Gender-Based Violence Due Diligence Tool

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to equip investors to understand the risk their investments are exposed to as a result of gender-based violence. This tool enables investors to determine how their existing due diligence process can be used to determine a potential investment's exposure to the political, regulatory, operational, and reputational risks of gender-based violence. This tool is one component of a broader global effort to ensure the right to live free of violence.

Gender-based violence is a global epidemic affecting more than 1 in 3 women worldwide, as well as millions of boys, men, and gender-nonconforming individuals.

Research suggests that the cost of violence against women is 2% of global GDP, equivalent to US$1.5 trillion.

It exerts a significant physical and mental toll on survivors, which in turn impacts the economic systems that survivors interact with.

The impacts of gender-based violence on companies, sectors, and geographies, though material to finance, are rarely factored into investment analysis.

To understand what risks gender-based violence presents to companies, we look at the policies, practices and norms that affect the incidence of violence at several levels. The risks to a company come not only from the activities of the company, but also from the cultural norms and government policies and their enforcement that impact violence within sectors, industries and society.

This tool is not intended to enable an investor to decrease gender-based violence in companies or communities. These issues are complex, and investors may not be best placed to influence or intervene. Asking questions and naming gender-based violence as a material risk to investments can, however, create positive change by raising awareness and increasing political and company management will to address the issue. Deciding not to invest due to unacceptable levels and conditions of gender-based violence also sends a clear message.

This tool is specific to the Pacific region, but it builds upon diligence processes that are standard worldwide. It is not comprehensive; rather, it is a starting place for anyone investing in the Pacific that will evolve as we learn more about best practice ways for incorporating an assessment of the risks of gender-based violence into a due diligence process.

Finally, it is important to note that the priority of anyone addressing gender-based violence must be to put safety first and do no harm. Gender-based violence is global human rights violation that is widespread and complex, and approaching it without expertise or care can result in significant unintended consequences. We encourage companies that want to invest in prevention and/or response to research this thoroughly and reach out to local or regional gender-based violence experts when shaping their approach. We provide guidance on leading with a safety-first approach in the ‘Do no harm’ section.
At its root, gender-based violence arises from an imbalance in power between women, men and gender-nonconforming individuals. The inequalities contributing to gender-based violence include: norms and assumptions assigned to gender identities, unequal access to power/resources/decision-making based on gender identity and/or sex, and condoning/accepting beliefs, attitudes and norms that support violence.

Importantly, power dynamics, attitudes, and norms can change. Therefore, any investor looking to the future should think about the current reality and about what is changing.

Are the companies you are investing in able to respond not just to the costs of gender-based violence that is currently occurring, but the potential of a future where gender-based violence is no longer tolerated?

While gender-based violence might be a chronic or systemic risk today, as regulatory practices, societal tolerance and gender norms shift, it can become an acute risk in companies that do not adjust.

Gender-based violence includes rape, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, workplace harassment, human trafficking, financial abuse, coercion, emotional and psychological abuse, stalking and any other acts or threats of acts that incur harm, suffering or deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life.  

Photo: International Women’s Day 2011 Honiara. DFAT, Australian Aid.
Rates of gender-based violence are high in Pacific island countries. The incidence of violence against women in the region is much higher than the global average of 35%, sometimes as much as double. And the economic costs are high. While data at the Pacific country level are not complete, individual studies give some insight into how this affects Pacific island countries. One World Bank study estimated that domestic violence alone costs Fiji 6.6% of its GDP annually.

A study in Papua New Guinea found 68% of surveyed employees experienced gender-based violence during the past year. Analysis determined that staff time lost to gender-based violence represented 2–9% of their annual salary costs.

While these numbers are stark, they are changing. The gender norms and inequities that are the root cause of gender-based violence are shifting. Between 2008–2018, there has been a 10-fold increase in funding from the Australian Government for ending violence against women and girls, which improved access to services, higher quality services and improved access to justice for women. Pacific-focused programs, such as Pacific Women, increased policy focus for ending violence against women and increased political participation for women and economic empowerment in the Pacific.
UNDERSTANDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AS AN INVESTMENT RISK

While some studies into the costs of violence exist, little has been done to translate how the social and economic impacts pose a risk to investments. The risks gender-based violence create for direct investment into enterprise generally fall within four existing investor due diligence categories:

Political risk

Assessing country-level risk and the stability of markets is key to valuing a potential investment. Gender-based violence is not typically part of assessing country-level risk, but compelling reasons exist why it should be. Research shows that levels of violence against women are a better predictor of state instability than traditional measures such as wealth and the strength of institutions. High levels of violence can indicate unseen instability in a country, including corruption and coercion.

