

Gender Equality in The Pacific Islands.

Current Issues & Pathways to Improvement

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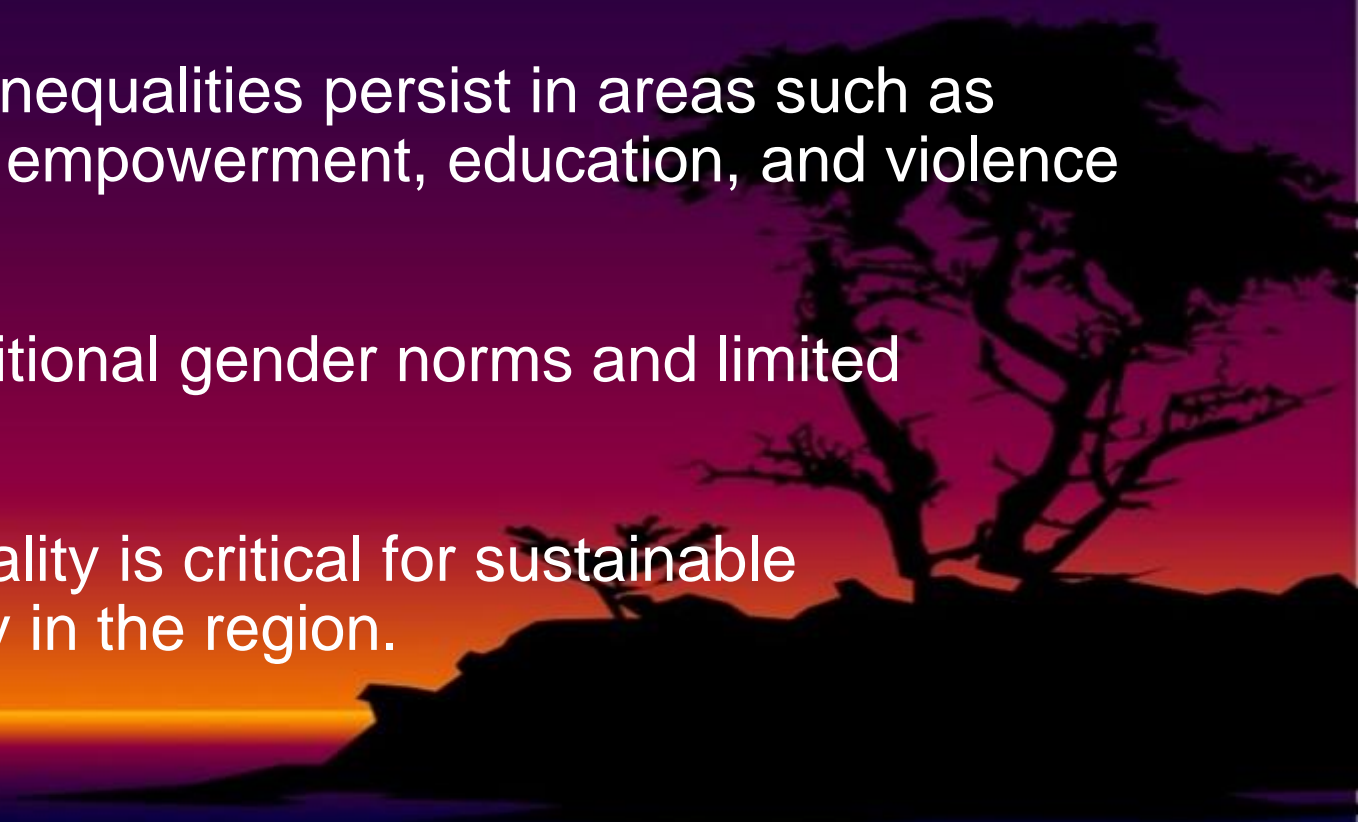
Introduction to Gender Equality in The Pacific Islands.

Overview

1. Gender equality is a global challenge, and the Pacific Islands are no exception.
2. Despite progress, deep-rooted inequalities persist in areas such as political participation, economic empowerment, education, and violence prevention.

Cultural & Structural Barriers - Traditional gender norms and limited resources hinder progress.

Importance - Achieving gender equality is critical for sustainable development, peace, and prosperity in the region.



