



HERSTORY

WOMEN WORKING IN CORRECTIONS 1986-2018



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Edited by Dr Anouk Ride & Wendy Gebe

With CSSI Women's Network

2018

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First interview for the HerStory project with retired officer Phylistus Fafai (centre). Left to right: Bernice Wasia, Catherine Nalakia, Anouk Ride, Jennifer Williams, Valorie Pitamama.



Catherine Nalakia interviews Phylistus Fafai at Rove Central Correctional Centre.

INTRODUCTION

Women have a long history of working as correctional officers in Solomon Islands. Initially beginning with the female spouses of male correctional officers, with women officers being responsible for female inmates, females later applied and were successful in getting regular roles in Correctional Services Solomon Islands (CSSI). In the process, they faced several challenges; some for being pioneering women in a male-dominated sector, and others that women face in the workforce and society more broadly.

This book features the stories of 24 women working in the service and their own analysis of these stories. The research uses participatory methodology - women identified the various challenges and strengths they, and their organization, have currently and reflected on their past experiences, through several collaborative activities.

First, the women met and agreed on priorities for research questions, these were then drafted by Dr Anouk Ride, agreed by the group and sent out to all the research participants. The women then used these questions to interview each other, providing audio files of the interviews and a consent form. Chair of the CSSI Women's Network, Wendy Gebe, conducted the vast majority of interviews and prompted women to analyse their own experiences in the interviews, with the support from Gender Officer Catherine Nalakia.

Dr Anouk Ride then put this data was then put in a database (using Nvivo qualitative research software) and coded interviews to identify themes of the stories and recommendations. Then the women met to compare and contrast their interviews with each other, to identify challenges and strengths that were applicable to one or a few people or to most people. From this analysis, the book text was drafted, cross checked again with the women, a further draft was produced together and this final report was produced.

Participants in this project decided their stories would be anonymous in order to enable them to feel comfortable discussing any difficult or personal issues that came up while relaying their experiences. However, it is accompanied by

a film, where some of the interviewees talk publicly about their experiences at work. The film provides the experience of key female pioneers and leaders in the service.¹

This book is the story of 24 women who worked in prisons and correctional services from 1986 to the present day. 50% of these women are aged 31-40, 42% are aged 41-60 and 8% are aged 25-30 years. One is retired and the rest are all working in Correctional Centres in Honiara, Tetere or provincial centres (Auki, Gizo, Lata, Kirakira) and in CSSI Headquarters.

The women who told their stories are from all over the Solomon Islands – 12% have links to Choiseul, 12% Guadalcanal, 8% Isabel, 17% Makira, 37% Malaita, 17% Western, 17% Temotu and 4% Renbel. 29% of the women have kin links to more than one province.

The contributors to this report include 9 Correctional Officers, 9 Sergeants, 2 Senior Sergeants, 1 Inspector and 1 Commandant (in charge of a prison, known as a correctional centre). These women have a combined total of 377 years of service to CSSI.

Every story is different, but this report points to what is similar in the women's experiences over time. There has been great progress from the first pioneering women to today, and also areas where women's challenges remain the same. This is not one person's story or the report editor's story but all 24 stories combined to create a history from the perspective of women – *HERSTORY: Women Working in Corrections 1986-2018*.

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The film will be available to view on www.youtube.com/sukwadimedia in February 2019

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Inspector Alison Salu at work, as filmed for HerStory film.

CHAPTER 1:

The First Women Correctional Officers (1986–1997)

Women started working in prisons, as administration officers, gate keepers, as “warders” (which would later become known as Correctional Officers) in the 1980s. When the first female inmates were sentenced, there was a view it was inappropriate for them to stay in the prisons with all the male inmates. So, some female family members of male prison officers said they could look after the female inmates. As there was no women’s prison, female inmates stayed in the houses of these first female officers, with the first women to work in these roles being Lotas Molia (recruited 1986) and Diana Sikwae and Dorothy Siru (1987).

One of the women who contributed to HerStory reported what it was like to house prisoners at your home, saying she shared the same burden of restricted movement as the prisoners:

The biggest challenges when I first came into prison service then a big escape happened, after I’d been in the prison service for five months the escape happened, I did not know what to do. I saw them, I was frightened, when they broke down the remand unit for women, women inmates had no place to stay. So, management asked my dad for us to keep four women in our house. So, we took four women prisoners and kept them in our house. At that time, I was a young girl, so when the prisoners were staying in the house, my dad didn’t allow me to go out. Every day and night I stayed at the house only...

When I went to work, I took all the convict prisoners because they were remand ones, not allowed to work. So, I took two convicts, one to clean-up office and weed around the office, another one to stay at the house my sister was looking after. They stayed in their house, they heard the rules my dad said: you stay here, you are not free people now, you are still prisoners even though you stay out from prison. You are not to go out to any house or go out from our house or go to any place you think, sit down around the house then go inside the house only. The decision for them to stay inside the house was from the Controller, management.

So, that challenge, for me, very challenging, as a young girl you join activities like sports, I was a netball player, but when that responsibility was with me, four prisoners in my house, I could not go out now, or go play netball. Every Saturday I used to play netball, I wished they would hurry up and finish the building for the women prisoners so they would go.

I stayed there, couldn't go anywhere, it was like I was a prisoner too, stay in the house only, evening at 8 o'clock my dad locked the door, locked us in too, stay inside the room until 8 o'clock in the morning then we come out. So, that time, I thought I was like a prisoner too.

Female recruit, 1980s.

It was recognised that cells might be needed for women, and these were allocated in the prison (a few cells at the end of a block for male prisoners). So, women working with female prisoners also knew well the environment of the male prison at that time. There were some prison break-outs and serious incidents in the 1980s, including a rape of a female prisoner by male prisoner in 1988. Such dangers were a concern for some of the pioneering women, and prison break-outs were usually mentioned by early recruits as something that made them apprehensive at the start of their service.

Pioneering women to work in correctional facilities who contributed to this book were Phylistus Fafoi who started service in 1987 (transferring from Royal Solomon Islands Police Force), Dorothy Siru recruited in 1988, Anna Giano in 1989, Janet Tonisi in 1991 and Alison Salu in 1992. The year 1993 marked a turning point with an increase in the number of female recruits – 7 women – including Solomon Islands' first female Commandant Catherine Kere and four other contributors to this report. The stories of Phylistus Fafoi, Alison Salu and Catherine Nalakia (recruited 1993) are featured in the film that accompanies this book.

Some other early recruits were Diana Sikwae (1988) Rose Kenekene, Jennifer Williams, Cathy Givi (deceased), Eva Gilapeara (1989) and Clera Penibanga, Ruteta Eke, Madame Leah Alufōoa, Betty Dauara (1991) Angela Dakile, Delrisa Muaki, Christina Pamela (1992).²

Each of these first women were pioneers, often the first and only women in teams of men. Many served for several decades, reaching senior roles and being influential in leading and mentoring other women.

Pioneering women joined for various reasons, mostly with encouragement of someone in their family to apply for this new type of work. Half of the recruits from 1986-1997 who contributed stories to this report had parents working for the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force:

My parents were working people, my mum worked in correctional and my father was a Police Officer too, so, somehow I heard through my mother that prison service needed direct intakes for five female officers, so, we had to go through the process too, we had to sit exams, so, 13 females, we came sat the exam, fortunately I had the opportunity to be inside the 5 candidates selected. So, that was how I became an officer inside the correctional service.

Female recruit, 1990s.

When I first went to Honiara, after I left school in 1985, I went to town, just stayed with my parents, prison service before wanted female officers to work. During that time, no women worked in the prison service, so, the wives of police officers just went to look after all the females, when they went to court, send them to prison. From that time, prison started to realise that they needed females to work. So, they started to advertise in the newspaper, my dad was a prison officer at that time too yeah. So, he came to the house and asked me: "you want to work at the prison service?" I said: "Dad, I am willing to work there. If work you do is good, I want to come join you too." So, I applied...

Female recruit, 1980s.

Others had neighbours or friends who told them about the recruitment intake:

In my early days, usually I see officers when they go past I started to be interested to see these officers in uniform, officers who work to serve the country, officers who have heart for the people and that's why I started to get interested in this work, and then I began to have a friend who went to

school with me and then both of us, we happened to be interested in the same job, as a correctional officer. One day we planned to go and reach our correctional headquarters and the two of us on our own were brave to go and ask for this work as an officer for corrections and then both of us took the form and followed the process, and it happened that we were both recruited and worked. In my family I think I am the first one to choose this kind of work, but my friends, I have lots of friends where they work in this kind of work and through them too, they encouraged me, so, that after a while I could come in to work, so, then I saw my future inside this work. I had my friends there to encourage me to take up this work.

Female recruit, 1980s.

I reached Form Five at school in 1992. During that time, if you reach Form 5, well, you can work now, it was easy to work. When I left school, some of my school mates, they went now, only myself was left in the place where we were, it was when mum and dad were in the province and we were staying together. I watched everyone go school, go to work, go find jobs in town, only me was at home so one time an uncle of mine, he was a police man, he said: "Everyone from Prison is coming to do a recruit". So, I heard it, I wanted to try it, because if I stayed doing nothing I'd never achieve my potential, so, I stayed but I looked for work too, so this time my uncle told me, the next day I went. That Saturday I told my mum, but she said for the two of us to go the food garden, so we took baskets and went to the bush now. We were on our way, in the middle of the road, I just thought about it and I said to my mum: "Mummy, one group is coming and I want to try it". So, I left my mum, dropped the basket and hurried up to the Station. I came back to our house, washed and then went up to the Police Station, but the Police Station is right next to the Prison...I went in just interviewed, I did not apply too, I interviewed and then next day sat the exam. That was how I got the job, yeah. After one month the exam result came back and only two were recruited from the province, one man and me. So, I was really happy because I would work and have money, because I had no money then, stayed like that, cooked at home, went to the garden, there was really no hope for me, so, when I heard about it I said to myself: "This is a chance, try for this opportunity."

Female recruit, 1990s.

Once recruited, staff did an induction training which taught them the basics of what was expected, particularly discipline, following standing orders and protocols for prisons and dealing with prisoners. This training built confidence in the staff:

Before I didn't hear anything about prison, but like what I heard was that prison was a place to punish people who break the law, so, when I heard I was selected to work I started to worry more: how will I look after these people yeah, because I am a woman? But when we went through all the training, we are guided by law and prisoners we are there to control and manage them. If you have fears do not show it out because the prisoners will hurt you inside the prison.

Female recruit, 1990s.

People, my friends and family think prison is not a good place to work inside. Then they say work here is for men only, not for women. All the officers who work there must be strong, tall and well-built and fit to work in there. They always ask me: "Aren't you frightened to work in the prison?" I tell them all: "I am not frightened because we go through trainings for work, all the prisoners are just human beings, if you and I treat them good, they will treat us good too."

Female recruit, 1990s.

All of the women recruited in the 1980s and 1990s describe how it was different to work in a male-dominated sector, and that they had a feeling of being out of their depth:

When I first came in, I mean it's a normal thing that happens in life, your first time in a place, you do not feel comfortable, first time. So, for me, first time I went in, I left school and just went straight to the Correctional Centre so it was the first time for me to work, I was frightened too of doing the wrong things. When I came in, I came in direct intake so I didn't even train to know my work. It's like they threw me in the deep sea and I tried to swim to the shore, like that. First time I was really frightened a lot but I looked and learned for two weeks, then I was OK.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Initially, during that time there's a lot of mass escapes that happened but I tried my best that time yeah. I said maybe anything the men can do but I can do, I was confident, but that is the only thing that I had because when I came I hadn't seen it yet but I heard the story from people, so, that is my only fear when I first came. I worried like, what if when I went to work then there's a mass break out, then, like, for my own security. That is the idea I had before I went to work, I didn't know what is prison life or I didn't know yet what are the process or procedures in prison.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Even inside too, when we went to work inside there, it's true, we were frightened too because, like, we were very young coming in and there are some female officers or inmates that are older women. So, how would we tell them things to do, what for them to do, and then we cannot tell older women to do this and that because this is our culture.

Female recruit, 1990s.

When I started work, after I finished training and then I went inside to do an attachment, first thing I was frightened of was the inmates. I was very frightened of the inmates because I saw them as huge people, I saw people who would not know how to smile, because before inmates were very tough people and people where if you saw them you would be frightened of them, those where they stay inside segregation, where they stay inside induction, so, I was frightened of them if I approached them. I feared them very much, I thought that they are criminal people, so, I thought this job was good for me but it took time until I just felt that oh yes, I feel confident, to work in the jail. This is what I can tell you about this one.

Female recruit, 1990s.

When I came in here, I feel frightened because like I said, how would I go through all the training, how would we go in training for sports, how would we attend sports activities that were part of the 6-months training too and after that we have to go through 2 years' probation at prison, where you work with the criminals inside the jails now and I cannot say no because I came in to work inside the jail, I have to attend to the prisoners, their requests, and as time goes on I was familiar with working with prisoners in jail.

Female recruit, 1990s.

These early recruits also described a sense of being different and being watched:

In public, people get used to see police, police officers coming and see women working along the road, doing patrol on the road. They never saw prison had women, so, I came in as the third recruit, two other women were first before me, the first one has retired already, then the two of us were recruited in the same year. So, people just saw women working in the prison service then. As soon as I came in, a woman was arrested in Auki, and no one was there to look after her so I went to look after her in Auki. I went and stayed with them at Auki, police truck took me with the woman to go attend court at Malu'u Police Station. So, when I wore the brown dress of the prison service before, as soon as I stepped down from the truck, everyone was staring at me, I think people were surprised, women work in the prison now. Full time I was there, eyes of people were on me, I was the first one to go out from town, then one of the first women to be recruited for prison service.

