



Gender and Politics
in Practice

Gender and Politics in Practice: The Pacific Leadership Program and CEDAW in Tonga

Mereani Rokotuibau
Chris Roche

dlprog.org/gapp



#genderpp

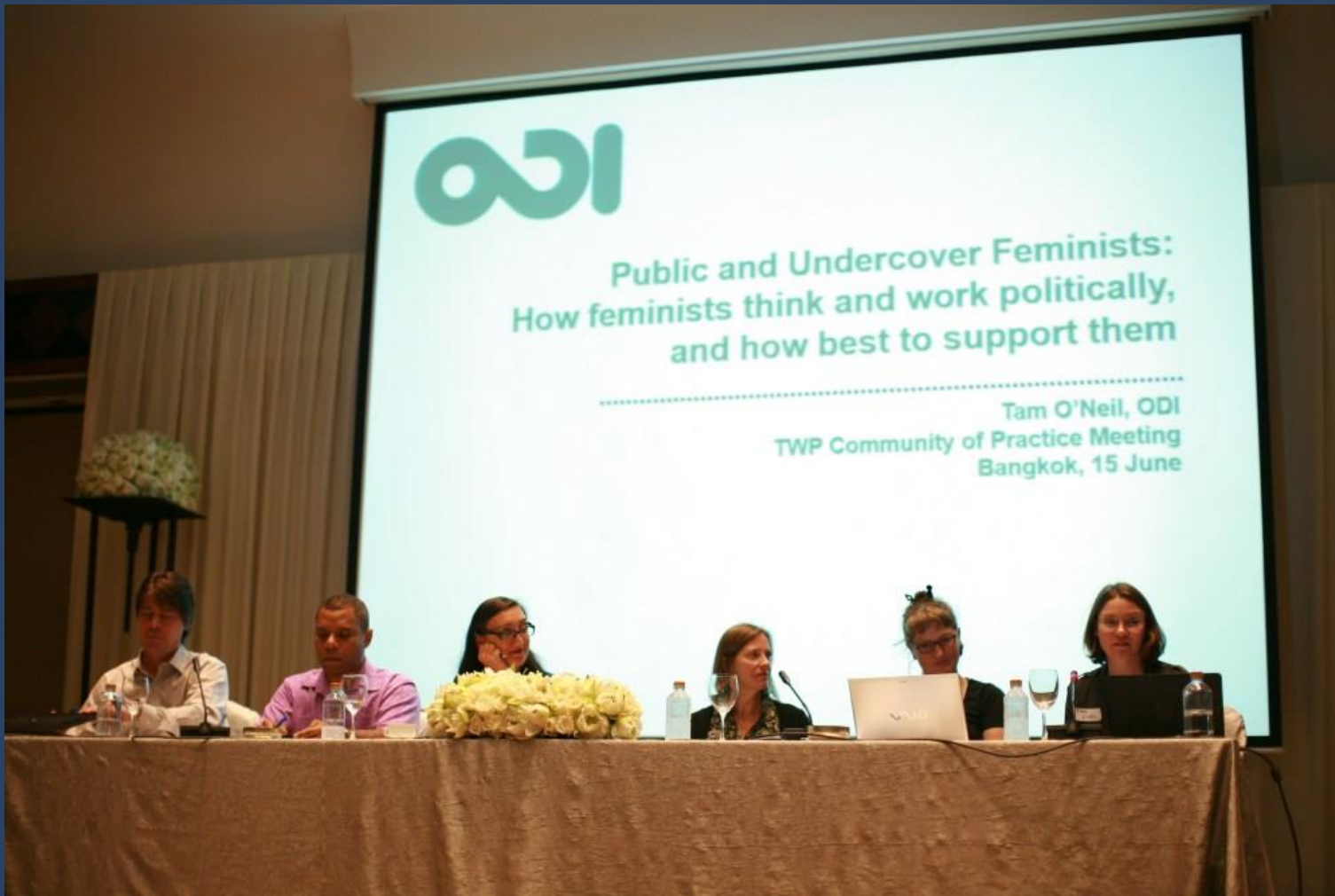
DISCUSSION PAPER
AUGUST 2016



PACIFIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
An Initiative of the Australian aid program



The origin....Bangkok 2015.



Gender and Politics in Practice Research Program

Our evidence Base

- Literature Review
- 15 case studies of development programs seeking to be both gender aware and to understand & engage with power and politics
- Diverse sample – targeted and “mainstream” initiatives; sectors including women’s rights, governance, economic development and peace building; DFAT, DFID and NGO funded

Example of one case study: CEDAW in Tonga

- Context of Tonga:
 - High hierarchical cultural values
 - Strong influence of church institutions on all aspects of life
 - Shift in power: changes in political leadership
 - Gender inequality in all aspects of society and economic life

Pacific Leadership Program Role

- In 2014, PLP was exploring opportunities to support women coalitions for change





What did we learn?