Key Gender Issues in The Pacific Islands

Political Representation

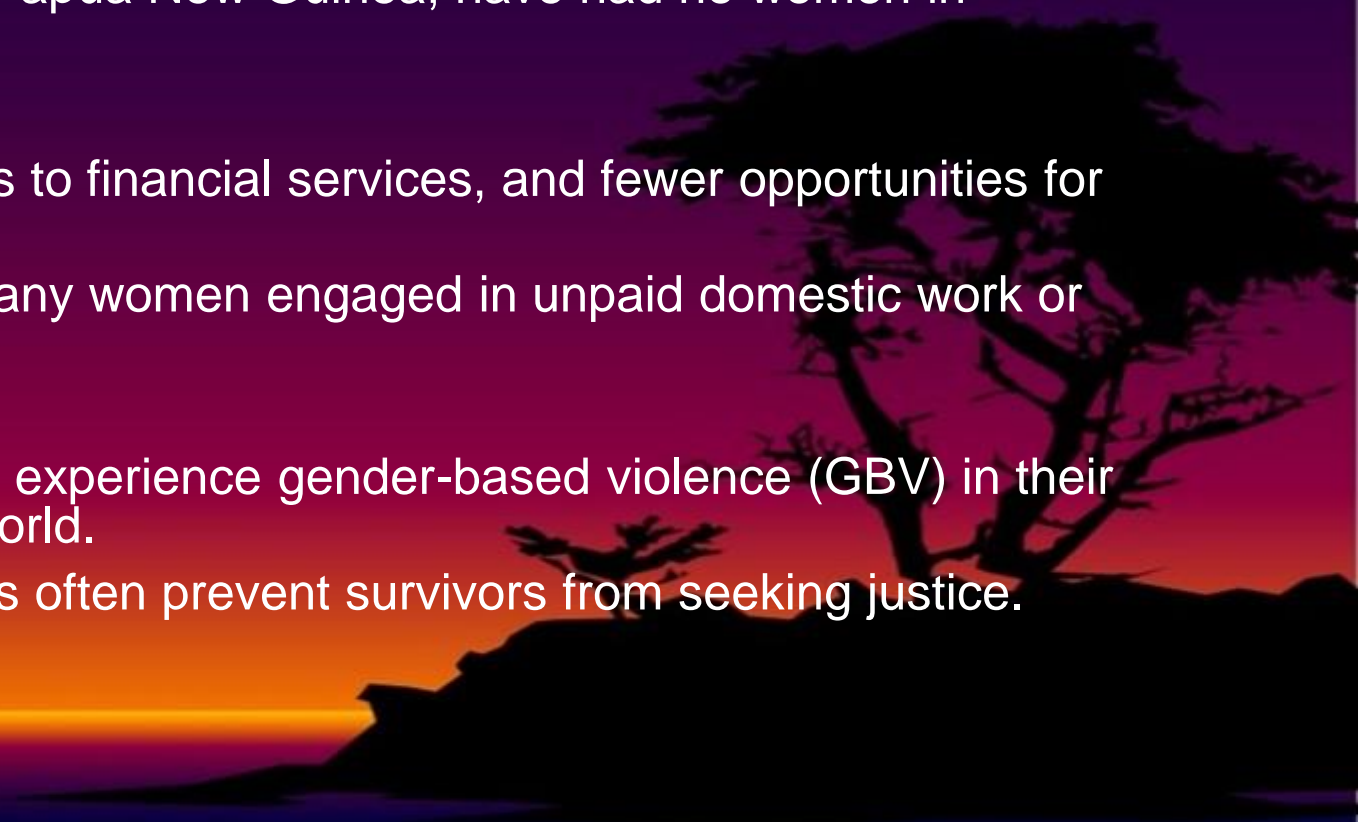
1. Women hold less than **10% of parliamentary seats** across the Pacific, compared to a global average of 25%.
2. Some Pacific countries, like Tonga and Papua New Guinea, have had no women in parliament for long periods.

Economic Inequality

1. Women face lower wages, limited access to financial services, and fewer opportunities for entrepreneurship.
2. Informal labor markets dominate, with many women engaged in unpaid domestic work or subsistence farming.

Gender Based Violence

1. 70% of women in some Pacific countries experience gender-based violence (GBV) in their lifetime, one of the highest rates in the world.
2. Social stigma and weak legal frameworks often prevent survivors from seeking justice.