Female recruit, 1980s.

When I look at work here, I am proud of myself because most people look at this kind of job, they say it's work for men, so, when they see women join this kind of work, they regard them highly. So, I was proud too, I say I am somebody who knows this work, I can deal with criminals, I know the place of criminals, so, when I work in there, people respect me and even people see me and are fearful too, "she works in the prison, that one", something like that.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Yeah it's a new thing for Prison Service or Correctional Service when women came to work, I felt like the place was a male-dominated organization so you feel it, sometimes body language you can see it, you are in a place that doesn't seem fit for women to come inside, so, a challenge I found to work with the men, first you need to break this kind of thinking of men towards the women.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Women often faced attitudes from friends and family that the work was not

suitable for women, and through their own experience, tried to change these attitudes:

My immediate family appreciated work because by mother was a respected woman and my daddy, but besides them the extended family they say: "Aren't you frightened of that place? You want to go work there? It's a place for men, if they turn around and attack you, you are not anything. Isn't there any other work at any other place? Why choose this place?" But again, I know what my role is inside the prison so I say: "It's work now, as time goes on it will be alright, no matter it is a place for men, but today in the world men and women work, it's fine."

Female recruit, 1990s.

I don't need to look far to find it, madam, I remembered the time I just went inside, my people they did not really agree with me. My parents even saw prison as work where, it belonged to men, they started to try discourage me, start tell me that the place was not fit for a woman, that it was only fit for men, men only can deal with criminals, so, they put a kind of mindset like that on me, and I found it a bit challenging that is true but I had in my heart that I must work in this work, to serve the country, to serve my people.

Female recruit, 1980s.

"Why aren't you frightened to work in the prison?" Because they know too that prison is a place for criminals, murderers stay there where we look after it. So, they question like that too, "Aren't you frightened to work in a place like that?" "Yes, I am confident to work there, not frightened, no, I don't have that." That's how I used to tell all my family members, friends and relatives.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Inside the service too, most women, particularly the 1980s recruits, described men as "respectful" of women, but it was also clear there were a few men who were not used to women being in the workforce and would make women feel uncomfortable:

When I first came in, I have a religious family, I had not heard swearing in my family, my dad was a pastor and we knew religion in our house but when I came in to prison I heard swearing, like that was their work every day to swear, sometimes I heard it I could not stay there, I ran away, I felt not good hearing swears.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Before us women, we struggled, faced hardship, faced a lot of difficulties inside work at Corrections and faced a lot of harassment in the work place like that, and then when I worked I was not settled, I worked with just, fear, I worried and stressed because the environment was not safe to work as a woman.

Female recruit, 1990s.

One of the early recruits reported a specific time when she was the only female in a team and harassment from other officers made her think to leave the service:

Yes madam, in my early days, well nowadays I am confident, I am strong now, this time. But in my early days madam I found it tough for me, tough in a sense that me, if I go there, I would say, this life of harassment, I was inside it. Officers themselves, I did not feel free to move, I did not feel free to talk, discuss with the officers about what was work because officers they just have this mindset of harassment. So, I want to say in my early days I found it not easy. I found myself, I just wanted to give up now, just stay at home and not work, even they did not know why I didn't come work. But this fear I had which was inside me that I had but the bosses and the officers did not have respect for me, so, it got to a point where the truck would come to find me: "How? Will you work, why do you not come work now?" And they convinced me to come back and then I decided ok I will come back...I even went to a point where I was not fit to work, in the early days, but this time I am strong to stand against the things like that.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Women were motivated to continue by their interest in working with prisoners:

I thought I will go work inside, where you deal directly with the offenders. Like I can deal direct with them, talk to them, because the police they just deal with open cases and make them go to court and come to prison. What I want to see inside here is that they could have some rehabilitation in here, I want to see that there are some changes that happen to them, so I applied to come here.

Female recruit, 1980s.

I see that I have some information for people inside prison, I have thinking that what I take inside this work, I can tell for people outside, how is life inside the prison, so, that people will not get inside these problems and come inside this place. That's why I chose to become a correctional officer.

Female recruit, 1980s.

I saw if we interact with the prisoners and study their life and what type of offence, what type of crime they commit and you look at how you can help that prisoner, you yourself will build too, develop the way you communicate, the way you can work towards, plan and help this particular prisoner. So, in that sense, it really made me interested very much in working inside the correctional service, to study life of another person where, people think they are a law breaker, or a prisoner, sometimes people outside are frightened of these people, but when we deal directly with them, you manage somebody and then they go out and change, it makes you proud too that a product of yours, when you work inside, becomes a changed person. I really feel very happy and I believe when we do this work we will be rewarded too, the Bible mentions it clearly, looking at people and bringing back new soul, so, with that one I am very happy.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Working in corrections, it's very good and interesting because I start to understand the officers and inmates who come in from different cultures and backgrounds. I work in corrections with all the inmates and I learnt many good things from different people and I studied too the attitudes and behaviour of inmates, they come in where looking at attitudes of inmates it's like they come in with different offences and crimes. I believe that this is a challenge for me, and I learn too to manage my family and children too

so that, I don't want them to go into criminal activities even in the future too.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Working with prisoners meant that the women had to mediate conflicts:

Yes, we faced it, when there were a few women inmates, sometimes they fought about food, some did not take their share, they had shares, but maybe if they saw there was not enough cucumber... things like that. Arguments would come up. I remember one time Madam was in charge one tried to commit suicide, everyone was on her now, everyone hated her, during that time we had an extra check on them, when we encountered the problem, we always called them, talk with one first, talk with the other one, from there we heard two sides of the story and called them to sit down together. "You must know we are here, you are there, you should love each other, the thing is you must know your sisters are here, you are in this place..." We tried to solve their problems, always sit down with them and try and solve their problems. Lucky too the Women's Network later came up with the welfare officer to stay so they can identify needs of inmates and address these welfare issues³.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Prisoners always have problems, complain all the time, any kind of issues. Our work is to address the issues and complaints. When we address them, their issues, it helps me myself too, when I go back home or outside, when I have a problem I can address it too, that's one interesting thing about working in corrections.

Female recruit, 1980s.

They also faced harassment from male prisoners – harassment meaning that prisoners might shout or try and throw things from cells as the female officers passed them to get to the female cells. Women described crouching down as they went past the male cells so not to be seen or touched by them. In 1991, the female unit was housed in a separate building, allowing female prisoners and officers to be more secure and reducing harassment. The women who started service in the 1980s were a source of inspiration and encouragement for the

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The first Welfare Officer was established in 2006.

1990s female recruits, particularly often mentioned as a role model was Phylistus Fafoi who would later go on to Chair the CSSI Women's Network from 2003 to 2010:

When I came in, us women, we knew during that time Phylistus was there and a woman, Lotas, our retirees, so, when I just started work I would look to them.

Female recruit, 1990s.

She came and took the rank of Staff Sergeant so she was my In-charge that time so she was a role model at CSSI that time. She is one smart woman, how she does her work, no one can argue with her, she stands for her rights, so, I admire her work. This woman she was first Chairlady of CSSI Women's Network and I was inside the committee that fought for our issues, what has affected us women inside CSSI.

Female recruit, 1980s.

We learned a lot from Phylistus, she mentored us, she taught us how to do our work, this is what you should do and things like that. So, Phylistus was very helpful when were inside the block over there.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Looking back at the time I worked in corrections, I do not see anyone except one female officer former Sergeant Phylistus Fafoi, I would say she is my role model, for me Sergeant guided me through recruitment, work. She is one very good Sergeant always advising me about work, if we make mistakes, calls us to talk to us, even though she is harsh on us, cross at us, but for me I learnt a lot from her words, her advice, every advice of hers brought me to where I am today. I can never forget her advice.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Women working in the provinces in particular were most likely to mention senior male staff as providing a guide as to what it was to be a good correctional officer. These men trained women and also modelled the sort of qualities they wanted in their staff through their own behaviour:

Looking back inside corrections, I had a role model but he was a male officer who is retired now. Everything he did was neutral, he has no bias to prisoners or officers, he works according to what he should do, like when I see him display this he is a role model now. Some officers there they do not think to teach others who are there but this man, his mindset and thinking after all he would leave his work at correctional and go home and work, so, he taught us the junior ones and I think he made a legacy there where we, every officers in the province, when things happen we would say "if this officer was here, he would make it like this"...He displayed everything like starting from discipline, he was one disciplined officer inside there, so, whenever he gave his decision no one would dispute him because I mean he had no faults in that part, he gave decisions, so, when he made decisions we would stay quiet.

Female recruit, 1980s.

When I started work one role model was a man because I saw him as a man of discipline, he was always on time, always spoke good things, he did not talk crazy to me, some of the officers joke but he was like wantok (kin), so, he had respect but I saw him as a role model to me because he could give me advice, every time he met me he would encourage in work, so, I started to pick up his good advice. So, that made me see him as a role model during my time at the prison.

Female recruit, 1990s.

In general, women were trained by more senior staff via on-the-job training or looking and following what others did. Another key part of learning on-the-job was rotations, where staff could be rotated to different teams and duties on a regular basis.

There was not available the kind of professional assessment of training needs and assignment of training that is available today for CSSI staff. For basic functions, the induction training and on-the-job training was sufficient. However, it also meant that when computers came on the scene no training was provided in how to use them – which became a challenge for the 1980s and 1990s recruits:

Yes, for computers, I did not do any training, when they put a computer

up in my office, they told me to send email and I had never seen this thing, I just sat down on the chair and I was thinking how do I send email? Because even the basics of computer I did not know too. So, I just sat down read this manual, so, just teach myself.

Female recruit, 1990s.

At the beginning I went and looked at files, even typing, was not good for me too, so, it gave me a big challenge but I had to do it, I learned to do type finger type, didn't know how to print, I learnt the computer now, almost one ream per day I spent for printing. It was just me in the office yeah, making mistakes, and then developing from mistakes on my own.

Female recruit 1980s.

Women recruited in the 1980s and early 1990s had several other challenges to deal with. Those in charge of inmates and gate security worked shift hours day and night, which was particularly challenging for women with children:

True, I had five children and everyone was just kind of one-year difference between them only, so, very, it was a bit tough on me. That time we did not work official hours, we worked shift and at that time this Maternity Leave and Return to Work Arrangement Policy we have this time where women now enjoy this time, that was not in place. I really had a hard time that time. I had to work, work, work, until the child, I went straight to the hospital to give birth. That's how we worked inside there, quite tough when we worked inside there... They just give out shifts only six weeks after birth, then we come back straight to work and we did not come back to official hours, we came back straight to shift. It was very hard especially when you work night shift – children do not like cold milk – but I have to come and work now because there was only one female here, suppose one female doesn't come to work, then I have to work throughout the day, even more.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Before yeah for me, my children, it was like when another child was big, then another one, because I am a woman who works and I was frightened of being sacked, so I waited until my children must be big before another, that was my first one was born 94, another one after 97 finished and then 2002 and then my baby was the last one. Because I was working, like, for

me to go out at night and leave them it was very challenging for me, I left the small baby at the house then I come like that from them, so, I wanted the children to be big and good before I had another one born because I did not want to be absent from work all the time, like I was committed to work so that's how I managed it, yeah.

Female recruit, 1990s.

It is interesting to note that most (4/5) of the pioneering women recruited from 1986-1992 who told their stories had husbands who looked after the children when they were working, often in conjunction with a house girl (nanny). These women thanked their husbands for providing the practical support to take care of their children's needs such as meals, transport and other needs to attend school and to take them to medical services when sick. Overall, housegirls were the most common form of support for women working in correctional services during this time. One woman said she used both at various times in order for her to work:

Yes, in my early days when my children were small, I tried to manage them through my house girls. I took them from my home village, I took 2 or 3 house girls and gave them tasks. One you look after the children, another one you cook, another one you wash and why I talked like that was because I knew that I have more work to do, so, I trusted my house girls and all these house girls stay with me until when my children were big everyone went and I was free. Now this time I do not have any house girl, everyone is grown up... This time I want to tell you that my house girl is my husband, when he finished from work he stayed around the home and he himself looks after the house this time and cooks for this young last born of ours.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Half of the female staff recruited during these early days from 1986-1997 had husbands who were working in police or correctional services so had an understanding of the needs of the kinds of work women did in prisons. Shiftwork often involved coming home late at night for example, and working with men, which was outside the cultural norms of the time.

One woman officer married to another officer reported she managed to nego-

tiate for herself to do official hours and for her husband to do shiftwork. But it was not like that for everyone, some working in the female prison reporting that 16 or 24-hour shifts could occur when the centre was short staffed, and this kind of work was particularly taxing on women with children. Some female officers had times when their children slept at the office at prison as there was no other choice and they felt a responsibility to guard the female inmates.

Female staff reported it was hard to get this “double burden” of childcare and work taken seriously. Staff were disciplined for turning up late, and it was expected for you to work the shifts given whether you had family responsibilities or not. One woman described spacing out the years between the births of her children because she was worried about being sacked if she had time off for having babies, another woman said she was transferred after coming back to work, suspecting it was due to just having a baby and returning to work.