- **Importance of front-liners to be strategic and have political capital:**
 - have a good enough knowledge of context
 - ability to recognize an opportunity
 - relevant network to support change processes
- **Balancing power dynamics:**
 - ability to manage expectations of both the donor and the coalition
- **Framing of information** is critical when supporting and communicating sensitive reforms
- **Timing is critical**

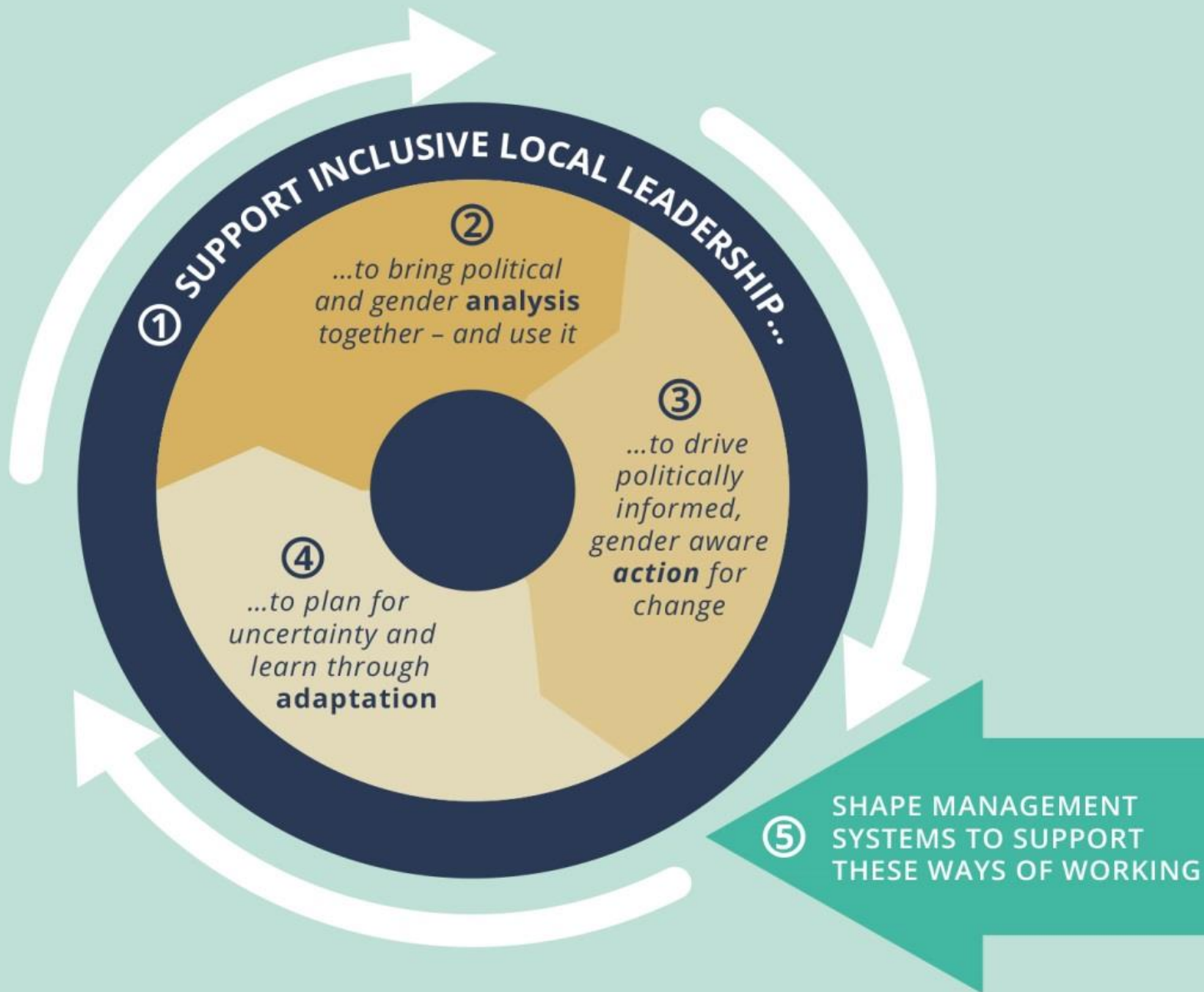
What has happened since?

- Government of Tonga has still not ratified CEDAW but have agreed to do more awareness-raising, as requested by the coalition of women and the public
- Little changes noted in people's understanding of CEDAW
 - In December 2017, during a radio talk-show, after the elections people talked about CEDAW as not being as threatening as they thought and agreed that it was okay for women to be leaders
 - In 2014, only 6% of the population voted for women, and by 2017, 14% of the population did
- Other women outside the Coalition have registered their interest in joining the Coalition – need to have some form of formalised structure.
- Women are now strategizing differently to working and thinking politically, working inclusively and using other methods to address change

Reflections

- **Deep knowledge of the context is essential**
 - Continuity and cultural competency of Pacific Islander staff, and particularly their ability to understand the context, the cultural values/norms and the potential for change, were crucial for any of the success achieved
- **Its highly important to be able to identify what kind of input is needed at particular times. At this stage, Coalition needs a ToR, Guiding principles.**
- **PLP's experience shows that program work with leaders and coalitions can play a role in contributing to leadership-led developmental change, as long as there is a supportive donor enabling environment.**

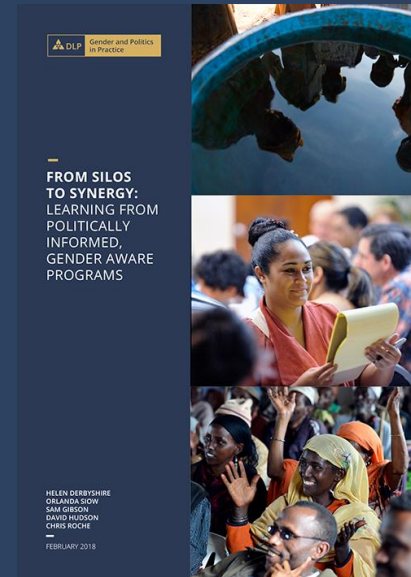
Five broader lessons from experience



Briefing note



From Silos to Synergy



Explore the Gender and Politics in Practice series at dlprog.org/gapp

Thank you for listening

GAPP is led by the Developmental Leadership Program, which involves the University of Birmingham and La Trobe University, in collaboration with the Australian Government. Partner organisations include The Asia Foundation, Palladium, RMIT, Kings College London, UCL and the University of Southampton.

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