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YWCA of Solomon Islands

Rise Up! Young Women’s Leadership Program

Executive Summary of Evaluation Report 2013

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Introduction

The Young Women’s Christian Association of Solomon Islands (YWCASI) is a non-government, membership organization that is affiliated with the World YWCA movement. The YWCASI was established in 1975 with its main office in the capital Honiara and a branch in the Western Province in Munda. The YWCASI’s vision is to create space for young Solomon Islands women to influence change. As well as offering a number of services to the public such as a Kindergarten and Hostel, the YWCASI currently runs the Rise Up! and Sistas Savve programs.

The Rise Up! program is in its fourth year of implementation and has reached over 700 people in 4 different provinces of the Solomon Islands. Rise Up! is funded through the Pacific Leadership Program, a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade–Australian Aid initiative that supports influential Pacific leaders to shape and lead developmental change, and the World YWCA ,a global network of women and girls working for justice, peace, health, human dignity and care for the environment.

Rise Up!’s objectives are:

- Young women are leading positive change in their communities.
- Young women are more confident and identify as leaders in their own communities.
- Community members recognise the leadership potential of young women.

- Young women are knowledgeable and skilled, and are sharing information with their peers in the areas of Human Rights, Women’s Rights, Gender, Public Speaking, and Leadership.

These objectives are achieved through training participants in five topics: women’s rights, leadership, public speaking, human rights and gender.

YWCASI’s second program, Sistas Savve, is a two year project aiming to improve the health, economic and social status of young women in Honiara. Sistas Savve is run in partnership with Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA), Family Planning International New Zealand, and funded by the New Zealand Aid Program.

In 2013, with support from PLP YWCASI conducted an evaluation of the full Rise Up! program. We wanted to find out what outcomes Rise Up! has had to date and how we could improve Rise Up! for the future.

The Rise Up! Program

In the Solomon Islands young women are marginalised, disempowered and denied leadership opportunities because of their age and gender. YWCASI created the Rise Up! program to give young women aged 15-30 the confidence, knowledge and skills to become leaders in their communities and change this situation.

Rise Up! began in 2010 as a four day leadership workshop. These four day workshops have now been run five times with a total of 114 young women participating. In 2011 the program was expanded into a Peer Educator-run program. This was achieved through the development of a workshop manual and a one week Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop in Honiara. Through the TOT 20 young women who previously graduated from the four day workshops were trained to become Peer Educators and return to their communities to run workshops on the five topics with their peers. The Peer Educator–run component of Rise Up! involves 1.5 hour long workshops, usually with three topics covered in each community. Due to huge demand for the program, Peer Educators have now run these workshops in 26 different communities within four Provinces of the Solomon Islands. They have trained 518 people, including 106 males.

In 2013, Rise Up! has become a widespread grassroots program largely run in rural areas and implemented by young women Peer Educators. More people have participated in the program than YWCASI expected. In total Rise Up! has reached 712 people including 305 in Auki, 249 in Honiara, 88 in Munda, 30 in Aola, 24 in Visale and 16 in Choiseul.

How we evaluated Rise Up!

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were run with 74 people and reached all communities (except two) where Rise Up! has been run. We spoke to Rise Up! participants and Peer Educators about changes in their lives after the program. We interviewed community leaders to verify the changes participants reported and to understand the attitudes of leaders/gatekeepers towards young women and towards the program. All three groups were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of Rise Up! and their ideas for the next stages of the program. After transcribing interviews, we analysed the data to find themes and the percentage of interviewees who discussed each theme. From monitoring data kept by Peer Educators we tallied the number of participants and communities reached so far.

Results of Rise Up!

- **93%** of participants reported that they shared information on what they learnt through Rise Up! informally with their peers, family and other community members.
- **78%** of participants reported that they had increased their knowledge in the areas of human rights, women's rights, gender, public speaking and leadership.
- **53%** of participants reported increased confidence and **22%** of participants reported increased self-esteem after training.

