Engaging Boys and Men in Sexual and Reproductive Health

Report of the New Zealand Parliamentarians’ Group on Population and Development
Open Hearing 2015: Engaging Boys and Men in Sexual and Reproductive Health

29 June 2015
The New Zealand Parliamentarians’ Group on Population and Development (NZPPD) would firstly like to extend our appreciation to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Sub-Regional Office of the Pacific (SROP) and Family Planning New Zealand for providing funding to make the Open Hearing on Engaging Boys and Men possible. The Open Hearing was very timely as all nations are now faced with the complex task of developing national agendas to implement the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the international development agenda which will lead the way for the next 15 years.

The NZPPD would also like to express gratitude to Hon. Maere Tekanene (Kiribati Minister of Education), Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata’afa (Samoa Minister of Justice and Courts Administration), Hon. Dr. Saia Piukala (Tonga Minister for Health), Dr. Puakena Boreham (Tuvalu MP) and Gov. Julie Soso (Papua New Guinea MP) for attending the Open Hearing and providing valuable input and commitment towards sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the region and in your own countries.

Thank you also to the Pacific, Global and New Zealand organisations and SRHR-advocates who took time to travel to Wellington to share your knowledge and expertise on how to best engage boys and men in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Without your well-researched presentations, the Open Hearing would not have been possible.

Finally, the NZPPD would like to thank all the organisations who made submissions to the Open Hearing. Your input has greatly contributed to our knowledge on SRHR for boys and men, and as such, added invaluable information to this report.

Yours sincerely,

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Wellington, New Zealand
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Acronyms/initialisms

AFPPD  Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development
AIDS  Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CBD  Community Based Distributors
CEDAW  Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEDRD  Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CPD  Commission on Population and Development
CRC  Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD  Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSE  Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO  Civil Society Organisation
CSW  Commission on the Status of Women
ESCAP  Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FLE  Family Life Education
FSM  Federated States of Micronesia
FWRM  Fiji Women’s Rights Movement
GBV  Gender Based Violence
GGGI  Global Gender Gap Index
HIV  Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICCRPR  International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD  International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR  International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICPD  International Conference on Population and Development
IPPF  International Planned Parenthood Federation
KFHA  Kiribati Family Health Association
LGBTQI  Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning) and Intersex
MA  Member Association (of the IPPF)
MDGs  Millennium Development Goals
MFAT  New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MMC  Medical Male Circumcision
MOH  Ministry of Health
MP  Member of Parliament
MSI  Marie Stopes International
MSPNG  Marie Stopes Papua New Guinea
MSM  Men who have Sex with Men
NGO  Non-Governmental Organisation
NSV  Non-Scalpel Vasectomy
NZ  New Zealand
NZPPD  New Zealand Parliamentarians’ Group on Population and Development
ODA  Official Development Assistance
PD  Population and Development
PITs  Pacific Island Countries and Territories
PIFS  Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PNG  Papua New Guinea
PoA  Programme of Action
RH  Reproductive Health
S.A.M.O.A.  Accelerated Modalities of Action
SDGs  Sustainable Development Goals
SPC  Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SRH  Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR  Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STI  Sexually Transmissible Infection
TFHA  Tonga Family Health Association
TG  Transgender
TWT  Te Whāriki Takapou (formerly Te Puāwai Tapu)
UDHR  Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN  United Nations
UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund
US  United States
PSRO  Pacific Sub-Regional Office
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO  World Health Organisation
Executive summary

In the Pacific, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) have traditionally been seen as the domain and responsibility of women. In the last two decades however, there has been increasing recognition, both internationally and in the Pacific, that engaging boys and men in sexual and reproductive health is central to improving the health and rights of all people and building more equitable societies.

Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) face considerable sexual and reproductive health and rights challenges, including: high rates of sexually transmissible infections (STIs); high rates of unintended and youth pregnancy; and low contraceptive prevalence. Such challenges are also taking place in the context of: high rates of violence against women; the lowest levels of female political participation worldwide; strong religious influences; increasing pressures on the environment and natural resources; large youth cohorts entering reproductive age; and high rates of urbanisation and population growth.

In recognition of these challenges, the New Zealand Parliamentarians’ Group on Population and Development (NZPPD) held an Open Hearing on ‘Engaging Boys and Men in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Pacific Island countries and territories’. The Open Hearing provided an important opportunity for Pacific and New Zealand parliamentarians across the political spectrum to develop their understanding on population and development issues through submissions from experts in the field. Following the day-long Open Hearing, a roundtable meeting was hosted by NZPPD. This report is principally based on both the written and oral submissions, and on the subsequent parliamentarian roundtable discussion.

