

# WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN BOUGAINVILLE

EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

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The research was a collaboration between RMIT University and BWF. It was designed by Barbara Tanne and Isabel Koredong of BWF, Dr Ceridwen Spark from RMIT, with support from Stephanie Lusby in her role at IWDA. The research was conducted by Dr Ceridwen Spark and a team of six young women researchers from BWF, led by Isabel Koredong. The young women's team was made up of Michelle Kiroha, Irene Subalik, Skailie Kevi, Jacklyn Pampam, Lydia Katsia and Henrietta Sinei.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, authored by Dr Ceridwen Spark of RMIT University, presents the findings of a pilot study about women in the public service in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. The research was commissioned by IWDA as part of its work with the Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF), a civil society organisation based in Buka. As part of their mission to support gender equity across diverse community organisations and in the public sector, BWF is seeking to understand more about the experiences and perspectives of women in the public service.

The research represents a collaboration between Dr Ceridwen Spark (RMIT University) and a team of young women researchers from BWF. The findings draw on a total of 42 interviews. This includes 31 interviews with women in the public service (including women working at a range of levels); interviews with seven men working at managerial and senior levels and interviews with others about whom we cannot specify details for reasons of confidentiality and in order to ensure anonymity. Women were aged between 23 and 58 years old and worked in various departments within the public service in Buin, Arawa and Buka.

The interviews were transcribed and analysed according to the Gender At Work Framework. Categorising the data in this way allows insight into four quadrants: women's and men's consciousness; informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices; women's access to resources and: formal institutions, laws and policies. This accounts for the need to address both individual and systemic change.

The findings show that in the Bougainville public service there is a lack of knowledge about and commitment to gender equity and a tendency to assume that women are not as suited to paid work as men. Women placed a strong emphasis on the need for further training and education to progress their careers but reported that a lack of resources and discrimination meant this was rarely forthcoming. There was a general lack of clarity about discrimination and harassment, including in relation to whether or not there were policies and procedures to address these experiences in the workplace. The analysis of the formal policies for supporting gender equity reveals considerable emphasis on addressing the formal ways in which women experience gender inequality, and little to no emphasis on the informal ways in which women experience gender inequality. The risk of such a heavy emphasis on the formal over the informal is that a range of formal documents get written and enabling structures are developed, but these structures make little to no difference to behaviour change. Meanwhile, the informal ways in which women experience gender inequality are so resilient and pervasive that existing power structures are able to continue in the face of what appear to be enabling formal policy environments.

There is a paucity of research in women in the public service in Bougainville and this report constitutes the first effort to address this gap. Providing valuable insight into the experiences of women in the public service it makes recommendations to support BWF and IWDA to make a positive contribution to the advancement of gender equity in the public sector over 12 months and 4 years.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville (Bougainville) is an island located nearly 1000 kilometres east of Papua New Guinea, and directly north of the Solomon Islands. The population is approximately 250,000. Bougainville was governed by Papua New Guinea after independence in 1975. After an extended period of conflict and civil war the Arawa Peace Agreement was completed in 2000 and the government of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) was established. In accordance with the terms of the peace agreement, a referendum for independence from Papua New Guinea will be held in 2019. Both men and women in Bougainville continue to experience the aftermath of decades of conflict in Bougainville, and a large number of people continue to remain internally displaced on the island.

Women and girls in Bougainville fare worse across nearly all metrics pertaining to health, education, financial security, safety, and wellbeing. Although there is currently parity in primary and secondary school enrolments, women and girls are less educated and more likely to be illiterate. Women are significantly underrepresented in vocational education and have less access to opportunities for informal education. They experience high rates of maternal mortality and have limited access to reproductive healthcare. They also experience high rates of domestic and sexual violence. Women are less likely to be formally employed and less likely to be able to engage in informal business. Although mostly a matrilineal society, women continue to experience exclusion from decision making about land use and agriculture.

Women's political engagement is relatively limited, although improving. Currently the constitution of the ABG mandates that three seats in the House of Representatives be reserved for women. In the 2015 elections 35 women candidates run, and 12 of these candidates contested open seats. For the first time a woman won a non-reserved seat in the House of Representatives. These are small but significant steps towards the goal of gender equality.

The public service in Bougainville continues to be affected by the crisis and subsequent devastation to the region. During and after civil war, the service was a 'skeleton operation' and those who remained to assist with rebuilding it did so without resources, regular wages or security. At this time, many among the most qualified and educated members of the public service moved away to work in other parts of PNG. Moreover, local conditions including the poor quality of housing and schooling for potential employees' children make it difficult to attract those who can access better conditions in Port Moresby or elsewhere. Recent years have seen concerted attempts to rebuild the service but it continues to be so 'lean' that one research participant said employees are doing the work of 2-4 people. The departments are also chronically underfunded.

The ABG is the largest employer of women working in the formal sector in Bougainville. In 2016, the public service took a step in the transition to autonomy, undertaking a restructure of all positions in the service. At this time the service focused particularly on filling senior roles. The Department of Personnel Management and Administrative Services estimates that since the commencement of the restructure, the number of women employees in the public service is approximately 315. However, at the time the research was conducted, only 35 (23 senior officers and 12 junior officers) women were in 'attached positions' with the remaining 280 in 'unattached' positions, meaning that they are on short-term contracts and ineligible for various forms of leave and other entitlements. Consequently, the majority of women are in administrative and clerical roles and 'usually do not participate in decision making'.

## Scope of this report

There has been some research on the experiences of women in the public service in PNG (see Haley and Zubrinich 2009; Macintyre 2011). However, the experiences of women in the ABG remains undocumented, not least because of broader institutional incapacities which have affected the keeping and retaining of records over the last twenty years. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence indicates that while the public service is a significant employer of women in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, the majority of women are employed in clerical and administrative roles. Moreover, there is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that gendered discrimination and harassment are to a large extent normalised within the service and that women are less likely to receive educational and training opportunities than their male counterparts.

The main purpose of this report is to commence the process of documenting the experiences and perspectives of women working in the public service. Providing a snapshot of the situation is critical at this point in time, not least because, as noted above, the ABG is currently restructuring the entire service, a moment which offers challenges as well as opportunities. Drawing on 31 interviews with women at various levels and across several departments, this report provides an important first record of women's experiences and perspectives. The insights provided by female employees are further illuminated by additional interviews with senior male public servants and others in a position to comment on recruitment and appointing processes. The report also considers two key policy documents, which are intended to promote gender equality, women's leadership, and women's empowerment in the Bougainville region. These are:

1. A strategic plan for women's political leadership in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville 2015-2020
2. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville policy for women's empowerment, gender equality, peace, and security

The report draws on the interviews and policy documents to provide recommendations for actions. These suggested actions constitute useful next steps for the consideration of those in the leadership team at Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF). In particular, they are designed to enable the BWF to consider how they might best advocate and action their support of women in the public service in the ABG over the next 12 months and within 4 years.

## Methods

The research represents a collaboration between BWF and RMIT University. It was designed by Barbara Tanne and Isabel Koredong of BWF, Ceridwen Spark from RMIT, with support from Stephanie Lusby in her role at International Women's Development Agency (IWDA). The research was conducted by Ceridwen Spark and a team of six young women researchers from BWF, led by Isabel Koredong, who, in addition to conducting interviews, contacted participants and arranged the interview schedule. The young women's team was made up of Michelle Kiroha, Irene Subalik, Skailie Kevi, Jacklyn Pampam, Lydia Katsia and Henrietta Sinei.

The research was conducted in February and March 2017. The overwhelming majority of the interviews were conducted face to face within the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

In March, the research commenced in Buka with two half day team workshops during which time a range of research issues were discussed, including ethical conduct, confidentiality, consent, the need for sensitivity and how to operate recording equipment. In addition, we discussed and workshopped the interview schedule, potential issues that might arise during interviews and practised conducting and recording interviews. After the workshops, two

members of the team travelled to Buin, two to Arawa; three remained in Buka to work alongside Ceridwen. In all three locations, the researchers conducted interviews with public servants, including senior and managerial staff within the ARB public service.

The research draws on a total of 42 interviews. This includes 31 interviews with women in the public service (including women working at a range of levels from clerical positions to a head of department), as well as interviews with men working at managerial and senior levels and others in a position to comment on appointments within the public service.

The women participants were aged between 23 and 58 years old with the average age being 37. However, it should be noted that not all participants' ages were recorded as some of the researchers did not ask this question. While it would be possible to explore age differences in the data, this has not been done as part of this report.