An increasing number of governments are naming gender-based violence as a national security risk in the Pacific. At the recent Pacific Islands Forum, leaders ‘acknowledged the prevalence of gender-based violence in the Pacific and the risk that it poses to human security’ and collectively committed to the ‘eradication of gender-based violence.’ In 2018, the Samoan Prime Minister announced the first-ever National Security Policy that names gender-based violence as one of the top 4 threats to Samoa’s stability and security.

Regulatory risk

Investors thinking about the future are always looking at how regulations or changes to regulations could present an investment risk. What if industry regulations were introduced that held companies accountable for gender-based violence, such as sex trafficking within supply chains or trade policies that pushed for increased transparency around workers safety, including sexual harassment and assault?

Regulatory change is already happening as governments, journalists, and activists shine a light on violence in the Pacific. In early 2019, a coalition of governments and global agencies launched a €20 million, 5-year initiative to change social norms and encourage institutions to address violence against women and girls. If the way violence is viewed changes, regulations that impact companies may also. Regulatory changes could also stem from trading relationships in the broader Pacific region. Thus, companies that are aware of, and responsive to gender patterns, including gender-based violence, would be better prepared to weather the changes and minimise their exposure to risk.
UNDERSTANDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AS AN INVESTMENT RISK

**Operational risk**

Investors can use indicators to examine how gender-based violence (whether it is happening inside the company or in the broader social context) affects the day-to-day operations of a company.

*Absenteeism and lower productivity can affect a company’s bottom line.* Employees experiencing intimate partner violence take more time off and, when at work, perform differently due to the physical and mental consequences of violence.

*Employee retention.* Violence in the workplace or on the way to or from work also leads to higher turnover and difficulty attracting staff.

*Quality assurance.* Product quality decreases when gender-based violence affects the incentives of workers. For example, the agribusiness supply chain in Papua New Guinea often relies on women labour for the quality control of product, working in the context of family businesses. Strategies to address violence against women working in the sector have been introduced in order to improve supply.

Investing in companies that have proactively worked to reduce or eliminate gender-based violence gives them an important operational advantage compared with peer group companies that have not taken equivalent actions.

**Reputational risk**

Investors thinking about the future of an investment need to ask themselves *under what circumstances gender-based violence might become a reputational risk?* Individual incidence of violence can affect domestic and international reputations. As global supply chains are under increased scrutiny around human rights, behaviours that may be tolerated in a local society put contracts and future revenue at risk. In addition, if violence became less societally acceptable, the company will be exposed to increased scrutiny.

Recent investigations in mining and logging in the Pacific have found companies liable for violence against men and women in remotely managed sites. Lawsuits and various forms of public pressure will continue as movements like #MeToo become increasingly global. Companies that are making the management and structural changes to respond will be better positioned to weather the changes in societal tolerance around gender-based violence globally.
INDICATORS ASSESSING INVESTMENT RISK

To assess the specific risk that gender-based violence presents to a company, an investor needs to be able to analyse the context in which it operates and how that context might affect the company. It is also important to consider what changes might be underway in that context. An investor is not just looking at the enterprise today, but also trying to predict how future changes might present opportunities or risks.

Indicators of the extent of gender-based violence are divided into three levels:

- **Country**
- **Industry**
- **Company**

This section lays out investment risks that derive from gender-based violence within society broadly, specific industries or sectors and within the company; the attitudes, policies and practices; and a company’s potential exposure to those risks. Indicators are translated into due diligence questions that inform the specific risk to the potential investment.
Most gender-based violence happens in society, homes and streets, not in the workplace. Intimate partner and sexual violence represent the most extensive expressions of gender-based violence.

As data are usually collected by country, we call this section country-level, but there are many contextual differences within a country coming from regional variations and different attitudes and practices.

Indicators of prevalence of gender-based violence

1. Law and policy
   - Does the country have laws that criminalise gender-based violence?
   - What policies are in place to diminish the incidence or impact of gender-based violence? For example, what is the country’s overall gender policy?

2. Governance and enforcement
   - To what extent are the laws around gender-based violence enforced?
   - What level of funding is provided to prevent gender-based violence and provide direct services and support for survivors?
   - Are there informal systems that deter gender-based violence? Are there informal systems that encourage it? For example, religious organisations and village or informal courts that operate in accordance with local customs and traditional practices?