The submissions to the Open Hearing cover a broad variety of topics. Amongst these submissions, three key themes are apparent. The first is the importance of engaging men and young men. Submitters describe the positive impacts of engaging boys and men in sexual and reproductive health through reviews of the literature and regional case studies. The second theme is barriers to engagement of boys and men. Submitters discuss barriers that organisations, individuals, or men themselves, face in accessing SRHR services in the Pacific. Finally, submitters provide descriptions of successful approaches to strengthen engagement with boys and men, including: creating accessible health services, reviewing government policies, enabling supportive environments, strengthening community action and implementing comprehensive sexuality education.

Fourteen key recommendations for future action were developed by the Parliamentarians present at the Open Hearing and roundtable meeting:
1. Form a Pacific Regional Parliamentary Group on Population and Development
2. Review current key documents and ensure that national policies are conducive to an increased uptake of vasectomies
3. Develop, where necessary, a national policy framework that supports the sustainability of a comprehensive sexuality education/family life education curriculum throughout the formal education system
4. Develop antenatal programmes for expectant fathers that are father-friendly and that empower men with the knowledge and skills

Written submissions

Burnet Institute Centre for International Health x 2 submissions, Australia
David Kakiakia, Kiribati
Family Planning, New Zealand
Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM), Fiji
International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Global
Joint Submission Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Region
Kiribati Family Health Association (KFHA), Kiribati
Marie Stopes Papua New Guinea (MSPNG), Papua New Guinea
MenEngage, US/Chile
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) Briefing, New Zealand
Shoveler and Knight, University of British Columbia, Canada
Te Whāriki Takapou (formerly Te Puāwai Tapu), New Zealand
Tonga Family Health Association (TFHA), Tonga
United Nation’s Population Fund- Pacific Sub-Regional Office (UNFPA-PSRO), Fiji
Village Collective, New Zealand

Oral submissions

Alison Green, Chief Executive, and Tawhanga Nopera, Te Whāriki Takapou
David Kakiakia, Kiribati Youth Representative
Dr Laurent Zessler, Director and Representative, UNFPA PSRO
Dr Edith Digwaleu-Kariko, Service Delivery Director, MSPNG
Frances Bird, Director Health Promotion, Family Planning New Zealand
Jessica Davis, Women’s and Children’s Health Specialist, Burnet Institute
Katherine Mafi, Programme Manager, TFHA
Lisa Davidson, International Health and Development Specialist, Burnet Institute
Stuart Calman, Acting Director of the Sustainable Economic Development Division, MFAT
Tamea Moannata, Project Coordinator, KFHA
Tewodros Melesse, Director-General, IPPF
needed to make informed decisions about SRH and healthy relationships

5. Fund and support general health care providers to develop innovative methods of delivering SRHR information to boys and men

6. Strengthen and expand general health care services that target the needs of boys and men of marginalised groups

7. Incorporate HIV/AIDS services (testing, treatment and counselling) into general SRHR programmes to reverse the stigma associated with separate HIV/AIDS services

8. Recruit and train health workers in best practice SRHR service delivery. This training should include interpersonal skills training to further develop confidence to deliver services aimed at boys and men, including key groups such as LGBQTI communities. Addressing personal and professional barriers to working with these key groups must be part of skills training

9. Support teachers with further training that addresses current barriers to openly discussing SRHR so they are able to confidently deliver CSE/FLE in school settings

10. Identify different responsibility-areas, gaps and strengths for governments and CSOs, ensuring transparent responses

11. Strengthen the relationship between national parliamentary groups on population and development (or other parliamentary groups interested in SRHR issues) and SRHR CSO providers

12. Create positive resources about the important role male family members play in the SRHR of a community

13. Support an increase in community-based SRHR education programmes that are delivered by trained facilitators, i.e. sports groups, religious groups, male-to-male peers etc

14. Engage and train male SRHR ‘champions’. These men can assist in demystifying myths associated with male-specific reproductive services and encourage other men to take responsibility for the development of healthy families.

On 29 June, 2015, the New Zealand Parliamentarians’ Group on Population and Development (NZPPD) held an Open Hearing on “Engaging Boys and Men in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs)”. Modelled like a select committee meeting with public submissions orally presented to parliamentarians and observers, the Open Hearing provided an important opportunity for Pacific and New Zealand parliamentarians across the political spectrum to develop their understanding on population and development issues through submissions from experts in the field.

The goal of the Open Hearing was to increase understanding of, and support for, investment in SRHR in the Pacific. As this report will make clear, boys and men have specific SRHR needs and also play a pivotal role on the road to achieving universal access to SRH. As such, the inclusion of boys and men in SRHR activities has implications for the SRHR of all people.

Expert organisations and individuals working in the field of SRHR in the Pacific were invited to make written submissions to NZPPD. Following interest from NZPPD members a small number of New Zealand organisations were also invited to submit on their work. A total of 11 submissions were selected to present oral submissions on the day of the Open Hearing, three of which were from New Zealand and eight from the wider Pacific.