"Before I joined the training, I felt that the community looked down on me. They said that I needed to stay quiet and not be part of decision making because I was a girl. After the training, I rose up as a leader and showed these people that I can lead, I can talk and I have a right to do something."

Rise Up! Peer Educator Honiara

"Before the training, I went to the community meetings – about community works, digging pipes and land rights - but I didn't speak out. But at the community meeting last week, I stood up and talked for the first time. Everyone in the community said they were happy to hear me talk. Before the training, I thought I didn't have the right to make decisions. But now, I know that leaders have to hear the views of women."

Rise Up! Participant Honiara

- **49%** of participants reported speaking out in their communities and families about their views and opinions
- **47%** of participants reported increasing their leadership or becoming leaders inside their communities. This was usually through formal positions in churches and schools such as women's/youth group leader, Sunday school teacher or class captain.
- **31%** of participants reported that their families and communities have increased respect for

them after the program.

Our evaluation showed that Rise Up! is a successful model and being implemented well:

- Peer Educators said the workshop manual was important for running good workshops: it was easy to understand, appropriate for their audience and contained all the information Peer Educators need to run training.
- Participants were satisfied with the Peer Educator model: training was targeted to their age, level of knowledge, culture and language.
- Participants found participatory learning approaches effective: activities like drama, role-plays and games provided practical opportunities to learn.

Following our interviews and discussions with YWCASI staff, management and Pacific Leadership Program we created recommendations. It is hoped these recommendations will inform the next stage of Rise Up!.

Recommendations for Rise Up!

Rise Up! would benefit from:

- Working more with parents, teachers, husbands and community leaders: for young women to take up leadership and exercise their rights they need the support of these people. As an organisation YWCASI could address structural barriers for young women such as government policy, education/health systems, and social norms through an advocacy strategy.
- Resourcing the program further: a Project Coordinator who can manage the whole program should be recruited. Training new Peer Educators is a priority because there are currently not enough to continue the program. Existing Peer Educators need more support including regular meetings/communication, increased allowances, and ongoing training/learning opportunities to stay motivated.
- Clarifying the goals and objectives of Rise Up!: 'Leadership' 'positive change' and 'rights' mean different things to different people. The program would also benefit from a more effective monitoring system to check we are achieving our goals.
- Improving implementation: workshops need to be longer than 1.5 hours and the workshop manual could be updated so it addresses Solomon *Kastom*. Interviewees saw *Kastom* as major barrier to young women's leadership and rights.

"I didn't talk much at home or at school before the training. If my teacher asked a question, I was too shy to respond. But since the training I've been able to talk publicly and talk with my family. If I disagree with something, I speak out and share my opinion. This is a big change that I've made since joining the Rise Up! training."

Rise Up! Participant Munda

- Collaborating further with stakeholders.
- Adding a sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) component to Rise Up!: many communities want this included in the program. YWCASI would benefit from sharing the resources and skills of other organisations whose focus is SRHR.
- Ensuring the sustainability of the program through a follow up: currently Rise Up! participants only receive once off training.
- Reach out to more communities: particularly within remote areas and vulnerable groups. The demand for the program is bigger than Peer Educators are able to meet and we need to source further funding to do so.

Conclusions

Through the evaluation Rise Up! has been shown to be an effective program. Most participants have increased their knowledge and are sharing what they learnt. Many have taken up leadership positions in their communities, are speaking out on issues important to them, and have increased their confidence and self-esteem. Some challenges remain, and the YWCASI recognizes the structural barriers that young women in the Solomon Islands face in taking up leadership and exercising their rights and the limitations of a small program like Rise Up! to change these. However, YWCASI looks forward to using this evaluation to strengthen the program further and to source more funding to expand and meet the large demand from communities.

www.ywcasolomons.com

ywca@ywcasolomon.com.sb

(+677) 22834

PO Box 494, Honiara, Solomon Islands