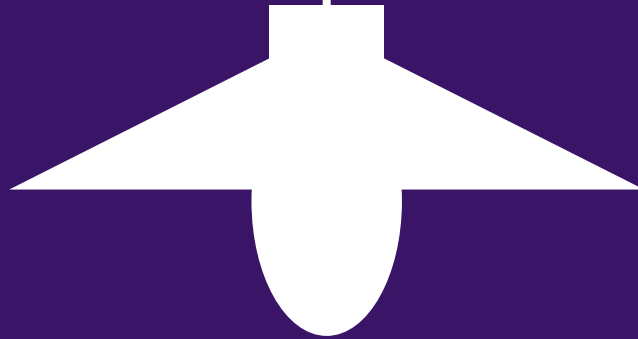




UNVEILING SUBVERSIVE POWER

Shedding light on anti-rights actors in
the Asia-Pacific region

A Report



Justice for Prosperity

WHO DIS 

Unveiling Subversive Power

Mapping Subversive Networks and Their Impact on SRHR in the Asia-Pacific

How sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender, LGBTIQ+, and women's rights are instrumentalised

5 December 2024

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Shedding light on anti-rights actors in the Asia-Pacific region



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1 Executive Summary

The global fight for human rights is no longer a progressive path forward—it's a battlefield where authoritarian states and conservative alliances exploit international institutions and local structures to destabilise, reshape norms, silence dissent(s), and advance their agendas. This report, by the Justice for Prosperity Foundation (JfP) with the support of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), reveals how these actors use sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and related topics as strategic tools for the expansion of power, financial gain, influence, and ideological dominance.

The report provides insight into the *modi operandi* of the actors seeking to increase their power and influence by instrumentalising topics around identity, culture, heritage, traditions, and even the interpretation of human rights standards. With that, its primary objective is to explain how this is a cross-sectoral issue and impacts democratic stability and states' receptiveness to international regional cooperation.

1.1 Context

The anti-rights movement poses a growing national security threat, leveraging divisive cultural narratives, legal manipulations, and geopolitical strategies to destabilise governance, erode democratic norms, and undermine regional stability.

JfP's qualitative research and investigations spanned Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji.

Deep dives into Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu reveal how anti-rights actors manipulate cultural and economic vulnerabilities to marginalise women, undermine SRHR, and destabilise governance. JfP's research of the individual situations regarding SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights within the ten countries under analysis produced results that, while somewhat nuanced and differing from country to country, can still be grouped in a commonly applicable conclusion.

1.2 Key Findings and Conclusions

Anti-rights actors—including authoritarian states, conservative networks, and extremist movements—strategically exploit societal divisions to weaken democratic systems, destabilise institutions and undermine regional alliances. The anti-rights movement represents a deliberate reshaping of governance and societal norms through calculated manipulation of laws, institutions, and narratives. This creates vulnerabilities that oligarchs and authoritarian regimes like Russia and China capitalise on for strategic and financial gain. Without urgent, coordinated action, this growing movement threatens decades of progress in human rights and the stability of regional and global systems.

This challenge extends beyond issues related solely to SRHR or “gender”. It must be recognised as a cross-sectoral national threat requiring coordination across intelligence agencies, law enforcement, civil society, and multilateral partners. A unified, inter-agency response can effectively address the destabilising impact of anti-rights actors and connections to foreign state influence.

This report draws **five main conclusions** from the findings from the investigations and research. The anti-rights actors and activities around SRHR:

- 1) Pose a threat to regional and national security
- 2) Undermine long-standing democratic principles

- 3) Are instrumentalised as part of geopolitical influence and interference
- 4) Rely on religion and religious institutions framing backsliding as “foreign”
- 5) Expose civil society organisations to targeted attacks and systemic suppression

These actions are not isolated cultural battles; they can be seen as calculated efforts to destabilise regional governance frameworks and influence multilateral platforms. They threaten bilateral and multilateral relationships in regions such as the Asia-Pacific, making these activities a potential **threat to regional and national security**.

Anti-Rights actors manipulate democratic mechanisms to normalise regressive ideologies by infiltrating multilateral institutions and domestic legislative processes. They use ambiguous human rights language to promote traditionalist values while rolling back inclusive norms. This “reframing” **undermines long-standing democratic principles** and erodes democratic norms, making it difficult for progressive states to respond effectively.

Authoritarian regimes use these ideological battles as soft power tools to extend their financial and **geopolitical influence**. From funding ultra-conservative organisations to exploiting local narratives, actors like Russia and China intertwine their strategies increasingly with financial opportunism, particularly in resource-rich but politically vulnerable states like PNG and the Solomon Islands.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) across the region have experienced a regression in their efforts due to escalating legal restrictions, disinformation campaigns, and declining government support. Their ability to advocate for inclusivity and democratic resilience has been severely constrained, **exposing them to targeted attacks and systemic suppression**. In critical cases, legislative tools such as “foreign agent” laws, anti-LGBTIQ+ policies, and media and consumer laws are used to censor even education and have been weaponised to curtail freedoms and silence civil society. A legal regression regarding SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights is being justified with rhetoric referring to a “return” to ‘traditional’ or ‘historical’ values. Religion – whether Christianity or Islam – is being heavily exploited to fulfil this purpose. The **widespread participation of religious institutions** is crucial to realising all these occurrences, some of which are seemingly done in collaboration with foreign state actors. In contrast, other religious institutions exhibit pervasive social influence over culture, customs, worldviews, and practices adopted by everyday people, even without formal participation in political decision-making. Corresponding to these developments, much of the progressive legislation enacted before this **backsliding is labelled as a “foreign, “imported, or “modern” concept**. Efforts to prevent gender-based violence in the region have garnered significant attention, accompanied by frequent calls for women's rights and their active participation in public life. However, this **advocacy is often contradicted by messaging** from the same individuals and officials at events. While they promote women's empowerment, these leaders simultaneously express that women should avoid wearing pants, be submissive to men, and concentrate on raising boys to become leaders, rather than pursuing careers or seeking independence. This **conflicting narrative** is perpetuated by various bodies, including Ministries for Women, Youth, Children, and Family Affairs, as well as ambassadors **advocating for women's rights, resulting in a confusing understanding** of women's roles in society.

Examples are seen in **PNG**, where several religious organisations tied to external actors highlight using ideological narratives to restrict rights and influence societal norms. Events in the **Solomon Islands** illustrate how financial incentives intertwine with anti-rights campaigns, with local elites exploiting these dynamics for personal and political gain.

Globally, two critical missteps previously have hindered progress in countering these influences. First, **an approach of appeasement**—overlooking violations or being overly tolerant to avoid escalation—has emboldened actors to push boundaries with minimal consequences. Second, an **excessive focus on "front door" activities**, such as public diplomacy and official policies, **has diverted attention from covert "back door" operations**, where efforts to destabilise systems and alienate governments from traditional alliances take root. These **back-channel strategies**, often orchestrated by international actors with ties to other states, exploit systemic vulnerabilities to weaken partnerships, amplify societal polarisation, and disrupt international cooperation.

1.3 Recommendations

The report makes **four main recommendations**, contextualised and detailed in Chapter 8. They should be seen in direct relation to this report's objective and main findings. In addition to these four recommendations, JfP respectfully suggests progressive democratic governments consider developing (or reconfirming) a **cross-sectoral strategy to counter anti-rights influence and foreign state subversion**.

A comprehensive strategy is required to mitigate these threats effectively and could:

- ***Integrate cross-sectoral efforts*** by establishing a coordinated framework involving intelligence, financial intelligence units, law enforcement, and civil society to address overt and covert activities.
- ***Counter subversion and financial networks*** by proactively dismantling financial networks supporting anti-rights activities, particularly those linked to foreign state actors. This includes tracing and blocking funding sources through enhanced financial intelligence and international cooperation.
- ***Strengthen multilateral engagement*** by fostering proactive collaboration with multilateral partners to anticipate and neutralise threats while bolstering collective defences against covert influence campaigns.
- ***Empower smaller states*** through strategic partnerships to help them resist coercion, counter disinformation campaigns, and strengthen their alignment with progressive democratic alliances.

By integrating anti-rights actors and their connections into broader cross-government investigations, governments can safeguard democratic values, fortify alliances, and reinforce global stability and the rule of law. This approach acknowledges the urgency of addressing these threats with the seriousness and coordination they demand. Next to developing a solid national or regional strategy, the following four recommendations detailed in Chapter 8 are summarised.

Recommendation 1: Early detection

- *Focus on tracking the tactics of anti-rights actors, particularly their infiltration of multilateral institutions and legislative manipulation.*
- *Prioritise early detection of the development of laws targeting SRHR and civil society, such as "foreign agent" regulations, anti-LGBTIQ+ policies, media restrictions, and cybersecurity laws.*
- *Take proactive measures to counter these legislative trends by advocating for transparency rules, building coalitions, raising public awareness, and leveraging strategic litigation.*

Recommendation 2: Continuous Investigations

- *Establish a dedicated, centralised investigation capacity to understand and anticipate threats from anti-rights actors.*
- *Enable cohesive civil society responses by consolidating intelligence and high-level strategies.*

Recommendation 3: Going Cross-Pillar

- *Reposition the anti-rights agenda as a national security and destabilisation risk to enable cross-government coordination.*
- *Establish multi-agency working groups to address these threats' diffuse and subversive nature, involving law enforcement, financial regulators, and intelligence bodies.*
- *Engage in international platforms to enhance global cooperation and align national efforts.*

Recommendation 4: Supporting Local Organisations

- *Strengthen the capacity of carefully selected local CSOs as frontline defenders and leverage their unique ability to operate across societal layers.*
- *Commit to substantial investment in capacity building, strategic alliances, and counter-narratives to resist disinformation and ideological manipulation.*
- *Facilitate alliances and coalition building among gender equality, anti-corruption, and democracy actors.*
- *Develop campaigns supported by business and media experts to counter anti-rights narratives, and combat disinformation and stereotypes.*
- *Enhance digital and reporting tools, including media literacy, cybersecurity, and documentation skills for non-government organisations (NGOs) to report better and counter opposition.*

2 Introduction

Culture wars are an active part of the expansion of power and influence in regions globally. 'Soft power' and 'soft laws' are terms often used to describe this phenomenon. This may leave one with the impression that the tactics used in soft power aren't all that worrisome or aggressive, or that the topics instrumentalised like SRHR, LGBTIQ+ issues, gender equality, and family values are siloed issues only problematic for certain communities. This is most certainly not the case.

Across the world, a backlash against these topics and democratic backsliding have increased, while electoral autocracies and authoritarianism are on the rise. As a result of a larger wave of conservatism, nationalism, and traditionalism, SRHR has been instrumentalised by ultra-conservative religious actors and organisations, populist politics, and extremist ideologies to reshape the interpretation, progression, and protection of human rights globally. It has become a weapon of war to geopolitical powers like Russia and China.

In Europe, especially the European Union, governments had long been appeasing Russian influence rather than taking the subversive activities, manipulation campaigns, and sometimes blatant aggression for the signposts they were. This willingness to appease and accept norm violations, through ambiguous provocations combined with leveraging democratic credentials, helped actors who employ these methods reframe their provocations as 'allowed'. This makes it difficult to push back, but it is also a warning sign that we should.

IPPF and its Member Associations have flagged these developments as threats and are forced to deal with the very real threats on human lives they present. This has now been recognised as a systemic issue threatening the stability and security of bilateral and multilateral relationships in the Asia-Pacific region and led to the commission of this report by the Justice for Prosperity Foundation (JfP). The objective of this report is not to confirm that SRHR, LGBTIQ+, and gender rights are under threat but, more importantly, that it is a strategic instrument in the expansion of foreign influence from, for example, Russia and China.

Sincere ideologues, religious actors, advocates, and right-wing extremists also play their part in this game. They, in turn, are instruments at the hands of those who intentionally seek to expand their power and/or undermine the stability of other states. All the actors can be grouped along a triangle in which they interact and mix. This notion will be explained further in the methodology, with the actors involved also described in more detail in the case examples.

This report includes historical elements and regional context that, while familiar to many readers, are essential to understanding how the investigated actors' modus operandi exploits deep-seated frustrations and long-standing societal challenges. By leveraging these issues, these actors amplify polarisation and division, creating the societal fractures that underpin their operational strategies and financial gain.

3 Methodology

This report by Justice for Prosperity (JfP), commissioned by IPPF, results from a rigorous investigative process combining diverse methods to ensure depth and credibility. The scope was set at 10 countries in the region of special interest to IPPF — Australia, Malaysia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Republic of the Philippines, Independent State of Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Republic of Nauru, the Republic of Vanuatu, Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands and the Republic of Fiji. The investigations were conducted over a 7-week period. Over 250 sources were analysed through open-source intelligence (OSINT) investigations, including breached data, complemented by insights from confidential human sources— anonymised or pseudonymised for their safety.

While field investigations have further enriched the broader investigation by offering valuable on-the-ground perspectives, the findings presented in this report focus on data and insights gathered from OSINT and human sources.

Rather than providing an exhaustive account of all actors and activities, the report describes the systemic challenges driving the issue. Three countries were selected for a deeper dive, offering slightly different dynamics of anti-rights activities. One in which anti-rights are more at the forefront of undermining the position of women, SRHR, and LGBTIQ+ people. Another, with new but strong foreign state interference. Finally, one where opportunism and financial interests impact women and girls. Though these are different, they exemplify how the objective of money, power, and influence instrumentalise these communities and rights. Destabilising systems and threatening the security of the state and regional relationships. Though we may not always see it that way, the (geopolitical) actors behind it do.

In our investigations, JfP explores anti-rights actors and activities within an “anti-rights triangle” comprising three key corners, as illustrated in *Visual 1*. One corner represents ultra-conservative, traditionalist religious actors, including the Russian Orthodox Church, the Vatican, and fundamentalist Evangelical lobbying organisations like Family Watch International, as well as private entities such as Hazte Oír and Citizen Go. On another corner of the anti-gender triangle, we can see populists, who are able to use their political platform and leverage to stigmatise, dismiss and ‘ostracise LGBTIQ+ and SRHR rights. Finally, on the last corner, we can describe extremists or influencers, persons or organisations (or accounts if on social media) that hold some form of social, financial, or political capital and influence that often form around an (extremist) ideology, conspiracy theory/belief. These can include organisations such as the former French Generation Identity or youth active clubs. These actors also can be secular in nature, such as NGOs advocating for higher birthrates, such as X-Y Worldwide, an initiative co-founded by former Hungarian President Katalin Novak and British Data Scientist & Demographer Steven J Shaw, which reportedly also received sponsorship from Elon Musk and Giorgia Meloni (see section on Demographic Decline in Chapter 6.3).

However, it is important to note that these actors (ultra-conservatives, populists and extremists) often do not operate independently of one another; instead, they interact with each other and **work in symbiosis with each other**, resulting in a myriad of alliances formed consciously or unconsciously to be able to mobilise political leverage, support and financial capital to utilise polarising topics to be able to wield a shield of power and influence, with vulnerable members of society taking the biggest detrimental impact.

In many cases, relationships and activities are intentionally manipulated. It is JfP's theory that ultra-conservative, traditionalist, religious actors mostly drive this manipulation. To truly understand their power and influence, **we must consider the anti-rights movement as a complete and interactive trifecta**. This report contributes to existing enquiries into global efforts of anti-rights and anti-gender actors, placing a specific focus on the Asia Pacific region where historically there have been significant gaps in cross-pillar investigations. Recognising this issue as a threat to national security and stability is essential, as it affects our democracies and regional relationships. JfP's expertise in counterintelligence and counterterrorism allows it to approach research and investigations from a unique perspective. This includes leveraging knowledge and operational experience in areas such as financial intelligence, networks, and organised crime detection, among others.

In previous investigations, JfP tracked and extracted the most predominant modi operandi of anti-gender actors and activities in Europe. This report will specifically address several of these, explained in Chapter 5 and *Visual 2*.

4 Why Is This Happening

Indonesia's new **Criminal Code**, adopted in December 2022, criminalises extramarital sex and cohabitation – impacting SRHR by creating barriers to accessing contraceptives and sexual health services, particularly for unmarried individuals. In **Malaysia**, health services that cater to SRHR needs for the marginalised, including LGBTIQ+ communities – especially around HIV prevention and sexual health education – are increasingly restricted, impacting overall public health. In **PNG** and the **Solomon Islands**, it is reported that two-thirds of women experience gender-based violence (GBV) in their lifetime. In both countries, GBV remains a serious epidemic problem and is continually underreported. These concerning developments over the last five years did not occur in a vacuum. Any efforts to address them must consider both the historical and current political context of the local and international levels, which heavily influence legal, political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics in the ten states under review. Their important geopolitical location makes them vulnerable to outside influences.

This report provides insight into the covert modus operandi of foreign actors. Still, first, this chapter describes factors that give rise to a 'perfect storm'—to the detriment of SRHR, LGBTIQ+, and gender in the region—and whose root causes and symptoms we must tackle.

These emerging trends will continue feeding local and global radicalism and tension that must be addressed by understanding the deeply rooted issues that are exploited by geopolitical powers like China and Russia and opportunistically used by ultra-conservative religious actors, right-wing populist politicians, and their extremist likes.

Ten states—Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, PNG, Nauru, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji—are among over 80 nations decolonised in the 20th century after enduring colonial rule lasting one to four centuries. Colonisers included the UK, the Netherlands, the US, France, and Spain. Indigenous cultures in these regions, often patriarchal but sometimes matrilineal, were reshaped by Christianity and Islam, introducing stricter gender norms and marginalising LGBTIQ+ individuals.