The success of previous Open Hearings has rested with substantial Pacific participation, both from parliamentarians and presenters. As such, NZPPD invited five Pacific parliamentarians to join their New Zealand counterparts for two days of deliberation. The Pacific parliamentarians who participated were:

- Dr. Puakena Boreham, Member of Parliament, Tuvalu
- Governor Julie Soso, Member of Parliament, Papua New Guinea
- Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata’afa, Minister of Justice and Courts Administration, Samoa
- Hon. Dr. Saia Piukala, Minister for Health, Tonga
- Hon. Maere Tekanene, Minister for Education, Kiribati.

Following the day-long Open Hearing, a roundtable meeting was hosted by NZPPD. At this meeting, the Pacific parliamentarians together with their New Zealand colleagues discussed key learnings from the Open Hearing and developed key recommendations. A contemporaneous civil society organisation (CSO) side event was held where oral presenters from the Open Hearing discussed the key themes and developed shadow recommendations. This report is based on both the written and oral submissions, and on the subsequent parliamentarian roundtable discussion. The discussion and shadow recommendations from the CSO side event provide additional depth to the themes discussed in this report.
Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) are home to more than 7 million people, who speak more than 800 indigenous languages, and live across more than 25,000 islands. With this diversity comes a wide range of SRHR challenges, which are experienced differently by different individuals, countries and territories. Many PICTs face high rates of sexually transmissible infections (STIs), high rates of unintended and youth pregnancy, low contraceptive prevalence, and large youth population cohorts entering reproductive age and putting pressure on already stretched SRH care services.1

Such challenges are also taking place in the context of high rates of violence against women, the lowest levels of female political participation worldwide, strong religious influences, increasing pressures on the environment and natural resources, and in some countries, high rates of urbanisation and population growth.

Prevalence of sexually transmissible infections in PICTs is very high.2 Limited STI testing and surveillance capacity however means exact incidence is often not realised.4 A series of Second Generation Surveillance surveys (SGS) carried out in six Pacific Island Countries (PICs) between 2004 and 2005, found that nearly 20% of all pregnant women surveyed had chlamydia and in Samoa the rates were higher than 40%, among the highest in the world. In the Solomon Islands nearly 15% of pregnant women surveyed had syphilis, and nearly 5% in Tonga had gonorrhoea.3 This high incidence of STIs in the Pacific region poses significant health risks and can lead to infertility and life-threatening pregnancy and neonatal complications. Further, HIV was first reported in the Pacific in 1984 and has since spread to nearly every PICT. While HIV rates are low regionally, PNG in particular has high prevalence rate of 0.7%.6 Associated risk factors in many countries, such as risky sexual behaviour, small mobile populations, and stigmatisation of men who have sex with men, continues to heighten people’s risk of contracting HIV/6

While access to family planning has increased in the region in recent years, in most Pacific countries the prevalence of contraception is still very low.1 Unmet need for contraception in the Pacific is among the highest in the world.3 Consequently, throughout the Pacific a significant proportion of pregnancies are unintended, with unplanned or mistimed pregnancies in some countries accounting for over half of all births.10 Adolescent fertility rates in the Marshall Islands and Papua New Guinea are comparable to those in sub-Saharan Africa.11

While the region has experienced a gradual decline in fertility, total fertility rates remain generally high with Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tokelau and the Marshall Islands having total fertility rates between 4 and 5.12 High fertility and rapid population growth, coupled with a large and expanding youth population, increasing urbanisation and overcrowding, present considerable challenges for small island states.13

The high rates of unintended pregnancies and poor sexual and reproductive health in many PICTs present a high risk to mothers and children. Across the Pacific, approximately five women die each day due to complications from pregnancy and childbirth.14 While in countries such as Samoa and the Cook Islands, maternal mortality rates are low, in others such as Solomon Islands and Kiribati, the rates are very high. Similarly, rates of infant mortality (IMR) are extremely high in several PICTs, with nearly 1 death for every 20 live births.

The prevalence of gender-based violence is also very high in many PICTs. Typical lifetime physical and sexual violence incidence against Pacific women falls between 60% and 80%. Reported lifetime physical or sexual violence by partners against women is over 60% in several countries, including Kiribati, Fiji and the Solomon Islands and sexual violence by non-partners is over 30% in Vanuatu.15 These high rates have severe impacts on the well-being of women and affects women’s physical, mental and sexual and reproductive health. Health consequences of GBV can persist long after the violence has stopped. The more severe the level of violence, the greater the impact will be on women’s health. The World Bank estimates that rape and domestic violence account for 5% of the healthy life years of life lost to women of reproductive age in developing countries.16 Globally, the number of disability-adjusted life years (DALY) lost by women is estimated at 9.5 million years, comparable to HIV, cardiovascular diseases or cancer.17

Given these challenges, the Pacific has also been identified as the second least likely region in the world to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).18 In particular, PICTs are making slow progress to achieving Target 5.6, universal access to reproductive health, with only Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue and Palau on track to achieve this by the end of 2015.19

