

Questions for Written Follow-up

1. What are the intentions and concrete plans to involve women in the UN's plans for Women Peace and Security?

PREVENTION – The Cook Islands incorporates women's perspectives into early warning systems, public education and training guidelines and prosecution of violators of women's rights, including sexual and gender-based violence, are all measures that are essential to conflict prevention efforts.

PARTICIPATION

Defense is the responsibility of New Zealand, in consultation with the Cook Islands and at its request. In recent times, the Cook Islands have adopted an increasingly independent foreign policy through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is led by a woman, Ms Tapaeru Herrmann.

Cook Islands is a founding and valued member of RAMSI. The Cook Islands Police Service has deployed officers as part of RAMSI's Participating Police Force since the Mission first arrived in Solomon Islands in July 2003.

PROTECTION The Cook Islands will improve institutional strengthening of local police and judiciary in order to protect the rights of victims and reduce sexual and gender-based violence.

PEACE BUILDING, RELIEF AND RECOVERY – The Cook Islands will also ensure equality of access to justice and basic services through the activities of Internal Affairs, NGO's such as Punanga Tauturu, National Council of Women and Women and Girls with Disability.

2. What is not working within the Cook Islands education system?
The Cook Islands Education System is under resourced. We experience trouble in attracting and retaining quality people to the teaching profession. We import a lot of our teaching staff from NZ where wages are more competitive and costs of living are lower. We also experience a level of truancy, currently there are 8 cases under the supervision of the Child and Family Unit of Internal Affairs.
3. Are there assessments and evaluations for sexual education teachers? How does the State Party ensure that sexual education is provided in a neutral way (i.e. how does it ensure that teachers refrain from infusing the subject matter with their subjective views?)
The Ministry of Education of the Cook Islands have adopted our own Cook Islands Curriculum Framework from ECE through to Year 10. The framework consists of eight essential learning areas. The area of Health and Physical Well Being supports delivery of sexual education on schools.
Our teachers are trained and professionally developed to deliver specific achievement objectives relating to sexual education.
The impact, delivery and achievement of all essential learning areas, including H&PW, is monitored by the Ministry of Education through annual quality assurance reviews.

Schools also complete their own assessments and analysis of the data relating to the achievement of subject areas throughout the assessment.

Senior secondary, so 11-13, deliver the NZ Curriculum due to NCEA...but learning programs for sexual education are contextualized back to reflect Cook Islands culture, identity and learner needs. Education stats are collected annually, with variation assessments completed every academic term. Analysis is done at a national level and used also to inform Global reporting requirements.

4. When will the Marriage Amendment Bill be adopted?
According to the Crown Law Office the Directive has not yet been given by the Cabinet. Parliament will not be sitting until September and its major business will be the budget.
5. What is the role of religious and traditional leaders as non-State actors?
The Government can consult with either Religious leaders or traditional leaders for their opinion with any relevant issues.
Furthermore for traditional leaders the following applies;
Traditional leaders shall consider such matters relative to the welfare of the people of the Cook Islands as may be submitted to it by [Parliament] for its consideration, and it shall express its opinion and make recommendations thereon to [Parliament]; and
Traditional leaders shall have such other functions as may be prescribed by law.

As an example Govt and the religious and traditional leaders worked together on a major piece of legislation for Marae Moana, involving the protection of the Cook Islands oceans within at least 50 nautical miles of each islands reef. They are consulted on Environmental/Conservation issues, Cultural and traditional practices like the language, land issues. Permanent residency of applicants. Legislation was passed a few years ago to recognize first Friday of July each year as House of Ariki Day that is a public holiday.

6. What is the role of family law courts in advancing women's rights and human rights? Do people trust the authority of the judiciary in the Cook Islands?

The Family Protection and Support Act provides women with equal rights to divorce, access domestic and child support, access to childbearing expenses, paternity orders, parenting arrangements, care and protection orders, police safety orders and prevention of the removal of a child.

We are reliant on the New Zealand Judicial system for our judges. There are no Cook Islands Judges, however there are Cook Islands Justice of the Peace, some of whom are women. Judges are appointed by the Cook Islands under the recommendation of New Zealand, a process which we have little control of. This independence allows a deeper level of confidence by our people.
