

Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2018

Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2018 (IPE18) conducted Women, Peace and Security (WPS) activities during its recent port-visits in Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa including community engagement, workshops on how to better integrate gender perspectives into operations and exercises, and events focussed on how to broaden the opportunities and roles of women in regional security forces

IPE is a significant annual maritime activity intended to deepen Australia's engagement and partnership with regional security forces, local communities and governments. The IPE exercises aim to improve and strengthen military interoperability throughout the Pacific region, with a focus on disaster planning, disaster relief operations and responses to regional security challenges.

On 13 June 2018 the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Marise Payne and ADF Gender Advisor Lieutenant Commander Sarah Mills, engaged in an interactive discussion on WPS in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster relief (HADR) operations, in Tonga.

The interactive WPS workshop provided an opportunity for the Minister of Defence to remind representatives from the ADF and His Majesties Armed Forces (HMAF Tonga) of the importance of incorporating gender considerations into disaster management, planning and relief activities.

She also congratulated HMAF personnel on their role in leading Tonga's development of a National Action Plan for WPS.

She also noted the importance of collaboratively sharing lessons learned and working together on advancing the WPS themes of participation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery, during times of disaster and unrest.

The Minister further reflected that a gender perspective was actively applied during ADF's recent humanitarian aid and support to Tonga after Cyclone Gita. This ensured that humanitarian aid and support encompassed the needs of the whole population, including children and youth, people living with disability or chronic illness, elderly people, people living on the outer islands, widows, young single mothers and pregnant and breastfeeding women. She added that deploying an ADF Gender Focal Point, Squadron Leader Adam Vasilj, as part of the ADF's first response, was instrumental to ensuring that aid reached the most affected communities, and that the specific needs of those communities were met.

The WPS workshop invoked much thoughtful discussion of ADF and HMAF personnel, including some of the practical ways that gender can be incorporated into military planning and execution processes, especially in relation to HADR operations.



(left) Australian Minister for Defence, Senator the Honourable Marise Payne talks to Joint Task Group Indo-Pacific Endeavour Gender Advisor Lieutenant Commander Sarah Mills about a Women, Peace and Security workshop held onboard HMAS Adelaide, in Tonga, during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2018.