Despite these challenges, there has been considerable progress in the Pacific.20 The number of countries with national population policies is increasing and SRH programmes...
have received considerable attention.\textsuperscript{21} HIV prevalence has fallen in PNG, the most affected PICT.\textsuperscript{21} Access to family planning has increased, and contraceptive prevalence has risen across the Pacific. Maternal and infant mortality rates have fallen in many places over the last decade.\textsuperscript{22} However, for sexual and reproductive health to be attained and maintained in PICTs much more needs to be done. Working towards gender equality by empowering women and engaging men is fundamental to achieving a host of developmental outcomes.\textsuperscript{23} Men and boys’ positive relationships with women and girls have been shown to lead to improved SRH outcomes.\textsuperscript{25} Sexual and reproductive health and rights-related outcomes in particular, can be improved for men and women through positive engagement from men.\textsuperscript{26}

The question is not whether to involve men in SRHR initiatives, but how.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are health and human rights applied to sexuality and reproduction. It is a combination of four fields: sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health and reproductive rights. In the concept of SRHR, these four fields are treated as distinct but inherently intertwined.

Sexual health and reproductive health both refer to a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity, in relation to sexuality\textsuperscript{27} and in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes\textsuperscript{28} respectively.

Sexual health requires a “positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”\textsuperscript{29} Similarly, reproductive health requires “that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.”\textsuperscript{30} Together these two concepts are referred to as sexual and reproductive health (SRH). However, for both sexual health and reproductive health to be achieved and maintained, both sexual rights and reproductive rights of all persons must be realised and fulfilled.\textsuperscript{31}

Reproductive rights have been on the human rights agenda for over 20 years. These rights rest on the recognition that all couples and individuals must be able to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and must have the information and means to do so. They also have the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. Reproductive rights also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence as expressed in human rights documents.\textsuperscript{32}

While reproductive rights have gained widespread recognition, sexual rights remain more contested. While grounded in core international human rights,\textsuperscript{33} sexual rights include the right to freedom from all forms of discrimination based on sex, sexuality or gender. In practice this means that outdated legislation on homosexuality and abortion laws ought to be reviewed. Many countries, globally and in the Pacific, are not yet willing to do so.

\textsuperscript{21} SPC RRRT, Awareness, Analysis and Action
\textsuperscript{24} UNFPA, Engaging Men and Boys: A Brief Summary of UNFPA Experience and Lessons Learned (New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2013)
\textsuperscript{25} UNFPA, Engaging Men and Boys
\textsuperscript{26} UNFPA, Engaging Men and Boys
\textsuperscript{28} United Nations, Programme of Action
\textsuperscript{29} “Defining Sexual and Reproductive Health,” World Health Organization
\textsuperscript{30} United Nations, Programme of Action
\textsuperscript{31} United Nations, Programme of Action
\textsuperscript{32} United Nations, Programme of Action
\textsuperscript{33} IPPF, Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration (London, The International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2008)
The submissions presented both orally and in writing to the Open Hearing covered a broad variety of topics. Amongst these submissions however, three key themes are apparent. The first theme is the importance of engaging men and young men. Submissions that dealt with this theme primarily describe the importance and impacts of engaging boys and men in sexual and reproductive health through reviews of the literature and regional case studies. The second is barriers to engagement of boys and men. Several submitters discuss barriers to engaging boys and men that they, other organisations, or men themselves face in accessing SRHR in the Pacific. Barriers described range from socio-cultural to political. The third theme apparent in submissions is the description of successful approaches to strengthening engagement with men and young men. Submissions describe numerous successful approaches to engaging boys and men, including; creating accessible health services, reviewing government policies, enabling supportive environments, strengthening community action and developing personal skills. These three themes are elaborated below.

The importance of engaging boys and men

Men are husbands, partners, fathers, brothers and sons, and their lives are intertwined with those of women, children and other men. Across the world, including the Pacific, rigid gender norms and harmful perceptions of what it means to be a man have far-reaching consequences on health and well-being. Promoting gender equality requires working with all gender identities.24 Focusing on boys and men in SRHR discussions, policies and activities is one way that governments, CSOs, and community groups can affect change.