COUNTRY-LEVEL

This section lays out investment risks that derive from the prevalence of gender-based violence within the society broadly, and a company’s potential exposure to those risks.

3. Attitudes, practices, and norms
   - What is the prevalence of gender-based violence within the country?
   - What is the societal tolerance around gender-based violence? How does that break down across generations, class, or geographic region?
   - How strong is the will within civil society to end gender-based violence? What is the strength of the women’s movement, which is a recognised contributor to the decrease of gender-based violence?

Future trends in the Pacific that will shift prevalence of gender-based violence

1. Women’s economic empowerment in the region is increasing, though there is country- and region-specific variation. In the long term, this will affect gender norms, women’s role within the economy, and likely the incidence of gender-based violence. Increasing women’s access to resources and decision-making will contribute to greater gender equality in the region, creating an environment where gender-based violence is less tolerated.

2. Evidence-based approaches to violence prevention are being undertaken in various parts of the Pacific, albeit with country- and region-specific variation. Examples include increasing the quality and prevalence of rights-based and survivor-centered services.

3. In many Pacific countries, more women are becoming business owners and political leaders. This will affect the importance placed on addressing gender-based violence and power imbalances overall.

4. International donors are providing significant funding to support women’s organisations, governments and civil society organisations addressing gender-based violence. For example, the Australian Government committed A$320 million to the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program and European Union’s Spotlight initiative recently announced €50 million in funding to eliminate gender-based violence in the Pacific.10
Due diligence questions to determine a company’s exposure to risks created by gender-based violence in the country

**Political risk**
- Is the company particularly exposed to political or cultural instability that is shaped by the prevalence of gender-based violence?

**Operational risk**
- What is company doing to support workers who experience intimate partner violence? For example, benefits, support services, or the availability of personal, sick or compassionate leave?
- How might patterns of gender-based violence affect how the company’s product or service is used? Is the experience of the customer considered?

**Regulatory risk**
- Is the company in compliance with all laws and regulations surrounding gender-based violence?
- Is the company seen as a leader on gender-based violence and women’s rights more broadly within the community?

**Reputational risk**
- What role is the leadership of the company taking in addressing gender-based violence within the community? Is the company perceived as taking a stand?
- Does the company work with other organisations to support their employees, suppliers, or customers—for example, collaborations with local community groups, women’s organisations, church groups, or organisations that prevent or respond to violence?
Analysing the effects of family violence on a company’s operating costs in Solomon Islands

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) partnered with SolTuna, a tuna processing facility in the Solomon Islands, to identify ways to reduce expenses. The analysis illustrated the extent that violence in society impacts a company’s operations. SolTuna was experiencing exceptionally high rates of controllable absenteeism—that is, leave not accounted for by holiday, sick, or maternity days—which was increasing costs and decreasing productivity. Of SolTuna’s 1,800 workers, 64% are female. IFC found that 10% of all controllable absences were caused by gender-based violence in the home. In response, IFC is helping SolTuna to implement gender-smart initiatives, including health interventions, care services, and enhanced support on gender-based violence such as investing in community safe houses and training for staff members in peer counseling. They estimate the initiatives will reduce controllable absenteeism by 3%, increase earnings by US$1.58 million and save US$166,000 annually on reduced staff costs.11
Incidence of workplace gender-based violence varies from industry to industry. Agriculture is recognised globally to be one of the industries with the highest rates of sexual assault. In the Pacific, agriculture is the largest employment sector and contributes the most income to households.

Industries that overlap with informal sectors face risks. As there are fewer structures in place to report on or measure gender-based violence, enforcement of laws or regulations is challenging. This includes agriculture and tourism, two of the largest industries in most Pacific countries.

**Indicators of prevalence of gender-based violence**

1. **Standards or policies**
   - Are government enterprises, international companies, or donors involved in the sector?
   - How regulated is the industry? Who sets standards for the industry?
   - To what extent is economic activity within the industry taking place in the informal sector or the formal sector?

2. **Governance and enforcement**
   - Who are the national organisations (boards, chambers, councils) regulating and enforcing the regulations within the industry?
   - What are the gender divisions in leadership? There is often a disconnect between who does the work and who sits in leadership positions.
   - How enforceable are practices? Industries, particularly agriculture, that operate in more isolated settings have an increased likelihood of gender-based violence, resulting from a decreased ability to enforce.