Case Study – Gender Based Violence in Papua New Guinea

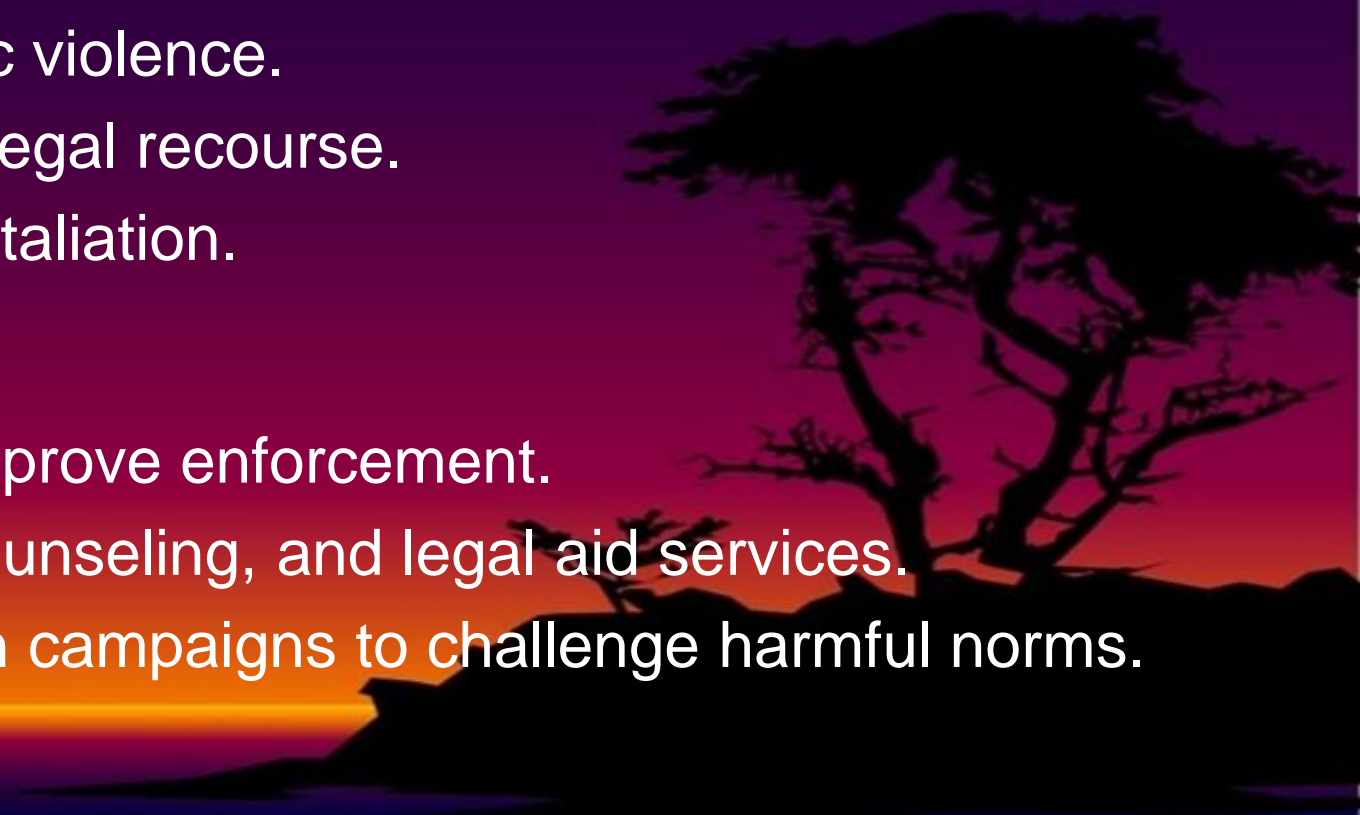
Issue: Papua New Guinea has one of the highest rates of GBV globally.

Challenges

1. Cultural acceptance of domestic violence.
2. Limited access to shelters and legal recourse.
3. Underreporting due to fear of retaliation.

Steps to Move Forward

1. Strengthen laws on GBV and improve enforcement.
2. Increase funding for shelters, counseling, and legal aid services.
3. Implement nationwide education campaigns to challenge harmful norms.



Barriers to Gender Equality in The Pacific

Cultural Norms: Deeply entrenched gender roles that often limit women's participation in decision-making and economic activities.

Limited Political Will: Lack of gender-focused policies or enforcement of existing laws.

Access to Education & Healthcare

- Gender disparities in school completion rates, especially in rural areas.
- Limited access to reproductive healthcare and maternal health services.

Economic Exclusion: Women often lack land rights, access to credit, and control over household finances.



Successful Initiatives: Vanuatu's Women's Market

Project Overview:

- Vanuatu's Women's Market Program supports female entrepreneurs by providing access to local markets and financial literacy training.

Impacts:

- Over 1,500 women have gained access to formal markets.
- Increased income and financial independence for women in rural communities.

Key Factors:

- Partnership with local governments and NGOs.
- Focus on skills development and empowerment through entrepreneurship.