Men as clients25 – Men have unique sexual and reproductive health needs which change over the course of their lives as their sexual behaviours change.26 Traditionally, the SRH needs of men, beyond their roles as women’s partners, have received little attention. However, while relatively few men require medical intervention per se, aside from HIV and STI screening and treatment, teens and young men do consistently require comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). This enables them to make informed decisions, behave responsibly and to learn how to communicate effectively with their partners.27 Although the need for CSE is not unique to males alone, boys and men need to understand the function and consequence of power inequalities; and learn how to engage in ways that are sexually respectful not only to their partners but also to themselves.28,29 Innovative methods of SRHR delivery such as interactive games and targeted films can address some of the unique needs noted for boys and men.30,31 As young men age, their need for medical reproductive health care generally increases and can include: treatment for male infertility, erectile dysfunction, vasectomy, diagnosis and treatment of prostate and testicular cancers.32 Other male-specific sexual and reproductive health needs include: medical male circumcision (MMC) and the treatment of male-specific symptoms of STIs and HIV.33

Men as partners34 – Men have a shared responsibility for decisions around contraception, preventing HIV or STIs, and as parents and caregivers. They also have a supportive and enabling role to play during pregnancy and childbirth or if their partner needs to access a safe abortion service. SRHR programmes for boys and men have been shown to effectively reduce men’s risk-taking activities, prevent unwanted pregnancies, reduce the incidence of STIs, decrease the burden placed on women to manage SRH, reduce violence and tackle gender inequalities.35

Men as key agents of change36 – Men play a key role in bringing about gender equality since men often exercise preponderant power in nearly every sphere of life, ranging from personal and relationship decisions to the government policy and programme decisions.37 This includes the promotion of gender equitable fatherhood, advocacy against discriminatory laws and policies, changing attitudes and behaviours that are a cause and consequence of sexual and gender-based violence and women’s inequality.

Gender norms, which are largely determined by cultural norms and expectations, have a fundamental bearing on SRH practices.38 Gender equality can only be achieved when rigid norms are challenged as these norms perpetuate gender inequality and undermine SRHR for all.39 Conversely, reproductive health initiatives that engage boys and men as agents of positive change can help to challenge dominant gender norms and the SRHR context for all. As such, men play a fundamental role in not only supporting their own, but also women’s reproductive health. If societal norms that inhibit women’s reproductive health and rights are challenged at all levels of society, gender equality is subsequently strengthened.40
Barriers to engaging boys and men

Despite the widely documented benefits of including boys and men in SRHR activities, submissions also highlighted current barriers to engagement in the Pacific region. The barriers raised by the submissions were largely from the experiences of the expert organisations and individuals. While the list below is not exhaustive, nor representative of any one country, it presents a picture of common challenges around engaging boys and men in the Pacific.

High-level barriers
- Laws that restrict sexual and reproductive rights, for example, the criminalisation of homosexuality and conservative abortion laws.
- Policy restrictions that prevent a wide range of health workers from providing services such as vasectomies.
- Policies that require a husband’s authorisation for a wife to receive health care.

Interpersonal barriers
- Reluctance to access SRH care due to embarrassment. Extends to accessing reproductive services: for example, feeling shame, shy, embarrassed and ‘out of place’ at antenatal education settings.
- Conservative community and family settings. For example, young men often deny being sexually active due to fear of family and community response.
- Religious objections from individuals and their communities. Many PICTs are very religious and sexual and reproductive health issues are often challenging to discuss and address.

Gender barriers
- Traditional gender roles. Looking after families’ reproductive needs has traditionally been the role of women.
- Men as perpetrators of gender-based violence. Research shows prevalence rates for gender-based violence in the PICTs are extremely high, with approximately 60-77% of Pacific Island women aged 15-49 years old experiencing physical or sexual violence over the course of their lifetime.

Service barriers
- Poor geographic access to sexual and reproductive health services in much of the Pacific. Challenges with remote populations make service delivery difficult.
- Limited contraception options for men, including low condom use. Poor care-seeking behaviours and lack of access to appropriate services. SRHR services are often dominated by female staff which discourages men.
- Most SRH services are primarily focused on women.
- Reluctance among young men to use condoms due to preference for skin contact.

Sexuality education
- A lack of formal and informal sexuality education. While comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is in its infancy in several Pacific countries, many countries are yet to develop a national policy framework to ensure its sustainability.
- Peer education programmes have been reported to be an effective way to reach young people, including out of school adolescent and young men. However, a tough funding climate restricts these programmes.

How to strengthen boys’ and men’s engagement in SRHR activities?

The third theme present in the submissions was around successful approaches to address boys’ and men’s engagement in SRHR. It is important to note that, while population numbers are relatively small within the 22 PICTs, people are dispersed over vast geographical areas. These different areas have varied social, economic, cultural, political and geographical contexts, including a varied commitment to SRHR. Any discussion concerning the people of PICTs needs to take into account the diversity of peoples, including within countries. Language, customary and gendered expectations are only some of the ways in which differences are noted. The report should not be considered an exhaustive examination of how to strengthen boys’ and men’s engagement in SRHR activities in the Pacific. Rather it is based on key messages from the oral and written submissions received by the NZPPD.