3. **Attitudes, practices, and norms**
   - What are the power dynamics in the industry? What is the gendered division of labour within the sector or value chain?
   - What is the relative isolation of workers, what supervision is there, and do they work close to remote communities?
   - Are workers transient or working away from families and communities?
   - Is the workforce dominated by one gender?
   - Are workers relying on cash or other informal forms of payment?

**Future trends in the Pacific that will shift prevalence of gender-based violence**

1. In some countries, increased access to land ownership for women is slowly shifting practices and power dynamics. For those not paying attention, these shifts will create moments of destabilisation in the standard practices of industries.

2. Some industries are facing significant external pressure from trade partners or increased regulation, such as the fishing industry. There is more consumer activism in the agriculture sector and a growing global preference for fair-trade or organic certified products that include specific gender requirements.

3. The presence of social media and access to high-speed internet in remote locations is reducing the impact of isolation within industries such as mining and agriculture although it can bring a new set of risks related to gender-based violence.
INDUSTRY-LEVEL

Due diligence question to determine a company’s exposure to risks created by gender-based violence in the industry

**Political risk**
- How stable is the industry in which the company participates? Would that stability be disrupted by significant shifts in gender norms? E.g. shifts in pay equity or land ownership?
- Is the company able to adapt to broader shifts in the industry? Will it be an early adopter or a laggard in changes within labour patterns?

**Operational risk**
- Do employees work in remote or isolated areas? Is there potential exposure to violence on the way to work? Does the company provide safe transportation to work? Is there adequate, effective protection for workers in isolated areas?
- Are there changes in the industry economics putting pressure on labour? Is this increasing gender-based violence?
- What is the demographic breakdown of the workforce (gender, nationality, isolation from community) compared to the industry standards? Are the company’s labour needs shifting?

**Regulatory risk**
- Is the company engaged in global trade where standards around gender-based violence might be set outside of the Pacific?
- Is the company exposed to regulations and reporting requirements around gender-based violence in its supply chain?

**Reputational risk**
- Is the industry perceived as well regulated and ethical? Does it have gender equality standards? How much international/national scrutiny is it under? Would the company potentially be implicated or complicit in a broader industry-wide scandal?
- What is the company’s ability to innovate and lead in its sector? Is it driving industry changes, or will it need to respond to shifts in norms and practices around gender-based violence?
- Is the company seen as an ethical leader amongst its industry peers?
The risk of gender-based violence to the coffee industry in Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, women work more hours than men in coffee production, contributing two to three times more hours. Women are heavily involved in the activities critical for ensuring productivity and coffee quality. A study found that their involvement is key to the quality of the final product. Yet recognition of their contribution to production and quality is limited and they are regularly exposed to violence. The risk of women disengaging from their work in coffee is a risk to supply, and there is also a risk for women of increased violence in the home if they don’t continue with their work. These issues are true of other agricultural industries across the Pacific, as women are heavily involved in agricultural production but face similar challenges receiving the benefits.
The risks in small, early-stage companies are really about leadership. Do the leaders have the skills to be able to manage diverse backgrounds and potentially shift expectations around the acceptance of gender-based violence in their workplace? As individual companies mature, the power dynamics within the company shift. How a company considers gender equality and gender-based violence internally may be a litmus test for its ability to respond to the complex shifts that the future will bring.

Much of the economy in the Pacific overlaps with the informal sector, therefore the patterns of risks for that sector will shape company-level risks. Furthermore, many Pacific businesses are family businesses and intimate partner violence may affect the leadership of the company and shape the culture of the enterprise.

**COMPANY-LEVEL**

This section lays out investment risks that derive from gender-based violence within the company, the attitudes, policies and practices, and how to understand a company’s exposure to those risks.

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**Indicators of prevalence of gender-based violence**

1. **Policies**
   - Does the company have a gender-smart operational strategy and plan?
   - Does the company have a stated policy, whether formalised or not, that sexual harassment is not tolerated and the ramifications?
   - Does the company have explicit standards about sexual exploitation as part of its operations, in their business or in the supply chain?

2. **Governance and enforcement**
   - What is the gender division of the governing board and management?
   - Does the company have a process for employee complaints? What are the practices for alerting external authorities if the complaint is about criminal behaviour? Can the complaint be kept anonymous (recognising this is not possible in a very small company)?
   - How are disputes settled? If by informal mechanisms, are those mechanisms transparent? Are they perceived as fair?
   - How much information and transparency does the company require of vendors? E.g. labour practices, traceability of products.