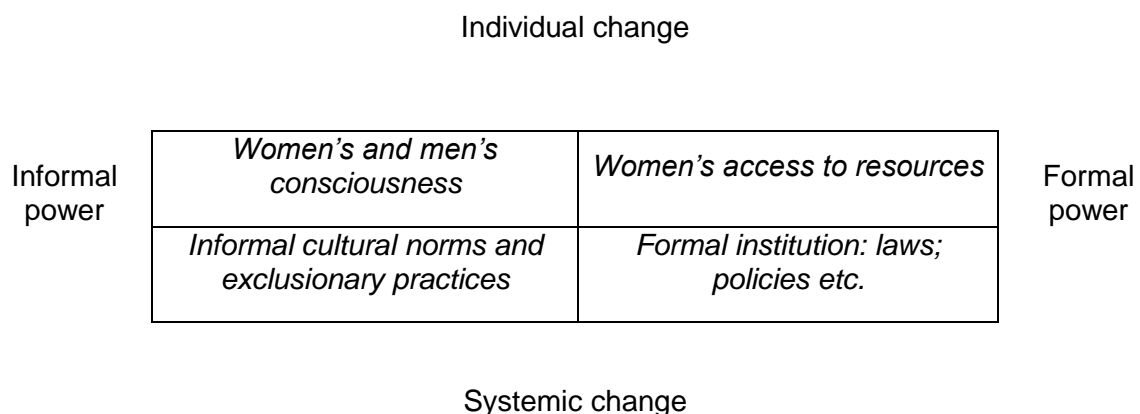
Interviews were semi-structured. Commencing with a range of demographic questions, the researchers sought to encourage women to narrate their experiences of working in the public service including in relation to questions about training, promotion opportunities, sexual harassment, discrimination, challenges and aspects of the jobs they enjoyed. We used a different interview schedule for senior managers and heads of department who were asked about their perceptions of women's experiences in the public service and about gender in relation to training opportunities, challenges, harassment and discrimination. With the consent of participants, the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for the purposes of analysis. Data was coded using the Gender at Work framework (see below for details).



# FINDINGS

The findings from the interviews are thematically presented using the *gender at work* framework as the organising construct for the presentation of the data. The Gender at Work framework was developed by three gender specialists, Aruna Rao, David Kelleher and Rieky Stuart. The purpose of the framework is to describe a holistic approach to social change that would lead to gender equality. It includes an analysis of social roles, and institutions, both form and informal, and how as a whole these differing elements contribute to gender equality.

## The Gender at Work Framework



The Gender at Work framework is comprised of quadrants. The top two quadrants focus on measurable changes for individuals. The bottom two quadrants focus on measurable changes in systems. The quadrants on the left focus on informal norms and cultural practice. The quadrants on the right focus on the formal ways in which policies and procedures contribute to gender equality.

The four quadrants are:

- *Women's and men's consciousness* – this quadrant focuses on individual knowledge, attitudes, skills, and emotions and the ways in which these dimensions contribute to gender equality. In the framework, the way that gender and gender equality is thought about by individuals contributes to cultural norms and exclusionary practices, and is contributes to women's access to opportunities.
- *Access to resources* – this quadrant focuses on the formal ways in which policies, rules, laws, and procedures contribute to access to resources and opportunities for women.
- *Cultural norms* – this quadrant focus on the ways in which groups of people behave in order to contribute to gender equality.
- *Formal institutions* – this quadrant focuses on the ways in which formal laws, policies, and procedures can create an enabling environment for gender equality.

## Summary of key findings against the gender at work framework

### Individual change

Informal power	<p><i>Women's and men's consciousness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many men and women appear to lack and understanding of the ways in which gender inequality is manifested in the workplace</li> <li>• Attitudes towards women in the workplace are ambivalent</li> <li>• Some people hold openly hostile attitudes to women in positions of power</li> <li>• Women who wish to be leaders in the public service must demonstrate significant emotional and communication skills</li> <li>• Women's experiences of gender inequality can be harrowing, but they face further discrimination if they display emotional responses to inequality</li> </ul>	<p><i>Women's access to resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ABG has limited financial capacity and consequently many public service staff have limited access to further training and education</li> <li>• Women see access to further training and education as absolutely critical if they want to progress their careers in the public service</li> <li>• Women believe that man get more opportunities to participate in training</li> <li>• Lack of opportunities for career progression is a significant issue for women in the public service</li> <li>• Most women in the public service work in support roles and few get opportunities for leadership positions</li> <li>• There is a widely held belief that access to leadership roles is merit-based and not based on gender</li> </ul>	Formal power
	<p><i>Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which women experience discrimination in the public service is contested with men being less likely to consider this to be the case</li> <li>• Women reported experiencing discrimination in the public service, they reported routinely being perceived as less capable than men</li> <li>• Women reported that some men in the public service are resistant to women in leadership roles</li> <li>• Many women reported experiencing sexual harassment in their workplaces. Sexual harassment is seen as inevitable for women and something that must be managed by women. This view was held by some men but also some women.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Formal institution: laws; policies etc.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are policy and strategy documents which direct how gender equality in the public service could be strengthened. These policies focus heavily on addressing formal types of change, mostly with the creation of formal policies and mechanisms, and creating access to resources, and focus less on informal barriers to achieving gender equality.</li> <li>• Staff mostly appear to lack knowledge of existing policies and strategies to promote gender equity.</li> <li>• The key mechanisms for gender equality in the public service are the Office for Women and the Gender Focal Points. The Office for Women is a new department, is under resourced and appears to lack significant influence at this time.</li> </ul>	

### Systemic change

## Women's and men's consciousness

### Individual change

Informal power	<i>Women's and men's consciousness</i>	<i>Women's access to resources</i>	Formal power
	<i>Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices</i>	<i>Formal institution: laws; policies etc.</i>	

### Systemic change

This section of the gender at work framework looks at the individual and informal ways in which attitudes, skills, knowledge, and emotions contribute to the way in which gender and gender equality is thought about in workplaces. In the framework, the way that gender and gender equality is thought about by individuals contributes to **cultural norms and exclusionary practices**, and contributes to **women's access to opportunities**.

This section looks at the following aspects of women's and men's consciousness:

- The **knowledge** that men and women have about what constitutes gender equality
- The **attitudes** that men and women have towards gender and gender equality
- The **emotional** impact that attitudes to and knowledge about gender and gender equality has on women in the public service and the ways in which emotional responses contribute to gendered attitudes
- The **skills** that women use to navigate workplaces in these contexts

### Knowledge

Many interview informants did not appear to have a fully developed understanding of what gender equality is and what it means for them and other women in the public service, and they did not appear to have a great understanding of what gender inequality looks like and how it is manifested. Many did not appear to have a great understanding of the ways in which attitudes, especially ambivalent attitudes, towards women contributes to discrimination in the workplace. Some interview participants appeared to have a poor understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment in the workplace. None of the interviewees appeared to be very knowledgeable about relevant policies or procedures that guide the promotion of gender inclusive practices in the public service.

*Staff lack real knowledge of what gender equality is. A lot of people think it is just to do with women. Not really understanding that it is actually both for men and for women. The economic benefits, and all that. There is no proper awareness. Even the heads of some departments... a lot of them don't really know, they need to be made aware, sensitised and all that.*

*Female informant*

### Attitudes

In this section we explore the following aspects of attitudes to gender and gender equality:

- People's attitudes to women
- People's attitudes to gender equality

### *People's attitudes to women*

The interviews for this report were conducted either by the international consultant hired for this project or by representatives of the Bougainville Women's Federation. The stated purpose of the interview was to better understand people's views on women in the public service. This must have had an impact on the responses gathered through the interview process, for instance, it was extremely unlikely that people would directly and unambiguously state that their attitudes to women were hostile in the context of these interviews. But many men and women who were interviewed stated that many people in Bougainville, both within and external to public service, hold hostile attitudes to women. Several informants talked about other men and women seeing women as being inferior to men in some way.

*Some people think that women are nothing.*

*Male informant*

*The men think that we women cannot do things.*

*Female informant*

*We women as always seen as inferior to men in the place of work. Sometimes like, I just want to say something back to men: 'I think I am equal to you'. When you talk about our intelligence and ability and creativity, we women have it. But men overlook this ability, talent, knowledge, ability we have.*

*Female informant*

When we think about attitudes to women we tend to characterise attitudes as being positive or mostly negative. But mostly attitudes about women – as expressed by informants - were expressed more as ambivalent as opposed to openly hostile. Even as an interview respondent acknowledges that women are capable of doing the same work as men, women are still seen as lacking in some way in the workplace – often because they are perceived as being more emotional and not having the same 'emotional toughness' as men:

*Personally, I can say that women are known as weak people. Weak meaning – a lot of things. But, as of today there is the gender balance. I can tell you the women – they are doing fine. But like I say sometimes they are weak. Sometimes it might be quite tough for them to make a foundation. I know quite a lot of experienced women working among men. Sometimes, they are easy to be tempted in other aspects. But otherwise, I should say women they are good.*

*Male informant*

### *Peoples' attitudes to gender equality*

None of the interviewees directly stated that gender equality was not a desirable goal for the public service. Rather, they either appeared to sincerely believe that gender equality exists and is a reality in the public service, or they rationalise the lack of gender equality as being a

consequence of the ways in which women behave in the workplace. This is likely in part because a) they are able to internally justify their ambivalent attitudes towards women and/or b) they lack an understanding of what gender equality means and what constitutes gender inequality.

In keeping with the theme of ambivalence and attitudes to gender, many interview subjects appear to hold conflicting views about women and their access to equality. So even as they acknowledge that women may be seen as weak or inferior by male counterparts, they are able to state that these attitudes to women do not lead to women experiencing discrimination in the workplace. In the interviews there was a commonly stated belief that the Bougainville public service is a merit-based system and that women would be promoted if they had the appropriate set of skills and qualifications – it's just that there are not enough women with the appropriate skills and qualifications.