Improve health services

A common viewpoint to most submissions was that health services need to improve or adapt in order to be acceptable and accessible to the needs of men in the Pacific. This improvement needs to be from across the SRHR sector, from clinics to schools. Both government and non-government health services need to further develop programmes that engage men in SRHR. Government ministries have multiple responsibilities, including ensuring financial commitment to sexual and reproductive

References
- Burnet Institute Submission
- UNFPA Submission
- Burnet Institute Submission
- SPC and PIFS Joint Submission
- IPPF Submission
- Burnet Institute Submission
- SPC and PIFS Joint Submission
- Report
- Note that high population densities are observed in some areas such as Eibay, Marshall Islands, South Tarawa, Kiribati and Funafuti, Tuvalu.
services in health budgets that ensures well-resourced hospitals and health centres. NGOs and other community groups also play an important role in providing targeted and effective programmes, often with little support/input from national governments and often with unique access to remote and rural areas. Sexual and reproductive health services also need to adapt to the interests of boys and men. Services that cater to the needs and interest of men are limited in many parts of the Pacific. In PNG, young men report that sex education programmes within both the formal and informal education system are too disease-focused and often didactic. Education and health promotion programmes also need to be targeted to men. Despite more than a decade of global awareness-raising of HIV, many boys and men still have limited knowledge of the modes of STI transmissions. Surveys across the Pacific region find low rates of condom use, a high number of people with multiple sexual partners, and the common occurrence of commercial sex activities. While HIV testing, treatment and counselling services are common throughout the Pacific, a recent study of young PNG men found that current approaches are too focused on disease and that there is little information available about other methods of contraception but condoms.

Similarly, in New Zealand, research suggests that Māori boys and men who are sexually attracted to other men are also at risk of late testing and treatment for STIs, including testing and treatment for HIV, because of the stigma and discrimination linked to homophobia and HIV-testing. While HIV/AIDS services continue to be offered by many general SRHR service providers, additional efforts should be made to reduce the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS testing by further incorporating these services into mainstream SRH providers.

Innovative programmes need to be developed that engage men in SRHR in non-traditional situations. The limited data that exists on men’s engagement in antenatal education programmes in the Pacific suggests that most expectant fathers do not attend any form of antenatal education. Yet, engaging expectant fathers is a low-cost strategy globally that has been shown to promote couple communication, increase contraceptive uptake and family planning, positively influence care-seeking behaviours for pregnancy and birth, and more. Research shows that pregnancy and the birth of a child are significant events for both men and women and expectant fathers are likely to be more open to new information during this time. Additional benefits of antenatal education programmes for expectant fathers includes their preventative approach and that they can be delivered in areas with limited resources.

Programmes should also recognise the diversity of the male population and seek to engage marginalised groups as well as the mainstream. Recognising the diversity of males in SRHR programmes improve health outcomes and is a way to enhance gender equity. By engaging boys and men, service providers must recognise that the category of ‘males’ is not a homogenous group and that any approach that stresses men’s involvement needs to acknowledge both the commonalities and diversities of their lives. An important component is to address the SRHR needs of marginalised groups of men; for example men who have sex with men (MSM), homosexual men, male sex workers and prisoners. The needs of marginalised groups are often poorly understood and receive considerably less attention than the needs of mainstream groups such as heterosexual men and/or married men. To strengthen SRHR health services and programmes, the needs of these marginalised key groups must be incorporated into programmes and services. Allocating targeted resources, as well as equipping staff of SRHR and other health-oriented organisations with the skills to address the needs of these groups of men will support improved health outcomes for all.

Finally, education and health programmes should seek to address concerns, knowledge gaps and misinformation among men. In 2015 Marie Stopes Papua New Guinea (MSPNG) conducted a qualitative study into vasectomy provision which revealed that the primary barriers to men seeking...
Implement comprehensive sexuality education

Universal and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is essential for the achievement of SRHR. The purpose of CSE is to give children and young people information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships and to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive health and well-being. For young men this means that they are empowered to share responsibility for family planning and the health and happiness of themselves and of their partners. Key to this is gender-equality training, counselling, and running workshops that address GBV and non-violent ways of relating with partners.

In order for CSE (or family life education [FLE] as it is often called in the Pacific) to be effective and sustainable, it must be supported by a national policy framework. In 2013, a study of eight Pacific Islands (Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) showed that all were at some stage of implementing a CSE curriculum into schools, yet only Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu have a national policy framework to support CSE/FLE, with Nauru and Tuvalu in the process of developing policies. Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Tonga have no national policy guiding CSE implementation at time of writing. Traditionally, most sexuality education in the Pacific has been taught from a conservative and often religious perspective where abstinence has been the main message. However, it is crucial that national policies meet internationally agreed standards which include scientifically accurate, curriculum-based information about human development, anatomy and pregnancy. It should also include information about contraceptives, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Comprehensive sexuality education further needs to encourage confidence and effective communication skills and address the social issues surrounding sexuality and reproduction, including cultural norms, family life and interpersonal relationships.

Enabling boys and men to gain the knowledge and skills to improve their own SRH is critical for the overall improvement of SRH and also for challenging the idea that SRH is solely the responsibility of women. By increasing targeted options and information available, men are likely to feel more in control of their own health and environment.