3. **Attitudes, practices, and norms**
   - What is the gender diversity of the workforce at all levels, including leadership?
   - What is the culture of the organisation? Does it reflect traditional or more progressive gender norms?
   - Does the company leadership set a tone within the company that allows workers to feel respected and safe?

**Future trends in the Pacific that will shift prevalence of gender-based violence**

1. Behaviours of companies on gender-based violence are being increasingly watched and regulated by national governments, watchdog groups and donors as well as within the marketplace. Technologies, labelling schemes and certification programs are facilitating better visibility into company behaviour.

2. If companies can access international capital, they will encounter greater attention of international investors to company-level policies, strategies, and operations around gender and gender-based violence.

3. Increasing women’s leadership within businesses will continue to shift business culture in the Pacific. Since 2014, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu have rewritten company laws to allow ‘single-person companies’, meaning women can now start a company on their own.12
COMPANY-LEVEL

Areas of focus in due diligence to determine a company’s exposure to risks created by gender-based violence in the company

Political risk:
• Is there formal or informal policy relating to gender equality and/or gender-based violence?
• How strong is the leadership governance structure of the organisation? Does it have the power to enforce these policies consistently?

Operational risk:
• What portion of company turnover can be credited to gender attitudes within the society, broadly, and gender-based violence, specifically?
• How are reports of gender-based violence in the workplace handled? Is a survivor-centered approach applied?
• What is the role of women in the company: governance, management, employees, suppliers, and customers? Do power imbalances create conditions for gender-based violence in the workplace?
• What is the ability of the company to understand the cultural context it works in? Can the company use gender analysis to understand how shifting power dynamics might affect its business?

Regulatory risk:
• Is the company leadership, including the board, aware of potential regulatory changes?
• How prepared is it for shifts in employment regulations around gender equality and gender-based violence in the workplace?

Reputational risk:
• Is the company known as a safe, respectful place to work?
• Does the company have a historical practice that allowed for gender-based violence in the workplace? Historical disputes might not get attention now but would become a risk in the context of different potential futures.
COMPANY-LEVEL CASE STUDY

The costs of gender-based violence perpetrated by workers to a mining company

Over 940 cases of violence were filed against Barrick’s Gold’s Papua New Guinea gold mine in Porgera, including rape, sexual assault, drownings and shootings, since its foundation in 1989. To date, Barrick’s has settled over 200 cases of rape and violence against women from the Porgera community by security guards and mobile police. Men and boys have also been beaten, shot and killed for entering the open pit or tailings dumps or going near the mine’s property. Barrick’s has paid out hundreds of thousands in USD to settle claims and has received global attention and condemnation from organisations such as MiningWatch Canada, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and legal clinics at Harvard and New York University law schools.13
RISK MITIGATION

Understanding that gender-based violence exists and affects companies may not deter investment in a company but could inform how the investment is structured and what post-investment support to mitigate risks is provided. These recommendations are general and should be contextualised within the risks identified in due diligence and the nature of the relationship you have with the company.

**Investment structure terms**

Within the negotiation and structuring of the investment, you can introduce terms to mitigate identified risks:

- Introduce reporting requirements for specific indicators that require the company to pay attention to how gender-based violence may affect it going forward.
- Require sexual misconduct training/policy and clear reporting guidelines on sexual harassment and sexual assault, preferably in partnership with rights-based/survivor-centred organisations.
- Require board seats for leaders experienced in advancing gender equality.
- Recommendations for restructuring that would shift how power operates in the business or the industry and help to protect employees.
- Advocate with other co-investors to consider exposure to gender-based violence as a material risk to shape the valuation of companies. This could include employee ownership through structures such as employee stock ownership plans.

**Post-investment support**

Following investment, an investor plays a trusted advisory role. You contribute knowledge, skills and new partnership to the company:

- Encourage and provide training to increase the ability of the company to do a gender analysis to be able to continuously identify and respond to risks. Investors might be able to work with government bodies or foundations to get grant money to help companies meet the cost of developing and implementing best practices.
- Encourage companies to draw on partnerships with organisations and individuals who have knowledge of gender-based violence in the region. Companies can learn from others who have built best practices.
- Support the company leadership as they use their power to influence national or industry practices.
- Use your influence within the industry and region to help the company put in place processes for vetting suppliers/vendors.

