

## Balance of Power – Investment Brief

### Introduction

The *Balance of Power* (BOP) investment is a **new and innovative** approach to address the complex issue of **women in leadership in the Pacific**, with a specific focus on increasing women's participation and voice in **political processes**. It is an initiative of Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*), a 10 year commitment by the Australian Government aiming to enable women and men in the Pacific to improve the political, social and economic opportunities for women and girls. The BOP design is based on the significant research, advocacy and development practice that has occurred over recent decades in the area of women's leadership in the Pacific, building on lessons learned and analysis of **what works and what doesn't** in achieving greater representation by women. Targeted consultation across the Pacific has also been conducted to further inform the design. The initiative is intended to be delivered intensively in three countries in the Pacific – starting with **Vanuatu and Tonga** - with some elements implemented regionally. The time-frame for this initial phase is 2019 to 2024.

### BOP Conceptual Approach

BOP recognises that it is the deeply entrenched **norms, attitudes and perceptions** around concepts of leadership and politics that are the primary barrier to women's participation and voice. However, changing these will only be possible if **driven by local actors** who can sensitively navigate the local socio-political economy. Central to the approach of BOP will therefore be its intent to 'work with the grain' of the local context, and function as a **convener** of multiple and diverse stakeholders, able to facilitate a broad-based, locally-led coalition for positive social change. This will include ensuring all activities are **framed to respond to the values and drivers** of the culture and context, and maximising engagement that goes beyond the 'usual suspects' of conventional donor-supported efforts in this area. This includes recognising the **critical role of men** and involving important norm influencing agents in the community, including leaders of faith-based organisations and of traditional governance structures (e.g. chiefs, nobles). BOP will also ensure that it **builds upon existing strengths** and entry points in shifting attitudes and practice around the roles of women and men in leadership, particularly in the political sphere.

### BOP Aims

The long-term goal of BOP is that *'women are increasingly culturally, socially and politically accepted, and act, as legitimate political leaders and decision makers across the Pacific region'*.

BOP acknowledges that Pacific women already lead in a range of spaces, including as leaders of their communities and social organisations, and in the private sector, but there remains strong resistance to the idea that women are legitimate political leaders.

In contributing to this shift in social norms, there are three higher level intended outcomes of BOP:

- There is a shifting balance of power towards women and men sharing decision-making at all levels;
- Women's right to participate in the public sphere, including their right to vote independently, is increasingly understood and accepted by women and men; and

- Traditional, church, and democratic governance institutions demonstrate action consistent with their commitments on women in leadership and role model gender sensitive practices.

All BOP objectives will align with the respective national policy frameworks of the implementing countries to ensure that the initiative is positioned within **locally-defined development priorities**.

### **BOP Technical Approach**

Given the centrality of a contextually attuned and locally led approach, BOP will be implemented as a **multi-country initiative**. While an overarching 'Theory of Change' for the investment has been designed to support the achievement of the outcomes outlined above, this will be **adapted to respond to the unique realities and opportunities** of each country's operating environment. In each country BOP will engage a **local Country Manager**, who will be responsible for identifying and bringing together a core group of stakeholders who will become the BOP 'Strategy Testing Group' (STG) for that country. Both the Country Manager and the STG members will be carefully selected through **values-based** criteria, including a commitment to **supporting collective action**, rather than individual or organisational agendas. This group will be supported by the BOP Team Leader and other resources to develop strategies and partnerships to strengthen existing momentum, optimise entry points to achieve BOP aims, and improve harmonisation of effort. For this reason, an extended inception phase will take place from June – December 2019 to enable the development of these country-level designs.

The BOP Team Leader will be based in Suva, Fiji, within the Pacific Women head office, with a dedicated support unit. The Team Leader will be **an influential Pacific Islander woman**, able both to support the Country Managers in country-level implementation, as well as ensure that **regional networks and activities** promote shared learning, coalition-building and accountability around women's leadership. She will be assisted in her role by a Regional Manager.

### **BOP Resourcing**

The Australian Government, through Pacific Women, has committed an initial budget of **AUD 8.6 million** for the first phase of BOP. In addition to funding key management positions in line with DFAT's Adviser Remuneration Framework and operational support (including M&E), this budget will enable strategic financing of activity at both country and regional levels. Resourcing will also include a strong research component. This will provide the STG in each country with access to targeted and contextualised socio-political analysis that will inform iterative and flexible approaches to activity design and implementation.

Importantly, the size of the BOP budget reflects the evidence that success in shifting norms and practices for positive social change is much less dependent on the amount of money spent, but **rather on the quality of the personnel engaged and a values-based commitment to building coalitions for locally-led reform**.