To support young men to develop their interest and understanding of SRHR, including gender equality, teachers need to be supported to deliver the right messages. Sexuality education, whether supported by national overarching policies or not, remains highly awkward and contested by many teachers (and their networks). To best support teachers to feel confident in delivering CSE/FLE education, current barriers to effectively discussing SRHR (including personal values), must be included. Raising awareness amongst community members on the positive effects of CSE/FLE, as well as debunking common misconception with regards to CSE/FLE, can also help teachers feel supported.

It is not only school teachers that benefit from further and ongoing support to confidently deliver SRHR programmes. Health workers, both clinical and non-clinical staff and volunteers, should be supported in developing their personal skills when working with boys and men. Interpersonal skills training can further develop confidence, teach problem solving tools and communication skills while also addressing values and attitudes in relation to gender roles and sexualities. Addressing personal and professional barriers to working with marginalised key groups such as LGBTIQ communities should also be included.

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Story of Success

Men in a PNG study cited their spouse’s health and well-being, and joint decision-making, as primary factors for wanting to take contraceptive-responsibility. These factors point towards a willingness among PNG men to share the family planning “burden” and the importance of providing men with contraceptive options.

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71 IPPF Submission
72 MSPNG Submission
73 Burnet Institute Submission
75 IPPF Submission
76 SPC and PIFS Joint Submission
77 ARROW, Pacific Young People’s Sexual Reproductive Health And Rights Facilitated (Kuala Lumpur: Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women, 2014)
79 Burnet Institute Submission
80 IPPF Submission
81 UNFPA Submission
82 Family Planning Submission
Support informal education programmes

While several Pacific countries are in the process of implementing CSE/FLE, many young people do not attend formal education. Peer and informal CSE/FLE education can therefore play a supportive, yet important, role to the education system within PICTs. While universal access to CSE/FLE is an important goal in the Pacific not all young people attend formal schooling or feel equipped with comprehensive SRH knowledge. Community-based SRHR education programmes should therefore be available as an addition to formal CSE.

Peer education programmes aimed at engaging young men should be driven by trained male facilitators. Young men generally respond well to information passed on by their peers and should be delivered as part of a programme and not on an ad hoc basis. ‘Edutainment’ programmes (education delivered in an entertainment format) is one of several effective strategies to engage young men.63 Programmes and facilitators should be targeting sports groups and other places where men get together and where they will feel safe to explore sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

UNFPA reports similar success for an edutainment project for adolescents and youth in Vanuatu in 2014. The programme allowed young boys to bring together their passion for music to create music with meaningful SRH messages and messages of youth empowerment.64

Finally, male ‘champions’, or SRHR role-models, should be utilised as agents of change.65 Men with personal experience of a particular SRHR issue, such as the process and outcome of having a vasectomy, are in a unique position to dispel myths and rumours associated with the issue.66 Utilising male champions is a cost-effective approach that can be used in ways that suit the needs of the community. Information campaigns such as promotional or educational services should use messages that respond to the primary concerns of men, which might include issues such as land and the economic benefits of smaller family size.67

Enable supportive environments

Health cannot be separated from other goals of any society. Creating a supportive social, cultural and physical environment that make positive SRHR choices easy, requires input from all levels of society. For example, parents need to be educated so they can support their children while the wider community, government and media can address social norms and create supportive environments that help improve the SRH of all.68 The health needs of people will also vary from community to community, and within communities themselves. As such, programmes need to be able to address diverse needs and be driven by local people who are best equipped to understand their environmental context. A supportive environment should also offer people protection from the factors that can threaten good health.69

Communities play a central role for achieving results. What constitutes effective community action varies depending on the unique environment; however, partnership, participation and engagement are key factors to achieving successful outcomes.70 Communities have the ability to be innovative in their approaches to change in ways that national responses often cannot. Therefore the outcome of innovation and creativity will ‘look’ different from community to community. This ought to be considered a strength.

The realisation of improved SRHR commitment and investment also requires strong political leadership. Parliamentarians have an important role to play in creating SRHR-supportive policy and to reform restrictive legislation. Policies aid the
Recommendations

Following the day long Open Hearing, participating Pacific parliamentarians and NZPPD members participated in a roundtable meeting where key messages from the submissions were discussed and framed into recommendations.

It is not recommended to ‘cherry pick’ between the recommendations in this report as this would devalue the holistic framework within which the recommendations have been developed. NZPPD stresses the value of engaging entire community structures; from high level public policy to further development of personal skills, while ensuring that any call for change is locally driven. The Open Hearing identified several ways to strengthen boys’ and men’s involvement in broader SRHR activities. All areas identified here were recognised as important by the five countries with parliamentary representation at the Open Hearing: Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tonga and Samoa.