Three out of the ten women who told their stories reported negative opinions from people in their household, particularly husbands and in-laws, impacting on pressures they had in life to manage work and family. Those who also encountered a lack of understanding at home and at work, had a particularly hard time:

Looking back at my time working for corrections, I think one challenge I faced was when I worked shift, my husband did not like for me to work shifts. But shift duties was the main work we came to do, that was all. I faced it, my husband did not accept me to work shifts. We had a real problem. That was one challenge I faced when I worked there, I don't know, maybe lack of understanding or something like that. I tried to apply for official duties but the commander that time did not accept it, he said no, you come work in corrections, our work is to work shifts, so I found it a bit hard because every boss did not accept it.

Female recruit, 1990s.

This lack of support from management and became something women themselves talked about and bonded over:

Like for me in the province, when the women come and then they have

children, or even me too I had too, I had some challenges, like to breast feed or when the children were sick, like one example some children were like this, some children of ours no matter we see they are big in size but for them to go alone and talk about their sickness at hospital, it's a bit hard, they like you mummy to take them, so, when it happened to me, the men complain: "Say, the children are big they should go on their own." Then we had female officers where they come up and say: "Oh think about it because you the men come work but when your children are sick at the house, your wives will take them, why can't you be a little bit flexible, we are mothers and children feel comfortable with their mothers." Yeah, so, that was how us women helped each other. When one talked behind the back of another one we try to educate the male officer yeah: "Oh you try take that back, you look at the other side of the coin, what do you see?" So, that was how we women helped each other with challenges we faced in the correctional centre.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Sometimes we would sit down and talk, share what are the problems and issues, we would talk and about how we could manage these kind of issues, like for instance men, because husbands were involved too much in this drinking business, when we are ready to work, we have to find the men too, so, these kind of problems we would share amongst ourselves. Some women started to overcome the problem of their husband, start to understand it, some bosses called the husband to come and said: "Do you want your wife to work or we stop your wife your wife from working here?" From there, the husbands just heard it and changed their attitudes.

Female recruit, 1980s.

This shared experience and female bonding provided the basis for what would become a push for change, however, it was not easy to change attitudes particularly for those early recruits working in male-dominated environments:

Yes, I find the biggest challenge where I found for me to fight for issues of women. Issues of women who I work with, they, sometimes, they do not share with their bosses, because bosses see them as male and they do not see what are their issues and then they would put them on me. I have to carry

them up and then sit down and wait at another level, the level of bosses but the boss does not say anything about it, so I had, it was a big challenge for me, how to frame what I would take to them. What are the issues of women that they will say yes to. So, I found that I have to find ways how I can convince the bosses, that was a great challenge I found in the workplace.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Other women said a major challenge during the 1980s and 1990s was promotion and career progression and said they felt stuck in the same roles for a long time:

Because they might see me as one lady so they just put me as an admin officer and then to deal with files and to deal with letters, go through mail, come back and deal with sick leave and they look at these things as fit for women, so, they put me there, all my life there. So, through other trainings I went through I said I should not stay like this, I should move from level to level like that, I should move to have ideas to discuss in our management team. I tried to tell them... But I did not move much, like rotations in other places, it was not like that very much. Because of that mindset that I know they had for me, that's it, I know that I stay in one place for a long time.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Then, in 1997, a civil conflict began building, known as “the tensions” which would provide new challenges to women working in correctional services.



Dorothy Siru locks cell in early days of her service.



Pioneering female officers Dorothy Siru (left) and Lotas Molia (right) in the first uniform for female officers.



Inspector Dorothy Siru went on to be in charge of many units and teams, doing work that had previously only been done by men, such as escort of inmates.

CHAPTER 2:

Women During the Tensions (1998–2003)

From 1998–2003 Solomon Islands was embroiled in a civil conflict involving armed militants from the islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita. While the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) arrived in 2003, with the intent of disarmament and restoration of law and order, so, the tensions are considered to have ended then, 2004–2005 remained a tense time for people working in corrections to try and re-establish control in and around correctional facilities. There was a mass escape from prison in 2004 by disaffected inmates. By 2005, these kinds of problems had stopped and Rove Central Correctional Centre's operations had become more normal and routine.

Female staff, like the male staff, worked during the crisis, although control was lost over Rove Central Correctional Centre during the tensions and many staff ran away and sought refuge in the provinces. As armed militants threatened many government offices in Honiara and ransacked government funds, correctional officers too were unable to resist the demand of heavily armed militants, who forced their way into prisons and released prisoners. One woman summarised this time as:

During the tension, work was really bad, it was like we were living in darkness, no law and order, no procedures, no rules, no policy to guide us, we were controlled by militants and managed under their authority, it was really very hard during that time, yeah.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Women's stories from the tension are about the heightened risk they faced, but, at the same time, many women said their favourite memories are what they experienced in the tensions. These are memories of where they met difficult situations and prevailed over them. One female officer said the female unit was short-staffed because of people's fear to work during that time so she was put in charge of the whole unit. There was only one female inmate at that time so they soon decided to send the inmate to Gizo for her own safety. One woman described how this gave her the opportunity to go work in Gizo too and continue her employment:

I had that thinking during the ethnic tension, during the ethnic tension between Malaita and Guale, many officers from various provinces they ran away, no one stayed in Honiara. I was inside the boat to go back to Western Province I went to work in Gizo. I did not want to come here [Honiara], no good we went back and faced more of that kind of thing, we feared that more things would happen, so I said I'll go back to my province and work from there. I finished work and it happened that everything cooled down with the help of RAMSI who came, we came back to work, worked peacefully, back to normal at our place of work here at correctional and at headquarters. During that time, I did not want to resign.

Female recruit, 1990s.

A female correctional officer was working at the prison gate, when MEF militants demanded to come inside the prison:

Many memories in my mind, some are sensitive, some are positive. One memory during the tensions I really have not settled now is 5th June. One mass release, prisoners from Guale, they ran away, they stayed in Block 3, that night too they said they would come kill everyone. Like I will never forget this one, we were working but then a group of militants come, every militant, that time I worked the afternoon, me and another man at the gate, one was at long term every block was empty so only us looked after the prison. Another one, he released 20 men from Guale but I cannot forget how they harassed us at the gate lodge. Outside the fence it was full dark with people in the truck who came to release the prisoners inside. I sat there I did not say anything, after not a long time, but outside it was full, then they hammered the gate. So, they told me "open the gate", they were banging it, so, they told me "open the gate now!", that time that officer saved my life, how I panicked and was frightened there, like, I did not think of anyone, God only I was thinking about, they threw the key to me and they said: "You go out". I was like I left everything to God, so I went and opened it then the leader came in the gate and he said: "Matron we came to release everyone inside, because 20 Guale men are out now". I did not know what they would do inside, so, I opened the gate, when I opened the gate everyone wanted to run inside, then the leader selected 10 people to come in, he selected 10 men, fully masked and holding high powered guns, I could not recognise their faces but the structure of their bodies, yeah, I could see some

prison officers and police officers yeah. But I was frightened because everyone was armed, when they came in, how they grabbed my key, grabbed my diary, ripped out the telephone, took every key and started open from gate 1 and then gate 2, and on and on. I looked but every prisoner was carrying their luggage. Like that experience stayed in my brain, like I had trauma about it, I do not know how I will forget it. Worst experience I experienced which I have not told out. A very big thing, hard life, but, I enjoy work in prison too, yeah.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Another officer working inside the prison also described that day and how it changed her thinking:

One thing I cannot forget during that time of the tension, when we were working, like, I don't know what came over me, I did not think to be frightened or runaway like many people ran away, I was not frightened to run away, like we just worked. That time, yeah, it was like we worked, we worked sometimes 24 hours because there was no one to come work, until the time where the militants took out the prisoners, yeah. So, when they took out the prisoners, every prisoners were out, we women were not many, everyone had already run away from us, I think those who worked I can name them, only those few ones were here when we were working, so, the militants come bang and bang at the gate but I was lucky because I was inside the female unit. So, they were banging and banging there, but I hid inside the female unit, so, they showed their guns to the people at the gate to get them to open the gate, yeah, so that time I looked, went back, like this, I was just thinking if these people come and shoot at us what will happen to us? I think I just had mature thinking then, before I was not frightened, sometimes we came to work, guns were firing at the gate lodge, yeah, underneath only every fire service, yeah you could hear machine guns they were shooting with but we were just inside. Sometimes we came out we, it was like then we just ran away to the inside of the fence of the prison, everyone was taking cover all over the place there.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Officers in the provinces also worried the conflict (mostly confined to Guadalcanal and Malaita, with Shortlands and Western Province also having problems) would spill over to their home provinces. One officer based in the province said she felt strongly women should know how to use arms:

One time during the tension, when the tension was just starting to get hot, I treated it like it was a favourite experience of mine. It was the first time for me to get a red mark yeah, so, we hand over in the gate room during those times, we had arms yeah and the place had many short gun, pump action, we had all the rounds there, bullets there, hand cuffs there and all along when it was time for us to finish work we would hand over the arms, yeah, count them, not really knowing that these things were workable or function yet or what? Not until one day we hand over the shift we worked and then I got out this pump action and I went and discharged a round on top of the hill there. Right on the spot Sergeant in Charge he red marked me now, he said I discharged the round without order from the boss. I was red marked now, they were very fast with my case. Two days after I appeared in martial court and the Commandant of RCCC (Rove Central Correctional Centre) that time. So, I happened to go to martial court and my case was uplifted because I gave a reason like this "What if anyone attacks us?" It was the time tension started to get hotter and hotter, they said they saw Gualale militants around and I heard the story that one day they would come and release everyone of theirs who was locked inside. Suppose they happen to come then we go hold these things, shoot with them and it doesn't work? So, I tested it, made the Special Task of ours try to do some repair to make the arms workable. So, my case was acquitted there, I won my case, so like it was something where I will not forget. If I had been frightened and quiet I would have been in trouble, might have lost my job but I must stand for what is right and I must tell them no good they [militants] come but we are at the bottom of the pump action. This is one of my favourite memories I cannot forget, quickly I was in martial court and quickly I was acquitted.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Despite all these threats, the women who told their stories for HerStory did not want to leave their work, as one woman explained:

I cannot forget the time of tension, yeah, then after everyone had gone out and the Commissioner said: "You people must keep the centre, no good

they come and destroy it". So yes, every time would come inside there, we worked shifts too yeah, so, we come to just look after this centre of ours. No matter there were no prisoners, but we just went ahead to look after it until prisoners come back. If we weren't there, I think they would have come destroyed inside the centre then all of us correctional officers would have no work, because they had destroyed everything inside, they wanted to come do something inside but they saw us working inside, so they would go around, around, come back. So, we looked after this prison of ours, that's why we have work until this time. So, I think that's it, a bit of story I think where I saw it, yeah. Like, it was hard for us women working that time, many people had run away, gone back to their homes during that time. That time I think there was less than 10 of us, we were not many... we found our own transport to come, so, this time everyone relaxes and does not come to work but before yeah if we did not come work, we would have a red mark. Before we really treated work as our priority, we must come and work.

Female recruit, 1990s.

While people say the tension ended in 2003, security conditions inside the prison and around were tenuous for some time yet. Many prisoners had escaped, and new ones were being brought in to await trial for tensions-related offences. Phylistus Fafoi in the film described how she was involved in teams assigned to put prisoners back after escapes and riots of 2004:

During the tension, I worked, actually one thing that happened just after the tension there was a riot inside. Those people did not want to go back to their cells. We had a rumour inside here and we had a team too to go inside, make the place come back to order. That time I was off work, four days off, then came back "It's us, your team will come pick you up at the house". "No, I am going to Buala, yeah". I expected for the team behind me to do it, I was trying to escape from it, but no, it was my time to out everything to go back for everything, to go back inside the box now. Then I came we had to put them all back now. So, they put them back inside, it was with all the help with expertise, some advisers, all the ERG (Emergency Response Group), all the emergency boys and girls and the shift officers. It's all teamwork to make it happen. No matter you are an army one, you

are in charge, but it's good for everyone to be a team, everyone has one mind, one thinking about something that is hard for us to achieve.

One positive feature of the tensions were that management and RAMSI personnel recognised that key women were hardworking and committed during the tensions and as soon as 2003, some were quickly promoted to fill jobs as correctional services tried to go back to normal operation. Catherine Kere became Inspector after 2003 for example, and another officer described being quickly appointed and trained as a clerk for the Commandant. Staff were trained in teamwork, with many women mentioning finding training to become part of the Emergency Response Group particularly interesting.

The new training and job opportunities from 2003-2004 gave female officers some hope and encouragement after the difficulties of the tensions. One woman described how it was to come back to work during those times:

Many officers, they had run away from this tensions but now many of them started to come back, though we ran away we did not lose jobs because we were under duress, we were under situations where safety was important, but we did not have safety, that's why we went home. Arrival of everyone made work come back to life, so from that time, as a woman, I worked but still felt pressure, my feeling that time, I was not really satisfied or good because there was lots of harassment in the workplace. Us women we don't really have an understanding of what is harassment but harassment is an unwanted action or behaviour where we don't accept but when we don't know these things, we think their action is right, we take it wrong, we think what they are doing is OK. During that time, I really did not feel like working, pressure from home was big, then later us women teamed up again, and work started to be interesting again.

Female recruit, 1990s.

In 2003, a reconciliation was organised between police women and correctional women. There had been arguments and tension between the two groups over some misunderstandings about personal issues and sports teams representing the two sides. It happened at the United Church prior to the first combined conference with police and correctional women.

