



**UN**  
**TRUST**  
**FUND** TO END  
VIOLENCE  
AGAINST WOMEN  
AND GIRLS

**30**  
YEARS

# LORIO SISIOLO

**Family Support Centre**  
(Solomon Islands)



**Sometimes, getting help means taking a boat.**

In Solomon Islands, our communities are scattered across islands. For a woman experiencing violence outside the capital, Honiara, reaching counselling or other support may mean a journey by boat or plane. For many, those services have been out of reach.

When I joined the Family Support Centre in 1998, it was only three years old and still a very small organization, with just a handful of staff. Yet it was already becoming an important part of Solomon Islands' response to gender-based violence, providing counselling, referrals and other support to women and children experiencing domestic violence. I joined to work as the finance and administration officer, but the work drew me in: I trained in counselling, began supporting survivors and eventually became the Centre's coordinator.

I left in 2009, and when I returned ten years later, I found a very different organization. Its first UN Trust Fund-supported project, awarded in 2017, had just ended, and the Centre had expanded its reach through volunteer-based committees in seven provinces.

Through these committees, women who had struggled to reach us in Honiara could now seek basic support closer to home. Trained local volunteers provided counselling and connected survivors with health workers, police, legal assistance and other services in their provinces. The committees became part of a wider referral network, helping women move between counselling, medical care, legal assistance and protection depending on what they needed.



But bringing services closer was not enough.

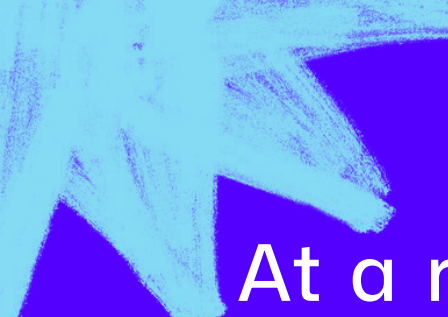
In small communities, where everyone knows one another, a woman entering a counselling office might be identified as a survivor of violence. We chose neutral, central locations where women could seek help more discreetly.

When funding later ran short, some provincial committees had to pause. Within six months, communities were asking for them to return. It showed how much people had come to rely on the service and how quickly that support could disappear when funding ended.

We could not keep depending on one grant after another to maintain services that women needed every day.

Our second UN Trust Fund grant, awarded in 2024, is helping us address that challenge. Over four years, we are strengthening the provincial network through training and full-time counsellors, including two new branches in Lata and Buala. Just as importantly, we are working with provincial governments to build the partnerships that could keep these services available long after the grant ends.





At a recent training, provincial leaders expressed interest in providing land or buildings and developing agreements setting out how they could contribute. We are now working to turn that interest into concrete commitments, so the services women rely on are not left vulnerable every time external funding runs short.

I think of a woman who finally decides to seek help. She needs somewhere she can reach without travelling all the way to Honiara, where she feels safe asking for support and can understand her options. She needs to know that the service will be there when she needs it.



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Donors and projects will come and go. But she should never arrive to find a closed door because the funding has ended.



**Lorio Sisiolo** is Coordinator of the Family Support Centre in Solomon Islands, which provides free counseling, legal support and referrals for survivors of violence.

Having first joined the organization in 1998, she has spent much of her career working to bring support closer to women and girls across the country's scattered islands.