The overarching recommendation which all parliamentarians agreed would advance the development of SRHR in the Region is the formation of a Pacific Region Parliamentary Group on Population and Development. At present, different PICTs report varied high-level engagement on population and development. For example, Tonga has recently established a Select Committee on population and development (for an eventual upgrade to a standing committee), while several other PICTs are yet to form parliamentary groups. Regionally, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) promotes parliamentarians’ involvement in addressing and solving population and development (PD) issues in the Asia and Pacific region. The formation of a Pacific region-specific parliamentary group would complement the work of AFPPD and add value and consistency to high-level PD issues in the Pacific.

Parliamentarians attending the roundtable discussion also highlighted the importance of establishing or maintaining strong relationships with health care providers tasked with the implementation of SRHR programmes (both CSOs and state-owned service providers). That parliamentary decisions need to be anchored to SRHR issues as experienced by those working ‘on the ground’.

Prioritisation of funding which in turn guides the focus of SRH activities.

Discussion around policy review at the Open Hearing largely centred on removing policy barriers to vasectomy. Vasectomy is one of the safest and most effective permanent contraceptive methods available. Still, vasectomy is a highly under-utilised method globally with only 3% of couples worldwide using vasectomy as their primary contraceptive method. To improve the uptake of non-scalpel vasectomy (NSV) national health policy should reconsider downgrading the cadre of health professional required to perform NSV, from clinicians to nurses. The World Health Organization suggests this may be an option in some countries, if rigorous research is undertaken to prove safety. For several Pacific nations, this would mean that a wider range of health professionals would be able to perform vasectomies which would free up clinicians’ time and also minimise the cost of health care services. Changing national policy would have the added benefit of challenging the idea that SRH is primarily a woman’s responsibility and help close the gap of the 650,000 women in the Pacific who report an unmet need for family planning.

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### Overarching recommendation

1. Form a Pacific Regional Parliamentary Group on Population and Development.

**Objectives:** Promote the population and development interests of Pacific Island Countries and Territories by focusing on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Purpose of group**

- Strengthen the prioritisation of population and development (PD) issues nationally
- Allow for continuous and targeted SRHR advocacy nationally and regionally
- Advocate for the nationalisation of the SRHR targets of the SDGs
- Advocate for the national implementation of ICPD commitments
- Provide regionally coordinated responses to SRHR challenges in the Pacific
- Strengthen the Pacific voice in the region and globally on issues concerning SRHR

**Membership criteria**

- Representatives from PICTs Parliamentary Groups on Population and Development
- PICTs Ministers and Parliamentarians with a proven interest in SRHR issues
- Preference to be given to MPs and Ministers who attended the 2015 Open Hearing who have endorsed these recommendations

**Secretariat**

- UNFPA Sub-Regional Office of the Pacific

**Supporting role**

- NZPPD (New Zealand)
- PGPD (Australia)

### Additional recommendations

#### Policy review

2. Review current key documents and ensure that national policies are conducive to an increased uptake of vasectomies. It is recommended that a wide range of health professionals should be permitted to perform non-scalpel vasectomies in accordance with WHO standards and recommendations.

3. Develop, where necessary, a national policy framework that supports the sustainability of a comprehensive sexuality education/family life education curriculum throughout the formal education system.

### Improved health services

4. Develop antenatal programmes for expectant fathers that are father-friendly and that empowers men with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about SRH, healthy relationships and male involvement in family life.

5. Fund and support general health care providers to develop innovative methods of delivering SRHR information to boys and men. For example, interactive and positively framed games, or edutainment programmes, delivered by men for men.

6. Strengthen and expand general health care services that target the needs of boys and men of marginalised groups.

7. Incorporate HIV/AIDS services (testing, treatment and counselling) into general SRHR programmes to reverse the stigma associated with separate HIV/AIDS services.

### Capacity development

8. Recruit and train health workers in best practice SRHR service delivery. This training should include inter-personal skills training to further develop confidence to deliver services aimed at boys and men, including key groups such as LGBQTI communities. Addressing personal and professional barriers to working with these key groups must be part of skills training.

9. Support teachers with further training that addresses current barriers to openly discuss SRHR so they are able to confidently deliver CSE/FLE in school settings.

### Supportive environment

10. Identify different responsibility-areas, gaps and strengths for Governments and CSOs, ensuring transparent responses.

11. Strengthen the relationship between national parliamentary groups on population and development (or other parliamentary groups interested in SRHR issues) and SRHR CSO providers (in particular IPPF MAs).

12. Create positive resources about the important role male family members play in communities SRHR. Creating targeted and positive resources that can be distributed in local language throughout communities and via media. For example, positively framed antenatal booklets.

### Community action

13. Support an increase in community-based SRHR education programmes that are delivered by trained facilitators, i.e. sports groups, religious groups, male-to-male peers etc.

14. Engage and train male SRHR ‘champions’. These men can assist in demystifying myths associated with male-specific reproductive services and encourage other men to take responsibility for the development of healthy families.