From bringing women together in this way, and encouragement from RAMSI advisers, the idea of a women's network for correctional officers was born, as described by the current and previous chairs of the network:

I remembered 2003 we had a combined conference, that conference was to deal with differences between police women and correctional officers. We needed differences on the side of sports, the police had a netball club and we had a netball club too. Two superpower clubs it built differences between women police officers and correctional women officers, so, when those differences went on for some time until when we came in. 2004 they were able to take us together and we had one big reconciliation at United Church. Reconciliation between female police officers and correctional female officers. During the reconciliation, the Deputy of Police, all of us and Reverend of the United Church came. We were in the church then the women inside the teams they took turns to go up and say their apologies and cry too during the reconciliation. After reconciliation, we went to attend a one-week conference. That time we were new to the service too, we just saw that kind of thing but after they went finished, from that they agreed prison should have their own network. Police women and correctional women they agreed for correctional women officers to have their own network for themselves. In 2006 the network was formally recognised by the Commissioner of Correctional Services, so I started to come and join this network.

Wendy Gebe, current CSSI Women's Network Chair.

There was a network with police, so they would like us to have a network as well at the correctional service, so, that call came when Val (adviser) was in the social welfare department unit with Mrs. Aronisaka. In a way when I was here inside the workplace the network was not big at that time. She said, "idea like this", I said, "that's not a bad idea." I said, "let's go, so that we can help mentor the girls as they come in, let's establish a network." At that time, it started with the police and then came to me here at the jail... One thing is thanks to the Advisers who came to help us start to make this women's network. It was an idea which came into our minds, as someone who came out with that thinking: "Oh, we need to make women's network now, make the challenges women face have some answer to them," and

recognition, we women could break through barriers, when women come together as a team.

Phylistus Fafoi, former CSSI Women's Network Chair, 2003-2010.

The Network's first task was to create an action plan of what they wanted to achieve and hold a conference of women in 2004. Women based in the provinces gathered their own peers together to meet and contribute to the national meetings.

As pioneering women remembered, initially the gatherings were police and correctional officers, but the latter soon made more progress:

Like looking at women's network where we have, first time they gave a letter to my Commandant and requested me to go to his office and say "oh you will attend a network here". But corrections had not separated yet, it was with police and prison still. First one the police hosted, next one the prison hosted and then later they split, police set up their network and us at corrections made it too, and the corrections one exists until today, the police one I am not sure whether its died out now because every time I travel for network the police in the province say "you women are doing well, for us there is nothing now".

Female recruit, 1990s.

I heard 2-3 women from police they came and they said: "we like how you women bring the women together, it looks really nice when you go in a group, the annual workshops of yours, us we hear about it, it's different from how we organise ourselves and how you are a team in the workplace and how your team on the side of sport is different from how ours is." This positive talk was, like, I hear it many times from the police women.

Female recruit 2003-2018.

Women described the initial meetings of the network as being a time to share experiences, often for the first time: I found my favourite times were when we meet, especially the women. I found that it's a time where I can share with the others what are their challenges, I want to know too, what are their challenges of they themselves in their centres, what are issues of

women, so that I can take them and then compare with us at our correctional centre. Whether their kind of challenges, we face too? How they go about settling things? So, that us too, if I am inside and then I can show examples to us at our centre. So, I found that times where we go, as you know, go for conferences and all these workshops which we attend, it's a good time where I found, it's a time which I really enjoy and I want to share and hear more information and I want to just communicate with the senior ones.

Female recruit, 1980s.

These meetings of women in correctional services would propose a set of ideas that, once adopted by the CSSI Executive, would substantially change the conditions for women working at CSSI and for the post-tensions female recruits.



CSSI Women's Network Chair Wendy Gebe travelling to conduct awareness in Malaita.



After changes to legislation in 2006, women were allowed to work in all sections of the prison. Above: Naery Suamoana at work.



CSSI Women's Network members participating in International Women's Day celebrations.

CHAPTER 3:

Women's Network, Women's Progress (2003-2018)

After the tensions period the number of women recruited increased dramatically – by 2018 approximately 1 in 6 CSSI employees were female (93 females, 447 males). Women who were in service prior to and during the tensions generally got promoted after the tensions, while the number of new female recruits grew as CSSI recruited for posts in Honiara and the provinces.

One post-tensions female recruit said from when she joined in 2008 to ten years later the number of women in the annual in-take had doubled. The larger intake of women was enabled by a change to the Correctional Services Act and Regulations in 2006 and 2007 which allowed women to work in correctional centre blocks housing male inmates. The women wore the same uniforms as the men (with trousers and weapons) and were charged with the same duties. Initially the idea was met with some resistance, but the Women's Network pushed for men and women to be seen and considered equally capable:

It happened too, when we worked this police network, we told what all the issues were, where you, every women are inside, go work and how you feel. They said they want to wear trousers too, long trousers because they would go between men. They said to look into it, skirts were for women who went inside. We said we work in a place of men as a gender now, you are born a girl but when you come do work of men you must try to be like a man too, do work of men too. So, that was what we pushed for and it would be more comfortable too to wear when you sit down inside the blocks of men, you feel comfortable... When we did it, some comments came, but when we pushed for it to the bosses, we want this one, they viewed the reasons we had and accepted it. Some did not agree with us, we say must wear uniform same as men too. We told them: "Well you take same pay, we take same pay, same work you do, we do too, to go inside all the boxes too, we escort the inmates too." We wanted to wear the clothing too so that we look the same as other officers, operational too. We told them and they accepted it.

Phylistus Fajoi, former Chair of the CSSI Women's Network 2003-2010.

All the women that witnessed this change to allow women to work in the male blocks, said it was an exciting moment:

My favourite memories are like before people said no women can work inside the blocks where men stay. But when I was recruited I came to the place where they put me because like I will not forget it, "hey, I am an army too man" I come work in this place now, place where women have not been before, men only keep the men, women you keep the women, so, this time we flow with these people. Any place they threw us into, we went now Looking back on these times for us women it was taboo to work in a place of men but this time that's work now. So, I will not forget it, when I went into the block for men, I felt like "hey I can do this too in here".

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

One thing we, the network, contributed to that time was this new Act. It allowed the women to work here, we said why aren't we allowed to work in the male dominated blocks, for prison, all of us come through the same training so we should do the same job. So, when they lifted this barrier, women could work in every block now. Many benefits from women's network came like one was this new Act, we, some women had opportunities to be in charge of male blocks, like I said earlier, I looked after three male blocks so I looked after the unit, looked after the juveniles and looked after this 4-wing block after that new Act was approved. Me, I was inside everything.

Female recruit, 1980s.

I was really very eager to enter in the blocks, for me to see how is work there, I want to feel like how women cannot go inside there, what is so special about it? So, that part, yeah, was very interesting so I really looked forward to it. When they took us in, it was like our moral was high too, to carry out the same work in the prison. Like I was the kind of type: I was happier, felt motivated, kind of like that. So, I would never miss work and wanted to work all the time.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

My favourite memory was when it changed, it was a hard time but at the same time it was a nice memory from day one when all the females start work in the male blocks. I don't know why but because when we just recruit and on and on then we went inside the block, before we went in, we came to the gate lodge and then only they came told us that us females, us three, cannot go to the male blocks. For us, it was really, like, eagerness, where we expected to go see real life in the male blocks, but they told us no. We gave a cry there, our eagerness, like we tried to argue, I really thought that time even the commandant, it was when commandant or general adviser was there, adviser George or one of the two of them, how they talked to us: "sorry now but you cannot go, etc. etc.". We insist but we, just it did not work, we wanted to visit inside the male. So, eagerness to go see the male block, they stopped it. I was like tears dropping because the place like they gave it, commandant sent them came to see us three, one good, we another. I waited with the other one and gave a cry there so tear drops run like that, how we expected it, we were happy, say we will go see it now, so, that memory of the time they said to work in the male block we were really excited. We had fear, same time over excitement now, so, it was really something we saw and cried about, at least we go work in the place of men, so, it showed we are strong too. That feeling just self-esteem, it really made us high that time. It was really nice.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Unlike the pioneering women who mostly had family in police or corrections, women recruited from 2003-2018 heard about the vacancies and had encouragement to apply mostly from friends:

I heard it through other neighbours when they came and they took the forms that time, so when they came passed my area I went and asked: "These forms are for what?" Then they told me: "Oh, for the new package for correctional services." So I heard it through people and that is why I came and took work here.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I saw they advertised it in the Island Sun, when they said to do recruitment for CSSI, I came took the form and applied for work.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Two or three friends worked here, some encouraged me too, that's how I tried it and I came.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Ok work here, I was really like how I first heard it from a girlfriend of mine, she wanted us to go take the form, so, through my girlfriend we went and took this form.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Ok the job, how I heard about it, a former officer, they no longer work here passed me in town. In 2008 we met at Point Cruz they said to me: "Hey a recruitment is almost happening at CSSI". So, I said: "What is CSSI?" I thought it was some new sort of work because I didn't know what is CSSI, the only thing I knew was prison. They said: "Ah prison service, we will recruit 20 more new officers, five female and the rest men... so if you are interested to apply you come, I will let you know what time job and recruitment applications go out."

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I heard about the work from some old officers, the prison officers here, they said to me: "How? Are you interested to apply to correctional?" "Yes, I'm interested." "A vacancy is out now," they said. So, I said: "OK good, you give it to me for me to try if I can get through". Then they said: "We can help you if you have any question or you are confused, just come and see us and we will help you."

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Friends encouraged each other and helped allay some fears potential recruits had:

When I came to work, some of us made our friends want to come in. "How do I get work, what is the process, application and things like that?" "Oh, it's like this..." "Hey its nice work there." Some commented like: "Hey that work is fit for men only." "Hey, we women know how to do it too, we are many women, have our network there, we can encourage us women how

to work equally with men.” Some would say: “We hear some stories like...” “Every workplace is the same as this.” Every workplace is the same, males and females work, nothing to make a big deal about, “it depends on you, you stick to what is right,” and they laughed.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

One recruit said her mother encouraged her and another that her father was the one that made her apply:

My father told me because he saw they put it out in the Star and he knew I was sick of school, I was out from there already, so, he told me: “You go pick up the form from that place.” Here at the Headquarters, so I came. So, I said: “What kind of work is this?” So, they said: “Work for the prisoners here.” Then I started to be: “Hey I am not fit for it, men will see just I am kind of skinny like this.” “You apply for it, work is here.” So, I followed what my dad said.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Another female from the provinces said she wanted to be one of the first women from her place to do this sort of work:

I was interested to work in this job because I saw in our history there was no one from my region working inside the jail, so I was the only women from our place to work inside corrections.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Female recruits with no family connections in corrections or police came to corrections for different reasons:

I decided to work in corrections because when I was at school I had aims, two aims of mine is when I was big and finished school I decided to become a teacher or a correctional officer. So after a while I managed to, my first dream I achieved, I was teaching, I took my certificate for teaching, then for a little bit of time I taught, then due to some circumstances, I stopped for one year, and that year I stopped this recruitment package for corrections came out, so I thought like, oh I will try it, because it was part of my

dreams to become a correctional officer, so, I applied for work and then I came in.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Challenge I faced that time was I was starting a new family, I started a new family and I was reliant on my husband, only him. Husband was the breadwinner in the house but at the same time he was self-employed too, which was difficult too for all of us. So, then my plan to go to school, I started to prioritise it less, I said, "I think I'll just find work, I'll find work to make me have money to support the family". So that was how I came to join Correctional Services it was not something that I dreamed of joining, it was just something because I really faced hard life then. So, when my relative, a former officer, she told me about it, I said: "Oh this is an opportunity I must try."

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Correctional Centres were a daunting environment to work for many of the recruits, initially:

When I applied, I heard some stories, the people inside there, 2 or 3 of them were aggressive at times. So, when I came in I was not confident, when I was at a new place because I was thinking about those stories that sometimes they can pour hot water on you, anything in their hands if they are cross with you, they will throw it at you. Like these were my fears when I came in now...My work inside correctional was a bit hard for me. I came in, worked inside corrections, the moment I entered the gate I felt like a prisoner too. So, for how many hours I stay inside the workplace I was like that, I would feel as if I was the same as the people I was looking after. For eight hours and then after eight hours I would go out and then I felt free.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Ok the biggest challenge I had to work in this place is that I learnt to work under command, something I had never done before. I worked under command, security orders, I worked under security orders, for example before I enter the jail, when I am inside the jail, before I go further than gate lodge we have to be patted down by a duty officer. Something I have never done in my life before, and at first it was not comfortable for me, but I had to accept it, because it's the nature of the work. The other thing too is some

possessions I cannot carry in, mobiles are restricted from the place. These big challenges I had in the workplace but as time goes on it became not a challenge for me, it was part of my work.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

When I came in as recruit, I worried and I was frightened, frightened of prisoners, I thought I was not fit to work in this place because I saw the prisoners had big mighty muscle hands, like I was bit frightened too and then my boss I was frightened of too. So, I worried about it, like, hey, will I be alright with this work or how?

Female recruit 2003-2018.