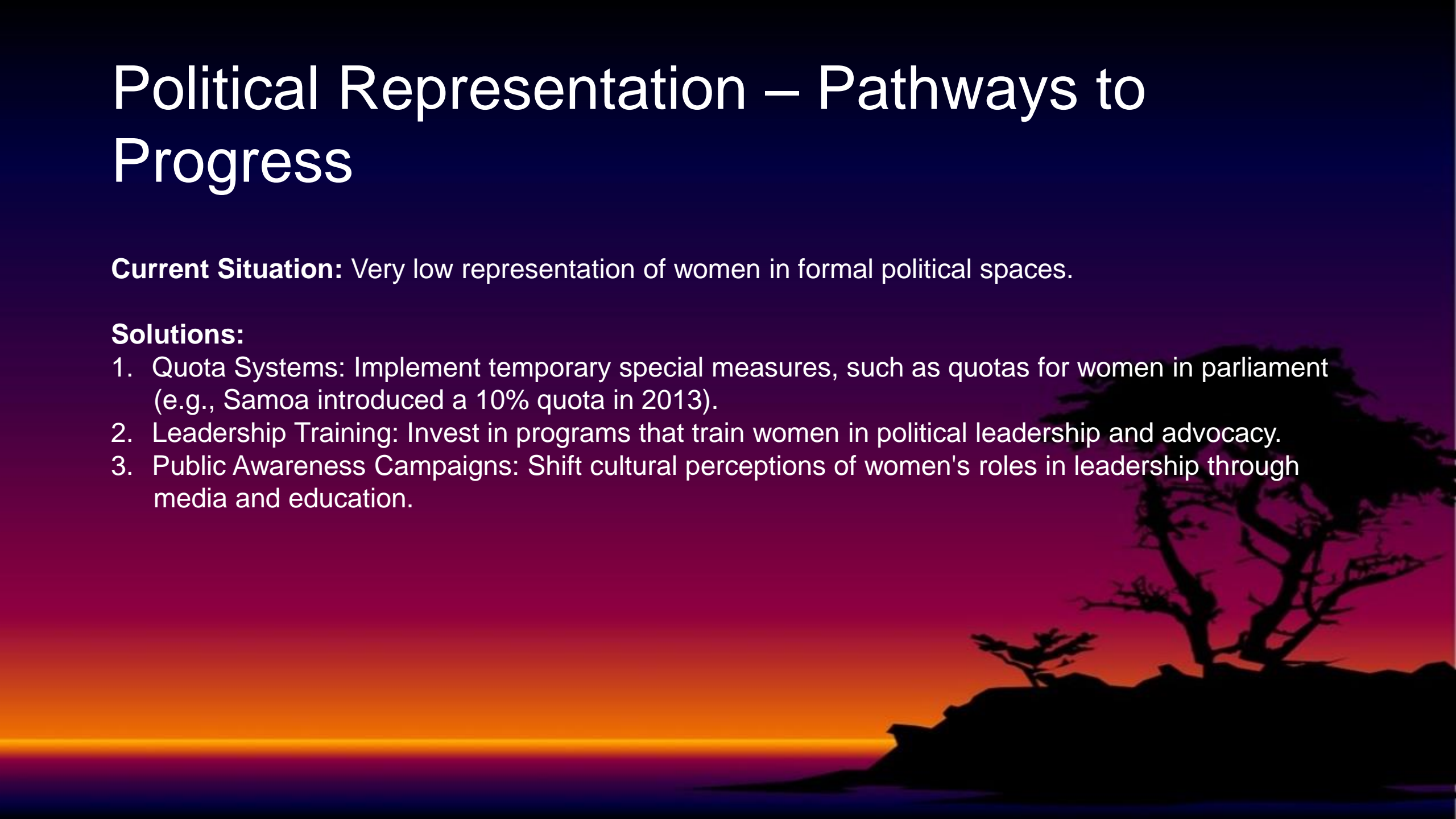


Political Representation – Pathways to Progress

Current Situation: Very low representation of women in formal political spaces.

Solutions:

1. Quota Systems: Implement temporary special measures, such as quotas for women in parliament (e.g., Samoa introduced a 10% quota in 2013).
2. Leadership Training: Invest in programs that train women in political leadership and advocacy.
3. Public Awareness Campaigns: Shift cultural perceptions of women's roles in leadership through media and education.