But many women in the public service who were interviewed did state directly that women do experience discrimination, and they indicated a belief that women in higher positions were more likely to experience discrimination, both within the public service and within the community. This is likely because the more power that is handed to a woman in the public service, the greater the perceived threat that is invoked due to attitudes to women having power.

*Are women discriminated? Yes, because we previously had a woman that was a district manager. And the males in the community – if it was a male district manager there would be some respect and not try to argue and do things their own way. Because we had a woman. Sometimes they tend to overlook her and arrange things by themselves.*

*Female informant*

*In my department, I have experienced discrimination. [Men say]: 'she should be replaced because she doesn't know her job'. In my opinion, I think women are seen to work under men, most of the time. I think it is common in our place in Bougainville and in the department. Some departments, they have women secretaries, women bosses, and I don't know whether it is discrimination, but when they go for high powered meetings, they don't even talk. It is just the men who contribute a lot. Men think that women should not take these positions.*

*Female informant*

## **Skills**

Women who work in any type of leadership role in the public service describe the employment of a range of skills needed to successfully navigate an environment where both male and female public servants have a lack of knowledge about what constitutes discriminatory practices combined with either hostile or ambivalent attitudes towards women in the workplace.

Many women are aware that they are perceived as being the emotionally weaker or more emotional members of the workforce, and are aware that any emotional response to discrimination of sexual harassment is unlikely to be met with a sympathetic response. For this reason, many women develop a range of emotional strategies for dealing with the impact of discrimination in the workplace. These largely centre on development of emotional resilience and learning to hide emotional reactions.

*Psychologically, if you are a woman and you get promoted, there are obstacles. Others will see you, they will say 'oh this woman is getting a promotion', and will say things about you. But actually, I didn't mind that. All I do is concentrate on my work, what I am responsible to do.*

*Female informant*

*When they promoted me, almost every day my male colleague do things that offend me as a woman. He used to say 'you are too young to take up that position'. He discouraged me. He used to tell customers, 'that girl will not do anything in the company'. I don't let it get me down. I take that discrimination as my stepping stone. So other women can do that do also. So whenever men discriminate against us – when women get promoted to senior position, we take the discrimination as a stepping stone.*

*Female informant*

Women also described needing to be very forthright with men in order to ensure that they are able to hold a leadership role. Women can't just exist as leaders, they need to have the skills to constantly define and defend their roles as leaders in the workplace, and command respect.

*Sometimes I see discriminatory behaviour among men in the place of work. If you are smart, you can tell that this is a discriminatory behaviour against you. You can tell the men off straight away: 'what you are saying is not right'. Put him in the right place. In my case, I fight against that in my place of work, and men know, they get the message that I am a strong woman. They know I will share a piece of my mind, and they have to be smart enough to come to me. If I see it is logical, neutral and fair, then go through the discussions. But otherwise, men always put women down. Maybe it is because of culture, men have this of authority. And men have the mindset to say 'I'm the boss who are you to tell me what to tell'. This kind of thing needs to stop – we have to liberate against it. I have to put men in the right place.*

*Female informant*

One of the consequences is that, because some women are able to successfully navigate these male dominated environments, it is then assumed that all women should be able to navigate these complex and difficult workplaces. This then validates the existing belief that the men and women of the Bougainville public service exist in a merit-based system. It also places the onus on women to effectively address the inherent challenges associated in working in a workplace environment that is characterised by ambivalent or hostile attitudes to women.

*From my observation, here in Bougainville there is not much women holding a senior position. I don't know the reason, but we women can do better than men. We look after women. All our mothers manage the home. They look after the finances, so same thing happens in the home, happen in any organisation in the public service. I see that woman can do what men do. Nothing is impossible.*

*Female informant*

*There's a lot of talk out there, gender, it's a big problem, we must address is, we need more women. But I think sometimes we over dramatise the issue to the extent that we turn off support from the male population, because they are here to support you. Women themselves are a major problem, because they create too many unnecessary problems. You can see where the men are coming from. I have sat in so many committees. I have worked with mostly men, I have gone to places where I am the only female. I have never felt, at least not directly. I have never felt I am being discriminated against because of my gender. Men are there to support, they have to support their women. They are willing to support their women.*

*Female informant*

Women who do not have the necessary high-level emotional skills or communication skills to navigate difficult environments find it much more difficult to work within male dominated environments:

*A policy is just a policy, but it is in the implementation of the policy that exposes challenges. Even though there might be processes that are in place that relate to issues related to gender equality, for instance, sexual harassment in the workplace. Before that issue can be addressed, the victim must first have the courage to report instances of sexual harassment, so that then it can be dealt with. But if you have a victim that doesn't know what her rights are, then she is not going to push for her rights.*

*Female informant*

## **Emotions**

This section discusses the ways in which attitudes towards women in the workplace has an emotional impact on women. Their experience of harassment and discrimination in the workplace can be harrowing, but if they express an emotional reaction to these challenges they risk feeding into existing prejudices around women being weaker and less able to cope than men. In the quote below, one woman talks about her experiences of reacting emotionally to sexual harassment in the workplace, only to be chastised by her supervisor (who had also engaged in inappropriate behaviour in the past):

*Maybe I was immature, I said 'I am not happy with that officer' [who behaved inappropriately]. So my manager called me to his office, and then he counselled me. He said 'I'd like to now talk to you, the [anon] setting is very different from an office setting, here there is a lot of such things happening, so in case anyone advances on you or anything of that sort, you have to deal with it in a professional manner, that means you come and see me and then we call that person and we talk about it properly. Don't be childish like that'. And then I was just looking at him because I knew that he had also tried it on me once.*

*Female informant*

In this example both the woman and her manager both situate the harassment that had occurred as problematic because of her emotional reaction to the experience. Her emotional reaction is interpreted as an absence of professionalism and her inability to navigate the behaviour of her colleague an example of her inability to constructively mediate the behaviour of her co-workers.

Another issue for women in the public service is the ways that their personal experiences of violence impact on their work. The issue of the ways in which violence impacts on women's capacity to participate in the public service was not often mentioned in the interviews, but must be considered a factor given the Bougainville is widely believed to have significantly high rates of family violence.

*My background is full of abuse. It never occurred to me that I could help myself and others so that was the main thing. I was struggling with my own life as well in relation to my husband, my job. My husband was very abusive. All those experience, it was becoming very...I noticed it a lot, when the [anon organisation] gave me that chance to work with gender...it attracted me. So I am very passionate about this!*

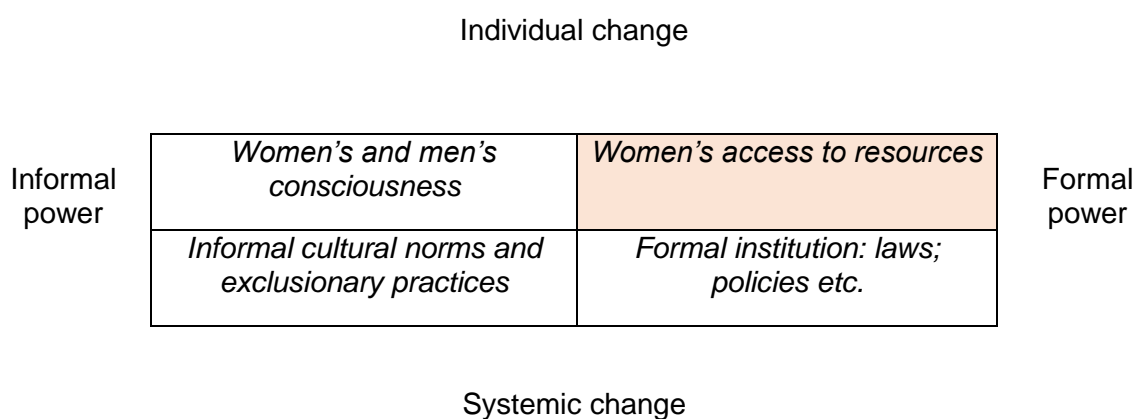
*Female informant*

As seen in the comment above, women are sometimes able to catalyse their experiences of gender inequality and trauma into personal change which can then lead to transformational change for themselves and for others. But for many women their experiences of gender discrimination and inequality have a deleterious personal impact on their confidence and sense of worth.

*Within my department, I think the real challenge for women is to gain the confidence that they need to do their work, in terms of holding onto a position that is equivalent to a male position. Sometimes that the female officer does not have the confidence that she needs to display to get her message across. The other challenge is for them to take a more active role in the activities that require them to take on those extra responsibilities that will allow them to coordinate themselves in a meaningful way. In this department... [w]e expect the women to be taking the lead in sourcing funding and delivering what they would like to deliver. Sometimes they feel that the man is dominating over them, because of the cultural background, men are dominating more, and they don't have the confidence to challenge the men.*

*Male informant*

## Women's access to resources and opportunities



In this quadrant of the gender at work framework, women's access to resources and opportunities refers to formal opportunities for individual women to access opportunities for skill development and career progression in the public service. Women's access to resources are informed by all other quadrants. The ways in which men and women think about gender equality, and the ways in which groups of people act in accordance with cultural norms informs the resources women can access. These informal power structures then influence the way that formal laws and policies are generated and so shape the ways in which women can formally access resources.