I just started work inside corrections I found it very hard, challenging for me, because I deal with, especially the male prisoners, most of my time, I know it is not easy. All the things which I did not expect, I started to expect it. Like, they wanted to see me all the time, especially because I am a female officer, they ask for me, any kinds of questions, or want to tell stories with me, sometimes their faces made me frightened. My first experience was like that. Sometimes they talked harshly to me, these sort of things made me frightened, that was my experience. Then the number of prisoners too contributed to my morale, when I was working, sometimes it was low, that was side of my experience.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

When I recruit and it was my first time to enter in the centre, I had that feeling, yeah, the atmosphere and environment inside it was different altogether from any offices outside. This place inside fence, so, I had a feeling that time, when I just went in after recruitment. But when it changed from Prison Service to Correctional Services, we moved into the male blocks, a thinking came to me, like, strength of men is different from female, and it was a fear of mine. So, when I worked I was always alert, then what came into my mind is, anything a prisoner can grab me, he can grab me anytime. That was my fear, so every time I passed something or went to talk with them when they needed anything I must be alert to my surroundings, that is how I worked, the feeling of fear it always made me alert.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

However, women quickly adapted to the work and came to feel more comfortable with prisoners, through talking with them:

The first time I worked with them, the first day an inmate called me, I was frightened. "Hey Sir, you go so see him, I do not want to go, lots are there." So, he went and attended it and came back and said to me: "You must not be frightened, if you show them that you are frightened it provides an access for them to you, one easy way for them to go through you, so you must show that you can do these things on your own, you are brave, that is one thing you must try to do, do not be frightened, as long as they call you, you go attend them, this is one thing you will learn out of it. By then they will see that madam is a woman who does not scare, no matter we call her she will come." Things like that: "You go, you hear what they want which you know you cannot do, you tell them straight and you explain it to them, make sure you do not lie to them, because if you lie, they will keep asking you the same question. They will say: 'why are you lying to us, you are a con woman'. This kind of talk madam you must try to avoid." That was how my In-Charge told it, advised me. So, I learnt a lot, very much.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

The thinking of people when they see us, how they tell me is: "Hey you work inside the prison and you are not frightened? I mean you are a woman, and not frightened? You are not frightened of the men inside there?" Like that, they told me all the time. This work here I think we train a bit for it, then we do some work, school a bit about it too, so, we get the idea so we know how to manage a bit or deal with these people. So, first time we are frightened but this time it is like we go inside so we stay with them, after a while its normal, like we are there every day, it's like we are just at the house. Every day we see, we talk with them, after a while we get used to it, the workplace.

Female recruit 2003-2018.

I was not confident but as time goes on, work it becomes like normal to me to confront the inmates and then I had my friends, other officers they encourage me, so, I start to know what to do inside the place, after a while this fear was not with me anymore, I was even more interested. I worked, yes first time I was frightened, but when I worked I found it really interesting to me, I knew the different types of people who come in with different crimes, when I confront them I talk well with them, encourage them, and

I found I grow too in my knowledge and I go up to, I feel confident to do work and I find it very interesting for me.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Women who joined CSSI after the tensions were interested in rehabilitation, with many mentioning prior volunteer work at churches and NGOs as giving them motivation to join CSSI and continue working there:

Ok by reading through this package of ours I saw one part which is interesting to me because it talks about rehabilitation, reintegration of inmates and I am interested. You rehabilitate the inmates through what you can do with them. Like I had interest to interact with the people but mainly the young people, so, when I read through this package, the part which interested me, rehabilitation of the inmates. So, I questioned 2-3 old officers where I was neighbours with them, I said "How these people stay?". Then they said: "They stay like a community." So that part, I said: "I think I am interested in that part."

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Sometimes prisoners really want to tell me their stories and I try to sit down and think about how we can help these children here, especially inside here, I can talk about how we can help, the programs and things like that, but when we go out we don't have anything to do with them anymore. I was trying to think about it, suppose they help, like other groups outside to monitor these people where they are here and grow up. Especially the age groups like teenage children come inside. Sometimes I feel sorry for them, when they tell stories about how they ended up in this place.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Most important thing I learnt in work was when you rehabilitate a person, that was something important to me. When you try to rehab a person like that, I think it's helpful for our country too, for you to rehab a person to go out and become a good citizen of ours and I think every In-Charge since I worked helped out with my work to understand that we do rehabilitation.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

My favourite time is when I worked shift duty, this I must say, because I believe that time they come together for my shift I believe that one is a very real experience where you get the feel of the job as a correctional officer or a correctional woman. That was my favourite time and the most memorable, so, what I want to clarify is just that the main role of being a correctional officer is security, self-containment and rehabilitation. That experience taught me that's the real nature of work of being a correctional officer.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Working with inmates, female officers came to understand about what makes people think certain ways and how to calm down inmates. Women's skills in solving problems at the prison through talking rather than physical action, became more widely known through several activities of the Women's Network and the observations of male staff in teams including women. For instance, the first Gender Audit Report in 2012, states: "Female Correctional officers in Solomon Islands are likened to 'cooling agents and panadol' by their male counterparts because of their ability to defuse tension and conflict within Correctional Centres."

Female recruits 2003-2018 talked about this as being an interesting part of the job, and one which women were adept at:

Something very interesting about this work, when I started to work inside this place, it helped me to start to study behaviour of people and I started to know when people were lying, I knew that too. When a man tells the truth, I know by looking at their body language. So, from there, I learnt a lot and it helped me outside, not only inside the workplace, but when I was outside, how people start to talk like that, I know how to analyse – oh that man here is trying to lie to me again. These things helped me a lot, when I worked in the prison.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Something I saw too, I learnt too, for example like sometimes mental men, they put them in the prison too. So, only qualified mental illness nurse will know how to handle him, but we, when a mental man comes we have to find a way now, how I can try and cool his mind, because he is not normal... if you go hard with them they will just be even more cross. So, you have to find quickly how for you to go soft or you negotiate or go cross or

kind of like that, different types. Really one main thing I never learnt how to handle these people, I came in straight away I was handling the offenders inside here.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

One thing which is really interesting about this work is how we are recruited, come in and then how to manage these people. Especially like when you are young then someone who is a prisoner their age is mature more than me. So, how for you to deal with them now, how to deal with certain prisoners who are older than you, that one is like the most interesting part I have come across.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Another woman said while relating to the prisoners as a “mummy” was good to keep prisoners calm, it also meant they hassled her with their requests and she felt pressure dealing with their demands:

That challenge I faced and they saw how I reacted differently, after that they started to listen, because when they were aggressive, I talked like their mother too, like a mother would talk with children and they realised, mothers cannot be easy all the time, sometimes if you keep on asking for something, then it will get to a time mummy is cross, she will talk strongly to you, so, this time they understand me and it is easy. For this challenge I talk about in the Juvenile Unit, I do not see any women who has this challenge which I faced because in this unit I am the only one looking after them, every time they say “Your mummy is coming, anything wait for your mum”, so, I see this challenge I face... I am the only one to come across this challenge here because I look after them and they see me as a mummy of theirs.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Women described other difficult situations they faced with male prisoners:

Ok a challenge I know I go through, when I worked shifts in Block 2. Place of the convicts in the RCCC. After lock down, after we lock every inmates for rest, one of our officers went to find food outside at the small shops outside. So, there were two of us, I think we stayed and two inmates argued a bit after that lockdown, so, us two managed to radio to the gate lodge to

ask for assistance for anyone to come up help us. But they did not arrive here but us two solved the problem ourselves. Two inmates settled down, two from Block 2, that was a challenge I went through when I was working at Block 2.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Sometimes it's good, sometimes not, because different types of men, sometimes, some men are like "I am here", here we have these kind of men too, one time we had a bit of an argument, one time I could not hold it anymore, so, I swore, and the inmate heard it. "Man! You want to be a boss too much," he said. "Man, you listen to me because I am supervising you, anything I tell you, listen." Times like that every idea you have, they do not follow, some are not like that, like we work and everything flows. But here there are lots, so, sometimes I go back to the house then anger I take from here, go argue in the house, stress here then angry more on top. Interesting kinds of people, these ones.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

In the women's prison too, like with the early recruits, young officers had to have courage to deal with older inmates, and those women held on charges of tensions-related offences. One woman recruited just after the tensions detailed her experience:

Ok, on my first day of posting after they made us go on trial in a shift. First day of work I go there, this shift In-Charge of ours who was supposed to come meet me they came late. So, when I went to take over that first day of trial, officers handover, I think that day shift they hurry up, want to come out too, so, then they left me alone in Block 3, at the same time they went out, went out the gate, I was there alone. I did not know, I tried like that, I tried to show that I did not want to show those two or three prisoners there that I had fear. I tried to act like I was confident but I think if they looked at me they would know but I said: "I am here." I said: "I am strong now." So, I sat down just inside and waited for my In-Charge but they were late... So, then I just realised that there was a new one inside Block 3. But no shift In-Charge so I just sit down there, man it was a funny experience! I sat down and one inmate there, wife of a militant too, ex-militant I think she knows because they know how the system is. They look and know who the

new ones are, so, I think she wanted to make me frightened too. I go inside the office but this time it was lock down sit down, and she came out from her cell, the type that did not want to smile too, walkabout closer, walkabout rough with it. Pulled her chair, dragged it, put it on the table, kind of sit down banging all about, so, I kind of looked but as though I was acting really like a man, not frightened at all, but for your first placement you see it, it was like a movie, I said about this one.

But it was nice, like, after a little while they called and sent a woman from gate to come assist. They came in and then I told the woman that this woman here, and explained it: "Oh the situation here is like this". It might be she knew, so, like, but she was not that aggressive that woman, but you understand, first time placement, then this picture from the movie inside too, so, when it happened I sat down acting strong but inside my heart was pumping now, I said: "When will this woman throw something?" But it's something I really learnt, a nice experience.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Other women described days they dealt with unusual crises in their work:

One thing I will never forget since I worked until now, was a part case it was an incident which happened at our centre, a death in custody. At that time, I was in charge of the shift and so every decisions and work I had to struggle with, must...how do I make decisions and it was my first time to experience it too, so, that makes me never forget that incident, an inmate died inside his cell and it was the afternoon my team was working. I was the In-Charge and when my officer saw the dead body he came back to report to me, and I did not know what to do, so I had to go and identify the body. I knew fear but when I held him, I held back the fear. I am a person to fear spirits, time to do that I don't know, I had to hold the dead body to confirm it, I acted like a doctor, like I was a real doctor before we went and got the doctor to come...I confirmed first if he was dead, so we could inform the bosses. I said I have to hold the body, so, when I held it I said we need to call the boss to come, so, I came back to the office and called them, three male officers worked under me, supervision of mine, so, I called them and told two of them to stay back with the dead body and the other one, because our phone could not call out, so we had to run to the house. But I

put someone there to ring the bell, this bell we use to call the inmates come back from work and call people out for parade and all their activities, that big bell I positioned one officer there to ring the bell full time. Boy asked: "how do I ring the bell" I say for 2 or 3 hours, so my officer had to follow. The decision I made, I was shocked, so, when I told him ring the bell to my boy, it rang, rang and rang and everyone in the prison had to run and come, following the bell. I waited for another officer to call the Chief of Security, we were in the middle of the road, everyone came following the bell, the police officer from the station and the officers working for corrections, they heard this bell non-stop so they came. Came then they just came to attend to the body then boss just made the decision to take the doctor and everything to check this inmate. This I will not forget the time where I was in charge and looked after the team when the incident happened inside.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Looking back at my time at corrections, some small favourite memories, there are many situations I went through, I really like one which I can pick out – the time where something happened in prison, flash flood operation happened and officers worked 16 to 24 hours then. Some had colds did not turn up because starting in the morning until night until next day people were wet cleaning up, so, I see no matter the situation is like that, everyone worked and enjoyed it, and everyone was part of it, even when it was 16-24 hours everyone continued to carry out our duties. I was part of that operation too, I really enjoyed it, it was a new experience for me to work more than eight hours, no rest and come back.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Harassment, particularly swearing, teasing or trying to touch the female officers, was an issue mentioned by 38% of all the participants in HerStory. Most of the harassment came from prisoners, and in Rove Central Correctional Centre, harassment was curbed by females working in teams with men, as one woman explained:

When we go do cell check, we go past, some of them shout, we always go with males when doing cell check, so, we are free to do things, we do not go alone, so, we face all those, talk that comes, and then we just put it behind

us. When we are doing work, we always go with a male colleague.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Only three women (13% of participants) reported that they had experienced harassment from officers over their working life from the 1980s to today. One early recruit said harassment made her consider resigning while another said it was not until later that she realised what harassment was and felt like she could oppose it (see Chapter 2). The women facing harassment from officers both in history and today were all based in the provinces, where women are more likely to be the sole woman in all-male teams:

We don't know but like it's quite common, its more common here, I see it in the correctional setting, this kind of teasing and provoking here, it is organizational norms or something like that. This teasing and provoking it's part of it or what I have seen and faced too. There are times when I come across this kind of thing, feel offended, sometimes I just cry or sometimes I retaliate and do an improper action like kick something or scream like that. I worked in two correctional centres, same thing, so that's why I say I think organisational norms or part of the culture of CSSI.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Even though the number of women recruits increased after the tensions, women were still faced with a number of challenges including negative perceptions about women working in the service. One woman based in the provinces explained that the thinking was it was a job for boys:

So, day just before applications were due I heard the boys talk about it then I approached my in-law who lived in the same house, but because us here, it was work for men only, so he gave it out for every mam. I heard them talking and then this evening before, it was due the next day, I asked him: "Please can I try it?" He was quiet and then he said: "OK if you want to try it, take this form here." Full night I was busy answering the questions without realising that I would become a correctional officer... When I was short listed for interview, that time I became serious now. I said: "Hey I think I have a chance here man." When I came for the interview there was many of us, daughters of police officers so when I competed with the daughter of a police officer, it made me want the job, did my best, because like I was in

competitive group...So, when I did the interview they even asked me, they said: "Do you have any questions?" Then I said: "Oh yes, I have one question, any female from this place join the organisation too?" Then they gave me the answer: "Oh, no, female here yet, you would be the first from that place if you work in Correctional Services." When I heard that comment I was thinking I think I will go in.... I was really excited without knowing that some grannies, relatives and everyone did not agree because this work was for men, wear uniform, even my husband that time, we were inside a relationship and engaged. I even told him that I applied for this job, correctional officer, then what he told me, he said: "Man! This work is for every juri (prostitute), work for whores, my parents will not like you." Then I told him, I still remember it, I said: "To gain respect in the workplace, you display respect, you respect the people around you, they will respect you too." I gave these words and then I went. I left everything behind and went ahead, that's how I got this job, I just went for it.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Women recruits from 2003-2018 described working in male-dominated environments, particularly in some sections of the service:

I found working inside corrections very tough because I was working with a culture of male-dominated environment where only men were numerous and the inmates I worked with most of them male.