Post-independence (1940s–1970s, except for Australia), these nations grappled with political, economic, and cultural transitions. Challenges included economic dependency, fragile institutions, and colonial legacies of ethnic and cultural divisions. For instance:

- *Malaysia retained British systems and economic ties but faced ethnic tensions.*
- *The Philippines relied on US trade and military agreements while struggling with elite-dominated politics.*
- *Indonesia dealt with tensions over West Papua, Cold War pressures, and reliance on foreign investment.*

These states faced economic vulnerability due to reliance on single-resource exports, institutional fragility, and challenges in forging unified identities. Despite these obstacles, progress in gender equality and SRHR emerged, influenced by human rights trends and United Nations (UN) instruments.

During the Cold War, most aligned with the West due to historical ties and economic reliance, while others pursued neutrality. In the post-Cold War era, alternatives to Western dependence emerged, notably from China, India, and other BRICS states, reshaping political, economic, and social dynamics.

Within the ten states investigated for this report, a preference for non-Western partners has materialised, and domestic policy directions have evolved accordingly. In terms of international alliances, also exhibited by voting practices in global institutions such as the UN, this changing landscape has enabled significant international political-diplomatic shifts. For instance, **Vanuatu** and **Nauru** have closely engaged with China and Russia. Similarly, the **Solomon Islands'** decision to establish diplomatic relations with China in 2019, rigorously moving away from Taiwan, indicates a strategic realignment influenced by China's rapidly growing presence and influence in the Asia Pacific exemplified by large financial investments through the **Belt and Road Initiative** and diplomatic assertion. During the UN General Assembly vote in 2022 on a resolution condemning Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine, countries like **Indonesia** and **Malaysia** abstained – reflecting a nuanced stance that deviated from their traditional alignment with the Western bloc.

Domestically, this emergence has materialised in **socio-cultural 'backsliding'**, which, among other consequences, has also resulted in diminished legal guarantees for women's rights, SRHR and the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community – as elaborated throughout this report. One of the links between the evolving geopolitical dynamics and the downgrading of this category of socio-cultural rights is the increased use of populist rhetoric – some by the political parties in power (for instance, in the Philippines and in Fiji), but often also by the political opposition and by non-political groups in society. Overall, a noticeable trend in the states under review is the **emerging qualification of SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights as a modern (colonial) import** which clashes with 'traditional' domestic cultural-religious values and which now, some politicians in power can 'boldly' overturn in the name of heritage and complete independence and sovereignty. This is encapsulated, for instance, in the statements by Vanuatu's Pastor Thomson Aki, who stated that LGBTIQ+ is *"Perhaps /.../ a foreign concept adopted from modern culture, which has become a problem in the country"*.ⁱ Vanuatu's National Human Rights Coordinator, Albert Nalpini, also stated that November's proposed legislation banning LGBTIQ+ promotion and funding recognised that such activities *"/.../contradict our Constitution's preambles, Christian principles, and Melanesian values"*.ⁱⁱ

The irony of these developments, nevertheless, is that what many political and religious leaders in the states being analysed are calling "traditional", "historical", and "deeply rooted" values are, in fact, foreign-imported, colonial religious doctrines that are less "indigenous" to the region.

Domestically, emotion-evoking themes, like the loss of culture, immorality, falling natality rates and others, are often blamed on the LGBTIQ+ community, Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE), and abortion or contraception. A relatively new but very fast-rising theme is **demographic decline** (Chapter 6.3), which anti-rights actors often claim is due, in part, to the same "causes". While women have historically been held responsible for these issues, those considered as non-conforming-to-tradition, such as gender and sexual minorities, are becoming increasingly treated as "domestic traitors" – with civil society organisations, for instance, being scapegoated for receiving "foreign funding". Foreign actors then weaponise this increased social intolerance for their agendas and even support for legislative actions, such as in **Vanuatu**.

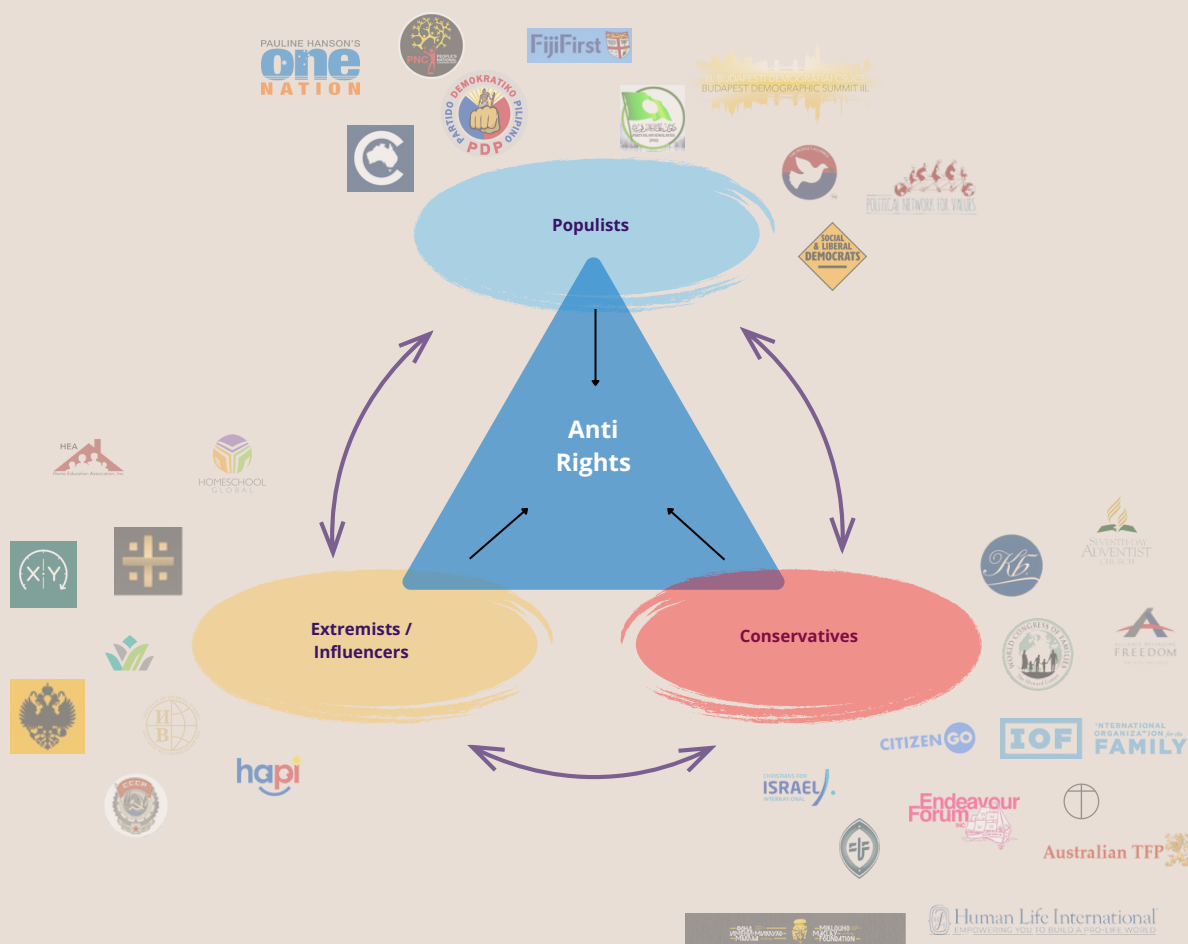
One of those agendas is economic exploitation, unhindered by human rights standards. Others are related to the desire to establish close political and diplomatic alliances based on "shared traditional values" by, for example, engaging with leaders as **Hungary** and **PNG** did. This socio-cultural-legal backsliding is not an isolated phenomenon. Other than mate-

rialising with SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights, there is also a trend in the loosening of environmental protection regulations and the increased ecological damage through unsustainable economic exploitation of natural resources – as seen in the **Solomon Islands** (Chapter 7.2).

Australia is likewise experiencing increased populist rhetoric both in the political and socio-cultural-religious spheres. It is also, alarmingly, becoming a fertile ground for the global anti-rights network, often using Australia's Christian Evangelical background to disseminate anti-rights rhetoric and conduct activities in the surrounding areas of influence – as elaborated upon in Chapter 7.5. This trend affects SRHR in Australia and enables the progression of anti-rights networks in the other nine states. Australia's role in the regional export of harmful trends to SRHR is enabled by several factors, such as a significant diaspora of the other nine states on its territory – which often embrace more conservative values. On the other hand, Australia is the largest aid donor to the Pacific Islands (one of the world's most aid-dependent regions) – providing about 40 per cent of total development finance from 2008 to 2021. This trajectory continues in 2024-2025, with Australia delivering record AU \$ 2 billion development assistance to the Pacific.

The Anti-Rights Triangle

Actors could be grouped based on their self-identification, activities, and connections. To illustrate this, several actors have been sorted along this triangle visualisation based on their self-identification and, or, public classification as such by topical experts.



This visual is for illustrative purposes only and does not constitute an exhaustive representation of the subject matter. Any interpretations or conclusions derived from this visual are the sole responsibility of the viewer.

5 Modi Operandi

Subversive actors use a variety of interconnected tactics to undermine democratic, inclusive values, especially human rights, women's rights, SRHR, and LGBTIQ+ rights. These tactics are mostly subtle and seemingly innocuous when observed individually but become more alarming when their cumulative effects and underlying coordination are recognised. These tactics collectively seek to influence policies, weaken democratic norms, and roll back existing human rights, relying on secrecy, coordination, and manipulation to achieve long-term goals. Below are several key tactics that JfP uses as indicators to identify potentially subversive activities and actors. This list is not exhaustive for strategic reasons.

1. **Networking:** *Actors form alliances and coordinate anti-rights strategies through private meetings, international events, and formalised partnerships. Networking strengthens their reach, pools resources, and creates a powerful, interconnected movement. Examples of these alliances and networks include the Political Network for Values and Agenda Europe. Often, board members of these organisations are often part of multiple organisations. An example can be seen in Katalin Novak, former President of Hungary, who was the former president of the Political Network for Values and is now the co-founder of X-Y Worldwide, a pro-Natalist NGO backed by Elon Musk and Giorgia Meloni. With the help of human sources and infiltration, JfP has been able to prove the normally hidden but thriving relationships between a wide range of actors.*
2. **Discourse Manipulation:** *Language is twisted to frame their anti-rights agenda in a positive light. By altering the narrative, they shape public opinion and bolster polarising sentiments, using terms like “freedom” and “pro-family” to mask harmful intentions. From breached data, JfP possesses lists of terminology that appropriates human rights language to further its anti-rights objectives.*
3. **Training:** *Training sessions are held to educate lawyers, lobbyists, and anti-rights activists on fundraising, political processes, and agenda-setting. Training reinforces the coordinated messaging used across different countries and platforms, enabling these actors to manipulate public discourse better. A recent example is when the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) recruited and trained thousands of conservative Christian attorneysⁱⁱⁱ, many of whom have ascended to influential positions, including the newly appointed US House Speaker, Mike Johnson. Similarly, Ordo Iuris in Poland has established law schools to train anti-rights legal specialists, further expanding their influence. JfP mainly uses Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) research to investigate these events and those being trained.*
4. **Social media and Internet:** *Social media and online platforms are used to spread disinformation, mobilise supporters, and target opposing views. Campaigns exploit emotional narratives to influence public opinion, drive polarising debates, and amplify messages through platforms like CitizenGO and iFamNews. Social media is being increasingly used to disseminate disinformation. Faith-based organisations, often under the guise of media literacy, illustrate and dictate the spread of carefully selective narratives on social media. JfP built an AI tool for early detection of active polarisation and disinformation campaigns.*
5. **Funding:** *Funding comes from multiple sources—including Russian or South American oligarchs, US Christian right groups, and European elites—using techniques like astroturfing¹, state funding, and religious donations. This financial support enables actors to stay under the radar while creating widespread influence. Many have reported on the hundreds of*

¹ The term ‘astroturfing’ describes the practice of masking the sponsors, a message or organisation (e.g., political, advertising, religious or public relations) to make it appear as though it originates from, and is supported by others, like grassroots organisations.

millions to billions that circulate in funding these anti-rights actors, but exact numbers remain unknown. An example of this is Family Watch International (FWI), a fundamentalist Arizona (US)-based Christian organisation whose spending in Africa increased nearly five-fold from 2019 to 2022. During this period, FWI was present in many International Organisations and influenced several African states' domestic and foreign policies. JfP works with large financial institutions, both public and private, to better understand the financial flows between actors.

6. **Infiltration of Influential Positions:** Actors infiltrate positions in international organisations and political bodies to promote their anti-rights agenda from within. They have taken positions in EU bodies, the UN, Organisation of Islamic States and African Union, and. They use consultative statuses at forums like the United Nations and the Council of Europe to influence policymaking and push their agenda. Understanding this broader context is equally critical to being more effective in proactively advancing and protecting SRHR at the multilateral level. This report pays specific attention to the UN as a space where, for decades, conservative and religious actors have ingratiated themselves and infiltrated influential positions. At the same time, domestic politics, regional dynamics, societal attitudes, and informal norms shape Member States' formal positions, their endorsement of UN norms, and the implementation of agreed policies and actions. Geopolitical powers like China and Russia actively benefit from this. Still, NGOs and Government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) often prepare grounds to support the favourable circumstances that allow this to happen. JfP mainly uses OSINT research and Social Network Analysis to find the (historical) ties between new nominations and the relevant people, organisations and networks.

SRHR has been instrumentalised by ultra-conservative extremists and organisations, populist politics, and extremist ideologies to reshape the interpretation, progression, and protection of human rights through the UN mechanisms. This has been exemplified by manoeuvres such as the inclusion of Sharon Slater of Family Watch International on the formal panel at the Commission on the Status of Women's (CSW) 65th edition in New York, along with the support these groups have increasingly provided to governments in drafting language in response to resolutions, the least of which was the Russian success regarding the local, traditional interpretation of human rights.

This infiltration of multilateral spaces is significantly different from merely holding a status at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), open to any NGO after 3 years of enactment. These actors deliberate to gain a stronger foothold and influence key international agreements and processes. For example, on 16-17 November 2023, the Political Network for Values (PNfV) and its partner organisations hosted its fifth "Transatlantic Summit" conference on the 75th birthday of the Human Rights Charter (UDHR) at the UN Secretariat premises. It adopted the "New York Statement", which was entered into the records of the General Assembly as a letter and annexe after being submitted by the Hungarian Permanent Representative to the UN, Ms Zsuzsanna Horváth (A78/639). In that annexe, the alliance calls for a commitment to return to the original meaning of the UDHR and...

"...to establish an environment conducive to family formation and stability for men and women to fully realize their fundamental human right to marry and found a family (UDHR 16, 23, 25). To protect children, both before and after birth (UDHR 3, Cf. CRC Preamble)".

Representatives of 40 UN Member States attended the conference, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Ghana, Hungary, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, and Uganda.

In this context, we must consider: Where is the progressive coalition that launches such letters into the formal record of the General Assembly?

The formal position of Member States in the UN (and relevant working groups) is increasingly influenced by this broader domestic (or regional) context of growing conservatism, nationalism, and traditionalism, where previously, international and multilateral relations swayed a more significant influence that enabled the positive progression of SRHR, despite opposition. It is also important to recognise that every Member State vote weighs the same – giving conservative states and actors more leverage to undermine existing international human rights frameworks.

7. **Attacks: Human rights defenders and activists are subjected to threats, harassment, physical violence, and SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation).** *These aggressive tactics are designed to intimidate and silence individuals, leaving them vulnerable to burnout and trauma. The aim is to directly weaken the capacity of activists and organisations to defend democratic rights by creating an environment of fear and insecurity. JfP provides expertise and on-the-ground support in case of physical threats.*

The most obvious attacks on laws and rights that we are witnessing globally are those which are taking measures to restrict or roll back the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people. A blatant example is **Vanuatu's** proposed legislation banning LGBTIQ+ advocacy and funding, along with the recent amendment of the marriage act by the Vanuatu Parliament stating that marriage is recognised as the union of a male and female only.

Many countries globally have started adopting such legislation, varying in scope and enforcement, but generally aim to limit the visibility and rights of LGBTIQ+ communities.

The **Indonesian** ban on all sex outside of marriage, including between unmarried people (adopted unanimously in 2022), is a slightly less overt attack. However, with same-sex marriage being illegal and unmarried sex criminalised and prosecutable, LGBTIQ+ relationships are targeted in unprecedented ways in the largest Muslim democracy in the world. This is an example of a less direct restriction: the net is closed around the community without needing to implement new restrictions against same-sex relationships.

In recent years, a growing number of countries have enacted or proposed "**foreign agent**" **laws** that impose stringent regulations on NGOs, particularly those partially depending on foreign funding and engaging in activities related to promoting human rights. These laws often require NGOs to register as "foreign agents," subjecting them to increased scrutiny, burdensome reporting obligations, and potential legal penalties. They are used to suppress dissent and curtail NGOs' operations, a point also stressed by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In 2023, Hungary's Sovereignty Protection Office (SPO) was established under the Act on the Protection of National Sovereignty. The SPO is empowered to investigate individuals and organisations receiving foreign funding and influencing public discourse. Hungary's efforts to close the net around LGBTIQ+ and human rights organisations is one of the most vicious, with the SPO's broad ability to gather information and conduct investigations with the assistance of Hungary's secret services. The establishment of the SPO aligns with a broader global trend where governments create agencies or enact laws to monitor and regulate foreign influence under the pretext of protecting national sovereignty. This is an argument we frequently find when it comes to curtailing SRHR and related topics like this.

The table below provides an overview of such legislative proposals. However, it is not exhaustive in measures at the administrative level, nor does it include ongoing discussions around imposing new restrictions. For example, Italy's recent restrictions against same-sex families by striking lesbian mothers from their children's birth certificates, no longer recognising them as parents or comprehensive plans, which is still being fought out in Padua (Italy) courts^{iv}. These approaches are seen worldwide (see also Chapter 8 Recommendation 1B) and in the narrative tactics of the actors.