This section focuses on two dimensions of access to resources and opportunities that were discussed most frequently in the interviews. These are: opportunities for skill development and opportunities for career progression.



### *Opportunities for skill development*

Women's access to opportunities in the ABG public service are restricted because the ABG in general has limited financial capability and is not sufficiently resourced to provide appropriate training to its workforce. This report does not have sufficient data to comment on the extent to which women in the public service have greater access to training or skill development opportunities or have less or greater access to formal education than their male counterparts.

*The barriers – as we all understand there are financial constraints. ABG is having financial problems.*

*Male informant*

Nearly all women interviewed had completed some form of tertiary education. Many indicated that they had accessed further opportunities for skill development in their workplaces. Others indicated that they had sourced opportunities for skill development but had been turned down due to financial constraints.

Women who were interviewed see further access to formal and informal skill development as absolutely critical for career progression – and particularly so for formal academic qualifications. They also believe that because women tend to be disadvantaged in career progression, they will be unable to progress in the public service unless they can demonstrate significant academic achievement.

Many women interviewed are seeking access to opportunities for further skill development through international organisations and bilateral aid funding. Several women interviewed were either completing or had completed Masters programs funded by the Australian government. Many women reported undertaking various other types of training funded by UN agencies of foreign aid. Some women reported accessing gender training through foreign NGOs and through the UN and indicated that they learnt a lot about gender issues through attending these training.

*I got absolutely no training in the public service for the first few years and nothing in relation to gender relations, and nothing in relation to what the Government provided. Eventually I got to do training in leadership, but nothing to do with gender relations.*

*Female informant*

*They had to train me too, because I had never worked in the gender field before, and it really interested me and it kind of made me see that most things are unequal.*

*Female informant*

Many women stated that they experience barriers to accessing further education because of family commitments. Many formal or academic training opportunities take place outside Bougainville and many women are not able to take time out from family responsibilities. There is also a belief that men get better access to training opportunities through their informal networks.

*I'd like to see more women supported in their studies. For example, when I worked in the department - apart from me, there were two women who were supposed to undertake studies, but they were caught up in family issues. When they were ready we went to the human resource department, we were told that there were not funds to fund new officers, and there was only funding for those who are currently studying. Men find it easy to pull strings, but women find it hard.*

*Female informant*

#### *Opportunities for career progression*

One issue that was consistently raised by many interview respondents was the lack of female staff in senior and leadership positions. Many interview respondents stated that women are concentrated in the lower levels of the public service, often in administrative or support positions. There was a belief that it is much more difficult for women to progress through the public service, even when they had the same level of education and experience as their male counterparts.

*There are women who should have been promoted and I get really mad because they don't. Because I know they have the qualification. I know they work so hard. They produce outputs, but they just don't get the job. Because she is a woman.*

*Female informant*

This lack of women in leadership positions in the public service was attributed to several reasons:

- Men are more resistant to women in leadership positions, so they are not being recognised for senior or leadership roles
- There was a belief that women are not getting as many opportunities to access skill development, so they are not being prepared for career progression
- When you have a man or woman who have equal experience and qualifications, men are being selected
- The pervasive belief that men are superior to women leads to women not selecting themselves for career progression
- Women are pooled in administrative and support roles and are not progressing beyond this level
- Women who have high level skills and experience to be working in senior positions are working in Port Moresby and are reluctant to return to Bougainville because the conditions and pay are not competitive

Many interviewees – both male and female - maintained that opportunities for career progression and recruitment into roles is merit based and based on the most experienced and qualified person applying for the role. Some people who have responsibility for recruiting into executive level roles maintained that they would absolutely recruit women into executive level roles, but that women do not apply for these roles. Without having access to data, it is difficult to ascertain where women stop progressing in the public service and why this happens, but the interviews appear to indicate the women are entering at the administrative levels or support

levels and then not progressing.

*I cannot tell you how many women in the department. I think approximately about 10 officers out of 30 staff. Just below half the staff are women. A few of them are holding onto key positions, the rest either hold clerical work or office assistant [positions].*

*Male informant*

Family duties were also brought up as a reason for women not progressing in careers. For instance, it was said that women who work are 'distracted' by familial demands, including getting children to and from school and staying home when they are sick. The idea that women would not manage the demands of work as well as men related to the perception that women's primary roles were domestic and child-related.

Another issue for the ABG is that its location, combined with its lack of salary buying power means that women who have the skills and capacity to work at high levels in the public service are not choosing Bougainville for work.

*I have been asking myself – 'why aren't the best women applying?' [for senior roles] and it is because the best women are not in Bougainville. It is not that we are short of human capital. We have highly experienced women all over the country. Unless we pay them the right salary. The ABG is low, they don't get all the benefits. The best schools are in Port Moresby. And it has been difficult. So I have been asking, why aren't the women applying? It is not that the quality women are applying and not getting in.*

*Female informant*

Some women who were interviewed for this report, who had occupied or were occupying senior roles indicated that they had a particular interest in assisting younger or less experienced women in the public service.

*I was hoping to help women in the public service. Like help them to get recognised and get, at least have some influence in the higher positions, so they can help other women down the line. I was particularly interested in developing something to assist projects for women who work in the public service who face a lot of domestic violence and that kind of stuff. So that they could actually help themselves at that level, and then trickle down through the public service. That was my main aim.*

*Female informant*

*Currently as a senior public officer, I am working on engaging as many women as possible to take up critical positions like policy officer, research officer. I think 'these are the women who should be encouraged' – you see they are performing. They should be promoted for what they do.*

*Female informant*

But other women in senior positions indicated that they thought their role was to recruit and retain the right people for the role, irrespective of gender.

*It is important as a female ... to maintain a straight focus.... Everyone expects me to support women, but there must be enough women. But not just any women. Because we would not be doing ourselves any favours. I said I will support the best female candidate in the best positions, but I am not there to support just any woman, I am there to support the best women. I know the demands are there, but let's introduce some impartiality.*

*Female informant*

As mentioned earlier a significant piece of rhetoric often raised in the interviews was the belief that the career progression pathway in the public service is a merit-based process where the best rise up and apply and progress according to their skills and ability.

*Interviewer: How do women achieve these senior positions?*

*Respondent: As far as I know they have applied for these positions and won these positions on merit.*

*Male informant*

But it is likely that many women with potential never make it to positions where they can be considered for further roles on the basis of merit, due to individual and social beliefs around gender (as outlined in the men's and women's consciousness quadrant). In addition, these beliefs coalesce around the gendered experience of the workplace and impact on opportunities for women.

In order for women to progress through the public service pathway there needs to be a life course approach to skill and career development for the women of Bougainville. This would involve:

- Supporting young women to complete secondary education
- Recruiting young women into post-secondary training opportunities
- Recruiting young graduates into public service positions
- Dedicated opportunities for career progression planning with women who are in administrative or support roles
- Providing women with the skills they need to negotiate gendered work environments through mentoring and formal training
- Working with existing managers to identify young women for further capacity building and skill development
- Providing mentoring opportunities between more experienced public servants and early career female public servants
- Promoting women of the public service as role models for the women of Bougainville

Because of the pervasive belief that the current recruitment systems are merit-based, and because many interviewees did identify hostile attitudes to women in the workplace, the provision of career progression opportunities for women would need to be carefully planned to mitigate the resistance that female-oriented career progression programming would likely encounter.

## Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices

Individual change

Informal power	<i>Women's and men's consciousness</i>	<i>Women's access to resources</i>	Formal power
	<i>Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices</i>	<i>Formal institution: laws; policies etc.</i>	

Systemic change

This quadrant examines the informal and systemic issues that impact on women's experiences of the public service through an examination of the ways in which groups of people behave and how this impacts on gender equality. This quadrant is informed by the women's and men's consciousness quadrant, that is, the ways in which groups of people behave is directly linked to what they think about gender and gender equality. The ways in which groups of people behave can enable or hinder the implementations of formal laws and policies and can enable or hinder women's access to resources.

The interviews highlighted two ways that informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices impact on women in the public service in Bougainville. The first is through the practice of discrimination, and the second is through the practice of sexual harassment.

### Discrimination

There did not appear to be consensus among interview subjects as to what constitutes discrimination. For the purposes of this report, we would characterise discrimination as being any practice in the workplace that involves favouring male workers for participation in various work activities and employment in positions. Favouring men for work activities can include allowing men to undertake tasks in their roles that could lead to career progression, and practices that involve the domination of shared work activities by men (for instance, talking over women in meetings and at events). It also involves practices where men receive greater recognition for doing the same work as a woman.

*In group discussions, some men tend to hold the conversation. That is irritating. They don't give a chance for women to speak. The men tend to speak very loudly and they drown out women's voices.*

*Female informant*

*In my opinion, I think women are seen to work under men, most of the time. I think it is common in our place in Bougainville and in the department. Some departments, they have women secretaries, women bosses. I don't know whether it is discrimination. When they go for high powered meetings, they don't even talk. It is just the men who contribute a lot. Men see that women should not take positions.*

*Female informant*

The issue of whether women do experience discrimination in the public service was contested by interviewees. This appears to be linked to a lack of understanding of what constitutes discrimination, and a genuine belief in the public service as being a merit-based system where candidates are placed in work activities and positions by virtue of their skills, qualifications, and experience.