Female recruit 2003-2018.

Biggest challenge for me in the workplace was that the workplace was male-dominated and like when I just came to work, gender had not come in yet, respect was a little bit low yet. Harassment, like people yeah, I found it a bit challenging because when I came in I was a young girl, I worked a bit of time before I got married.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

One challenge I came across when I came to work here was sometimes I was alone, when I worked in Block 3 it was good, there was many women there, so, we could share stories, whatever things I wanted to share I could share, but when I went to work in another unit it was like, only many men at that place, so, like, sometimes I had some things to share but I did not

share them because I think they are not interested to hear it.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

In general, women working at the correctional facilities at Rove were less isolated than those in the provinces. Female staff in the provinces often find themselves the only woman in teams of men:

For example, at this point of time I am posted here [a Provincial facility] and I work as a shift officer, we only have a few female officers and do not work together on team and one unit because each unit pulls out one woman, so all of us work alone with the men. So, I find it a bit hard when you work with only men. We have raised these issues but no one has acted or looked closely at it yet.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

One woman said she had problems working under a female manager and described a case of this, working in the female unit, when a manager talked harsh to her and she cried over it, but said she did not want the inmates to see division between the female officers. However, the majority of 2003-2018 recruits talked about the positive role of senior and higher ranked women in supporting them and providing role models. Particularly often mentioned as inspirations were Phylistus Fafoi and Alison Salu whose stories are in the HerStory film, but also early recruit Anna Gianno who provided leadership role to staff in the provinces. The first women to reach senior roles were nominated as women who demonstrated what female officers could achieve through service and promotion.

The stories of women reveal that male and female managers are more supportive of women working in corrections these days. While seven out of ten women recruited from 1986-2000 had stories about management not being supportive in their actions and comments, only three out of ten women recruited from 2003-2018 had stories about management not being supportive. Nine out of ten women recruited since 2000 had stories about management supporting them in their actions and comments. This support included training, encouragement, promotion and actively taking steps to help women take leadership roles. At a meeting of the CSSI Women's Network, women said this change was part of broader organisational change at CSSI including more training for manage-

ment, the introduction of United Nations standards on correctional facilities and treatment of inmates, education on rights and gender and a shift from colonial attitudes, which had previously tended to emphasise obedience and compliance above other priorities.

Long serving officers frequently complained about the lack of promotion of women in the past:

I thought of quitting because there were promotions coming up but then nepotism and favouritism how I saw it because now they put EOI, expression of interest, that is after 2003 and we had the committees which came in place to make sure that these things come up to standard. Even for a chance of training too, there were one or two females only who went out for training...most of us would just stay inside there, so I looked at work and after a while I said: "I cannot see where is the road for us to go on? Will we work and stay like this?"

Female recruit, 1990s.

It comes to a time I have the feeling to give up work. Sometimes you give all of your efforts and work well and your performance is really high but people in charge do not look good to you, things like that. At promotion time, they promote another person, kind like that, style or technique of ours sometimes which is not transparent. I think sometimes too it makes me like resign and go just stay at home.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Female staff in some provincial locations also said promotions were still rare:

Sometimes we go like directly to ask for promotion, like here at this centre sometimes we voice out the challenges which us women face in the centre... Like we need any female officer on the management team

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Same job for a long period of time is not really good because same old thing happens, same old thing you do, you go on and get tired of it. But I think if you do some rotations among the small units, by the time you come back to shift your mind will be fresh and willing and interested...

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I stayed in the same work since I was recruited until this time. Honestly, I will really tell you, I think if you eat taiyo (tin tuna), eat only taiyo, you will be tired, yes man? At least you need a taste of some good piece of meat or something like that. I stayed on shift since I recruit [over 10 years ago], the only times where I went to the office was during the time I was pregnant.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

The limited number of roles and weaknesses in spreading information from CSSI Headquarters to provincial staff (e.g. distribution of Expression of Interest Notices) were some factors women said contributed to low levels of promotion of staff in some provinces.

Many women said a benefit of the Women's Network was increasing recognition of women's service outside CSSI through awareness and outreach activities (such as joining International Women's Day celebrations):

I am happy that since the gender concept came into corrections it chopped off a lot of issues or perception from the public and us women should be proud of it because now we work free from harassment and the environment is free to voice out issues affecting us women, like, we will not have fear to hold back, we freely tell it out so the male colleagues of ours start to have fear of us, so, respect and boundaries are established. So, this is how I think about working in corrections and public perceptions.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Compared to before in prison, and now in corrections, its changed because of a lot of awareness, promoting gender, equal opportunity, gender equity, everything is promoted during those times, so, this time people are really aware about gender now, it is one priority of government too to be mainstreamed in every Ministry, so, they too promote it, so, this time no one has an excuse and says they do not know about the gender issue.

The public this time, they do not shake if they see women working in correctional services, not like before. This time the mindset of people changes because a lot of awareness happen, it's the same for the organisation. When it started every woman struggled to educate every man to understand about gender. Now everyone looks at other ministries going ahead promot-

ing too gender, other NGOs, so, people's eyes are open, women working is normal, this has made a difference.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Recognition of the CSSI Women's Network also led to more links with other organisations and government ministries – for example the CSSI women were educated on women's health (for example, encouraged to get pap smears) as part of network's activities.

Inside CSSI, women were recognised through promotion, with the women recruited from 1986-2000 saying that post-tensions they were happy to see themselves and other women promoted and this was seen as a benefit of the CSSI Women's Network by newer and older staff.

From this network I learnt so much from it, and I just see that from the network the bosses just recognise us women, and then I see promotion, the first time one sergeant, only one and during my time at the network, no women was an Inspector, Staff Sergeant only one female, so, like that is what I see from the network it helped very much the women... My own thinking, it might be not straight or wrong, but I see the benefit of the network we see it this time, almost every shoulder of the women has a sergeant symbol, so, this is the benefit of the network.

Female recruit, 1990s.

When I came in it was me, director and other officers, when I worked in there, they started to see that women when you tell them to do things they just do it, they just realised it, work you tell them to do, it's done. Even I hear from my boss when we were meeting: "Hey try to find any woman to come inside who knows what to do to help work with us here, try go and look for any woman". From that I was really happy because sometimes they say "look for any man..." but that time they say "look for any woman..." So, OK, there are many women out there, try to put them here.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Those who were promoted into leadership described the importance of promotion and what it was like:

My team has no women in it, only me and every man, I am very proud of that, I am in charge of the men, everyone worked under my supervision so I am proud that women can do this, work as a team, if they trust you to lead the group, always no matter we are a team you need someone to lead the group. I experienced that inside every teams women are inside it's nice because mostly men contribute ideas on how men do some things and think like that, but when women are inside they contribute on how women think and do things. So, it makes things balanced and work flows well.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

My experience the first time they gave me a formal letter that I would take up the deputy rank... I felt like I was floating with the stars and moon, so I took up the post. I met challenges but I took the challenges as experience and moved on, that was how I adjusted to it... Later I just knew that later I had a letter from the office of the commandant that they really appreciated what I was doing and even it was a bit over the men in the acting role. So, I felt very proud about that one... How I see it is if Lata has a Commandant that is female then maybe my province will too one day.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Several women described their promotions as a learning curve, some had to learn new skills and tasks, some felt apprehensive at first. One said she went back to the commandant and asked for a smaller rank but was told to take it and after that realised that higher ranking jobs were all about decision making, if you could make good decisions, you could act at a higher level. Another woman described how she had a lot of support from advisers to train her in new tasks, such as computer skills, driving a vehicle and other tasks needed to operate in her new position.

While women have been promoted to the level of Commandant (responsible for managing a correctional facility), there are still no women at Executive level and those close to this level said they hoped for change at this “glass ceiling” level. For instance, Inspector Alison Salu in the film said she encourages other staff to apply for promotions and new positions but decision making at the very top levels still included few women. As women have reached Commandant level, one recommendation forthcoming from the Network was to open up the

Executive to staff at that level. The hierarchical structure of CSSI and the lack of promotions of women prior to 2003 puts women at a disadvantage of being eligible for executive positions.

Training opportunities also increased dramatically in the RAMSI years and since. When asked to nominate the most useful training they had, many women, 25% of all HerStory participants, mentioned the leadership training supplied by APTC and IPAM:

Some trainings were like management and leadership, I really enjoyed them because it really equipped me for the times where you take a higher-level post and for me to take responsibility. I believe and I have seen that these trainings for management really built me up for such a time like this.

Female recruit, 1980s.

I went to one Leadership training. That training I find it very interesting, it opened up my thinking. Some thinking I did not reach but I have it now, especially when you read it, they give you a picture and say, "what do you see inside this picture?" Then it makes you interact with the picture and talk a lot of things about leadership, how you manage, how you compare to other ministries, you look back at your work, work all these things out, it's really interesting.

Female recruit, 1990s.

The most useful training which helped me a lot is "Leadership and Management" that really woke up my brain to lead and to manage people and to look after resources and to look after welfare of people and how you manage budgets, how to plan a project, all these things pierced my brain and was very useful for me.

Female recruit, 1990s.

So there [APTC] I just learnt many things, new skills and things to deal with many people, especially work colleagues, team mates and at the same time it applies to the prisoners. So, after all, they are human beings too and part of the daily job too, so, how to deal with them. So, it's the nicest training I have come across, that one. You can see it has a big positive impact on

my work here.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Also mentioned as valuable was other short trainings: Code of Conduct, Knowing Your Public Service, Mental Health, Investigation, Red Cross First Aid, Customer Service and Emergency Response. One participant said her one of her favourite experiences was the emergency response training where they simulated transporting prisoners and facing a pretend attack up at Tenaru waterfall with RAMSI advisers.

Long serving women reported that before the same few people used to be referred for training opportunities, rather than training being open to everyone:

Everyone pushed us group of girls to do some training, they voiced it out: "All the men go all the time every time they do training, how about any opportunity for the girls?" Women's Network too fought for us to go, the girls who were weak were always left behind so the Women's Network was to push us go up and acquire some trainings to fit this job. If the Women's Network had not been there, I think every man would have gone and acquired knowledge which they gave out in trainings, but because Women's Network fought for us women, us too, I acquired some skills and knowledge from all the trainings.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Since 2003, there has been progress, with most middle and senior level women receiving training opportunities, for both short courses and degree-level courses. Women were represented on the Learning and Development Committee and had a say in allocating opportunities and more women applied for more opportunities.

As with the earlier recruits, all the women recruited from 2003-2018 also talked about their appreciation of the on the job training provided by their managers:

In the unit I am working in Officer In-Charge of my block guided me through work I was doing... through work and boss helping me and guiding

me on things to do, that is now I carried out the work inside there. He was very helpful in my work.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I would say here one role model of mine is a female sergeant. Every time I see her work I see she is very active in the place, so, every time I ask her, what kind of thing is suitable... I can openly discuss with her, and she discusses with me, so, we are close and know each other well... No matter she is very busy, suppose I need help she comes to me at another office and shows me what to do.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Overall In-Charge of the team is a man but I see he shares work and sometimes he puts his work for us to do. Kind of like, to fill out a form, the form you see he should do it, but he leaves it with us then we are confused at first but as time goes on we start to understand the work and we know his level too, something that's a bit funny. Then my unit In-Charge, he is really helpful, anything I am confused about, he helps me with it. My two in-charges in my first team were like that.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

So, one officer, this time he is an ex officer he was one I would say I learnt a lot from because through his talking and some encouragement he gave and even if I had anything which I did wrong, he would be direct. Straight away he would tell what was my failure and what you are supposed to do and things like that and then one thing he said was: "Learning is something that never stops, you have to keep on learning, so, whatever the day brings you, you have to learn from it." So, that's why I say what I learnt, I really learnt it, every day comes with a lesson, that is what I learnt inside.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

My role model when I started work was my In-Charge he showed me himself how to do things. Like no matter its 4 o'clock when work from morning to afternoon shift, he would still complete every duty that time he took up, it must be complete. I saw he really did his best, also he could encourage me, especially in my work, In-Charge would tell me advice: "One day you will become like us, this is your chance to learn, no matter you say you are

a correctional officer now, the next level as sergeant at least you must learn from what I am doing, you see, you learn from it, you don't just see it and forget it, this is your chance."

Female recruit 2003-2018.