Year	Country	Legislation Type	Status	Description
2010	Lithuania	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Implemented a law prohibiting the promotion of homosexual relations in public information accessible to minors.
2012	Russia	Foreign Agent	Enacted	Introduced a law requiring NGOs receiving foreign funding and engaging in "political activity" to register as "foreign agents."
2013	Russia	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Enacted a law banning the promotion of "non-traditional sexual relationships" among minors leading to censorship of LGBTIQ+ content.
2013	Samoa	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Maintained laws criminalizing same-sex relations between men punishable by imprisonment.
2014	Nigeria	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Passed the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act banning same-sex marriages and associations with penalties for supporters.
2017	Hungary	Foreign Agent	Enacted	Passed the NGO Transparency Law requiring NGOs receiving foreign funding to register and disclose donors.
2019	Brunei	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Implemented the Syariah Penal Code penalizing gender-nonconforming individuals with fines or imprisonment.
2019	Poland	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Multiple municipalities declared themselves "LGBT-free zones" adopting resolutions opposing the promotion of LGBTIQ+ rights.
2021	Hungary	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Passed legislation prohibiting the dissemination of content depicting homosexuality or gender change to minors affecting media and education.
2021	Nicaragua	Foreign Agent	Enacted	Enacted a law requiring organizations and individuals receiving foreign funding to register and banning them from domestic political activities.
2021	China	Foreign Agent	Enacted	Implemented the Overseas NGO Management Law requiring NGOs to register with the Ministry of Public Security.
2023	Uganda	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Enacted the Anti-Homosexuality Act imposing severe penalties for same-sex relations and related activities.
2023	Uganda	Foreign Agent	Proposed	Proposed legislation to regulate NGOs receiving foreign funding requiring registration and adherence to strict operational guidelines.
2023	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Foreign Agent	Enacted	The Republika Srpska entity passed a law similar to the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act targeting foreign-funded entities.
2024	Vanuatu	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Introduced laws restricting the promotion of LGBTIQ+ rights aligning with traditional values.
2024	Georgia	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Enacted	Passed the "Protection of Family Values and Minors" bill severely limiting LGBTIQ+ rights including bans on same-sex marriage and adoption.
2024	Georgia	Foreign Agent	Proposed	Proposed a law requiring NGOs receiving more than 20% of their funding from abroad to register as "foreign agents."
2024	Indonesia	Media Restriction	Proposed	Parliament is considering revisions to ban LGBTIQ+ content under its 2002 broadcast law raising concerns about press freedom.
2024	Malaysia	Media Restriction	Ongoing	Enforced strict regulations against LGBTIQ+ content in media highlighted by incidents such as The 1975 controversy.
2024	Hungary	Foreign Agent	Enacted	Expanded powers under the Sovereignty Protection Office (SPO) investigating foreign-funded NGOs and their activities.
2024	Bulgaria	Anti-LGBTIQ+	Proposed	Proposed amendments to ban the promotion of non-traditional sexual orientations and gender identities among minors.

8. **Reputation Destruction:** Opponents deploy methods like disinformation campaigns, exposing private or identifying information of an individual online, such as home addresses (doxing), and/or filing strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) to tarnish the reputations of advocates, media outlets, CSOs, and inclusive politicians. Unlike direct attacks, these strategies focus on eroding public trust in individuals and groups fighting for inclusivity and tolerance. By discrediting their targets, the perpetrators seek to discourage activism, delegitimise progressive causes and mainstream harmful narratives in political discourse. As a member of international alliances, JfP frequently receives reports of attacks on its members.

Modi Operandi of Anti-Rights Networks



eg: Budapest Demographic Summit, where leaders from around the world and pro-family organisations convene to advance demographic renewal.

Networking



eg: Russia's 2009 UN Human Rights Council initiative on "Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values"

Discourse



eg: CitizenGO, a platform advocating for traditional family values received initial funding reportedly linked to the Vatican, Russian oligarchs, and the U.S. Christian right.

Funding



eg: ADF trained thousands of conservative Christian attorneys, many of whom have ascended to influential positions,

Training



eg: During the "CSW, Sharon Slater, leader of FWI used her presence to amplify anti-SRHR narratives.

Obtaining positions international bodies



eg: In 2019 it was reported that 63 of the 240 recorded attacks against human rights defenders in Southeast Asia, were against women HRDs

Attacks on Rights Defenders



eg: during the Solomon Islands' elections in 2024, Russia and China likely coordinated disinformation campaigns accusing the United States of intending to interfere in the voting

Social Media



Justice for Prosperity™

This visual is for illustrative purposes only and does not constitute an exhaustive representation of the subject matter. Any interpretations or conclusions derived from this visual are the sole responsibility of the viewer.

‘Anti-Rights actors continue to use underhand tactics

and backdoor advocacy to access and dominate policy and decision-making spaces, impacting the policy landscape and provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services. Such tactics create an environment that emboldens policymakers to go against rights established in national laws, global and regional human rights instruments, and existing evidence. The tactics range from pressure from foreign governments with threats of defunding development initiatives and interference of religious groups in the formulation of policies to infiltration of policy-making spaces. As these tactics are playing out in Kenya and several countries across Africa and as the attacks escalate,

it is imperative that we stand united to defend the fundamental principles of human rights, social justice, and equality for all.’

**Nelly Munyasia, CEO of Reproductive Health Network Kenya
to JfP for this report on 14 November 2024**

It is Everywhere

CitizenGo exemplifies the power and tactics of professional anti-rights organisations operating globally, as demonstrated by their activities in Kenya and the Philippines. These groups strategically influence policies and public opinion by financing campaigns, mobilising community leaders, and disseminating standardised hate speech playbooks. In Kenya, CitizenGo launched a targeted campaign against Nelly Munyasia, Executive Director of the Reproductive Health Network, transforming scattered local opposition into large-scale online and offline hate campaigns. This orchestrated effort included protests, physical attacks, and a deluge of hate speech—amplified by CitizenGo’s funding and organisational playbook—highlighting how such international groups undermine local initiatives and democratic values.

Similarly, in the Philippines, CitizenGo has been active since at least 2019, opposing the “Equality Act,” which sought to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Their petition against the act garnered over 10,000 signatures. CitizenGo has recently campaigned against SRHR reforms in the Philippines, seeking donations to “establish operations” to defend conservative values. Their reach, facilitated by campaigns in multiple languages, including Tagalog, underscores their global strategy to influence governance, erode public trust, and destabilise inclusivity and democratic stability worldwide.

This pattern reflects a widespread tactic among anti-rights groups worldwide, highlighting their detrimental effects on governance, public trust, individual rights, and ultimately, democratic stability and inclusivity.



Image from The Bureau Investigates



Image from The Rolling Stone

6 Examples of Subversive Tactics in Action

Three Examples: Networking by foreign state actors, Infiltration of Influential Positions to manipulate multilateralism, and New Strategies

This chapter uses three key examples to highlight critical dimensions of the current global landscape where human rights, traditional values, and geopolitics converge. First, we explore one of the long-term strategic approaches used by Russian actors to show how sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), traditional values, and LGBTIQ+ issues are weaponised as tools within geopolitical agendas. Next, we analyse how populists, oligarchs, and ultra-conservatives systematically manipulate multilateral international cooperation to advance their personal and political ambitions, often at the cost of collective progress. Finally, we take an in-depth look into two emerging ultra-conservative strategies: (home-) schooling and concerns about demographic decline, which, coupled with issues like rising sea levels, serve as rhetorical tools to oppose SRHR, especially concerning abortion and contraception, and to undermine LGBTIQ+ rights. By understanding these dynamics, one can better recognise and counter these threats in their early stages when they emerge in opposition to fundamental rights and freedoms.

6.1 Networking by Foreign State Actors

How Russia is pulling the region into its sphere of influence

Geopolitical and economic interests often intersect with broader ideological goals, shaping the global landscape in unexpected ways. Russian actors are increasingly active in the region as part of Russia's ongoing campaign to find more allies. Still, it has lost any connection with territories on the Eurasian continent (e.g., Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova).

Actively pushing for "traditional family values" across the world is part of an active subversive and soft power operation in many countries to make them culturally more aligned with Russia. The so-called *Ruskii Mir* ("Russian World") ideology focuses on tangible geopolitical actions and often invokes and abuses anti-Western sentiment to undermine SRHR and LGBTIQ+ movements. This dovetails with Katechon theory, which sees Russia as the power against the coming of the antichrist and is religious, spiritual, and philosophical. Both portray Russia as a central and divinely mandated^v force in history, seeking to assert Russia's exceptionalism and moral superiority^{vi}. However, this is not merely a theory but a strategic action plan. Since 2014 and the second invasion of Ukraine in 2022, experts have seen the Russian state's adoption of the *Ruskii Mir* ideology increase regarding geopolitical power and soft power^{vii}.

Russia has used disinformation to interfere with domestic action. This includes the concerning activities of the Social Design Agency and Structura – two firms funded by the Kremlin – and their leadership. These firms are running a large disinformation network known as "Doppelgänger". It has targeted the US and Europe with many fake articles published as legitimate news. DFAT published a statement on 29 November, expressing concern that the influence of Russian disinformation campaigns also targets Australia and the region.^{viii})

In June 2024, Russian oligarch **Konstantin Malofeev** said during a panel on the cultural identity of BRICS National Brands Exposition:

“the multipolar world is different from the U.S. hegemony of a unipolar world, that a multipolar world means we are all equal. We are all human beings, and as Nicosi Mandela has just said, we all represent the same mankind”.

Malofeev, one of the main sponsors of many World Congress of Families (WCF) conferences and avid proponent of “traditional family values”, employs such rhetoric for a reason: to encourage those involved with BRICS (members and observers) to feel freer to protect their “traditional culture”.

Historically, Russia has strong ties with communist countries such as Vietnam and Laos. However, JfP has also **observed the activity of anti-SRHR and anti-LGBTIQ+ Russian operatives in other countries across the region** without such historical ties, which will be expanded upon in Chapter 7. Militarily, Russia is, for instance, trying to build a rocket launch site in **Indonesia**.^{ix} Economically, Russia is also attempting to locate new partners to sell its natural resources to, as seen on Chapter 7.6 on **Malaysia**. Furthermore, Russia is expanding its cultural influence through development aid, sponsoring foundations like the Miklouho-Maclay Foundation in **PNG**, and hosting conferences.

JfP began its work in Malaysia to explore the link between Russian anti-SRHR and anti-LGBTIQ+ efforts in the region. Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, the relationship between Moscow and Kuala Lumpur has grown notably stronger, highlighting shifting geopolitical and ideological alignments. Understanding these broader dynamics is crucial for contextualising the regional pushback on rights.

Russia, particularly through figures like Malofeev and **Alexander Dugin**, has actively promoted conservative, religiously motivated, and anti-SRHR and -LGBTIQ+ agendas on the international stage. Dugin is an influential Russian far-right political philosopher reported to have close relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Malaysia, under its current political leadership, has similarly positioned itself as a strong advocate of conservative/Asian values, rejecting what it perceives as Western liberal ideologies, including the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. This ideological synergy has contributed to deeper bilateral ties, bolstered further by economic dependencies, such as Malaysia's continued reliance on Russian coal imports.^x



Figure 1: Malofeev and Dugin at the Eastern Economic Forum, 4 September 2024

Currently chaired by Russia, Malaysia's bid to join the BRICS alliance underscores a significant geopolitical shift. Malaysia sees BRICS as an appealing alternative in its effort to diversify global alliances and reduce reliance on Western powers. This platform offers economic and strategic opportunities and reinforces conservative, non-Western values.

Figures like Malofeev have used BRICS and similar forums to counter Western narratives on LGBTIQ+ rights, freedom of expression, and liberal democracy. By aligning with BRICS, Malaysia becomes part of a broader coalition of nations seeking to uphold traditional values while rejecting Western liberalism.

6.1.1 Why is this relevant?

Platforms like BRICS are not just economic alliances; they also serve as **vehicles for advancing ideological agendas**, challenging liberal norms, and reshaping global power dynamics. The ambitions of smaller countries to join and align with platforms like BRICS carry significant real-world implications.

JfP's investigation into Dugin —sometimes called the “ideologue of the Kremlin” and funded by Malofeev—**saw his participation alongside Malofeev at the Eastern Economic Forum**. In his communications, JfP found evidence of Dugin himself confirming the presence of influential figures such as Australian anti-imperialist activist **Tim Anderson** and Indonesian geopolitical expert **Connie Rahakundini Bakri**, along with “*intellectuals and experts from Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and many other countries in the region*”.^{xi}

Media and television are also business tools that further Russia's influence; for example, Malofeev has financed the Russian organisation Safe Internet League. The Russian Safe Internet League, founded in 2011, originally aimed to remove harmful online content, such as child pornography and drug-related materials, from the internet. Led by Ekaterina Mizulina, daughter of the influential and controversial politician Yelena Mizulina, the League has become a significant player in Russia's media regulation, enforcing the state's conservative stances and targeting figures and groups critical of the government. The European Union has sanctioned the organisation since early 2024.

The Russian Safe Internet League and Malaysia's internet censorship policies appear to share similarities in their handling of online content, particularly regarding LGBTIQ+ themes and critical discourse. The League has been noted for regulating content, including materials perceived as oppositional to government interests. Meanwhile, Malaysia's recent censorship measures have included actions such as the blocking of the gay dating app Grindr and other sites featuring LGBTIQ+ content, alongside efforts targeting politically sensitive material. These developments suggest a broader pattern of internet restrictions that can marginalise certain communities and limit diverse perspectives.^{xii} In an interview with a key LGBTIQ+ activist monitoring these shutdowns, JfP confirmed that the queer community and especially organisations for LGBTIQ+ rights are increasingly experiencing threats and challenges in their operations.



Figure 2: Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim and Vladimir Putin at the Eastern European Economic Forum 3-4 September 2024

The increasing ties between Malaysia and Russia are underpinned by economic necessity and shared ideological opposition to Western liberalism, particularly concerning LGBTIQ+ rights. An example of this emerging development can be seen in the launch of the Russia—ASEAN World of Opportunities International Business Forum in Kuala Lumpur on 26-27 November 2024. The forum targets cooperation between Russia and ASEAN countries in the energy sector, specifically trade with oil and

gas, digital economy, food security, sustainable development, infrastructure, finance, and tourism.

The **illegal coal exports** from Russian-occupied Luhansk to Malaysia symbolise the tangible link between these two countries' strategic and ideological cooperation. The deal to export coal from Luhansk to Malaysia was sealed during Malaysia's PM visit to the **Eastern Economic Forum** in Vladivostok on 3 September 2024. Luhansk, an area deeply tied to Russia's war efforts in Ukraine and controlled by pro-Russian separatists, has been a focal point for oligarchs like Malofeev, who profit from the region's natural resources.

Despite international sanctions and the ethical implications of doing so, Malaysia's willingness to import coal from this contested region signals its prioritisation of economic pragmatism over international norms.

By purchasing coal from Luhansk, Malaysia indirectly supports the Russian-backed separatist movement in Ukraine, which aligns with Malofeev and Dugin's broader ambitions of destabilising the European. This economic relationship is, therefore, not just about energy; it is about **aligning with Russia's geopolitical agenda**, which seeks to challenge the Western-led world order while promoting conservative values, including anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-SRHR narratives.

Figures like Malofeev are crucial in bridging these two spheres, using economic ventures such as coal exports from Luhansk to further Russia's ideological influence globally. As Malaysia continues to assert its conservative values on the world stage, its partnership with Russia, rooted in both economic pragmatism and a rejection of Western liberal norms, is likely to deepen further.

"Defending Children, Family and Faith Against the Tyranny Of Woke"

For Malofeev, Russia's leadership of the traditional world is a recurring topic in his communication with his friends. Much of the cultural influence happens through alliances with NGOs and Tsargrad.TV, and Saint Basil the Great Foundation.^{xiii} Below is a prime example of one of these highly effective global anti-rights NGOs: the **World Congress of Families (WCF)**.

Established in 1997 in the US and overseen by Brian Brown, as a grass-roots ideological and religious organisation for family values, the WCF has grown into a significant force in conservative circles, uniting a global network of organisations and activists dedicated to promoting "traditional family values" while opposing sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), LGBTIQ+ rights, and gender equality. Through annual conferences and strategic alliances, the WCF has successfully shared ideas, refined advocacy tactics, and advanced restrictive social policies. In 2014, Konstantin Malofeev, alongside Alexey Komov (see below), brought the World Congress of Families (WCF) to the **Duma in the Kremlin** under an



Figure 3: Promotion of the Russia- ASEAN World of Opportunities International Business Forum in Kuala Lumpur on the 26-27 November 2024

alias due to the recent annexation of Crimea for a conference attended by over 1,000 participants. Among them were Sharon Slater of Family Watch International and Brian Brown. Both remain highly active internationally, with Brian Brown recently invited to speak to an Australian audience in February 2024.

This well-funded coalition supports Russia's geopolitical and social objectives and exemplifies how global alliances can be leveraged to undermine progressive norms and human rights frameworks worldwide.^{xiv} Since its inception, the WCF has attracted thousands of participants, with increasing buy-in from networks in the Asia-Pacific and Russia. In 1999, the WCF hosted a regional conference in Manila, Philippines, titled *"The Family: At the Center of Human Development"*. This event, attended by international guests from as far as the US and UK, underscores the WCF's long-standing focus on promoting its agenda within the Asia-Pacific region.

This involvement is strengthened by the financial backing of oligarchs like Konstantin Malofeev—whose associate, **Alexey Komov**, serves as the World Congress of Families (WCF) director for Russia—and **Vladimir Yakunin**, a sanctioned ex-KGB official and influential figure known as the "railway oligarch". Yakunin, who also led the BRICS Dialogue of Civilizations on 24 September 2024, and Malofeev are at the forefront of global **homeschooling** initiatives, including those in the Asia-Pacific. Both have reported connections to the Kremlin, with Australian sanction files identifying Yakunin as a former KGB colleague of Vladimir Putin.