*I like to encourage women to work as hard as they can. Just like the male counterpart, I don't see them as separate people but equal in terms of being an officer. There are women who are officers, who graduate from university and come here. A lot of them are very good officers, and they produce results. For me, as long as they keep producing results, there is no way I can overlook them in terms of promoting officers. They have a chance of being promoted. Women are just as good as the men, but sometimes it is the cultural barrier that stops them from excelling, but for the women folks working in this department, I have not noticed anyone being discriminated against. I have not seen any disadvantage between male and female officers. In any case, the women folks in here take a more active leadership role than the male officers. That is another thing I have come to realise in this department. My guess is because it is a female oriented department and women can attract a bit more audience when we go out into the field. They just have to keep doing what they are good at, without being biased towards a gender.*

*Male informant*

Some interviewees during the course of their interview would describe the various ways in which women are sometimes regarded as being less capable than men in the workplace - but when they were directly asked if women experience discrimination in the workplace they would answer no. This suggests a lack of understanding of discrimination as a concept and what discrimination looks like practically. Discrimination does not simply refer to men being chosen over an equally qualified candidate but refers to a range of practices intended to silence or exclude women from workplace processes and activities.

*Education is one way to [address discrimination]. Treating women as equal partners. One is that women need to come out stronger and have a stronger voice, and the male must realise that women, educated women, they can do a job just as well as a male counterpart can do. We know they are capable of taking the lead. At the policy level, we must have policies that are conducive to support.*

*Male informant*

*Psychologically, if you are a woman and you get promoted, there are some obstacles, others will see you and especially boys, they will say 'oh this woman is getting promotion', and telling things about you. But actually, I didn't mind that. All I do is concentrate on my work, what I am responsible to do. We had some officers going against me. They see when a woman gets promoted, they don't want women to manage them. When I get promoted, those boys I used to manage – when I instruct they used to not do their work.*

*Female informant*

*Sometimes I see discriminatory behaviour among men in the place of work. But it depends on the kind of women. If you are very smart, you can tell that this is a discriminatory behaviour against you. You can tell the men off straight away – what you are saying is not right. Put him in the right place. In my case, I fight against that in my place of work, and men know, they get*

*the message that this is a strong woman. They know I will share a piece of my mind, and they have to be smart enough to come to me. If I see it is logical, neutral and fair. Then we have a go with decision making and go through the discussions. But otherwise, men always put women down. Maybe it is because of culture, men have this authority.*

*Female informant*

## **Sexual harassment**

Several female interviewees reported experiencing sexual harassment in their workplace. Examples included being directly propositioned by male colleagues, witnessing men looking at material of a sexual nature at work, and men making suggestive or demeaning comments toward female colleagues. Another dimension of sexual harassment involved the belief – reported by some interviewees - that women who spent a significant time with men in the workplace would be at a more significant risk of engaging in sexual relations with colleagues.

*I have gone through that. There are a lot of male counterparts, they think they can say anything they want to say to female public servants. I can't deny the fact that these activities happen.*

*Female informant*

Female interviewees reported that it was expected that men would behave in ways that were sexually suggestive and it was expected that women would respond appropriately and professionally in these situations. Responding 'appropriately' includes ignoring the behaviour, politely declining advances, and not reacting in an emotional manner to the harassment. In the men's and women's consciousness quadrant we discussed the ways in which the treatment of women had an emotional impact on women, and the ways in which an emotional response is seen as a sign of weakness and evidence that women cannot bring the same mental stamina to their work. Women who became upset as a result of experiencing sexual harassment were sometimes instructed that they should behave in a 'more professional manner.'

*[My manager] told me: 'I would like you to just ignore. I cannot speak up, I cannot correct him because he is the boss of all of us, but what you can do is just ignore him and he will see that you are not interested in his advances.' And I told him 'I don't feel good to be in this type of environment I might leave the job.' And he said 'you have just come in, just ignore and don't encourage him.' I said 'ok'. So that is what I did I just ignored it.*

*Female informant*

*[My colleague] said 'is this the first time you attend a workshop' I said yes. He said, 'I am feeling really sorry for you, you look like a young person. There is a lot of harassment, so I would like to caution you that if any of the guys advances on you don't listen to them. That's what they do, in every workshop that they go to'. So I had been warned, and I appreciated that. And I always remembered his advice.*

*Female informant*

Women who reported instances of sexual harassment received a range of responses. No reported response from management was directly antagonistic about what was being reported

but it was clear that managers did expect that women deal with these situations on their own, and that men who displayed sexually aggressive behaviours rarely if ever experienced any sanction for their actions. Women reported that some managers were sympathetic but appeared to lack the skills to know how to respond appropriately to reports of sexual harassment. Moreover they appear to lack a clear regulatory framework for responding to these types of workplace incidents. Managers themselves are not supported to respond appropriately to instances of sexual harassment.

*I reported – [my manager] was disgusted. The guy continued doing it. So I told the guy off. So I went to my boss’ office and I asked him ‘do you require me to write it in black and white’ and if I do I am gonna see the HR this time. So he said he was gonna deal with it, so he did. He did call in the guy, he researched. He was actually good. He found out background information and I did the same too. And he pulled the guy in, and he warned him ‘this is unethical’. But the sad thing was, after that, everyone said ‘oh I think the boss is having something with this lady, that is why he is all on her side and getting angry’. The thing just went crazy. And that is what I was so disgusted about. I was like, my god. Do you mean to tell me you accept this sort of treatment? Especially women. Men I kind of understand, but not women. It became, they started spreading the news everyone. I even heard from other departments. ‘Oh, this lady is following her boss around too much.’ And all this started coming up after this incident. And I was really surprised. They really spoil my reputation. My reputation got tarnished just because of that.*

*Female informant*

## Formal laws and policies

Individual change

Informal power	<i>Women’s and men’s consciousness</i>	<i>Women’s access to resources</i>	Formal power
	<i>Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices</i>	<i>Formal institution: laws; policies etc.</i>	

Systemic change

This quadrant details the formal laws and policies that guide or could guide equitable workplace practices in the public service in Bougainville. Formal laws and policies become enacted as a result of women’s and men’s consciousness. They have the capacity to influence the ways in which informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices are carried out. Law and policies can have a powerful impact on women’s access to resources. Conversely, the implementation of formal laws and policies can be enabled or hindered by men’s and women’s consciousness and by informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices.

This section describes two dimensions of formal institutions, the first is a description of the current policy direction for ABG as it pertains to gender equality, and the consequences of this for women in the public service. The second is a description of the extent to which women’s



careers in the public service are enabled or hindered by the application of formal laws and policies.

### **Current policy directions informing gender equality in the public service**

Currently there are two key policy documents which are intended to promote gender equality, women's leadership, and women's empowerment in the Bougainville region. These are:

1. A strategic plan for women's political leadership in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville 2015-2020
2. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville policy for women's empowerment, gender equality, peace, and security

#### *A strategic plan for women's political leadership in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville 2015-2020*

This strategic plan was developed by UN Women, the Bougainville Women's Federation, and the Department for Community Development. The plan was developed after consultations were held in Bougainville in 2015. The purpose of this strategic plan is to provide a framework for promoting and strengthening women's participation in a range of forms of political leadership and governance.

The strategic plan notes the following high level mechanisms that provide a directive for the implementation of laws and policies that focus on gender equality:

- The preamble in the constitution for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville provides the 'mandate for women in Bougainville to be able to participate in decision making processes in public and political life'
- The Act of Parliament and the Council of Elders Act enables women to participate in the Council of Elders assembly, with three seats intended to be reserved for women in each of the 44 Council of Elders
- The constitution mandates that three parliamentary seats are reserved for women
- The President is mandated by law to appoint one woman to Cabinet

The strategic plan identifies the Department for Community Development as the Government department with oversight for the development and monitoring of gender policies. The gender unit in the Department for Community Development, a network of gender focal points, and the Office for Gender Equality are the key mechanisms intended to guide the implementation of gender strategies and policies in ABG.

The strategic plan outlines a numbers of proposed strategies and actions. This piece of research was unable to ascertain the extent to which these strategies and actions have been progressed and actioned and we are unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy. In the table over the page we looked at which actions in the strategy could contribute to change against the gender at work framework. A total of 25 actions were reviewed and the table shows which quadrant of the gender at work framework they would likely be contributing to.

Out of the 25 actions:

- Five do not explicitly or directly relate to the promotion of gender equality (rather they focus on creating an environment for gender equality to occur)
- 12 actions appear to be directly concerned with the creation or further development of formal laws and policies that could contribute to gender equality
- 11 actions appear to be directly concerned with creating women's access to resources and opportunities
- 3 actions are concerned with contributing to changes to women's and men's consciousness
- None of the actions appear to be directly or explicitly concerned with contributing to changes in informal cultural norms or exclusionary practices

Out of the 25 actions, 13 pertain directly to issues that would affect women's participation in the public service:

- Four address women's access to resources and opportunities. They do this through recommending quotas for participation in mechanisms that provide governance and oversight to the public service and quotas for participation at various levels of the public service.
- Ten address the development of formal, laws, and policies that could contribute to the strengthening of women's participation in the public service. These include the establishment of the Office for Gender Equality and establishment of governance groups to monitor gender equality, the development of various documents and procedures that can support the implementation of gender friendly policies (such as gender budget resources).
- One action addressing men's and women's consciousness, namely the proposed gender sensitisation training for women. No training on gender sensitisation is proposed for men.