**Influence industry practices**

As an investor, you have a voice within the industry to advocate for shifts in practices that benefits companies:

- Advocate for industry practices that will contribute to preventing gender-based violence.
- Build coalitions (formal or informal) with investors who are concerned with gender-based violence in the industry or region.
- Support organisations that are actively shaping the economic development of the region through decreasing gender-based violence.
- Use your voice to raise questions with other investors and name gender-based violence as a material risk in investments.

At the core, it is important to support the ability of the company to innovate, respond to its context, and anticipate change. The role the investor plays is not just to conduct due diligence but also to enable the business to grow into the future. If we assume the future of the Pacific includes reduced rates of gender-based violence—how will the company perform in that future?
DO NO HARM

The focus of this tool is to understand the investment risks that gender-based violence presents to investments in the Pacific. We have not specifically named how to reduce gender-based violence via investments or even to ensure that investments do no harm. This is in part because gender-based violence is a complex and sensitive issue and identifying and addressing it requires a lot of care to ensure that no harm is done to those experiencing it or those asking questions. Challenging traditional gender roles and the power attached to them can increase the risks of violence to women if the efforts are not led by experts with a holistic understanding of the issues at play in the community. Some research has been done on how to safely and ethically investigate gender-based violence and some resources, such as the do no harm guidance material kits, have been developed specifically for the Pacific. The kits draw on key findings from the do no harm research project, conducted initially in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea by the International Women’s Development Agency.

Investors should note that the mere process of asking questions about gender-based violence can create impact, both positive and negative. For example, questions about the culture of the enterprise and employees’ ability to issue complaints about sexual misconduct in the workplace could result in improved practices and pathways for employees to disclose violence—or could see a company take measures to ensure that behaviours don’t come to light, thereby creating a more restrictive environment.

The potential for unintended consequences should not deter an investor from considering the issue, but it should ensure that care is taken. Being aware of the risks of gender-based violence is a first and important step. Much of that can be understood through secondary research (see Resource List) and by working with local gender organisations, particularly those with a rights-based, survivor-centered approach, to determine how those patterns and trends apply to the enterprise being considered.

Photo: DFAT, Australian Aid.
RESOURCE LIST


Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security Index: [https://giwps.georgetown.edu/index-rankings/](https://giwps.georgetown.edu/index-rankings/)


PNG Mine Watch, Pressure at PNG’s Porgera mine to act on human rights redress: [https://ramunine.wordpress.com/tag/gender-violence/](https://ramunine.wordpress.com/tag/gender-violence/)


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UN Women, Global database on violence against women: [http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/oceania/vanuatu](http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/oceania/vanuatu)


COLLABORATORS

**Criterion Institute**
Criterion is a non-profit think tank that works to expand who has power and influence in economic decisions, enabling social changemakers to engage with and shift financial systems. Since 2017, Criterion partnered with Pacific RISE on investment initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for women in the region. This includes advising on program design to integrate nuanced analyses of gender patterns into investment decision-making and helping to build the ecosystem of gender lens investing by engaging gender experts and other investors. Criterion is also dedicated to identifying ways to use finance to address gender-based violence, building a coalition of asset owners committed to directing capital towards ending gender-based violence and ensuring that gender-based violence experts are involved in the design of solutions.

Criterion and Pacific RISE combined their expertise on gender patterns, gender-based violence, and business and investing practices in the Pacific to enable investors in the Pacific to identify and mitigate the risks of gender-based violence.

**Pacific RISE**
Pacific Readiness for Investment in Social Enterprise, or Pacific RISE, is a pilot innovation of the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and partnership of Pacific Trade Invest Australia. Pacific RISE demonstrates impact investments in the Pacific and aims to deepen the knowledge about the investment process and the Pacific investment ecosystem. Pacific RISE works with investors and financial intermediaries and provides funding for intermediaries to provide investment readiness support to Pacific businesses and to raise capital. Pacific RISE partners with the Criterion Institute to incorporate a gender lens across the program.

During implementation, 80% of intermediaries noted gender-based violence as a risk during their analysis: 25% country risk; 25% gender risk; 10% sector risk; and 40% company risk. This was to be addressed through the company existing procedures (31%), using a gender analysis (44%) or with help from Pacific RISE or specific finance. It was clear that gender-based violence was an issue for investment and the design of this tool could help to address this for women, businesses and investors.

**Australian Government**
The Australian Government’s aid program reflects Australia’s values and its commitment to reducing poverty and lifting living standards through sustainable economic growth.

Australia’s foreign policy pursues the empowerment of women as a top priority and that Australia strives to end violence against women and girls.

For more information about Australia’s development paradigm visit: [Australia’s aid program](#)

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