A planning brochure for the WCF Moscow conference identified 29 "partner organisations" with a combined annual budget of approximately US \$ 216 million, over 60% of which were American organisations. These partnerships have enabled the incorporation of the WCF into Russian-backed projects and narratives on "traditional values," aligning with Moscow's broader geopolitical agenda to counter Western liberalism, expand influence in Eastern Europe, and enforce anti-LGBTIQ+ legislation. WCF's president, **Brian S. Brown**, in 2023 spoke favourably of Russia.^{xv}

The collaboration between American and Russian actors within the WCF network has significantly advanced conservative policies on domestic and international fronts. The WCF events in Sydney and Melbourne in 2013 and 2014 marked key moments in this global network's history, showcasing the longstanding nature of these alliances and their far-reaching impact. These events are important today because they illustrate how these movements have built momentum for over a decade, shaping the current global pushback against progressive values.

The Sydney conference, themed "Happy Marriage and Family Life," highlighted the extent of international collaboration. Russian figures like Vladimir Yakunin, Natalya Yakunina, Konstantin Malofeev, Alexey Komov, and Archpriest Dimitry Smirnov were present^{xvi}, alongside regional representatives from Australia, New Zealand, PNG, and the Solomon Islands. The inclusion of a side panel, titled the Indigenous and Pacific Island Forum, brought voices from the Pacific into the conversation, amplifying the influence of these ideologies beyond Australia and brought home to the many visitors attending from the region, as shown in the list of attendees in position of JfP.

The leaked participant list from this conference revealed the presence of influential figures from the Asia-Pacific, including Peter Westmore (National Civic Council of Australia), Teresa Martin (Cherish Life), and representatives from the Philippines, such as Fernandita and

Francisco Tatad. The details of the attendees are within the possession of JfP. Later developments underscore the regional and global significance of these gatherings. The Australian government sanctioned Yakunin and Malofeev for their links to Russia's war in Eastern Ukraine, although Komov has not faced similar sanctions. Furthermore, as briefly mentioned above, the next WCF event was rebranded as the "International Forum: Large Family and Future of Humanity" after Russia annexed Crimea and was held at the Kremlin, orchestrated and mainly paid for by Malofeev and his foundation.

This historical context is critical in understanding how these networks operate and expand their influence. It shows that the current anti-rights movements are not sudden or isolated but are the result of years of strategic collaboration, targeting specific regions and communities to advance conservative agendas globally. Recognising this timeline helps contextualise the resilience and coordination of these movements today.

11.00am – 12.30pm	CONCURRENT: TOWARDS HAPPY MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE				
11.00am – 11.40am	SE-27	SE-28	SE-29	SE-30	SE-31
	Love and Desire	Keeping Faithful	Conception and Nurture	Happy Homes	Indigenous and Pacific Island Forum
	The Soil in Which Romance Will Blossom	Intimacy and Faithfulness in Marriage	Empower your Marriage with Natural Family Planning	Creating a Home: A Place of Love and Security	Pearl Wymarra
	Pat Fagan, USA	Scott and Jennie Milne, NZ	Lynne Anderson/Kerry Bourke, Australia	Randall and Linda Gauger, Australia	Alli Golding
	Courtship and Engagement: Ryan Messmore, Australia	Unmasking New Forms of Infidelity: Jonathan Doyle, Australia	Answering a Child's Need for Family: Stan Swim, USA		Allan Murray
	Questions				Pastor Geoffrey Alacky
					Dr Toby Curtis
					Seini Afeaki
					Agnes Kola
11.50am – 12.30pm	SE-32	SE-33	SE-34	SE-35	
	Love in Marriage	Forgiveness, Joy and Healing	Migrant Families	Home Making	
	Made to Love	Restoring the Marriage Bond	The Contribution and Gift of Migrant Families	The Humanising Value of Home Making	
	Jaroslav Szymczak, Poland	Ruki and Liz Watene, NZ	Emmanuel and Jannette Bautista	Carmen Pavia, Australia	
	Loving Smart	Unexpected Joy – Children with Disabilities	Learning from migrant families	Meal Times without Mayhem	
	Byron and Francine Pirola, Australia	Mowbray, Australia	Ziaul Ahmad, Australia	Jo Turner, Australia	
		Abortion Grief and Healing	Mandaeen Contribution to Society		
		Anne Lastman, Australia	Brikha Nasaraia, Australia		
	Questions				

Figure 4: Schedule of the World Congress of Families held in Sydney, Australia in 2013 on the theme: Happy Marriage and Family Life

Despite deteriorating relations with the West, Russia strategically cultivates alliances in diverse regions worldwide by leveraging cultural, economic, and ideological soft power. Through influential figures like Malofeev, Russia has advanced an agenda rooted in traditional values, aligning closely with anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-SRHR stances across countries in the Asia-Pacific. This narrative has been tailored to resonate with local anti-Western sentiment, positioning Russia as an ally for countries that prioritise sovereignty over liberal rights frameworks, especially those related to LGBTIQ+ communities and SRHR.

The strategies employed by Russian actors involve not only cultural influence, as seen in the Safe Internet League's expansive censorship tactics, but also economic dependency, as illustrated in Malaysia's reliance on Russian coal and other resources. This multipronged approach underscores Russia's ambitions for a multipolar world order, where alignment on conservative values can transcend borders, forming a coalition resistant to Western liberalism. This convergence of ideology and economic cooperation would suggest Russia's deliberate, far-reaching plan to solidify its global influence through partnerships grounded in shared conservatism (such as 'Asian values') and mutual economic benefit.

The website of the **International Organization for the Family** (IOF), the organisation behind the WCF, still touts its efforts in the Asia-Pacific region through the conference in Sydney and Melbourne. The efforts continue to build momentum. For example, in March 2024, Brian Brown furthered these efforts in a podcast interview with Lyle Shelton, the former Managing Director of the **Australian Christian Lobby**, the topic was “defending children, family and faith against the tyranny of the woke”^{xvii}.

Individuals can also be strategically positioned as intermediaries in advancing geopolitical interests. By examining the case of **Vanuatu’s Special Envoy to Russia and Israel, Bernard Leclerc**, we illustrate how diplomatic roles can be leveraged to influence international relations and promote specific agendas. This example underscores the broader patterns of state and non-state actors exploiting individual appointments to align with their strategic objectives.

Leclerc, currently residing in Moscow, began his career in diplomacy, advising Central African leaders on international relations, and was appointed to his role in Vanuatu in 2021

Before this, Leclerc’s diplomatic activities in Russia brought him into close contact with influential figures supportive of policies that oppose progressive human rights, particularly regarding SRHR and the LGBTIQ+ community.^{xviii} Leclerc has clear and well-documented connections to Vladimir Yakunin and his think-tank, “Dialogue of Civilizations”, which is further explored in the following chapter in the country section on Vanuatu. **After research, JfP**



Figure 5: Leclerc in Vanuatu, n.d

found Special Envoy Leclerc is promoting second citizenship for Russians through Vanuatu because of its attractive regulations, something that is equally popular on the Russian social media platform “VK” and now resulted in its removal from the Schengen visa-free travel arrangements.

Leclerc’s associations with Yakunin and Russian conservative networks underscore a broader issue of involvement in anti-LGBTIQ+ policies. In Russia itself, the passage of “gay propaganda” laws in 2013 prohibited the public discussion and promotion of “non-traditional” sexual relationships, severely limiting the visibility and rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals. Since then, these laws have expanded, with several Russian officials advocating for further restrictions, including bans on legal gender changes and adoption by same-sex couples. Yakunin and his network are central to these initiatives – using their platforms to frame the rights of LGBTIQ+ people as threats to “traditional” Russian values and state stability.

Oligarch Konstantin Malofeev, Alexey Komov, and other key figures historically strongly supporting the World Congress of Families (WCF), along with Vladimir Yakunin’s network, actively cultivate relationships with international conservative figures who promote anti-LGBTIQ+ ideologies globally. Currently based in Moscow, Bernard Leclerc, through his association with Yakunin, is an active participant in this network, which opposes anything perceived as ‘untraditional,’ including LGBTIQ+ rights. Vanuatu’s ban on the promotion and funding of LGBTIQ+ advocacy, approved on 5 November 2024 (detailed further in the Vanuatu country section), strongly mirrors **Russia’s 2013 ‘gay propaganda’ law**. This was

soon followed by a legal ban on same-sex marriage on 18 November 2024, with the language closely resembling similar legislation from Bernard Leclerc's former post in the Central African Republic. Since 2013, other countries in Russia's sphere of influence have introduced similar legislation, such as Tuvalu, Hungary or Mali.

6.2 Manipulation of multilateralism

How multilateral international cooperation is manipulated

The **UN is increasingly utilised by ultra-conservative CSOs** like Family Watch International, ADF, and the Christian Council International, **and authoritarian actors**, including Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, **to destabilise the traditional international human rights system with tactics such as abuse of Human Rights language to push anti-rights policies or soft power and development aid.**

Actors like Russia, Saudi Arabia, and transnational, religious, conservative networks are leveraging their influence within the United Nations and other global platforms to redefine human rights, restrict SRHR, and curtail LGBTIQ+ freedoms. International and multilateral alliances had a stronger influence – successfully enabling progress in SRHR despite opposition. However, shifts in domestic politics, societal attitudes, and informal norms are now shaping states' formal positions within the UN and relevant working groups.

These actions are not isolated; they represent a calculated strategy exploiting historical grievances and regional dynamics to actively amplify division, polarise societies, and undermine the systems designed to protect universal rights. This network of ultra-religious conservative actors seeks to preserve traditional family values by rallying against what it perceives as progressive incursions on its ideological territory. Understanding these manoeuvres is essential to countering their growing impact on global governance and the future of human rights.

To some, this started with Russia's 2009 UN Human Rights Council initiative on "Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values". Initially framed around female genital mutilation, it was later found to encompass opposition to SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights. The initiative led to a 2010 UN workshop well attended by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, highlighting a trend where conservative states leverage "traditional values" to redefine human rights norms. Since then, it has opened the door to the "original interpretation" of human rights to centre around traditional family values.

Similarly, the 2020 **Geneva Consensus Declaration** adopted by the US under the Trump Administration is a clear example of efforts to widen anti-rights influence within bilateral international dialogues. Signed on by Hungary, Indonesia, and Nauru, among 30 other states, this declaration purports to defend national sovereignty on social issues, opposing global efforts to liberalise views on SRHR and underscoring a commitment to traditional family structures and "the right to life"—effectively pushing back on abortion rights.

The tactic of infiltrating and obtaining influential positions is fruitful. On 16 October 2024, the ADF hosted a meeting ostensibly focused on the safety of young women in sports. Instead of addressing legitimate concerns about safety and inclusion, the event became a forum to attack transgender athletes. ADF "called on the international community to pre-serve and protect fairness and safety in sports for women and girls," framing their exclusionary rhetoric under the guise of safeguarding women's rights.

During the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which took place from 11 to 22 March 2024 in New York, USA, Sharon Slater, a prominent anti-rights advocate and leader of **Family Watch International**, used her presence to amplify regressive narratives. Beyond the official proceedings, Slater attended a high-level meeting hosted by the Nigerian mission on 14 March 2024, where she disseminated disinformation about sexuality education and lobbied for the defunding of IPPF Member Associations. JfP has audio recordings of Slaters' call to action. Slater was also a panellist on a UN-sanctioned event during the CSW.

Slater later spearheaded a collective letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) through her organisation, Family Watch International, demanding urgent action against IPPF. The letter, which **is still being petitioned** and open to signature on their website^{xix}, in part, urged the UN:

- *"...To establish a committee to conduct a comprehensive investigation into all UN associations or partnerships with International Planned Parenthood Federation and their affiliates, including any UN funding of their activities.*
- *To investigate IPPF's harmful teachings to minors on issues of sex, sexual pleasure, and sexuality using objectionable, sexually explicit, or pornographic materials.*
- *To investigate IPPF's abortion practices to determine if they are harvesting and selling aborted baby body parts..."*

These demands represent a calculated effort to discredit and dismantle institutions working to protect SRHR while misusing the UN's legitimacy to lend credibility to these anti-rights campaigns. A recent Wall Street Journal article published on 22 September 2024 details Slater's role in the Ugandan anti-LGBTIQ+ law. For this article, JfP was able to confirm Slater's actual presence at the 2014 unofficial World Congress of Families conference held at the **Kremlin** right after the **invasion of Crimea**^{xx}. In addition, JfP holds the data breached by the hack of the Heritage Foundation, an ultra-conservative think tank in Washington D.C., indicating that she holds an index number with this organisation.

This reshuffle of the multilateral order can also be exemplified by the US Heritage Foundation's **Project 2025**, which advocates for the strategic abandonment of multilateral agreements and institutions favouring bilateral partnerships. The plan explicitly calls for the incoming US president and administration to withdraw from key international frameworks, including NATO, the Paris Agreement, and cooperative engagements with the EU and UN. Instead, it prioritises bilateral cooperation, framed as better serving national sovereignty and conservative ideological goals.

This approach significantly **undermines the UN's capacity** to act as a platform for advancing robust normative frameworks and protections. By sidelining multilateral agreements, Project 2025 weakens mechanisms designed to address global issues like gender equality and SRHR, creating a vacuum that directly affects initiatives in the Global South. The absence of strong multilateral partnerships complicates coordinated efforts to overcome systemic barriers to SRHR, forcing exploring alternative frameworks that may lack the same reach and impact.

Adding to this challenge, major powers, such as Russia, China, and likely the United States, after Trump's forthcoming 2025 inauguration, are pursuing strategies that deliberately undermine cohesion within regional and international blocs, including the European Union and Pacific cooperations. By fostering fragmented relationships and encouraging bilateral

rather than multilateral engagements, these actors weaken collective decision-making processes, increasing their influence over smaller, more isolated counterparts. This strategy enables them to assert greater control in shaping international norms, often to the detriment of global human rights and SRHR protections.

Smaller UN member states are increasingly influenced by domestic and regional trends in conservatism, nationalism, and traditionalism, shifting their formal positions within the UN and relevant working groups. These internal dynamics now affect their adoption and implementation of UN policies, impacting progress in SRHR despite previous successes through multilateral alliances. To protect SRHR, addressing this broader conservative influence is essential while fostering genuine partnerships and exploring alternative multilateral approaches. Such efforts can empower smaller nations, enabling them to overcome resource constraints, resist manipulation by authoritarian actors, and uphold human rights and multilateralism.

This dynamic is exacerbated by the significant resource disparities faced by smaller countries, particularly in their missions to international organisations like the UN. Limited staffing and capacity mean these missions often struggle to keep up with the high workloads inherent in multilateral diplomacy. As a result, smaller states frequently rely on externally provided texts and inputs when drafting their statements or shaping their positions. For example, ADF is a faith-based legal advocacy organisation based in Vienna, Austria, New York and Washington DC. Studied by Justice for Prosperity in the WhoDis Report, published in April 2023 in the European Parliament, ADF describes itself as a “human rights organisation” that aims to protect fundamental freedoms and promote the inherent dignity of all persons before national and international institutions^{xxi}. They submitted reports for various countries’ Universal Periodic Review sessions, including Indonesia in 2022 and Malaysia in 2018, focusing on religious freedom and traditional family values. It is commonly known in New York, Geneva and Vienna that this vulnerability is exploited by circulating anti-rights materials designed to influence these countries’ contributions to multilateral discussions and statements.

The systematic exploitation of the UN highlights the fragility of global governance structures in the face of ideological warfare. Unless countered, these efforts threaten to reshape human rights norms around exclusionary and regressive principles, undermining decades of progress in SRHR and LGBTIQ+ protections. We certainly witness these trends and attempts to derail and influence processes happening – but not all with the same level of success, leaving opportunity for strategic and proactive action by ally governments and partners.

6.3 New Strategies

Demographic Decline and Homeschooling as the New Go-To Strategies

The anti-rights triangle is always reinventing itself. Modi operandi evolve, and new topics are embraced to push the conservative agenda further. Some of the “new” topics have been around for decades, but new audiences have been found on the successful electoral results of the conservative authoritarian wave. One topic is **demographic decline**, also referred to as “demographic renewal”, the “demographic winter”, or the “Great Replacement”, with various actors touting that women’s emancipation, SRHR, CSE, LGBTIQ+, immigration, vaccines, and HIV/Aids are its causes. A proposed solution, then, is a return to traditional family values, white Christian nationalism, stopping migrants, and more.

Far from being a spontaneous response to demographic shifts, this narrative represents a **calculated strategy by far-right and nationalist movements** to expand their influence

and restrict rights. By weaponising demographic concerns, they aim to reshape public priorities and justify exclusionary policies under the guise of cultural preservation.

Far-right and nationalist movements increasingly frame demographic decline as a cultural and existential emergency. Migration is often portrayed as a demographic threat – especially in the EU and the US – with political and media narratives exaggerating population growth among migrant communities to stoke fears of cultural and political displacement. Far-right and nationalist movements weaponise demographic decline, portraying it as a sign of societal decay and positioning demographic renewal as a moral imperative tied to traditional values and national pride. Central to this rhetoric is the “Great Replacement” theory, popularised by French writer Renaud Camus in the early 2010s. This theory posits that globalist elites, often tied to leftist ideologies, are orchestrating the replacement of indigenous or local populations with migrants, particularly from the Global South. Such narratives are deeply rooted in fearmongering and conspiracy theories, conflating declining birth rates in Western nations with immigration trends to suggest that cultural and racial identities are under siege. These movements rely heavily on evocative language, depicting demographic shifts as “invasions” or “erasure”. This fearmongering has fuelled xenophobia and bolstered anti-immigration sentiment across Europe and North America, with even US President-Elect Trump using such terms.