What does this mean? This means that the strategic plan has a heavy emphasis on addressing the formal ways in which women experience gender inequality, and little to no emphasis on the informal ways in which women experience gender inequality. The risk of such a heavy emphasis on formal over the informal is that a range of formal documents get written and enabling structures are developed, but these structures make little to no difference to behaviour change. Meanwhile, the informal ways in which women experience gender inequality are so resilient and pervasive that existing power structures are able to continue in the face of what appear to be enabling formal policy environments.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Women's and men's consciousness</b>	<b>Women's access to resources and opportunities</b>	<b>Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices</b>	<b>Formal laws and policies</b>
Increase women's involvement in implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement	Quota of one-third introduced for women on boards, committees, and decision-making bodies concerning BPA		x		x
To increase women's involvement in implementation of Bougainville Peace Agreement	Women to be engaged in awareness raising about BPA		x		
Ensure implementation of Women, and Security Action Plan	Women, peace, and security technical working group to require biannual updates on progress				x
To make women more visible and effective in community	Increase number of police posts with more women police		x		
Increase and consolidate women's participation in the 2016 Community Government elections	132 women to be trained for election for Community Government in 2016. Awareness required about these changes and training workshops for women		x		x
Strengthen women's participation in Community Government	Gender sensitive community awareness raising for elections, development of resource material and capacity building of women to undertake sensitisation	x	x		
Strengthen women's participation in community government	Provide resources and support for BWF to undertake election monitoring		x		
Increase women's representation on Boards, Committees, and decision-making bodies	Ensure women are represented on the Referendum Committee		x		

Enable and support women to contest the 2017 National elections	Training, support	x	x		
Increase women's political representation	Support additional reserved seats for women and a political party to promote gender equality	x	x		x
	Develop capacity building program for MPs		x		
Information awareness	Improve information awareness activities conducted by the ABG	These actions don't specifically relate to gender so we are unable to categorise within the gender at work framework.			
	Coordinating mechanism for various government offices to make public awareness more efficient, responsive to the needs of the voters				
	Consistent and continuous education of the electoral and registration process should be provided to all electoral participants – from votes to polling staff, scrutineers, observers, candidates and security personnel, in order to promote greater awareness of rights, practices, and legal requirements				
Establishment and consolidation of DfCD gender unit	Needs to be operationalised				x
Capacity development of gender unit	Development of resource package to implement Gender Equality Policy and capacity development of Gender Unit				x
Planning and oversight and co-ordinating mechanism	Develop a coordinated whole-of-government work plan and a gender advisory/reference group with oversight of progress				x
Gender mainstreaming in ABG	Trainings of ABGs GFPs to integrate gender equality into policies and programs				x
Support to the OBEC to establish a staffing structure, develop equitable	OBEC can do better to promote gender equality in its office, because there are many				x

recruitment policies and procedures and undertake a thorough review of voter registration.	professional women around Bougainville who could take on responsibilities.				
OBEC oversight of reporting campaign expenditures	Rules on campaign financing strictly enforced. All candidates and party leader to report the source of funding and how it was used or spent.	These actions don't specifically relate to gender.			
	Review of the Electoral Act to provide maximum limits for the for the amount of expenditure that can be incurred on behalf of a candidate should likewise be considered.				
Gender budgets	Develop GB resources and training program for ABG, BWF, and House of Representatives.				x
Organisational strengthening of BWF	Two-year review and evaluation to be undertaken with plan of action developed and operationalised				x
Establishment and consolidation of the Office for Gender Equality	Feasibility study and options paper developed				x
	Office set up with functions, budget, etc. and capacity to be developed as a woman's national machinery.				x

*The Autonomous Region of Bougainville policy for women's empowerment, gender equality, peace, and security*

This policy document was developed as a partnership between UN Women and the Department of Community Development and the document was informed by a range of consultations with government, civil society, and international organisation. The policy has been endorsed by the senior management of all divisions in the ABG and was approved by the Bougainville Executive Council, which endorsed the establishment of the Office of Gender Equality.

The policy complies with Papua New Guinea's existing obligations regarding gender quality and women's empowerment, these obligations include:

- Pacific Plan (2004)
- Pacific Platform for Action (2000)
- The Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (1979)
- United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security (1993)
- Convention on the rights of the child (1990)

The policy document has a framework for implementation which outlines the key mechanisms that will be used to achieve gender equality in Bougainville. These key mechanisms are:

1. The Office for Gender Equality
2. Gender focal points
3. The Bougainville Women's Federation

### **Office for Gender Equality**

The OGE is expected to have key oversight of all gender policies in Government and ensure that the Government functions in adherence with principles of gender equality and a public service which promotes equality for women. It is expected to do this in the following ways:

- Provision of policy advice - providing advice to Departments, Ministers and the President on the gender equality implications of Government and its laws and policies
- Research, monitoring, and evaluation – creating an evidence base to inform the policy advice it provides to key stakeholders
- Capacity development and training for policy development and gender mainstreaming – providing public servants with the knowledge they need to change their attitudes, their behaviours, and provide them with the skills they need to implement policies that contribute to gender equality
- Outreach, liaison, and strengthening partnerships – building partnerships not just with public policy actors but also with civil society actors and faith-based actors and build the capacity of civil society to be advocates for gender equality in government decision making

The policy document stipulates that the OGE has the primary responsibility for the implementation and coordination and implementation of the policy.

### **Gender focal points**

It is expected that each Department will have a gender focal point. These actors will be the key interface between the written policy as it is written and how it gets implemented and

operationalised, linking the work of the OGE and the work of the departments. They are also expected to take an informal role in ensuring that gender equality is routinely considered in departmental life.

### **Bougainville Women's Federation**

As a civil society organisation, it is expected that the Bougainville Women's Federation will play a critical role in holding Government to account to its gender equality goals and also in the promotion of active citizenship among women of all cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in Bougainville.

#### Implementation plan

The policy has an implementation plan. Similar to the Strategic plan for women's political leadership in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville 2015-2020, we have conducted a brief analysis of the policy's implementation plan and key actions against the gender at work framework by tabulating the actions against the four quadrants of the gender at work framework. This table is over the page.

Of the 13 actions in the policy that were reviewed:

- 12 focus on formal laws and policies that support gender equality
- Six actions focus on addressing informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices that contribute to gender equality
- Five actions focus on addressing women's access to resources and opportunities
- Three focus on changing men's and women's consciousness and how they think about gender

Of the 13 actions in the policy, nine appear to relate directly to the promotion of gender equality within the public service. Of these nine actions:

- Nine actions focus on the creation of formal laws and policies that support gender equality in the public service. The policy focuses on developing gender mainstreaming policies and procedures across the whole of Government, and creating mechanisms that will allow for gender mainstreaming to be implemented and monitored. It also seeks to create an evidence base for the implementation of gender mainstreaming activities through the conduct of gender analysis of the current public service policies and training needs.
- Three actions appear to focus on addressing informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices that occur in the public service. These activities focus on developing a better understanding of the barriers to gender equality in the public service and through providing training to public service staff around gender equality principles.
- Three actions appear to focus on promoting women's access to opportunities. It intends to contribute to this through providing opportunities to develop skills in gender mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation, and data analysis and management.

One action appears to focus on making changes to women's and men's consciousness. This would largely be delivered through the provision of training around gender mainstreaming.

Strategy	Action	Women's and men's consciousness	Women's access to resources and opportunities	Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices	Formal laws and policies
Gender equality mainstreaming in ABG departments in compliance with the policy on women's empowerment, gender equality, peace and security	Provide technical assistance on gender mainstreaming to all ABG sectors				x
	Programme mechanisms developed and implemented				x
	Expertise and assistance of OGE being sought by sectors and other relevant stakeholders			x	
	Provide support to gender focal points on gender equality are implemented				x
	Set standards and develop gender mainstreaming guidelines				x
Capacity building for gender mainstreaming	Undertake training and capacity building for OGE departments and stakeholders	x		x	x
Monitoring of gender mainstreaming is established with relevant ABG departments	To ensure effective implementation, OGE will monitor the status of implementation of policy commitments, including analysing gaps in implementation and making recommendations for improvement				x
Effectiveness and efficiency of OGE is enhanced	For OGE to effectively achieve its mandate, it must strengthen its institutional capacity and ensure that human resources have the appropriate knowledge and skills in gender mainstreaming, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, gender auditing, and data analysis and management		x		x



OGE is the reference point for information documentation on gender equality	Communication strategy to enhance communication and information sharing with the public, and will identify appropriate channels for promoting the Policy on women's empowerment, gender, equality, peace and security and the work of OGE	x			x
Increased resource allocation for promotion of Gender Equality	Advocate for stable and sustainable budgetary support for policy implementation in all ABG departments at the frontline of service delivery to women and/or gender equality and the eradication of gender-based violence	x	x	x	x
	In collaboration with ABG departments, conduct a viability study concerning the possibility of committing a percentage of the total ABG budget to the provision of welfare services, including services for deserted women, single mothers, and women experiencing gender-based violence		x	x	x
Gender equality in ABG human resources	Gender analysis of the current public administration policies, personnel issues, and training needs.		x	x	x
Gender equality in decision-making	Ensure that the development plans, programmes, and budgets are designed following consideration and consultation regarding the needs of women and girls		x		x

## The applications of laws and policies for women in the public service

The ways in which formal laws and policies, as they pertain to the application of ABG policies and strategies, enable or hinder women in the public service are largely characterised by their absence. No interview subject identified or described in any great detail the presence of laws or policies or organisational procedures that they could invoke to enable the achievement of gender equality in the workplace. There were no formal policies described that could be invoked to specifically support the amelioration of discrimination or harassment against women in the workplace. There also appears to be a very shallow understanding of what the current policy framework for gender equality looks like and what this means for management in the public service, mostly because these policies and strategies, and the mechanisms that have been established to guide their implementation, are poorly resourced.