Also, senior women mentioned working with RAMSI and other advisers, and learning on the job through them:

There are times too when you have to do outside escorts to hospital, we got a little bit of training which we took from an adviser from England, help us to do the escorts, going out you must make sure how you escort an inmate is correct, you do not just go walkabout in Chinatown. How many officers to one inmate and we try to help us to make a good team. It's hard but we did our best try to not make an offence inside the workplace. We have to try and do our work professionally... I had many people I was in contact with, they encouraged me, helped me, the women which came and helped me, Val, Angela, Dicksy, many things they told me, man, I felt very angry too. The only thing is, I must take it, that's the only way I can achieve something. The only way I can be a role model, I have to take it. It's a two-way process, they give it to me, I'll have to take it, and if they give it to me, I go give it to these girls too.

Female recruit, 1980s.

One thing I really learnt too, one Advisor, her name was Kate she really moulded me, helped me, showed me ideas how to do work, no matter it's hard or what you know to do. We see that work is hard because we look at ourselves as frightened to do it, fright makes it hard, but if you have confidence in yourself, you can just do the work, though work here is new, you sit down do it and it's easy. So, like I was very happy too that Adviser and I will not forget her because she shaped me in how to manage and lead women, to take them across to Block 1 when we were trying to work in the male blocks. So, that confidence she built until this time I see women and male officers look the same to my eyes, I do not see them differently, what men do, women can do.

Female recruit, 1990s.

I do not know how to hold a computer mouse too, it was like I was frightened it would bite me, she started to teach me how to go inside the comput-

er after she taught me, almost two weeks later I knew how to work computers, and could type, so one piece of advice this Adviser, a woman from New Zealand called Angela said: "I do not want the computer to break you, you must break the computer."...

Female recruit, 1990s.

Adviser Val Stanley was a gender and social inclusion adviser that was here, she came to corrections to help me... give me some basis on what gender should look like, these are the strategies which you should take when you work on gender.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Staff recruited from 2003-2018 mentioned fairness as being a key value they respected in management. These managers who were described as "neutral", "disciplined" and straight talking. Role models helped guide women through corrections, which helped with women's promotions.

Despite the progress made in promotion, training and working terms and conditions for women at CSSI, change in the broader society towards recognising women at work can be slow. Many of the negative attitudes and cultural issues that were part of life for the early recruits in the 1980s and 1990s still remain today.

Cultural issues, particularly restrictions on socialising or communication between females and males, made life complicated at work for a few officers recruited recently:

For me, my culture, I can talk with any kind of person, for us, so it's OK. I talk with people from the opposite sex it's OK but because I married differently and most of them work with us too, so I try to fit in, to not do something too much where any kind of people are there. I just do not understand it, sometimes, it's in the blood. My husband understands it, but the in-laws especially I fear they will twist stories around and reach the ear of my husband and then any problem will come up. So, I am careful at work so nothing happens then he loses trust in me, that I do not want.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I have some male relatives in here too... there are a lot of times where I sit down with them and another officer will come and joke and pass by, and I feel no good because I sit down with my relatives, but then they understand it's work, so, they will say "don't worry about it" then I settle down no matter its wrong already for us, because I am sitting with my relatives and then you come pass and joke. I mean the kind of normal jokes of ours, so, when they go past, I just give anything which I have, like \$5 I have to give to my relatives.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Other women said the workplace also shifted some cultural ideas they and others had:

I had some cultural things which I came across in work culture, but I managed to take time with whoever caused the issue with me. For example, first time I did not wear long trousers to work, but to work in this organisation, we must deal with people, so, for safety and things like that, we must wear long trousers. Sometimes some wantok (kin) say: "Man! For girls to wear long trousers it looks no good." But it's hard now because it's for work and I want to work, so I have to wear it. So, I always answer them: "It's the culture of work, its uniform for work. So, I choose to work I must wear it."

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Here I really want everyone to have respect for staff. But to stand up in front of men and talk, I had to do away with it, that influence of culture I overcame it. Now I can stand up in front and talk to a group of men and women in the workplace.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

My culture, like I said earlier, you must talk softly you do not talk loud when there are men there, so, for me to go up to another level, commissioner, like whatever I want, I think I favour it, I like very much the Women's Network, it's nice, I would say very good, I like it a lot. They are very supportive of me in the organisation. Yes that's the Women's Network, it's to carry our voices, all the women, to go up to our superiors, we are very shy to take it up because the boss is there, you carry up your rights for women, go up, many questions are there, sometimes we can answer them...

One thing I acquired too was I started to stand up in front of people to talk about Women's Network, to stand up and talk in front of the girls... it was the first time for me to stand up front of the girls and present, during trainings to stand up and face a group of girls and present activities during conferences and meetings, so, I started to change my attitude about standing up in front of people, I gained confidence from the Women's Network.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Other post-tensions recruits had husbands and families that did not understand and support the kind of work they did:

Their [husbands] minds are not straight because they do not know what we come to do here. Their mindset is, they think or say we come to drink tea, tell stories and socialise and mix together, that kind of thing is in their mind, so, that time I found work hard and then he did not understand me, so, our problems grew bigger and I did not know how to manage that time, I took sick leave after sick leave, I had a problem and our place is a male-dominated environment, like, women you have to be sensitive too, it's hard to talk about your family problem at the house when there is nothing good to say. If you tell it, their mindsets will not be right so I kept that problem to myself that time.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I think my husband at home, I go to work, come back by 2-3pm and the talk comes because I work shift. So, every time I went to work, come back, we would not miss from arguments. Every time I come work, go back we argue again. But I was strong, that time I did not worry about him, I said: "My goodness, it's work, what kind of work you want me to do, it's work." Would come back and any husband would make any kinds of talk like that, I do not need to tell you, the talk, every woman already knows this kind of talk.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Two or three times I had some problems with my husband at home concerning work, after a while I thought about giving work up. Many things I came across about work, especially between me and my husband. Some-

times he does not know, is not happy about some things which he really doesn't understand, work inside here. So, he would talk a bit, tell some talk and it discouraged me and I thought about just finishing from work.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

30% of participants in HerStory at one point or the other in life had problems with husbands disapproving of shift work or about their wives working with other men at the correctional facilities. The proportion of women who had arguments with their husbands about these issues was the same for the early and recent recruits. Longer serving women said that unstable marriages may be the cause of jealousy and arguments for younger women, but younger women, particularly in the provinces said attitudes and expectations people had today about women were also part of the problem.

Considering all the participants, half of them told stories about not supportive attitudes from family and friends. Views included that working in prisons was not work fit for women, that women were not physically tough enough to face prisoners, that women should not wear trousers, women should not work at night or women should not socialise with a lot of men. Two women talked about female officers being called “dukongs” (whores) or “dogs” by members of the public. However, most of the women’s stories were not just about negative views, but about how seeing women work at CSSI and female officers talking to them, changed negative views into acceptance:

I think for me I would say I have seen it change, because my husband was one who was like that too, but when I came to the Women’s Network and attended programs which they organised and the other activities and then I would go back and talk to him. Then I saw he changed, this time no matter the Women’s Network meets there I will go. I don’t see it like before, this time he is different, so, I say he changed.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

One interesting part that one, during the time I worked, I met two or three women who questioned me about this one, they asked: “Where do you work?” “I work in the prison.” “What is work in the prison, you go and cook for the prisoners?” “No.” Then they ask: “If you do not cook for the prisoners what do you do in there, because that’s the place with prisoners inside.”

Then I say: "Some prisoners inside are women too, so, we keep the women in the female unit." ...But when it comes to my family, my relatives feel proud because they know I work in this place. "Oh, she's a police woman... looks after the criminals" they talk like that.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I will tell you a story, a time about the unusual thinking. One time I went out, socialised, had some time out with my friends and then I came to meet a friend of mine, in particular we used to school together in high school but he was more senior than me but we associated together in high school. OK we talked about every good thing we talked about it, until he asked me: "Hey where do you work?" He asked me so I told him: "I work in the correctional service, I work at CSSI." "What is CSSI?" "Correctional Services Solomon Islands." "Oh prison?" "Yeah, this time it's called correctional service, not prison," I told him like that. It was really, like I said, I have pride to tell it too that I work in correctional services. But how that friend of mine saw it, his reply I really didn't agree with it. He really disagreed, he said: "Man! This kind of work is not for women, kind of work fit for men only because only the men are strong to look after the criminal people, women should do kind of office work or agriculture or these things you women should do..." He went ahead talking at me. So, we didn't really argue but I had a discussion with him about it. He was still the same, he still did not understand why I chose this sort of work. "This kind of work is not attractive for women, it's not really fair for women to do this kind of work." So, anyway, I accepted his negative perception about me and the job, I listened and then I said to him: "You think, listen, it's time for you to think, if there is no correctional service in Solomon Islands where is there to keep the people who break the law, keep them away from community so they are safe, how?" I gave that statement to him because I know that he will still argue that the work is unusual for women. So, I say: "Ok you think if there is no work like this in Solomon Islands now, no place like correctional service or institution, do you think the place will be safe for you, the country will be safe for you?" I said to him: "Where will you go take your food from? Will any market be available or shop open for you to go buy food, and where will you go for medical when you are sick? And many other reasons, which you enjoy tonight where we sit down and have fun, if there is not a place to keep the law breakers where do you expect people to stay?"

“Correctional services make our lives what they are, protects our communities, where we continue to enjoy our normal living because these people have a place to stay, where we put them.” That was the question I put to him. Then he seemed to understand how I question him that work is not unusual. Men can do it, women can do it. Before only men did the job, they take women at this time. He was surprised I did this kind of work. But I said: “What is wrong with this kind of work? You don’t want me to help the community?” I think that’s the good thing about the job now.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Females recruited in the past ten years benefited from another proposal by the CSSI Women’s Network that was adopted at the executive level and effective in 2010: for female staff to have maternity leave. This was a boon to the new recruits, who unlike the old recruits, would not have to work through pregnancy and births of children. When women spoke about the benefits of the Network, maternity leave was mentioned by everyone:

As a working mother, I see that I acquired many benefits from the Women’s Network like us, all of us working mothers before I heard from the other women that recruit before me mistreat their baby, like time for breast feeding they do not have proper time, when we had Women’s Network there they fight for us to go, so, every women has time for breast feeding, time for work, maternity leave and time to resume duties, these things, yeah. Women’s Network carried up for us, and I see it benefits me... I think without the Network’s work the policy would be there but hard for them to understand and we would still struggle, but because the Network is there it gives many benefits to us working mothers.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

This time women are not like before where we carried up until the time we were ready to go to hospital for birth, but full time we worked shift until go to hospital and then after hospital come back shift again, so, this time I see some benefits, they are lenient to us women when you are pregnant then you come report it they worry about you and then you take maternity. After maternity come back and still work official hours.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Another improvement inside the prison was the Mother and Child Policy to give better conditions and guidelines for female prisoners who had breastfeeding children:

One important thing when we started to develop mother and babies policy for Block 3 here, the block for us, every female, lucky the Advisors were there so, they helped us. Before it's a management plan only, we did how to manage and look after female prisoners who come in with baby or was pregnant, so, it is work that I learn too, to develop it, the Mother and Child Policy.

Female recruit, 1990s.

Despite maternity leave and other improvements to recognise women's dual role as mothers and employees, women still struggle with childcare, as 2003-2018 recruits described:

A lot of times, on the work side, we women you start at six o'clock in the morning, you wake up, come work in the house and then you come end your work at your workplace then you go back to rest, but instead of rest, you go back to another kind of work. You rest only when you sleep, for a few hours' time you sleep and rest. So, I thought to quit because you feel very tired... It was just tiredness that made me feel like quitting.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Sometimes things at home are not straight then I come to work it's like I just float in the air. I will not enjoy work, I want to go back quickly, things I have to do I cannot do, not complete, but when things in the family are straight then I come work, work flows. So, how I know to solve it, at least, I must make the family satisfied, make my time at work, they do not talk behind me, so, I enjoy work, but suppose I do not satisfy the needs of family, family will start to disagree with me: "You prioritise too much work, how about us, you do not solve these things before you go to work."

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Women are now included in decision making meetings at CSSI and have the support of a Gender Officer to address their specific issues. Women are includ-

ed in CSSI's working committees, an achievement also born from the Women's Network:

I know too that, like, the time the committees for these things were formed, there was learning and development, uniform committee, many committees which came up where women try to push in a women's representative because it was only men dominating inside the committee, how do you come about that one? So, there's equal representation inside all the committees. Woman must be included inside the committees, because seeing that we have male and female officers inside the organization its good for us to have women inside the committees too... so, I was happy the bosses approved it.

Female recruit, 1980s.

The progress women working in corrections in Solomon Islands had achieved was demonstrated when they instigated a conference for other Pacific women in the sector, as former Women's Network Chair Phylistus Fafoi explained:

I had the privilege to travel with the head of corrections to go to Fiji, the Fijians hosted that time in 2008 the conference, so, from there I went and made, established a connection with everyone from Pacific correctional services. I did a presentation there, when we were there, so, I wanted to create a network with every Pacific correctional women officers. So, from there it was established, everyone agreed, the heads of corrections they say yes and it started... I was very happy it started... I saw too that if women inside the organisation in the countries can face these issues then us here at Correctional Services Solomon Islands we go through and fight it out as a team and as a Women's Network inside the organization them why can't we help the other women in Pacific corrections too?