Far-right demographic narratives have begun influencing regions like the Asia-Pacific. In Australia and New Zealand, far-right groups have adapted the “Great Replacement” rhetoric to fit local contexts – emphasising concerns over migration from Asia and the Pacific. For instance, the Australian identitarian group, Identity Australia, has implemented policies to the alleged erosion of “Australian values” and stoking fears of “Asian invasion” and the erosion of Anglo-European culture. Australia has experienced spillovers of far-right, anti-migrant, neo-Nazi rhetoric and activities from the EU and the US; also seen, for instance, with the neo-Nazi protests which took place in August 2024. These protests occurred in direct correlation with the demonstrations that occurred in the UK due to misinformation surrounding the Stockport Knife Attack.



Figure 6: ID Australia Logo

By presenting depopulation and migration as existential crises, far-right and nationalist movements galvanise public fear and redirect political priorities toward cultural preservation, nativism, and nationalism. Far-right actors exploit these demographic shifts to push for stricter immigration controls and advocate for policies prioritising native-born citizens. These fears are often exaggerated or unfounded but gain traction through social media platforms and populist rhetoric.

Having gained traction in Europe and North America, these narratives are now expanding into new regions, such as the Asia-Pacific, where new actors adapt them to local contexts. Framing population decline as an existential threat, the X-Y Initiative promotes pro-natalist policies aligned with Hungary's Orbánist ideology², which emphasises nationalism and traditional family values.

² Orbánism, named after Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, is a political ideology characterised by conservative and nationalist principles. It draws inspiration from Christian democracy and elements of Hungary's historical context. Proponents view Orbánism as a testament to the viability of conservative governance.

In response to the global challenges posed by declining birth rates, the **X·Y Worldwide Initiative** has emerged as a prominent platform for promoting demographic renewal. Spearheaded by former Hungarian President Katalin Novak (and Orbán protégé), this initiative positions population growth as a cornerstone of national and cultural resilience. It advocates for a pro-natural family and pro-natalist agenda, emphasising policies that incentivise family formation and larger households as essential to counteracting what Novak terms the “birth rate crisis”. Through public campaigns, international forums, and collaborations with other conservative leaders, X·Y Worldwide is becoming a leading voice in framing demographic concerns as urgent societal priorities. One possible sponsor has been reported to be Elon Musk, with Georgia Meloni, Italy’s PM, reportedly having sponsored a trip that brought them together at the Atlantic Council 24 September 2024^{xxii}.



Figure 7 Musk and Meloni endorsing Novak, Global Citizen Awards hosted by the Atlantic Council, US, 4 September 2024

Novak, has extended this narrative internationally, forging ties with nations in the Asia Pacific that are receptive to conservative values and authoritarian governance models. This strategy has integrated X·Y Worldwide into global networks, including the **Budapest Demographic Summit**, where leaders from Central Europe, the Gulf States, and pro-family organisations like the **International Federation for Family Development** (IFFD) convene to advance demographic renewal as a solution to cultural and economic challenges. IFFD operates in 70 countries, including several in the Asia-Pacific and Oceania regions, such as Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and India. IFFD Director of International Relations Ignacio Socias participated in a panel on Demographics and Sustainability at the Budapest Demographic Summit in 2023.

As part of these efforts, Novak signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the **mayor of Seoul in early September 2024**, extending this pro-natalist agenda into East Asia. While the framing appears focused on addressing population decline, the underlying messaging reflects an anti-gender narrative: promoting demographic renewal often implicitly excludes those who cannot or do not contribute to population growth.

This approach links demographic concerns to broader opposition to SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights. For example, individuals in same-sex relationships, those living with HIV, or those who choose birth control or abortion are framed as contributing to demographic



Figure 8: Katalin Novák, former President of Hungary, meeting with the Mayor of Seoul, South Korea, as part of the XY Worldwide NGO to 'combat demographic decline', 14 September 2024

decline. These implicit biases allow demographic renewal to serve as a Trojan horse for advancing anti-gender ideology under the guise of addressing population sustainability



Below Figure 8B X-Y targeting Australia, 17 October 2024.

Other initiatives, such as the **Doha International Family Institute** (DIFI) in Qatar and partnerships with the IFFD, highlight the expanding geographic influence of X-Y worldwide. These alliances bridge diverse regions, from Europe to the Middle East and Asia, emphasising shared values around family preservation and demographic renewal. The challenges faced by states like Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands underscore the broader dynamics of demographic and economic pressures in developing regions. Unlike the population decline narratives dominating far-right discourses in the West, these issues highlight the intersection of resource exploitation, cultural practices, and gender inequities. The alignment of goals across these regions re-

fects a concerted effort to position population growth as a critical issue on the global stage.

The X-Y Worldwide Initiative and its associated pro-natalist agenda exemplify the intersection of demography, ideology, and geopolitics. As countries grapple with ageing populations, migration, and shifting cultural norms, initiatives like X-Y Worldwide will likely continue to shape the global discourse on demographic renewal.

In Russia, demographic challenges are framed similarly, with the government adopting legislative and policy measures to address declining birth rates and high mortality. In October 2024, the Duma passed a bill that bans so-called “propaganda” that encourages procreation with heavy fines for promoting child-free lifestyles. The move underscores a state-driven effort to reinforce traditional family values and stigmatise lifestyles seen as contributing to the population decline^{xxiii}.

The theme of the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, in October 2024 – addressing demographic changes and their implications for economic development and global governance – reflects Russia’s approach to demographics. The summit brought together leaders from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and newly admitted members Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates. Several strategic initiatives were discussed: **promoting family-friendly policies that support families and encourage higher birth rates**, investing in human capital, and facilitating intra-BRICS labour mobility to address shortages in ageing economies while providing employment opportunities in countries with surpluses. China’s shrinking labour force has prompted some manufacturing sectors to relocate production. For example, Vietnam and Indonesia offer more favourable conditions and labour surpluses.

China's declining population has prompted the government to implement policies emphasising traditional family values and pro-natalist measures, which have implications for SRHR. In 2021, the Chinese Communist Party introduced a "three-child policy" to encourage larger families, reflecting a shift towards promoting traditional family structures. This policy has been accompanied by initiatives such as speed dating programs organised by the Party to facilitate marriages and boost birth rates. Additionally, there have been efforts to restrict access to certain reproductive health services. For example, in 2021, the government announced plans to reduce non-medical abortions, citing concerns over declining fertility rates. Furthermore, societal pressures have been exerted on women to marry and have children, with some local officials directly encouraging women to get pregnant to counteract the declining birthrate. These developments suggest a concerted effort by the Chinese government to address population decline through policies that emphasise traditional family values, which are likely to impact SRHR and individual reproductive choices.

Homeschooling

The promotion of homeschooling is increasingly being recognised as a tactic to further the control over the ultra-traditional narrative. **Homeschooling** is a way to take education outside of state involvement or oversight and allow parents to control the content and methodology of the education they receive, avoiding oversight and allowing their worldview of education to be taught. It is also being used as a new tool against incorporating CSE, SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights.

The GHEX (Global Home Education Exchange) is an advocacy organisation that primarily holds international events to promote homeschooling. It describes itself as "*an international network with a mission to advance, connect, and equip the global home education community*".

The board of GHEX^{xxiv} comprises 16 individuals representing different countries and organisations. Of these 16, eight seem to have the most international links: Alexey Komov (Russia, Director WCF Russia and the CIS), Edric Mendoza (Philippines), Alberto Solano (Mexico), Alexandre Magno Moreira (Brazil), Irina Shamolina (Russia), Debra Bell (USA), Gerard Huebner (Canada), and Mike Donnelly (USA)". In the region, GHEX operates in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Australia. Below a summary of the affiliated organisations can be found:

Malaysia:

Classroom Without Borders: A homeschooling collective based in Penang.

Indonesia:

Klub Sinau: A home education support group in Sidoarjo, East Java.

Jakarta Homeschool Club: A homeschooling community in Jakarta offering resources and support.

Philippines:

Homeschool Global: A homeschooling organisation led by Edric Mendoza provides education services and support.

HAPI: The Homeschool Association of the Philippine Islands promotes homeschooling within the country.

Australia:

Australian Christian Home Schooling: A Christian-based homeschooling program.

Home Education Association: A general support group for homeschooling families.
Accelerate Christian Home Schooling: A program focusing on Christian education for homeschoolers.

Previous attendees of the GHEX world conferences who also are affiliated with the WCF include Brian Brown (IOF Senior Fellow and WCF Founder), Dr Allan Carlson, Irina Shamolina and her husband Alexey Komov. Irina Shamolina is the President of the Russian Home-schooling Organisation, as well as a member of the Organising Committee of the Global Home Education Exchange. They work closely together with Tatyana Nikitina as part of the "KB-Клуб" (KB Club) and are connected to the Classical Conversations homeschooling movement, which is focused on providing classic educational resources and guidance. JfP found that they are (planning on) opening KB- or Homeschooling Support Centres in multiple countries, including **Indonesia**, UAE, Armenia, and the US, as part of their expansion efforts.

The KB Club builds on this influence to advocate for homeschooling globally, presenting it as a way to preserve traditional family values. Through conferences, publications, and advocacy, the club emphasises sole parental rights in education, aiming to limit state influence and oversight on what children learn. It appeals to communities with strong ties to religious and cultural values that align with its ethos.

The club positions itself as a community for families who wish to provide an education rooted in their beliefs, away from what they perceive as overly liberal or secular state curricula. In the Pacific, the KB Club works with local partners to create awareness and provide resources, encouraging homeschooling as an option for parents looking to instil more conservative values in their children.



Figure 9: The KB Club, promoted by the wife of Alexey Komov, is an international network focused on advancing homeschooling as an educational alternative.

As demographic renewal and homeschooling become the new battleground for anti-rights agendas, the global community must recognise these narratives for what they are: calculated strategies to undermine inclusivity, SRHR, LGBTIQ+, gender, and human rights, masquerading as solutions to societal challenges.



7 Country-Specific Case Studies

This chapter delves into the current landscape and activities of anti-rights actors in 10 countries of specific interest to IPPF in the region. By examining their strategies, influence, and impacts, we aim to understand how these actors operate within diverse national contexts comprehensively. While anti-rights activities are a shared challenge, their manifestation and intensity vary, reflecting each country's unique political, cultural, and social dynamics.

We begin with a deeper analysis of Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and PNG, where the presence and actions of anti-rights actors demand immediate attention due to their regional influence and escalating activities. These three countries serve as focal points for understanding the region's broader patterns of anti-rights influence.

Following this, the chapter will cover the remaining seven countries in a logical sequence:

- *Indonesia – where geopolitical significance intersects with religious and ideological conservatism.*
- *Australia – as a key regional player facing internal and external anti-rights pressures and as a stabilising factor in the region.*
- *Malaysia – with its growing alignment with conservative and anti-SRHR narratives.*
- *The Philippines – highlighting the role of cultural and religious dynamics in anti-rights advocacy.*
- *Fiji – examining the intersection of traditional values and emerging anti-rights movements.*
- *Nauru – where small-state dynamics reveal the influence of external anti-rights actors.*
- *Tuvalu – showcases how smaller nations are vulnerable to external pressures and ideological influence.*

Through this chapter, we aim to highlight not only the activities of anti-rights actors but also the systemic vulnerabilities they exploit, providing a foundation for understanding their broader implications for the region and beyond. All chapters start with a summary of the most important developments.

7.1 Vanuatu

Key developments

- **Legislative Changes on Marriage:** *In October and November 2024, Vanuatu implemented rapid conservative legislative changes. For example, to eliminate all “visible and invisible signs” of LGBTIQ+ and a redefinition of marriage in Vanuatu as exclusively between males and females.*
- **Foreign Influence via bought citizenship:** *Vanuatu's Citizenship by Investment (CBI) program has contributed to increased foreign interference, including influence from Russia and China. Special envoys to Vanuatu have been linked to figures such as Vladimir Yakunin and Vladimir Putin.*
- **Unified Push by Community and Religious Leaders:** *A coordinated effort involving local community leaders (Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs), religious leaders (Vanuatu Christian Council), NGOs, and government organizations (including VANGO and the Ministry of Justice and Community Services) worked together to push for the eradication of LGBTIQ+ visibility in Vanuatu.*

SRHR in Crisis: Vanuatu's Sharp Socio-Legal Turn

In recent years, particularly in 2024, Vanuatu has undergone a significant socio-legal regression in SRHR and human rights advocacy. The revival of traditionally-arranged marriages – alongside efforts to suppress LGBTIQ+ advocacy – highlights the nation's growing alignment with conservative religious and cultural ideologies.

On 1 October 2024, the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs advocated for the revival of arranged marriages to strengthen societal bonds, attributing the current social challenges Vanuatu faces to “foreign influences”.^{xxv} On 1 November 2024, the Ministry of Justice proposed a national policy banning LGBTIQ+ advocacy and funding – which they argued reflects Vanuatu's Christian and Melanesian values better than progressive social policies realised through sustained efforts spanning several decades.^{xxvi} On 18 November 2024, Vanuatu's parliament amended the Marriage Act to define marriage explicitly as a union between a male and a female, prohibiting same-sex marriages.^{xxvii}

This shift underscores the tension between Vanuatu's quest to preserve traditional customs and its adaptation to global human rights standards. Key actors, including the Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC) and the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs, have championed these initiatives, further polarising public opinion and raising concerns over the erosion of inclusivity and equity in Vanuatu's legal and social frameworks. This chapter examines these developments within the broader context of cultural, political, and international influences shaping Vanuatu's society and human rights framework.

Special Envoy Leclerc

In addition to the growing economic, military, and humanitarian cooperation between Vanuatu and China, another recent development concerns Vanuatu's appointment of **Bernard Leclerc** (a French-born, American-educated former banker) as a special envoy to Russia and Israel. Living in Russia, Leclerc was appointed to his current position in 2021.^{xxviii} JfP found that Leclerc has been involved in the work of the **Dialogue of Civilizations** by participating in events organised by Yakunin and the think tank as early as 2014. Yakunin is a former chairman of Russian Railways and a close ally of President Vladimir Putin.^{xxix} He is also a proponent of Russian Orthodox nationalism and “traditional values” which oppose Western liberal ideologies.^{xxx} In 2016, Yakunin co-founded the Dialogue of Civilizations think tank, through which he consistently promoted conservative and nationalist stances that aligned with the Russian government's positions on family, religion, and traditionalism. Notably, Yakunin defended Russia's anti-gay laws.

Message reçu par S.E M. l'Ambassadeur Bernard LECLERC de la part
M.Vladimir Yakunin from Russia



WPF Executive Committee Statement on the Events in Ukraine

The World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilizations” observes with alarm the unfolding events in the Ukraine. The Forum condemns in the strongest possible terms the involvement of foreign powers in attempts to topple the duly elected government in Kyiv and to replace it with a puppet regime. We urge Western powers to refrain from sanctions and the threat of sanctions and to return to the basic principle of democracy: namely, that political change is to be sought through a democratic process at the ballot box, not through bullets in the streets. We urge all powers involved to reflect on the possible consequences of their actions which seem to push the world steadily closer to a new World War.

We also appeal to the people in the streets to come to their senses and to return to the Gandhian path of nonviolent political action.

Vladimir Yakunin, Founding President, WPF “Dialogue of Civilizations”

Fred Dallmayr, Co-Chairman, WPF “Dialogue of Civilizations”

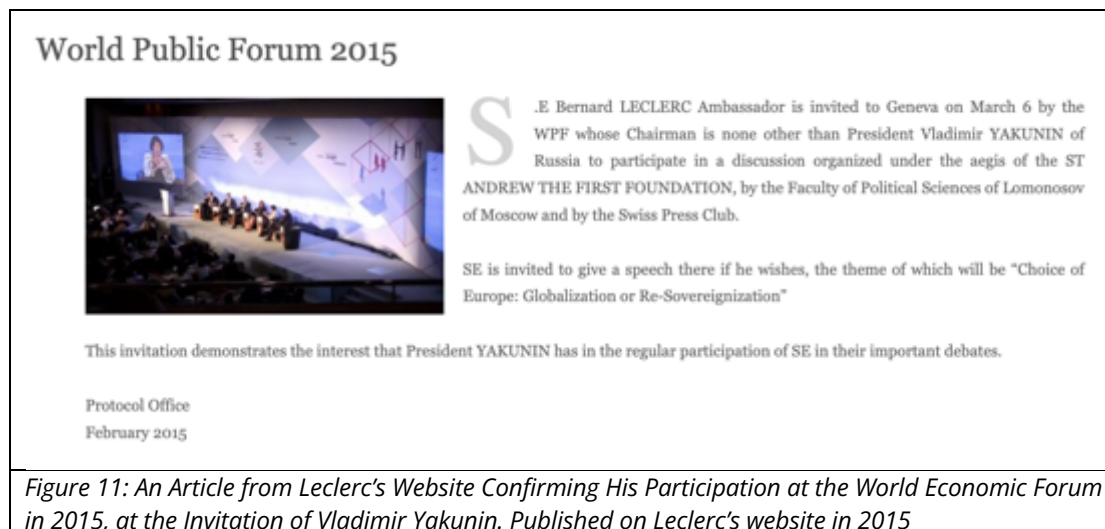
Vladimir Kulikov, Acting Director, WPF “Dialogue of Civilizations”

Chandra Mazaffar, President, International Movement for a Just World (IJM)

Hans Kischler, Founder and President, International Progress Organization

Figure 10: A Statement by the “Dialogue of Civilizations” Institute, Condemning Western Powers ‘Regime Change’ Attempts in Kyiv in 2014, Published on Leclerc's Website in 2014.