*[Policies are] not really implemented. It needs to be a holistic approach, right now, our department only doing it. There are measures in place to try and make it inter-departmental and that is why the new offices are being set up. The one I talked about earlier, it's called OGE officer – Office of Gender Equality.*

*Female informant*

*So right now The Office for Gender Equality is not an influential department. They are one of the least funded. All departments are underfunded, and they are underfunded. And they are not a key department, like community development. If they were resourced I think they would do more, they would be able to produce more to implement the policy and also development these workplace harassment ethics and actually try and implement them. And even a domestic violence policy, and make us closer to the private sector who are I feel are going ahead.*

*Female informant*

Interview discussions about gender equality in the public service are marked by ambivalent attitudes to women in the public service, a lack of understanding as to what gender equality is, a lack of understanding of what discrimination and harassment are, and what appear to be erroneous beliefs around the extent to which the ABG public service is a merit-based system. Strategies which intend to address attitudes and beliefs about gender equality in the workplace need to be underpinned by solid data about the extent to which women experience discrimination in the ABG public service to counteract lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, and misapprehensions about what happens for women in the public service.

*We need data, the number of women in Bougainville, in all fields. How many are holding jobs and in what areas? How many women in senior positions? How many women in business? Until we don't have that, we can work out how best to assist them. Will this research begin? The records are non-existent.*

*Female informant*

Strategies and policies that are implemented also need to consider the informal barriers to implementation, such as understanding the ways in which women's and men's consciousness and the ways in which informal cultural norms can enable or hinder the implementation of policy.

*I think generally policies are being put in place to give all citizens equal opportunity across the various departments. The fact of the situation is that a lot of work needs to be done to be able to achieve that. Women in many areas still have a lot of challenges. We might have a policy that is on paper, to be able to achieve what policy dictates, there are still a lot of factors that needs to be dealt with. The biggest challenges is changing the mindsets and concepts in the community. A lot of work needs to be done to empower women to rise up and achieve a level. Achieve what the policy dictates.*

*Female informant*

# CONCLUSIONS

## Women's and men's consciousness

- Many interview informants did not appear to have a fully developed understanding of what gender equality is.
- Many interview informants did not appear to be knowledgeable about relevant policies and procedures that guide the promotion of gender inclusive practices in the public service.
- From the interviews, attitudes to women in the public service can be best described as ambivalent. Interview subjects do not directly communicate hostile attitudes to women. Rather women are seen as lacking key characteristics and men are construed as 'better suited' to the workforce.
- Similarly, people do not communicate that gender equality is not a desirable goal for the ABG public service. Rather, they communicate that women's experiences of discrimination can be attributed to the behaviours of women in the workplace.
- Many women informants reported that there are people in the public service that hold hostile attitudes to women and are reluctant to see women in positions of seniority or power.
- Women who successfully navigate the public service must develop a range of skills to manage their emotional responses to discrimination and harassment and they must also develop high-level communication skills in order to assert their power in the face of dominance. Consequently it is expected that all women should be able to navigate these gendered environments.

## Women's access to resources and opportunities

- Women's access to resources and opportunities in the ABG is limited in general because the ABG has limited financial capacity.
- The report does not have sufficient data to comment on the extent to which women in the public service have greater access to training or skill development opportunities or have less or greater access to formal education than their male counterparts.
- Women in the public service see access to formal and informal skill development as absolutely critical for career progression.
- A small number of women are accessing funding for opportunities in further education through international governments and aid organisations.
- It was widely reported by interview respondents that there is a lack of female staff in senior and leadership positions. Many women in the public service are concentrated in administrative or support positions. There is a belief that the public service is informally resistant to placing women in senior roles.
- It was also widely reported that the ABG public service is a merit-based system where career progression occurs based on performance. Attempts to introduce policies and activities which seek to promote women are likely to encounter some resistance unless they are grounded in data that supports the view that women are discriminated against.
- It is perceived that women who have the skills and capacity for participation in senior leadership roles are likely to seek work outside of Bougainville and that the ABG is not competitive in recruitment.

## Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices

- The issue of whether women experience discrimination in the public service was contested in interviews. Many interview subjects appear to lack an understanding of what discrimination is. Some also appear to sincerely believe that the ABG public service does not engage in discriminatory practice.
- Women reported the many informal ways in which they are discriminated against in the public service. This included not having opportunities to talk in meetings, being excluded from opportunities to engage in informal leadership in the workplace, and working in contexts where they are seen as being inferior to men.
- Several female respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment in their workplace. When experiencing harassment, the onus is placed on women to respond by 'rising above it'.
- Managers who wish to respond to allegations of harassment lack the formal policy context to respond and also appear to lack the skills needed to respond appropriately.

## Formal laws and policies

- There are two key policies that could inform efforts to promote gender equality in the ABG public service. These are the *Strategic plan for women's political leadership in the Autonomous region of Bougainville 2015-2020* and the *Autonomous region of Bougainville policy for women's empowerment, gender equality, peace and security*. Both of these documents have had significant input from UN Women.
- The *Strategic plan for women's political leadership in the Autonomous region of Bougainville 2015-2020* intends to contribute to promotion of gender equality in the public service through:
  - Addressing women's access to opportunities through recommending quotas for participation in mechanisms that provide governance and oversight to the public service and quotas for participation at various levels of the public service.
  - Calling for the establishment of the Office for Gender Equality and establishment of governance groups to monitor gender equality, and the development of various documents and procedures that can support the implementation of gender friendly policies (such as gender budget resources).
  - Calling for gender sensitisation training for women.
- The *Autonomous region of Bougainville policy for women's empowerment, gender equality, peace and security* intends to contribute to promotion of gender equality in the public service through:
  - Focusing on the creation of formal laws and policies that support gender equality in the public service, including developing gender mainstreaming policies and procedures across the whole of Government, and creating mechanisms that will allow for gender mainstreaming to be implemented and monitored. It also seeks to create an evidence base for the implementation of gender mainstreaming activities through the conduct of gender analysis of the current public service policies and training needs.
  - Focusing on developing a better understanding of the barriers to gender equality in the public service and through providing training to public service staff around gender equality principles.

- Focus on promoting women's access to opportunities. It intends to contribute to this through providing opportunities to develop skills in gender mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation, and data analysis and management.
  - Calling for the provision of training around gender mainstreaming.
- 
- There appears to be limited knowledge and understanding among people in the ABG about the policies and strategies that guide the push for gender equality in the public service.
  - There do not appear to be any formal policies for addressing the issues of discrimination and harassment in the workplace.
  - The Office for Gender Equality, a key mechanism for the implementation of policy, is seemingly under resourced and its status as a new department means that it is as yet not influential.
  - The implementation of formal policies will be strengthened if accompanied by concomitant efforts to address informal barriers to gender equality in the public service.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve gender equality in the public service, the Office for Gender Equality and the Bougainville Women's Federation need to consider a holistic approach to achieving gender equality. Policy documents and strategies need to consider:

- The ways in which people think about gender and how this impacts on the extent to which women have access to resources and ways in which these attitudes enable and hinder the implementation of policy.
- The ways in which people act and how this presents a barrier to women's access to resources and to the implementation of policies and strategies that seek to strengthen gender equality.
- Ways to directly improve women's access to resources.

For this reason, our first recommendation is that the OGE and BWF conduct a policy analysis to examine the ways in which informal attitudes to gender and cultural norms act as barriers to implementation of gender policies in the public service. Through this, it would be possible to identify ways in which the proposed actions in this document could enhance the delivery of existing strategies and policies. This could include a road map for how stakeholders in the Office for Gender Equality, the Gender Focal Points, and the Bougainville Women's Federation could be involved in implementing the proposed actions in this report.

Our second recommendation is that the OGE develop policies for the public service that provide a framework for responding to discrimination and sexual harassment.

## **Suggested actions**

The actions we propose to strengthen gender equality in the Bougainville public service centre around addressing informal barriers to implementation of the existing policies and mechanisms that have been developed.

Our suggested actions focus on: planning; creation of evidence; awareness raising; capacity building; and creation of networks.

## **Creation of evidence**

One of the findings in this report was that there is a belief, among some members of the public service, that gender discrimination does not exist, that sexual harassment is not pervasive, and that people progress in their careers in the public service based on merit. If the OGE and BWF wish to counteract these claims their bargaining power will be greatly improved by having access to empirical evidence that support these claims.