Several women described the experience of the conference as being some of their favourite memories of working at CSSI:

PIRWC, Pacific Island Regional Women's Conference is for all correctional women from other Pacific Island countries. I worked closely with the committee that time to organise that conference. I think I contributed in terms of giving my time, not only official time, sometimes I come on weekends

too. When we did arrangements for this one I just had to give my time for the women. I had responsibilities at home and like that but that time I gave my time to work together with the committee to organise that women's conference and it happened. So, I see it was one area that I contributed a lot to it. Also sharing my ideas with the group and also in particular to bring up women's issues, some of the issues women shy away from voicing out, somehow we could share and bring up.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Yes, I have one favourite memory inside the organisation, When I recruit I found it interesting too because I was a young girl and then came recruit. One time where I found it interesting to me and very nice for me was during that Women's Network conference. It was one good memory which I still share with my children, even my friends, where during that time other Pacific countries which work in the same organisation come together for two weeks conference. It was very interesting to me and that time I really enjoyed it and it's very hard to forget.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Meetings and activities of the Women's Network have always been voluntary and relying on women to give their time and energy to analysing problems women face and suggesting solutions. Many women described though even though finding agreement and cooperation amongst a diverse group could be challenging, the network also provided women with a place to share stories and to not feel alone with any challenges they were facing. Collectively, and individually, women became stronger and this was an inspiration as the women explained:

For me, this CSSI Women's Network was born, I jumped inside and until today I do not give up, no matter whatever challenge, no matter whatever happens around us, no matter whatever I encounter with the junior officers, I know how to handle it now because it was born from my own hands or my time that time. This is what I want to tell... I see women come up strong now, this gender, we women come up with some policies we created and men start to see that women are someone too and they start to respect, they start to respect whatever we are talking about, they start to support us, all these things are through the Network.

Female recruit, 1980s.

So, one thing I want to stress is that it is not a particular person, everyone I admire who work in the CSSI Women's Network. So, I look to the group, I look at that group as a role model. The group brought a lot of positive changes that affected the welfare of women inside CSSI. Since I actively joined this group and since I join I am very happy that I am inside the main committee and it's how I learn... I see how women put things together, how the women know how to drive changes together. Not all the time it's perfect, sometimes it falls apart, sometimes it falls behind but what I see now is that the group always stands up and moves. No matter whatever happens they face challenges and issues, but it never stops to exist... So, I admire this group, I like the way women they work together.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

CSSI Women's Network Leadership 2003-2018

The progress of the CSSI Women's Network could not have been possible without the courage, inspiration and hard work of its Chairs.

Many thanks to all:

Staff Sergeant Phylistus Fafai,

Chair, CSSI Women's Network 2003-2010

Superintendent Leah Alufo'oa,

Chair, CSSI Women's Network, 2011-2015

Sergeant Catherine Nalakia,

Chair, CSSI Women's Network, 2015-2017

Officer Wendy Gebe,

Chair, CSSI Women's Network, 2017-present.



First female Commandant, Catherine Kere is responsible for the Lata Correctional Centre.



Pioneering woman Rose Kenekene presents to a HerStory planning meeting.

CHAPTER 4:

Wisdom from the Past, Visions of the future

Female staff working or recently retired from Correctional Services Solomon Islands (CSSI) want to pass on what they have learned through experience and their visions for the future. They want to continue progress made for women's training opportunities and promotion and to increase the number of female recruits. They want women not to feel isolated in male-dominated teams but instead to be confident and valued in teams, and to be free from harassment in their work duties. They want the CSSI Women's Network to be stronger and involve more and more of the growing female workforce, to support them with professional and personal issues (such as through counselling) and for men to know and appreciate its work.

For women to work in correctional services, key values they needed, that HerStory participants mentioned time and time again, were discipline and commitment. Traditionally working in corrections has been to work in a field where time is regimented – being late is a “red mark” offence as is having a uniform that is not immaculate or being distracted from work during shift hours. While the discipline practiced in the 1980s and 1990s had some costs – particularly putting pressure on women to work up until childbirth or in other circumstances where today there would be more understanding – it also had benefits in instilling discipline in individuals and teams.

For example, a 1980s recruit said discipline was the key thing that she learned from the service:

Discipline was strong when I came in, my recruitment years, where I recruit and I start to see that discipline makes me strong and it always stays behind my mind wherever I go, whatever I do, in my work discipline I find that it is a skill which I took from my recruitment time.

Other people said discipline was an attraction of the service:

I decided to work for corrections because I heard that it was a disciplined organisation. I myself come out from a disciplined family, so, I want to

maintain discipline I have, so, that is why I am interested to come join corrections.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

So, that was something I felt inside my heart made me work, and then when I come I see too because at home I have this discipline at home, I come here I try to do with the officers and especially women which I try to bring them up.

Female recruit, 1980s.

The most important thing I learnt at my workplace, working in a disciplined organisation I say that it really helped me, discipline is very important during working time, when you work for the organisation, to safe guide me in my own work too, or what to do and what not to do and it helped my family to discipline the children. Discipline I still maintain because I came out from a disciplined family background so how I see it, discipline is still ongoing for me.

Female recruit, 1990s

Recruits from the 1980s and 1990s said new recruits did not have the same level of discipline and it would be good for discipline to be maintained:

How I observe it until this time, during our times discipline was very strong, so, it moulded us, when we saw discipline was strong it was like we were frightened too and it made our work really good. This time I see discipline is too slack, then you see women not working well, they just come in mark around and go, those who like come, come, some just stay, this kind of attitude we should not entertain, we must come to work, must show our officers, must be loyal and honest and respect our work... I am heading for the harbour, I have almost arrived at the wharf, so I encourage all the women to keep on doing your good work, discipline yourselves, when it's time for work, work, time you are off from work you can join activities outside, but time for work you must attend work.

Female recruit, 1980s.

I want to tell them that working inside this place is tiring and sometimes it's hard for us to do but our commitment to work is important. If you give yourself to do service for other people inside here, especially for all the inmates, and do other related work in prison, we must dedicate ourselves to work. Suppose we are not willing with it, we will not do any good thing. But if you commit yourself to do work, you will find too what is the result of work and your contribution to the organisation.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Many staff mentioned values associated with the Yellow Ribbon campaign which aims to promote the reintegration of prisoners back into society.⁴ Through interviewing and talking with prisoners, officers and management came to understand some of the conditions that lead to crime plus the value of rehabilitation:

Many children I have come across are children out of broken homes. And how they relate their stories, like it comes back to the parents who raised their children and I found out that sometimes it's hard for children to make decisions too in life. When parents are not settled to raise the children, then they have to face many things which does not really follow what the parents think.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

People who stay with us then go out, when they go out they do not go straight away, they do not go to Australia or the USA, they go out and come back to our communities, they are our people. They come serve time inside and when they come out they are part of our society. So, how do we help them so that they start a new life again, come back to community.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

The expectations and experience of the organisation, should be respected by women, learning from others who had gone before them, one early recruit com-

4 The Yellow Ribbon Campaign originated in Singapore and is now run in Fiji and Solomon Islands to encourage people to help prisoners to break the "second wall" that is stigma in society. It draws on the popular "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" song which tells of a prisoner asking his wife to allow him to be part of her life after he was released.

mented. While many other women who had already faced many challenges and overcome them said other women should be confident and step up into roles:

My advice is for women to work, do not think low of yourselves, whatever role you can take, you should work in it.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I just want to tell this time I think on the side of work, we have to have confidence in ourselves, we must have confidence in what we are doing, whatever work they give you must be confident and take it, do not miss any opportunity when your turn comes. Because here nobody is qualified everybody works as corrections officer only, when it's your turn take it. Whatever mistakes we make that's a good thing, it is a stepping stone for us, it will improve us on the side of work. Do not take mistakes as: I made a mistake, I have a problem, I am no good.

Female recruit, 1990s

We have seen that women can do this, they proved that they perform to the standard, women can you think "I can do it too or not?" You can do it, if you are committed and always share and seek help you can do this work, it's not hard, your commitment is important so you can work well along every different level for work in the organisation. So, do not be discouraged, if others can do it, you can do it.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

We work with the males because it's a male-dominated work place, you have to come out and show yourselves, even though you are a woman you have to come out and perform the work which men can do, you have to do it too to show that and to make the bosses see that or women can do that work here. So, any challenges or any post which they give you, you must act on it now.

Female recruit 2003-2018

Strength did not mean doing things perfectly every time but learning from errors, maintaining key values and commitment in work women said:

I want to just say to every woman working in corrections, many challenges I was inside, and you will go inside too but I will just say, no matter you work inside a place full of men everywhere, have respect inside you, make the colleagues, inmates and workmates respect you too and its good for you not to give up.

This is an interesting job, it gives you money, yes, this work provides shelter for you to stay and you stay good and work. When you just come in you will find it hard but as time goes on you will find it interesting for you. Like I say you move and you find it much easier when you are promoted but like I say when you meet challenges never keep it to yourself, share your challenges with anyone at the workplace, make them help by encouraging you, motivating you to become a good correctional service officer. Stay strong woman and faithful to your work, even if you find it hard, but if you are strong you will find it interesting.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

How you manage this thing here, I want to encourage us so whatever challenge comes you must know it's just a test. It will go past and then we will face more new things will come, and at the same time it will strengthen you for you to know confidence, for you to know how to manage people, how to manage family, how to manage prisoners, know how to manage your staff because you know how to manage all the things you can settle it. You know how to talk about it and you know how to deal with it, in a professional way, that's what I think.

Female recruit, 1980s.

A few women also pointed to the need for patience, in dealing with prisoners and in the process of encouraging change towards gender equity at CSSI:

When I approached the inmates, something I learnt was patience too because it's a true thing if we are not happy with people here, there will be a big argument too, so, patience I see as something I have, when I work here. I have patience for everything, patience for my time, patience for wait for hand over, everything is about patience. Patience I found in myself this time but before not at all... This time people at home find that I have patience too. This is what I found and I did not train for it, that's true but I found it in me.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Challenges can also be faced with support from others, pointed out many women:

Sometimes you will need anyone to help you, it's hard for you to move on your own, you still need someone to support you and to encourage you. So, I would say if any female you come across any challenges it's better for you to go to any senior next to you, or any officer you trust, or you see as a role model of yours, go to them. I hope that they tell you, no matter you hear it every time, whatever situation you are inside, it will mean a lot to you, it will help you, it will support you inside your work and even build you to make you stronger. This is what I say ladies, young girls who come inside the organisation: you will meet many challenges but if you see yourself as a man too, it's a male-dominated area, so see yourself as one of them. We are all human beings, sex only makes us different, when we are inside a place of men, then you must have a role model there to support you. When you meet challenges do not keep it to yourself, if you cannot handle it, share it to someone next to you, they will encourage you and help you to be good and you will become strong and you will move forward.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

I think one piece of advice I want to give is if you want a good experience in your work, or you do not know something about your workplace, do not be ashamed to come out and ask. There's a group of women here, you come to them, if you do not want to go to your boss, because maybe you are ashamed because he is a man, we have the Women's Network, our leaders are here, come to them and share your problem with them.

Female recruit, 1980s.

Whatever you are confused about, you ask me, and if I don't know I will share with you, and if I don't know I will look out for anyone who has been here a long time for him to tell you more.

Female recruit, 2003-2018.

Many mentioned the CSSI Women's Network as a source of support and advice for new recruits:

I want to advise the young women who have just come to work at corrections, please be a part of everything, whatever this Network organises please take part and I want the young women, if you have problems do not stay out, come forward and seek help from the senior officers which you trust and share the problem with them.

Female recruit, 1990s.

This time the Women's Network some people do not attend and no action happens, they are never involved, so, this network is set up for us women but it does not have teeth to bite... Sometimes the junior officers do not recognise it until they come up to another level and they just see; oh ok, Women's Network benefits them.

Female recruit, 1990s.

I just want to advise the women if there is a program or activities participate, get more involved in the program, even those men organise, women organise, try to participate, or with outside stakeholders, from there it will build the confidence of women and if there is any doubt or whatever you face, challenges or issues, we have the committee, CSSI network committee are there to assist and to support the women in anything they have.

Female recruit, 1990s.

The Network was a group effort and relied on women to contribute to be successful, several people pointed out that included the older women being open to others and the new and younger women getting involved. To continue its strength, the Network needed to draw from younger women and continue to get a wide variety of women together to make decisions.

The Chair of the CSSI Women's Network Wendy Gebe said from her experience interviewing many of the HerStory participants in this report, she realised that it was the first time for many to speak about their experience and tell out what was kept in their minds, in their hearts, for a long time. The experience of many of the most senior women are in this book, and the experiences of the younger women are yet to be written, but she feels like the next story must be written by them participating in the network, working together to make progress and grow:

My advice for the young women coming up this time, they must carry out responsibilities, like this canoe, they must paddle it to continue, what I mean here is, they must not stay back, they must come and be involved in the activities the Network creates because they will paddle forward this one and pass it on to whoever comes in future. So, they must come up, participate, and take part in everything of the Network. I want to see in future it is a really big network, so they must nurture this baby or plant if it's going to become a big tree. This time its growing but it kind of has some broken branches so it's not really healthy but it's still growing, so, for them to make any difference, the new ones this time must come and show themselves now, because they have the potential there, come put things together and carry it forward. Us working now, it's almost time for us to go out of service, so, this kind of thinking I want to pass on to the new ones.



Inspector Bernice Wasia facilitates writing of lyrics for HerStory song featured in the film.



Martha Alabae takes her turn at the microphone during song production.



**CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**

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