The Dialogue of Civilizations forum has engaged in activities which align with conservative values, including collaboration with organisations like the **World Congress of Families** (WCF). In 2011, Larry Jacobs, then Managing Director of the WCF, co-moderated a family roundtable at the World Public Forum's "Dialogue of Civilizations" in Rhodes, Greece. This session, titled "Maintaining Family Values in the 21st Century", was co-moderated with Natalya Yakunina – the wife of Vladimir Yakunin.^{xxxii} The WCF is known for its conservative stance and has connections with both Russian and Western anti-LGBTIQ+ movements.^{xxxii}



Leclerc began his diplomatic career in the Central African Republic (CAR) as an advisor to the Minister of Education, focusing on international relations and partnerships. He later served as a special advisor to President Ange-Félix Patassé and subsequently as an ambassador and advisor to the presidency under President François Bozizé. While the exact dates of his tenure are not specified, his roles spanned the late 1990s and early 2000s.^{xxxiii} The CAR's penal code, which criminalises the "public expression of love" between individuals of the same sex, was enacted in 2010. This legislation imposes penalties ranging from six months to two years of imprisonment or fines between CFA francs 150,000 and 600,000 (approximately US \$ 255 to 1,020). The law has been criticised for contributing to discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community in the country.^{xxxiv} During this time, the CAR faced large-scale incursions of Russian influence, specifically the Russian armed militia, which was considered to be a member of the Wagner Group.^{xxxv} In 2005, Leclerc was appointed as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Hungary and currently resides in Moscow where he continues as a special envoy to Russia and Israel to Vanuatu. *For further information see: Chapter 6, Examples of Subversive Tactics and Actions.*

Recent Developments

Vanuatu's deeply conservative society is anchored in "**kastom**" (traditional customs) and Christian values – shaping its stance on issues such as gender roles, family structures, and LGBTIQ+ rights. This conservative outlook is evident in policy: while same-sex activity was decriminalised in 2007, broader LGBTIQ+ rights remain severely restricted. The government's recent push to ban LGBTIQ+ advocacy along with the amendment of the marriage act, aligning with Christian and cultural principles, highlights the resistance to change.^{xxxvi}

Reproductive and women's rights have gradually progressed, but advocacy efforts often clash with entrenched traditions. Religious organisations like the **Christian Mission Fellowship International (CMFI)** play a significant role in maintaining these values, emphasising traditional morality and opposing LGBTIQ+ activism. CMFI has been actively involved in Vanuatu since its establishment there in 2012.^{xxxvii} The CMFI upholds traditional Christian teachings regarding sexuality and marriage, advocates for relationships exclusively between a man and a woman and does not support LGBTIQ+ activism.

Vanuatu is currently led by Charlot Salwai as Prime Minister within a coalition agreement, as well as by Nikenike Vurobaravu as President. Salwai is the leader of the Reunification of Movements for Change (RMC), which is part of the Unity for Change bloc, which is known for its cultural conservatism. As of December 2024, both Salwai and Vurobaravu are facing motions of no confidence launched in November 2024^{xxxviii}, at a time when a movement of anti LGBTIQ+ motions have been pushed through parliament.

Commenting on the amendments to Vanuatu's Marriage Act of 18 November 2024, Minister of Internal Affairs Andrew Napuat, emphasised that the legal definition applies to all forms of marriage ceremonies – religious, civil, or traditional – and warned that any officiant conducting a marriage outside of the definition as a “union between a man and a woman” risks having their license revoked.^{xxxix} This legislative action is only the latest of Vanuatu's government's broader initiative to draft a national policy banning LGBTIQ+ advocacy and support within the country. The legislation proposed on 1 November 2024 – endorsed by the **Malvatumauri Council, the Christian Council, the Ministry of Justice and Community Services (MoJCS) and women's groups** – seeks to halt all visible and invisible signs of LGBTIQ+, silencing groups like V-Pride, which have ceased operations under mounting pressure. Vanuatu's National Human Rights Coordinator, Albert Nalpini, has expressed support for the proposed ban. He stated that the decision aligns with the **Council of Ministers (COM)** earlier resolution to create a policy reflecting Vanuatu's Christian principles and Melanesian values, which

“... was made in response to how V-Pride advocates, promotes, and implements activities, including receiving funds from donor partners and [NGOs]” and that “The COM has also recognised that V-Pride's activities contradict our Constitution's preambles, Christian principles, and Melanesian values”.^{xl}

The Vice Chairman of the VCC, Pastor Thomson Aki, further justified these measures with biblical references to Sodom and Gomorrah, framing LGBTIQ+ rights as an imported concept threatening Vanuatu's identity, “Perhaps this is a foreign concept adopted from modern culture, which has become a problem in the country. During the 90s, our traditions and customs would not have allowed any LGBTQ presence in the Nakamal”. The President of the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs, Chief Ravun, echoed similar sentiments, emphasising that same-sex relationships clash with the nation's laws and traditions.

While SRHR services, such as those offered by the **Vanuatu Family Health Association (VFHA)**, currently remain unaffected, the legislation signals a broader rollback of progressive social policies established over the past two decades. Critics warn that this regression – supported by populist rhetoric and conservative agendas – marks a dangerous intersection of tradition and state power, leaving marginalised communities increasingly vulnerable.

VCC

The VCC is an interdenominational umbrella organisation representing the largest religious groups in Vanuatu – including the Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Presbyterian Church, Church of Christ, and Apostolic Church, with Seventh-day Adventists and the Assemblies of God having observer status. The VCC organises prayer sessions in government ministries and ceremonial prayers at national events, such as Father Walter Lini Day and Vanuatu Independence Day.^{xli}

The VCC secures its funding through multiple channels, which include international partnerships,^{xlii} grants from regional organisations,^{xliii} and member church contributions; however, its largest donor is likely the Canadian government. Its continuous annual grants of 10 million vatu (approximately US \$ 88,700) were in 2022, accompanied by an additional 25 million vatu (approximately US \$ 209,000).^{xliv}

Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs

The Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs is Vanuatu's formal advisory body of chiefs, established under the constitution to preserve and promote the nation's culture, languages, and customary practices.^{xlv} President Paul Robert Ravun stated that the rainbow movement does not align with Vanuatu's laws. He urged Parliament to uphold the constitution, which identifies Vanuatu as a Christian nation. Ravun also highlighted the importance of traditional customs in guiding law-making, especially on issues like same-sex relationships.

The Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs also receives funding from several sources, including Nia Tero (an organisation committed to securing Indigenous guardianship of diverse ecosystems)^{xlvi}, and AU DFAT.^{xlvii} Nevertheless, its most significant donor is the Vanuatu government, which provides annual financial support through its national budget. In the 2025 Appropriation Bill, the Council was allocated 56,575,320 Vatu for members' allowances and 5,387,000 Vatu for the 14 Island Councils of Chiefs (about US \$ 462,500 and US \$ 44,000 respectively).^{xlviii}

In addition, the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs has interacted with several Chinese officials and organisations in recent years. In October 2022, the Chinese Ambassador to Vanuatu, Li Minggang, met with the National Council of Chiefs Chairman, Palasuva. During this meeting, Ambassador Li conveyed greetings from Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and discussed the deepening of bilateral relations between China and Vanuatu. The discussions emphasised the historical ties and mutual support between the two nations.^{xlix} JfP found multiple examples where China invites influential people from the region for a cultural retreat in the PRC and occasionally provides them with electronic devices. In June 2023, members of the Malvatumauri participated in a nine-day tour across China. This visit included stops in various locations, such as China's tea and film production capitals. The tour aimed to foster cultural exchanges and explore potential collaborations, including the possibility of producing a documentary film on Vanuatu's traditional culture.ⁱ

Silenced Voices and Divided Alliances

V-Pride, a community-driven organisation established in 2007 to champion the rights and inclusion of Vanuatu's LGBTIQ+ community, has been forced into silence. Known for its work in education and advocacy, V-Pride collaborated with international partners, such as the UNDP, to study the impact of COVID-19 on SOGIESC-diverse individuals.ⁱⁱ Yet, with the

introduction of legislation targeting LGBTIQ+ advocacy, the organisation has halted all activities indefinitely. The shutting down of V-Pride marks a grim turning point for LGBTIQ+ rights in Vanuatu as traditional and conservative forces tighten their grip.

VANGO – a prominent umbrella body for NGOs in Vanuatu – on the other hand, has thrown its weight behind the proposed legislation. The organisation was founded in 1991 and formerly known as the National Komuniti Development Trust. VANGO claims neutrality with no religious or foreign affiliations.^{lii}

Vanuatu's Geopolitical Crossroads: A Nation Between Power Struggles

Strategically perched in the Pacific, Vanuatu's Y-shaped island chain is a key player in naval monitoring and regional influence. Positioned between Australia and Fiji, this geostrategic location has drawn both opportunity and conflict.^{liii}

As of 18 November 2024, Vanuatu's President, Nikenike Vurobaravu, has dissolved Parliament, triggering a snap election for the second time in two years.^{liv} Since its independence in 1980, Vanuatu has been plagued by political instability. Four prime ministers have been elected and removed since 2020 through no-confidence motions, including a snap election called for in 2022 after a dissolution of Parliament.

On 18 November 2024, Vanuatu and Fiji laid out their common Foreign Policy priorities, officiating their non-aligned positions. Representatives elaborated that the document codified the two states' priority of contributing to peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region rather than participating in wider geo-political power struggles.^{lv}

Development aid has shaped much of Vanuatu's trajectory. While Australia remains its largest benefactor, contributing to health, education, and infrastructure, China's growing footprint has raised eyebrows.

China's influence in Vanuatu has grown significantly, with China now holding approximately 40% of Vanuatu's external debt. This substantial financial involvement has raised concerns about Vanuatu's increasing dependency on China – potentially leading to economic vulnerabilities and diminished autonomy in policy decisions – as seen with other countries in the region.^{lvi} On **26 April 2024, Vanuatu and Russia reaffirmed their diplomatic ties^{lvii}**, at a time when Pacific island nations have been left walking a geopolitical tightrope in their response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as they try to balance regional alliances with both the West, and China and Russia. The Russian Ambassador, Dr Pavlosky, appointed in 2019, resides in Australia and oversees Australia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Nauru, and Tuvalu.

China has been funding multiple infrastructure projects in Vanuatu. In July 2024, China completed a presidential complex in Port Vila, encompassing offices for the president and various ministries.^{lviii} Concerns have emerged about China's intentions, with speculation that Vanuatu's potential debt burdens could give China leverage to secure control over strategic assets like Luganville Wharf or establish a People's Liberation Army presence there. China financed the US \$ 114 million redevelopment of the wharf, which can now accommodate naval vessels, heightening concerns over potential military use.^{lix} In March 2023, China delivered emergency supplies to Vanuatu, including tents, water purification equipment, and emergency kits valued at 100 million Vatu, to assist with disaster relief efforts.^{lx}

Economic pressures further complicate the picture. Criticism from the media, such as publications like Islands Business, have accused the EU of 'neocolonial' policies toward Vanuatu – pointing to its persistent blacklisting of Vanuatu over anti-money laundering compliance, despite reforms that satisfied the FATF in 2018. This tension highlights the delicate balance Vanuatu navigates between sovereignty, global alliances, and internal challenges.^{lxi}

The current representative for Vanuatu to the UN, Mr. Sumbue Antas, was appointed to his position in 2018 and also serves as Vanuatu's representative to the World Trade Organization. In 2022, Vanuatu voted in favour of the UN GA Resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine.^{lxii} On 7 April 2022, Vanuatu also voted in favour of suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council due to allegations of human rights violations in Ukraine.^{lxiii}

The inclusion of **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)** language in UN resolutions has been a point of contention among member states, especially those referring to Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions. Several countries have opposed the inclusion of SOGI references in UN resolutions, citing cultural, religious, or legal reasons. Nevertheless, Vanuatu previously demonstrated support for it. For instance, in 2011, Vanuatu was among the countries that endorsed the UN's Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.^{lxiv} However, this voting record contrasts with Vanuatu's domestic legal framework – which lacks comprehensive protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals. Same-sex sexual activity is legal, but there is no recognition of same-sex relationships or specific anti-discrimination laws protecting LGBTIQ+ individuals.^{lxv}

The 56th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), held from 18 June until 12 July 2024, addressed women's rights and SRHR in several significant developments. During the full-day discussion, Vanuatu's Sumbue Antas was one of the speakers focusing on women's rights in the 17th session – with panels addressing economic violence against women and girls and the intersection of human rights and women's economic empowerment.^{lxvi} The Council also adopted a landmark resolution titled "Human Rights in the Context of HIV and AIDS" (A/HRC/RES/56/20), historically significant as it marks the first instance in which a Human Rights Council-negotiated document explicitly references "sexual and reproductive rights". The resolution urges member states to develop comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and education programs, emphasising the importance of addressing the specific needs of adolescents, young persons – especially girls and young women – and persons with disabilities in the response to HIV.^{lxvii} The resolution was sponsored by Brazil, Columbia, Portugal and Thailand and adopted without a vote during the Council's 37th meeting on 12 July 2024 – indicating broad consensus among member states. Vanuatu has not yet been a member of the Human Rights Council, established in 2006 and comprised of 47 Member States which rotate based on an election process

Passports for Sale

Vanuatu's citizenship-by-investment program has attracted significant interest from foreign nationals, particularly from China and Russia.^{lxviii} Applicants can obtain citizenship without residing in or visiting Vanuatu, with a single application costing approximately US \$ 220,000 in 2019.^{lxix} The program offers two main pathways: the Development Support Program (DSP) and the Capital Investment Immigration Plan (CIIP). The DSP requires a minimum donation of US \$ 130,000 for a single applicant, while the CIIP involves a significant

investment in local development projects.^{lxx} These programs allow investors to obtain Vanuatu citizenship, thereby granting visa-free access to numerous countries and favourable tax conditions.^{lxxi} The programs remain active as in the last week of November 2024, a handler offered a package deal to JfP for as little as US \$ 135.000. A day later, Vanuatu was expelled from the visa-free access arrangement to the Schengen Area.

The Citizenship by Investment (CBI) program has also attracted many applicants from China and Russia. In 2021, Chinese nationals accounted for approximately 50% of the 2,000 passports issued under the program. Additionally, Russian citizens have shown considerable interest, with reports indicating that they constitute a notable portion of the applicants. This trend reflects the program's appeal to individuals from these countries seeking visa-free travel and other benefits associated with Vanuatu citizenship.

A 2023 collaborative report by the Financial Action Task Force and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) highlighted that similar visa programs, such as those of Australia, Austria, Egypt, Grenada, and Italy, offer illicit actors greater mobility, broader business opportunities, and access to a wider range of banking systems, heightening chances of corruption, tax evasion, money laundering, and involvement in organised crime^{lxxii}.

7.2 Solomon Islands

Key developments

- **Environmental Exploitation and Human Rights Violations:** *Unregulated deforestation by Chinese and Malaysian businesses, facilitated by corruption and foreign political influence, has led to severe environmental destruction and social consequences. This includes human rights abuses such as child sexual trafficking and forced labour, with women and girls particularly vulnerable to debt-based coercion into sex trafficking.*
- **Foreign Influence and Disinformation Campaigns:** *Since 2019, foreign influence in the Solomon Islands has surged, primarily driven by China and, to a lesser extent, Russia. These countries have coordinated disinformation campaigns, discrediting local human rights activists via e.g. Sputnik, or accusing the United States of intending to interfere in local elections and incite unrest. These allegations, spread through Russian and Chinese state-controlled media and social media platforms, involved fabricated documents and false claims about US plans for regime change. Special attention could be given to the cell towers that Chinese telecom companies (e.g. Huawei) are building.*
- **Conservative Policy Promotion by Government and Churches:** *A coordinated effort between the Solomon Islands government and Christian churches has led to the propagation of conservative policies, undermining SRHR and enabling human rights violations. For instance, abortion remains criminalised under the Penal Code, even in cases of rape, incest, and severe foetal impairment, reflecting an erosion of women's rights in the country.*

Background

Environmental destruction and human rights abuses in the Solomon Islands are driven by unchecked deforestation by Chinese and Malaysian firms, facilitated by corruption and foreign political influence. Deforestation rates are 19 times above sustainable levels, threatening forest exhaustion by 2036.^{lxxiii} Yet, beyond environmental harm, this exploitation has led to severe social consequences, including child sexual trafficking and forced labour.

A disturbing dimension of this crisis is the distortion of cultural practices like "bride price," traditionally a local custom symbolising the creation of family alliances, into a tool for commercial child exploitation. Logging camps have reportedly become sites where young girls are trafficked and subjected to forced marriages with foreign workers. This systematic manipulation of customs (kastom), enabled by corrupt tribal authorities and tacit government approval, perpetuates human trafficking while silencing victims and stifling accountability.^{lxxiv}

JfP's investigation has identified that interactions between Chinese companies, tribal leaders, and members of the Solomon Islands government—also engaged with Christian churches that propagate conservative public policies—sustain this exploitation, eroding SRHR and enabling persistent human rights violations. The following section provides an overview of the key actors and contributing factors.

The Role of Overlapping Political-Economic Interests

Zooming in on the Sogavare-China Relationship

Despite the nation's wealth in natural resources, which include forests, minerals, and fisheries, the economic benefits are predominantly reaped by foreign companies, particularly Chinese firms. These entities dominate key sectors, often outmanoeuvring local businesses to secure government concessions. For example, bauxite mining companies, which caused environmental damage on Rennell Island and were involved in a significant oil spill in February 2019, received exemptions directly negotiated by Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare.^{lxxv} High levels of public sector corruption accompany this situation. In addition to the logging industry, Chinese companies have become prominent in the wider Solomon Islands' economy, particularly infrastructure. For instance, Chinese firms have been involved in significant projects like constructing the national stadium in Honiara for the 2023 Pacific Games, funded by Chinese aid.^{lxxvi} In May 2024, the Solomon Islands government presented plans to the People's Republic of China (PRC) requesting investments for new facilities, including a long-haul runway at **Honiara International Airport**. JfP observed further developments in this cooperation, marked by a high-level visit from China's Civil Aviation Authorities to Honiara in November/December 2024.