Therefore, we propose the following actions:

- Activities that seek to promote women into leadership positions need to be underpinned by evidence that women are being overlooked for leadership roles in the public service, being mindful of the reputational backlash that women coming forward may face. The OGE and BWF should seek to collect data about the number of women

in positions at all levels of the service and conduct a survey, with a reasonably representative sample, that seeks to understand men's and women's experiences of career progression in the public service.

- Collect in-depth qualitative and quantitative data about women's experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination in the public service and promote the research results to all departments.

## **Awareness raising**

Awareness raising would have several objectives. The first objective would be to promote the functions of the OGE and the Gender Focal Points and educate departments about what the OGE can offer to departments around all matters related to gender. The second objective is to change attitudes regarding the capacity of women to be leaders in the public service. The third objective is to educate public servants about how gender inequality manifests in the workplace, including what discrimination and sexual harassment look like, and appropriate responses to discrimination and sexual harassment at the individual and organisational levels.

Therefore, we propose the following actions:

- Conduct an awareness raising campaign, which draws on the evidence from the research, that seeks to educate public servants about what gender inequality is, what discrimination and sexual harassment are, and appropriate responses.
- Publically recognise and promote:
  - Examples of women in the public service to all members of the public service who have made significant achievements. This should promote women at all levels of the public service.
  - Examples of women as leaders in the public service, including examples of women leading men.
  - Stories from men in the public service who have had good female managers.
  - Stories from women and men who have developed respectful working relationships.
  - Stories about how women have progressed their careers in the public service.
- Conduct an awareness raising campaign about the functions of the Office for Gender Equality and the Gender Focal Points across the public service.

## **Capacity building**

This section is informed by three findings. The first finding is that managers often lack the skills to deal effectively with discrimination and sexual harassment. The second finding is that women in the public service are often pooled into support and administration roles and lack the support and opportunity to progress their careers in the public service. The third finding is that women regard access to training as critical to furthering their public service careers.

Therefore, we propose the following actions:



- The BWF should seek to develop a role as broker and facilitator of further training and learning opportunities across the Asia-Pacific region and seek to link women in the public service – at all levels (not just women already in senior or leadership positions) - to these opportunities.
- If possible, the BWF and OGE should consider commissioning or adapting a training package that is tailored for women in the public service, at all levels, who wish to progress their careers. The focus should be on women who do not yet have the skills for leadership. This course could focus on leadership, management, and political engagement. The course should have a focus on career progression in the public service.

## Networking

This report found several examples of women who were successfully working in some kind of leadership or management role. These women all reported the various ways in which they experience discrimination and harassment in their workplaces. They all described the various strategies they employed to address gender-related barriers in their lives. Creating networks of women who could support each other through informal networking and more formalised mentoring could achieve the following objectives: the women who are mentors could be inspiring to women who wish to progress their careers, women could come together to share their stories about their challenges and achievements in the public service and find strength in sharing their experiences with other women.

Therefore, we propose the following action:

- *Develop a program that provides opportunities for women at all levels of the public service to share experiences about gender inequality and share stories about how they navigate difficult work environments. This could include the establishment of a mentoring program between senior and junior women in the public service.*

In the table below we have outlined how these suggested actions are directly linked to the key findings from this report.

## Suggested actions

Findings	Suggested actions
<p><b>Women’s access to resources and opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women’s access to resources and opportunities in the ABG is limited in general because the ABS has limited financial capacity.</li> <li>• The report does not have sufficient data to comment on the extent to which women in the public service have greater access to training or skill development opportunities or have less or greater access to formal education than their male counterparts.</li> <li>• Women in the public service see access to formal and informal skill development as critical for career progression.</li> <li>• Some women are accessing funding for opportunities in further education through international governments and organisations.</li> <li>• There is a lack of female staff in senior and leadership positions. Many women in the public service are concentrated in administrative or support positions. There is a belief that the public service is informally resistant to placing women in senior roles.</li> <li>• It was also widely reported that the ABG public service is a merit-based system where career progression occurs based on performance. Attempts to introduce policies and activities which seek to promote women are likely to encounter some resistance unless they are grounded in data that supports the view that women are discriminated against.</li> <li>• It is perceived that women who have the skills and capacity for participation in senior leadership roles are likely to seek work outside of Bougainville and that the ABG is not competitive in recruitment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>12 month:</b></p> <p>Activities that seek to promote women into leadership positions need to be underpinned by evidence that women are being overlooked for leadership roles in the public service. The OGE and BWF should seek to collect data about the number of women in positions at all levels of the service and conduct a survey, with a reasonably representative sample, that seeks to understand men’s and women’s experiences of career progression in the public service.</p> <p><b>2 years:</b></p> <p>The BWF should seek to develop a role as broker and facilitator of further training and learning opportunities across the Asia-Pacific region and seek to link women in the public service – at all levels - to these opportunities.</p> <p><b>4 years:</b></p> <p>If possible, the BWF and OGE should consider commissioning or adapting a training package that is tailored for women in the public service, at all levels, who wish to progress their careers. This course could focus on leadership, management, and political engagement. The course should have a focus on career progression in the public service.</p>

<p><b>Women's and Men's Consciousness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many interview informants did not appear to have a fully developed understanding of what gender equality is.</li> <li>• Many do not appear to be knowledgeable about relevant policies and procedures that guide the promotion of gender inclusive practices in the public service.</li> <li>• Women are seen as lacking some key characteristics that make men appear better suited to the workforce.</li> <li>• There are people in the public service that do hold hostile attitudes to women and are reluctant to see women in positions of seniority or power.</li> <li>• Women who successfully navigate the public service must develop a range of skills to manage their emotional responses to discrimination and harassment and they must also develop high-level communication skills in order to assert their power in the face of dominance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>12 month:</b></p> <p>Develop a communications campaign targeting members of the public service that provides education about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What gender inequality looks like in the workplace</li> <li>• What constitutes gender discrimination in the workplace</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for women at all levels of the public service to share experiences about gender inequality and share stories about how they navigate difficult work environments. This could include the establishment of a mentoring program between senior and junior women in the public service.</li> </ul> <p><b>2 years:</b></p> <p>Publically recognise and promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of women in the public service to all members of the public service who have made significant achievements. This should promote women at all levels of the public service.</li> <li>• Examples of women as leaders in the public service, including examples of women leading men.</li> <li>• Stories from men in the public service who have had good female managers.</li> <li>• Stories from women and men who have developed respectful working relationships.</li> <li>• The Office for Gender Equality across all departments.</li> <li>• Stories about how women have progressed their careers in the public service.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issue of whether women experience discrimination in the public service was contested in interviews.</li> <li>• Many interview subjects appear to lack an understanding of what constitutes discrimination. Some appear to sincerely believe that the ABG public service does not engage in discriminatory practice.</li> </ul>	<p><b>12 month:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect in-depth qualitative and quantitative data about women's experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination in the public service and promote the research results to all departments.</li> <li>• Conduct an analysis of informal attitudes to gender and cultural norms and how these present a barrier to implementing gender policies in the public service.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women reported the many informal ways in which they are discriminated against in the public service. This included not having opportunities to talk in meetings, being excluded from opportunities to engage in informal leadership in the workplace, and working in contexts where they are seen as being inferior to men.</li> <li>• Several female respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment in their workplace. When experiencing harassment, the onus is placed on women to 'rise above it'.</li> <li>• Managers who wish to respond to allegations of harassment lack the formal policy context to respond and also appear to lack the skills needed to respond appropriately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify ways in which the proposed actions in this document could enhance the delivery of existing strategies and policies. This could include an analysis of the ways in which actors in the proposed mechanisms: Officer for Gender Equality, the Gender Focal Points, and the Bougainville Women's Federation could be involved in implementing the proposed actions in this report.</li> </ul> <p><b>2-4 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an awareness raising campaign, which draws on the evidence from the research, which seeks to educate public servants about what discrimination and sexual harassment is and how to respond appropriately to it being reported.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Formal laws and policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are two key policies that could inform efforts to promote gender equality in the ABG public service. These are the <i>Strategic plan for women's political leadership in the Autonomous region of Bougainville 2015-2020</i> and the <i>Autonomous region of Bougainville policy for women's empowerment, gender equality, peace and security</i>. Both of these documents have had significant input from UN Women.</li> <li>• There appears to be limited knowledge and understanding among people in the ABG about the policies and strategies that guide the push for gender equality in the public service</li> <li>• There do not appear to be any formal policies for addressing the issues of discrimination and harassment in the workplace</li> <li>• The Office for Gender Equality, a key mechanism for the implementation of policy, is seemingly under resourced and its status as a new department means that it may have limited influence.</li> <li>• The implementation of formal policies will be strengthened if accompanied by concomitant efforts to address informal barriers to gender equality in the public service.</li> </ul>	<p><b>12 month:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct awareness raising campaign of the functions of the Office for Gender Equality and the Gender Focal Points across the public service.</li> </ul> <p><b>2-4 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop policies for the public service that provide a framework for responding to discrimination and sexual harassment. Provide in-depth training to all managers in the public service about how to appropriately respond to sexual harassment and discrimination.</li> </ul>





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