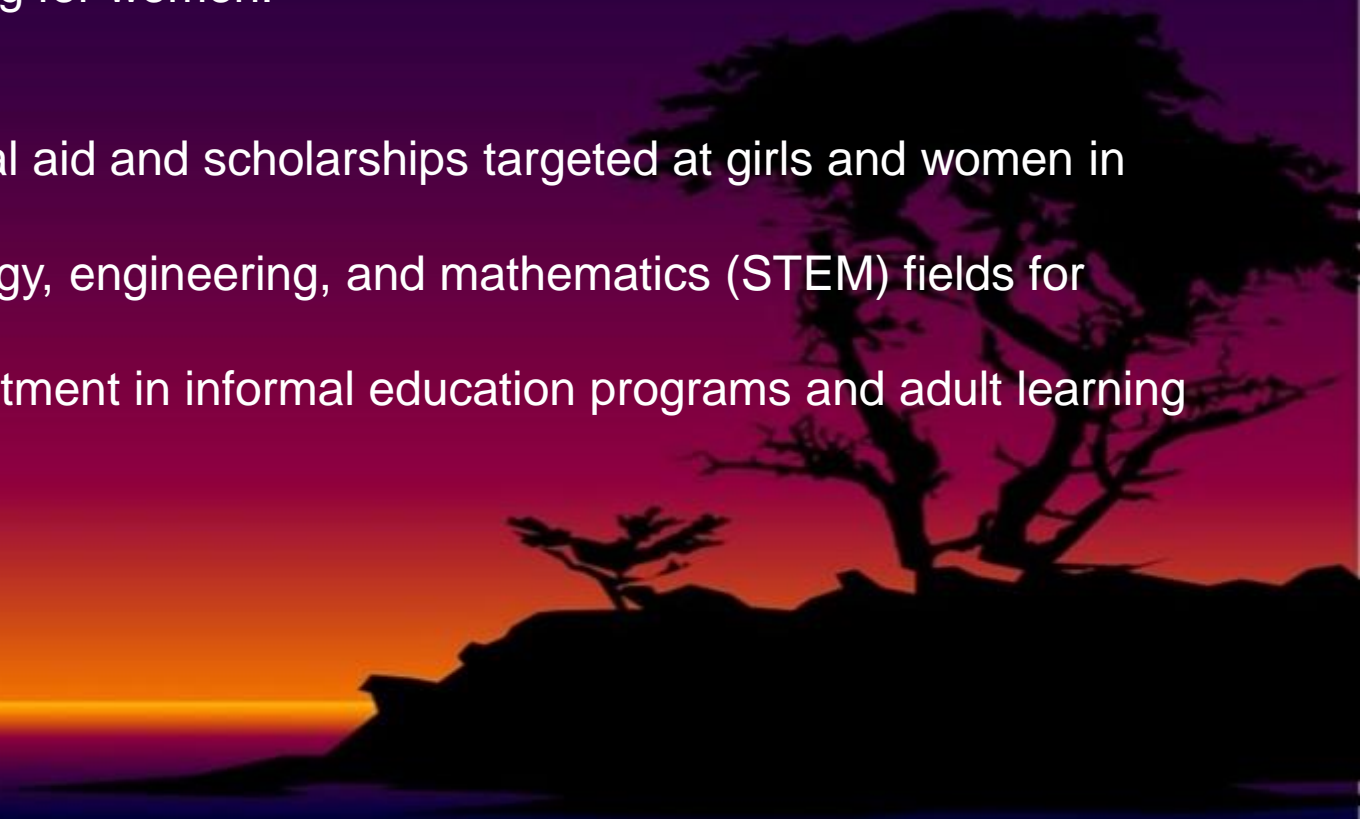
Education Skills & Development

Challenges:

- High dropout rates for girls, especially in secondary education.
- Limited access to vocational and skills training for women.

Proposed Improvements:

- Scholarships and Incentives: Provide financial aid and scholarships targeted at girls and women in rural areas.
- STEM Education: Promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields for women to diversify career opportunities.
- Community-Based Education: Increase investment in informal education programs and adult learning centers for women in remote communities.



Economic Empowerment for Women

Key Focus Areas

- Access to Finance: Improve access to microfinance and small business loans tailored to female entrepreneurs.
- Property Rights: Strengthen laws around women's land ownership and inheritance.
- Formalizing Informal Labor: Create pathways for informal workers, such as domestic workers and market vendors, to gain legal recognition, fair wages, and social protections.

Examples: The Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development initiative has invested millions in programs supporting women's economic participation across 14 Pacific Island countries.



Female Representation Across Pacific Islands

Country	2000	2010	2020	2023
Papua New Guinea	0	1	0	0
Samoa	1	2	5 (quota)	6 (quota)
Solomon Islands	1	1	2	3
Fiji	5	8	10	10
Vanuatu	0	0	1	1
Tonga	0	0	1	2
Kiribati	3	4	4	4
Marshall Islands	1	3	3	3
Cook Islands	2	4	5	5
Palau	2	2	3	4