The influence of Chinese companies extends deeply into the political sphere of the Solomon Islands. In 2019, Prime Minister Sogavare's decision to switch diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China prompted significant domestic opposition. It contributed to civil unrest, which targeted the parliament building and the headquarters of Chinese businesses in Honiara.^{lxxvii} Following these tensions, the Solomon Islands government targeted several CSOs that petitioned for Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare's resignation. Sogavare's administration accused these organisations of operating illegally by failing to register under the Charitable Trust Act; they labelled their actions as unlawful attempts to change a democratically elected government. This move raised concerns about the government's efforts to suppress dissent and the potential impact on civic freedoms in the country.^{lxxviii} The following year, Sogavare's government announced plans to temporarily ban Facebook, citing concerns over "abusive language against Ministers, the Prime Minister, character assassination and defamation of character". This proposal faced significant opposition from civil society groups and the public, with even a large portion of local Facebook users expressing disapproval, which prompted the government to reverse its decision in January 2021.^{lxxix}

Following the 2019 events, discussions emerged about a potential security agreement between the Solomon Islands and China by August 2021. In March 2022, a draft of this security pact was leaked, revealing provisions allowing China to deploy military forces to the

Solomon Islands and establish a military presence there. Despite international apprehensions, the Solomon Islands government proceeded. In April 2022, the security agreement with China was officially signed – thus signalling a new phase in the geopolitical dynamics of the Pacific region. Opposition leader Matthew Wale claimed the negotiations were concealed from everyone beyond Sogavare's close-knit group, including other members of Sogavare's cabinet.^{lxxx} The agreement includes provisions that allow Chinese security forces to be deployed to the Solomon Islands to assist in maintaining social order and protecting Chinese interests and permits Chinese naval vessels to access the Solomon Islands for logistical support.^{lxxxi}

In 2023, a leaked email revealed that the national newspaper, the Solomon Star, promised favourable coverage to China's embassy in Honiara in exchange for approximately US \$ 206,300 in funding for printing and broadcast equipment. The email expressed concerns that publishing stories with "anti-China sentiments" could jeopardise the newspaper's chances of receiving further financial support from Beijing.^{lxxxii}

As the April 2024 elections were approaching, a political analyst from the Solomon Islands argued that the news about the Chinese diplomat's attempts to influence the Solomon Islands' media was "not surprising" and "might even reflect much deeper to influence, not only mainstream, but also social media [...]".^{lxxxiii} He reminded that The Solomon Islands Chinese Business Council (SICBC), established in 2021, has financially benefited from the nation's relationship with Beijing, with many Chinese state-owned enterprises securing contracts for projects funded by Chinese and other international sources like the ADB and World Bank. Key companies, such as China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) and China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC), enjoy significant influence over the Solomon Islands government and local elites.

In response to allegations propagated through Russian and Chinese state-controlled media outlets, including Russia's Sputnik and China's Global Times, the United States Embassy in PNG issued a statement addressing disinformation regarding its election-related activities in the Solomon Islands two days before the elections (15 April 2024). The Embassy refuted claims suggesting American interference in Solomon Islands' elections, emphasising that all US development assistance, including programs by USAID, adhere to international standards and are conducted transparently at the host government's request.^{lxxxiv} Soon after the elections, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute indicated that in the lead-up to the Solomon Islands' national and provincial elections on 17 April 2024, **Russia and China likely coordinated disinformation campaigns accusing the United States of intending to interfere in the voting process and instigate unrest.** These allegations were disseminated through Russian and Chinese state-controlled media outlets and were further amplified on social media platforms. The campaign involved fabricated documents and articles, such as a purported leaked letter alleging US plans for regime change. While these narratives did not gain significant traction within the Solomon Islands, they exemplify the growing collaboration between Moscow and Beijing in conducting influence operations in the Asia-Pacific region.^{lxxxv}

After the April Parliamentary elections, Jeremiah Manele, the former Foreign Minister, was elected Prime Minister with 31 out of 49 votes. In his inaugural speech, he emphasised the importance of maintaining and strengthening relationships with international partners, including China, while also expressing a commitment to peace and national unity.^{lxxxvi} Under Manele's leadership, the Solomon Islands is expected to uphold its pro-China foreign pol-

icy stance, continuing the trajectory set during former Prime Minister – and current Minister of Finance- Manasseh Sogavare's tenure. This includes honouring existing agreements and fostering further cooperation with China while engaging with Western nations to balance international relations.^{lxxxvii}

This complex interplay between foreign economic influence, particularly from China, and domestic political dynamics continues to shape the socio-economic landscape of the Solomon Islands, often to the detriment of its Indigenous population.

Christian Churches and Politics in the Solomon Islands

Abortion in the Solomon Islands is criminalised under the Penal Code – even in cases of rape, incest and severe foetal impairment – and in particular to the detriment of underage victims of trafficking.^{lxxxviii} Its cultural and religious context influences the country's legal framework. Traditional institutions, including tribal leadership and customary practices, uphold conservative views on abortion, viewing it as contrary to cultural and moral values.^{lxxxix} Most of the population adheres to denominations such as the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Seventh-day Adventist churches. These religious institutions, along with traditional societal norms, have been influential in maintaining restrictive abortion laws. The **Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA)** – an ecumenical organisation comprising the country's largest churches – plays a significant role in shaping public policy, including matters related to reproductive health. SICA exerts considerable influence over public policy and societal attitudes, and its positions often reflect conservative Christian doctrines opposing abortion.^{xc}

The SICA is comprised of the following five major Christian denominations in the Solomon Islands:

1. **Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM)** – *The largest denomination in the Solomon Islands and a key member of SICA, representing a significant portion of the population.*
2. **Roman Catholic Church** – *A major Christian denomination that substantially influences the country's education, health services, and social issues. Former Prime Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo is known as a church member.*
3. **South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC)** – *A prominent Protestant denomination actively involved in societal and religious matters. Former Prime Minister, Philip, has been associated with the SSEC, reflecting his involvement in Protestant evangelical circles.^{xc}*
4. **United Church in Solomon Islands** – *A Protestant denomination with historical ties to missionary activities in the region.*
5. **Seventh-day Adventist Church** – *Known for its emphasis on education, health, and community service.^{xcii} Minister of Finance Sogavare is an active member.*

Recent Developments: A Nexus of Religion, Politics, and Global Ideologies

Political and religious leaders from the Solomon Islands have participated and engaged with several conservative organisations with significant international influence. For instance, representatives from the Solomon Islands, among whom Pastor Geoffrey Alacky, were present at the 7th **World Congress of Families**, held in Sydney, Australia in May 2013.^{xciii} Other such organisations have, in recent years, opened their own branches/offices in the Solomon Islands. Some of these engagements are elaborated upon in continuation.

Universal Peace Federation

The **Universal Peace Federation (UPF)** is an international non-governmental organisation founded in 2005 in **New York City** by Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon.^{xciv} It holds general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and

Social Council. The UPF is considered a conservative organisation which emphasises the importance of ‘family’ and ‘traditional values’.^{xcv}

In July 2012, UPF released the autobiography of its founder, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, titled “As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen”, in Honiara, Solomon Islands. Local religious and political leaders attended the event.^{x cvi} On 30 October 2017, the UPF, in collaboration with the **Women’s Federation for World Peace** (WFWP) and the **Family Federation for World Peace and Unification** (FFWPU), inaugurated the Solomon Islands chapter of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) at the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel in Honiara. The event, themed “Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: The Role of Governments, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations”, was attended by approximately 70 guests, including former members of parliament, executive members of the Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly, political party leaders, faith leaders, and NGO representatives. The program featured speeches emphasising the importance of collaboration among government, civil society, and faith-based organisations in addressing the “challenges” faced by the Solomon Islands.^{x cvii}



Figure 12 UPF representatives with Hon. James Tora, frmr Member of Parliament and frmr Minister for Police and Justice Solomon Islands, 30 October 2017.^{x cviii}



Figure 13: UPF representatives with Hon. Kamilo Teke, frmr Dep. Prime Minister and Member of Parliament, and his wife, 30 October 2017.^{x cix}



Figure 14: Mr. Casper Joseph Fa'asala, president of the People's Alliance Party, a leading political party in the Solomon Islands, presenting his views on the "challenges faced by the nation", 30 October 2017.^c

Christians for Israel (C4I) is a global, non-denominational Christian organisation established in 1979 in the Netherlands. Its mission is to promote a biblical understanding of God's purposes for Israel.^{ci} C4I engages in various activities to fulfill its mission, such as educational initiatives (conducting seminars, publishing materials, and organising tours to Israel to educate Christians about the significance of Israel in biblical prophecy and current events); and advocacy (opposing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, providing information on biblical, legal, and historical issues to Christian leaders and media channels).

In July 2019, Christians for Israel (C4I) inaugurated its Solomon Islands chapter with a three-day "Signs of the Times" conference in Honiara. The event featured speakers such as Rev. Cornelis Kant, Keith Buxton, and Ian Worby. It was attended by over 300 participants, including pastors and highly placed government officials from the Solomon Islands and neighbouring Pacific nations. Prime Minister Manasseh D. Sogavare delivered a keynote address, expressing strong support for Israel and urging Christian leaders to stand with the nation.^{cii} The Pastor mentioned above Geoffrey Alacky of Vanuatu's Full Gospel Church, who participated at the World Congress of Families in Australia, was also present at this event and is pictured below. Since its establishment in the Solomon Islands, C4I has continued to promote its mission through educational programs and events.



Figure 15: Photo in an Article on C4I's Website about its Launch in the Solomon Islands. 10 August 2019.^{ciii}

Project2025 and The Heritage Foundation

Project 2025 is a strategic initiative led by the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation. It aims to shape the agenda of the next US administration to advance national interests, curb government spending, and promote ultra-conservative values. This initiative is particularly relevant due to its anticipated implementation by the Trump administration, signalling a significant shift in US domestic and foreign policy priorities.

It also outlines the strategic framework for US engagement in the Pacific Islands, arguing for an increased push to counter China's growing influence. The strategy emphasises the importance of fostering bilateral alliances to promote an open and conservative Asia-Pacific, a policy the Heritage Foundation called for again on 1 October 2024.^{civ} Under the call of “re-specting Pacific Islands’s sovereignty and interests” this may strengthen their alignment with conservative and traditional norms towards SRHR, LGBTIQ+, and human rights.

In April 2023, Daniel Suidani, the former Premier of Malaita Province in the Solomon Islands, visited the US and participated in a discussion at **The Heritage Foundation**. During this event, Suidani addressed concerns regarding China’s growing influence in the Pacific Islands, mainly focusing on the Solomon Islands.^{cv}



Figure 16: Daniel Suidani in conversation with Jeff M. Smith, the director of the Asian Studies Center in the Heritage Foundation, 28 April 2023, Massachusetts, USA.

Anglican and Catholic Churches

Influential religious institutions in the Solomon Islands, notably the **Anglican and Catholic churches**, have expressed opposition to LGBTIQ+ rights and specific aspects of SRHR, framing them as contrary to Christian values.^{xxiv} Political parties and leaders have, at times, employed populist rhetoric that reinforces traditional gender roles and stigmatises LGBTIQ+ individuals, hindering progressive legislative reforms. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and inadequate enforcement of existing protections exacerbate these challenges, leaving marginalised groups vulnerable to discrimination and violence.

“Peace Curriculum”

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Education is developing a “peace curriculum” to promote social harmony in schools, including topics on human sexuality. This aligns with the Education Act 2023, focusing on inclusivity and safeguarding children from harm, regardless of their background or identity. The curriculum introduces themes like LGBTIQ+ rights – sparking controversy among some community and church leaders who feel these topics may conflict with traditional values.^{cvi}

7.3 Papua New Guinea

Key developments

- **Strategic Geographical Target for External Influence:** PNG's geographical significance in the Asia Pacific has made it a target for external actors seeking to expand their regional influence. This influence is exerted through economic investments and cultural diplomacy to strengthen ties, highlighting PNG's strategic importance in geopolitical power plays.
- **Resistance to Inclusive Legal Reforms:** The PNG government has demonstrated a clear unwillingness to adopt inclusive legal reforms for SRHR or the LGBTIQ+ community. This stance includes strong condemnation of support for LGBTIQ+ rights by foreign entities operating within PNG, maintaining an exclusionary approach to human rights protections for marginalised groups.
- **Religious Disinformation and Influence on Education:** Religious organisations in PNG are actively disseminating disinformation about organisations providing SRHR services. With support from government legislation, they also influence the educational curriculum using a strategic communication plan aimed at controlling the flow of information to local communities to further entrench conservative values.

The Struggle for SRHR Amid Cultural Conservatism and Foreign Interest

Deeply rooted cultural conservatism and external pressures have hindered inclusive reforms in PNG despite incremental progress in recent years. PNG has seen the increasing influence of foreign powers such as China, Russia, and Hungary upon its policies and cultural dynamics. Some of that influence has hindered attention to tackling GBV, for which PNG ranked 160 out of 161 on the 2021 UN Gender Inequality Index. Furthermore, domestic religious institutions and anti-rights activism are obstructing efforts to further LGBTIQ+ rights and SRHR policy reforms.

Recent Developments

Recent SRHR policy developments in PNG illustrate a mixed picture. Approximately 60% of women in PNG experience physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner – a rate that is twice the global average.^{cvii} Despite a 2021 parliamentary inquiry revealing that over 1.5 million people endure GBV annually, out of a population of 10 million, government resources and support systems to tackle this shocking statistic remain woefully inadequate.^{cviii} In 2023, the government allocated 9 million Kina (approximately US \$ 2,25 million) to address GBV and sorcery, but churches never received any funding to support them last year.^{cix} As of 2023, an estimated 72% of people living with HIV are receiving antiretroviral medication, leaving over half of at-risk groups—such as sex workers, men who have sex with men, and transgender individuals—without access to prevention programmes.^{cx} Papua New Guinea is facing a record high of 6,700 new HIV cases reported between 2023 and 2024, largely due to insufficient education and awareness about sexual and reproductive health.^{cx}

Regional differences are apparent, where in 2023, the Autonomous Bougainville Government introduced the Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, Peace, and Security Policy (2023–2027) – aiming to enhance women's participation in society and establish an Office of Gender Equality.^{cxii} These occurrences highlighted the regional discrepancies visible within PNG, as in 2023, then Prime Minister James Marape emphasised that “no bill before Parliament intends to legitimise LGBTIQ+ rights” – reflecting the government's unwillingness to move toward inclusive legal reforms for the LGBTIQ+ community.^{cxiii} Expression of support for the LGBTIQ+ community when a pride flag was flown at a foreign embassy in

Port Moresby was met with controversy, with the Prime Minister sending a “letter to remind them of PNG’s Christian values”.^{cxiv}

Influence of Christian Nationalism in PNG

Featuring around 1000 traditional societies and ethnic Indigenous groups who speak approximately 850 different languages, PNG is one of the world’s most heterogeneous countries.^{cxv} However, it can be argued that one of the few common denominators uniting the diversity of PNG is the adherence to Christianity, so much so that an attempt was made to pass an amendment to the constitution to label PNG as a “Christian nation”.^{cxvi}

The Papua New Guinea Council of Churches (PNGCC) is an ecumenical organisation comprising several Christian denominations, including the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea, Gutnius Lutheran Church, Independent Fundamental Baptist, Roman Catholic Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, United Church in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and the Salvation Army – and opposing progressive SRHR and LGBTIQ+ policies.

Noteworthy individuals from organisations like the South Pacific Division (SPD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which include Dr. Sven Ostring and Ruthy Baty, have also actively promoted traditional values against SRHR policies. **The Evangelical Lutheran Church, PNG’s largest Christian denomination, has been vocal in opposing LGBTIQ+ rights and SRHR.** The same can be seen with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which dictates that Seventh-day Adventists are **“opposed to homosexual practices and relationships”**.^{cxvii} The Seventh-day Adventist Church is influential in PNG, with the Prime Minister, Chief Justice, and Speaker of the House in PNG all being Seventh-day Adventists members.

Backed by conservative political leaders, the PNGCC presents its stance as a defense of Christian values. This framing significantly influences PNG, where religious beliefs shape public opinion and policy. Recent visits by figures like **Brian Stiller of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Dr Sven Ostring, Director of Ministry & Strategy of the Southern Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and delegations from the Roman Catholic Church** underscore cross-border support for PNG’s conservative policies.^{cxviii}

Furthermore, the recent Hungarian delegation by former President Novak in November 2023 and Pope Francis in September 2024 highlighted the international religious community’s influence on PNG’s political agenda, including those influencing LGBTIQ+ and SRHR rights.

In addition, the PNG Bible Church and the Calvary Christian Church, a Pentecostal church have significant conservative influences. The Calvary Mission in Papua New Guinea is part of the Australian Christian Churches (ACC) movement.^{cxix} JfP has identified the influence of actors from PNG, who attended the 2013 World Congress of Families Meeting in Sydney, Australia. These notably include Dr Jacklyn Nemba, Rex Koi, Julie Gotaha and Dr Agnes Kola – Education Director – responsible for spreading the use of the anti-LGBTIQ+/anti-SRHR ‘Sabbath school curriculum – Alive in Jesus’ within teaching materials within PNG. As of 2024, the World Bank paints a dim picture of the education crisis in PNG and “focuses on the urgent need for more and better investment in education to address a human capital crisis in PNG”.^{cxx}

Dr. Agnes Bayak Kola is affiliated with the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church) and headquartered in Lae, Morobe Province. Her role is Adsafe Limited Safeguarding Learning & Development Officer, South Pacific.

As the first woman minister in PNG,^{cxix} Kola's role entails her being responsible for spreading the use of the anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-SRHR "Sabbath school curriculum Alive in Jesus". Furthermore, Kola is involved with the Russian-backed World Congress of Families; has attended the World Congress of Families Conference in Sydney, Australia, in 2013 and is engaged with Calvary Church.

The cultural and economic influence of Australia's conservative organisations in PNG is evident within the religious links, with religious groups originating from Australia supplying aid to communities in PNG, such as the Anglican Overseas Aid and Independent Fundamental Baptists, and also support PNG's conservative stance within their shared ideological aims, including on matters relating to SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights.



Figure 17 Indicating the presence of Agnes Kola from PNG at the 2013 WCF Conference in Sydney, Australia, during her talk at the "Panel: UN issues, globalisation and human rights: Impact of Globalisation on Families in PNG".

Religion has an omnipresent influence within the domestic framework of PNG. **The Catholic Bishops' Conference in PNG** has implemented a strategic communication plan to shape the flow of information to local communities. This plan involves training local spiritual leaders, collaborating with a broadcasting station, and working closely with the Media Council and the Social Media Management Desk (SMMD). The SMMD, empowered by NEC Decision 100/2021 of the PNG Government, has the authority to monitor, assess, and manage information dissemination. Through these efforts, the Catholic Church effectively influences what information reaches local communities, ensuring that messaging aligns with its conservative values and priorities.^{cxii}

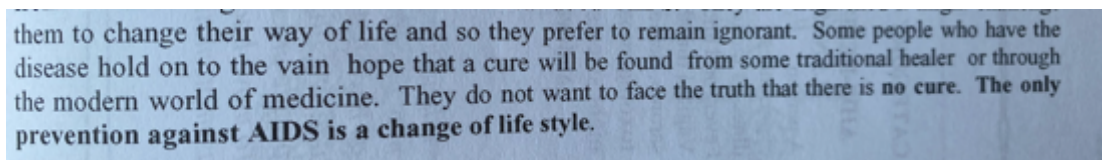


Figure 18: Schooling - Good Practices sharing by the Catholic Church in PNG.

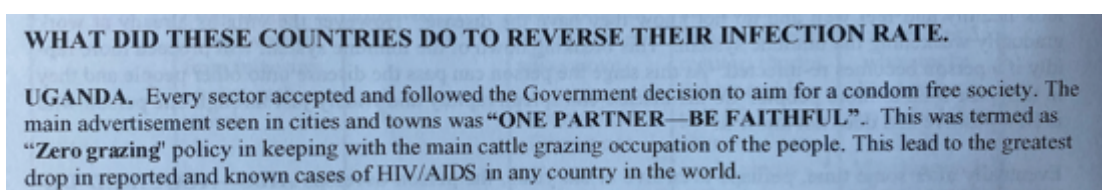


Figure 19: Lessons on how to prevent AIDS.^{cxiii}

The book "Personality Development and Human Sexuality Workbook" (adapted from the Curriculum Department's "Reproductive and Sexual Health" and reproduced by Sr. Helen Warman, OLSH, National Christian Education Co-ordinator at the direction of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2005), from which Figures 21 and 22 were extracted, states that the production of this programme was funded and supported by the Churches Partnership Programme (CCP) and the (then) Australian Agency for International Development.

The **Catholic Bishops' Conference in PNG** actively spreads disinformation about the work of Marie Stopes, portraying their contraceptive services in a negative light. They falsely claim that Marie Stopes administers harmful injections “to stop giving birth” and emphasize anecdotal narratives like “many of our women, our young women, died at home”,^{cxxiv} which fosters fear and mistrust within local communities. Additionally, the church promotes the idea that the only way to prevent AIDS is through a lifestyle change, dismissing established medical interventions. They further claim that contraceptives cause cancer, heart attacks, and strokes, spreading biased information that contributes to confusion and fear around reproductive health services. These narratives are strategically shared to influence community beliefs, ultimately discouraging the use of contraception and public health services by perpetuating myths and misinformation.^{cxxv}

Foreign Interference and Economic Influence

PNG continues to attract significant attention from global powers due to its strategic location and economic potential. These interactions reflect the growing geopolitical dynamics influencing the country's domestic and international policies. **China's involvement in PNG's economy is substantial, with at least 40 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) operating there.**^{cxxvi} In April 2024, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited PNG to strengthen bilateral ties.^{cxxvii} During this visit, agreements were signed to enable direct exports of unroasted coffee and cocoa beans from PNG to China. Additionally, both nations agreed to advance discussions on a potential free trade agreement. These developments underscore the deepening economic relationship between China and PNG, highlighting Beijing's regional strategic interest.^{cxxviii}

Russia has also identified PNG as a potential strategic partner. Russia tries to “influence global and regional policy through arms sales, the use of private military contractors, political interventions, social media and disinformation campaigns, and military force.”^{cxxix}



Figure 22: The Logo of the Miklouho-Malakay Foundation.

JFP has uncovered evidence that PNG is on the cusp of being targeted by Russian subsidiaries for economic, societal and political motives. The Miklouho-Maclay Foundation focuses on developing cultural, economic, diplomatic and educational exchanges between Russia and PNG. The foundation is directed and was founded by Nikolay Miklouho-Maclay, the direct descendant of the 19th-century Russian explorer of PNG, after whom the foundation is named^{cxix}

A presentation advertising the attractiveness of PNG to Russia was organised by the Foundation, and the country was described as “**one of the last places in the world’ where Investors have the most favourable conditions for creating and running a business.** According to experts, **PNG is the ‘early Indonesia’** perhaps repeating the path of rapid economic development due to a similar geological picture”^{cxix}

As seen within prior research published by JfP in the New York Times in 2023, it can also be seen how Orthodox Christianity was utilised to influence the local population to be supportive and loyal towards Russia.^{cxxxii}

Strong evidence suggests solid plans are in place to build a Russian Orthodox Church in PNG. Since 2020, Priests and Missionaries from the Russian Orthodox Church based in Moscow **have visited PNG twice, first during January - February 2020^{cxxxiii} and secondly between October and November 2023,**^{cxxxiv} stating that “a mass conversion is possible there”.^{cxxxv}

The visits by the two different Russian Orthodox Missions were primarily facilitated by the **Miklouho-Maclay Foundation.**^{cxxxvi}



Figure 23 Russian Orthodox visit to PNG in 2020, led by Kirill Shkarbul, the head of the Russian Orthodox representation in Taiwan.



Figure 24: Russian Orthodox Church's visit to PNG in November 2023. Priest Stanislav Rasputin was on a missionary trip. During this trip, individuals in PNG received Communion, and part of the Orthodox Liturgy had already been translated into one.^{cxxxvii}

These activities indicate Russia’s ongoing efforts to establish a cultural and religious presence in the Pacific region.

The Miklouho-Maclay Foundation has been increasingly active and present in PNG since 2019, when it held a conference to foster Russian business development. Oil, gas, mining,

and other natural resources were emphasised as critical industries for Russian investment in PNG.^{cxix}

This organisation is affiliated with the **Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and the **Port Moresby Chamber of Commerce and Industry, based in PNG**. Finally, an investment agency called Maclay Investments is affiliated with the Miklouho-

Figure 25: In Madang Province, Nickolayi Miklouho-Maclay visited the Government building on 6 May 2019, where he shared the plans of the Miklouho-Maclay Foundation in humanitarian and cultural spheres with the Governor of the Province.^{cxviii}



Maclay Foundation.^{cxl} These examples demonstrate the connection between investments and cultural diplomacy and development initiatives in the region, leveraging historical ties established by its founder.

Furthermore, JfP has uncovered that the Honorary Consul of Russia to PNG, Ms Maria A. Lavrentieva, is not only a member of the Board of Trustees of the Miklouho-Maclay Foundation but also acts as the director of Huon Machinery Limited.^{cxli} Huon Machinery Limited, based in Lae, PNG, operates from the Malahang Industrial Centre and offers a range of services, including backhoe hire, civil construction, excavation, and the supply of vehicles. The company is also involved in road construction, storage, and distribution solutions. In 2013, Huon Machinery was awarded a K1.9 million contract by Water PNG to construct water and sewerage pipelines for four new fish canneries in Lae's Malahang area. This project aimed to enhance water and sanitation access for local businesses and residents.



Figure 26: The opening of the Russian Corner in the National Library of PNG in Port Moresby in December 2019 was attended by LG Vorobyova, the Ambassador of Russia to Indonesia, Kiribati, East Timor, and PNG. Also present the director of the Mikhlouho-Maclay Foundation, Nickolay Miklouho-Maclay as well as influential individuals within PNG's political and economic sphere.^{cxlii}

JfP identified that the Miklouho-Maclay Foundation is affiliated with the Center for South-east Asia, Australia and Oceania Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences based in Moscow. On **7 November 2024, the 45th All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference on the South Pacific region was held in Moscow, Russia.**^{cxliv} The conference explored opportunities for economic and diplomatic collaboration between Russia and PNG in the context of broader geopolitical and environmental challenges. The themes were centred on historical, economic, political, and cultural dynamics, emphasising Russia's engagement in the region and focusing on the potential for enhancing bilateral relations and business collaborations with PNG, as well as other countries in the Asia-Pacific.^{cxlv}



Figure 27: Illustrating the 5-year Plan of the Miklouho -Maclay Foundation from 2020-2025.^{cxliii}

Topics such as the impact of climate change on Oceania's economies, the role of Russia in facilitating innovation and trade, and the possibilities for partnership in digital transformation and resource management reflect Russia's interest in establishing a foothold in PNG's developing market, primarily **framed within the broader context of Russia's pursuit of strategic influence in the Pacific region through historical goodwill and modern economic initiatives.**^{cxlvi} Another critical theme is PNG's significance as a focal point for Russia's efforts to expand its influence in the South Pacific. Discussions on the cultural heritage of PNG – including indigenous art and rituals – highlight areas where Russia can engage in cultural diplomacy to build stronger ties. Such efforts are positioned alongside broader discussions about Russia's historical ties with other Pacific nations – signalling a coordinated effort to enhance its presence in a region of increasing strategic importance.^{cxlvii}

The connections with Moscow are strong and could even be considered hierarchical. The Miklouho-Maclay Foundation has a wide presence in Russia, as well as within the media, including being featured on the Russian State TV channel Rossiya 24.^{cxlix}



Figure 28: Russian Promotional Media affiliated with the Miklouho-Maclay Foundation obtained by JfP in Port Moresby, PNG.^{cxlviii}

Since 2023, various actors affiliated with different religious groups have converged in PNG. General Conference President, Ted N. C. Wilson, visited the PNG in April 2024, as did Erton Köhler, Secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in May 2024. Within PNG, the Central Papua Conference (CPC) is the administrative entity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Central Province and the National Capital District (NCD) of PNG, operating 'Life Ministries' within the rest of the country.



Figure 29: Visit of Brian C. Stiller, Global Ambassador of The World Evangelical Alliance to Papua New Guinea in December 2023.^{cl} The **World Evangelical Alliance** is a global alliance serving approximately 600 million evangelical Christians internationally.

The World Evangelical Alliance is the largest international organization of evangelical churches, with approximately 600 members internationally. The offices of the Alliance are located in UN offices in New York City, Geneva, and Bonn. The Secretary-General between 2021 and 2024, Thomas Schirrmacher, visited PNG in 2020, as well as Brian C. Stiller, the Global Ambassador of The World Evangelical Alliance who visited PNG in December 2023.

The organisation has been increasingly active in the region as of late, with the most recent general assembly of the World Evangelical Alliance taking place in Jakarta, Indonesia between the 7th and 14th November 2019. Since then, there has been an increased number of regulations in different countries limiting the space attributed to certain discourses. For example, Canada threatens to criminalise the view according to which homosexuality is contrary to the will of God, even when limited to quoting scripture. Debates on the characteristics of hate speech and questions of freedom of expression have been trying to find ways to address both perspectives, specifically in regards to Christianity.^{cli}



Figure 30: Illustrates Ted N. C. Wilson, President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, meeting PNG Prime Minister and Other Leaders, some of whom are Seventh-day Adventists on 25 April 2024.

Hungarian Influence

In **October 2023**, PNG hosted the former president of Hungary, Katalin Novak – who is globally known for implementing Hungary’s conservative family policies, including anti-LGBTIQ+ measures and the 'heartbeat' law (Hungary President’s Visit Itinerary, 2023) – as well as a 25-member delegation, including László Köver (the speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary). This visit comes after the Hungarian Head of Mission to PNG, Ambassador Zsolt Csenger-Zalan, arrived in Port Moresby in September 2023. It reflects Hungary’s broader efforts to promote conservative social values globally, which align with PNG’s existing cultural and religious conservatism on issues such as the ‘natural family’ and LGBTIQ+ rights. This was evidenced when Novak met **Cardinal John Ribat, Archbishop of Port Moresby**.



Figure 31: Former Hungarian President, Katalin Novak, together with Cardinal John Ribat, Archbishop of Port Moresby and PNG’s Prime Minister James Marape on 26 October 2023 during Novak’s state visit to PNG.

Country	Key Activities in PNG	Implications
China	- Over 40 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) operate in PNG. - Signed agreements in April 2024 for direct coffee and cocoa exports. - Advanced discussions on a free trade agreement.	- Strengthening economic ties with PNG. - Increased Chinese presence in PNG’s trade and economy.

Russia	• <i>Two Russian Orthodox missions (2020, 2023).</i> • <i>Miklouho-Maclay Foundation promotes cultural ties directed by Moscow.</i> • <i>Identifies PNG as the "next Indonesia".</i>	• <i>Establishing cultural and religious influence.</i> • <i>Aiming for strategic partnerships in the Pacific.</i>
Hungary	• <i>2023 visit by former Hungarian president known for anti-LGBTIQ+ policies.</i> • <i>Advocated for conservative family values.</i>	• <i>Alignment with PNG's cultural conservatism.</i> • <i>Promotion of global conservative agendas.</i>

Table 2: Summary of the "Foreign Interference and Economic Influence" in PNG:

7.4 Indonesia

Key developments

- **Criminalisation of Extramarital Relations:** In 2022, Indonesia passed a law criminalising extramarital sexual relations, disproportionately affecting LGBTIQ+ individuals who are unable to marry. This law was championed by ultra-religious and conservative groups, including the Family Love Alliance (AILA) and the Muslim Scholars' Council (MUI), reflecting a broader push for conservative social control.
- **Influence of Saudi-Funded Religious Infrastructure:** An increase in Saudi-funded religious infrastructure and education has fostered a more conservative atmosphere in Indonesia's religious practices and community norms. This shift is evident in the growing influence of conservative Islamic organisations like AILA, which have used this funding to push for stricter adherence to religious principles.
- **Evangelical Funding for Conservative Advocacy:** Salafist organizations increased their activities, while Western evangelical groups, such as the Pro-Life Foundation, have intensified their advocacy efforts in Indonesia, further pushing conservative agendas in the country. Both groups seem to improve their coordination, including by signing Memoranda of Understanding.

From the legislative recognition of human rights to the legislative undermining of SRHR

Despite prior progress within Indonesia regarding human rights, including the signing of the Geneva Convention and the adoption of the Yogyakarta Principles in 2006, a human rights framework upholding protections for sexual orientation and gender identity, Indonesia's recent policies reflect a **troubling regression in SRHR**, with cultural, religious, and political forces colliding to shape a restrictive environment.

The most striking example is the **2022 law criminalising extramarital sexual relations**, a measure that both infringes on personal freedoms and institutionalises discrimination. These actions undermine individual freedoms and position Indonesia increasingly at odds with its international human rights commitments.^{ciii} The fight for SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights in Indonesia now stands as a critical battleground, with global implications for human rights advocacy. This chapter examines these developments within the broader context of cultural, political, and international influences shaping Indonesia's policies and society.

Recent developments

Since **2015**, Indonesia has seen a surge in **anti-SRHR and -LGBTIQ+ narratives**, culminating in legislation that erodes women's rights and targets LGBTIQ+ individuals. For instance,

a **2022 law criminalised extramarital sexual relations**, a measure that both infringes on personal freedoms and institutionalises discrimination. Under this law, **extramarital sex is punishable by up to one year in jail**, and **cohabitation among unmarried couples carries a six-month jail term**.^{cliii} LGBTIQ+ individuals who are unable to marry legally are disproportionately affected, making the law a direct assault on their rights. All political parties in Indonesia's parliament supported the measure, framing it as an effort to replace Dutch colonial-era laws with ones aligned with "Indonesian values". Despite **widespread protests** and opposition from civil society organisations, the law was passed, marking a significant setback for SRHR in the country.^{cliv}

A similar code was attempted to be passed in 2019 but sparked a national protest. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated at the time against a series of laws, especially those considered to regulate morality and freedom of speech, which they said would limit civil liberties. Some changes have been made to the 2019 legislative proposal, including provisions that allow the death penalty to be changed to life imprisonment after 10 years of good conduct. The criminalisation of abortion, except for rape victims, remained in the 2022 criminal code.^{clv}

In August 2024, Indonesia expanded the conditions under which abortion is permitted. Previously, abortions were only allowed within six weeks of the last menstrual period and limited to cases of rape or medical emergencies. Now, the revised regulations allow abortions up to 14 weeks of pregnancy in cases of rape, sexual assault, or medical emergencies. This change aligns Indonesia's policies with World Health Organization standards and notably adds "sexual assault" as a valid reason—. In contrast, before, only rape or medical emergencies were considered grounds for a legal abortion.

However, the process for obtaining an abortion has become more restrictive in several respects. Under the new regulations, the Indonesian **police are the sole authority for approving abortions in cases of rape**. Women must now obtain official recognition of their status as rape victims exclusively from the police, replacing the previous system where medical professionals or psychologists could provide the necessary documentation. Human rights activists have criticised this change, arguing that it adds significant barriers for rape survivors, potentially delaying medical care and deterring victims from seeking support due to fears of societal stigma and bureaucratic hurdles.

Despite the broader conditions now permitting abortion up to 14 weeks, accessing these services remains fraught with legal risks outside approved circumstances. Women seeking abortions that do not meet the specific conditions face imprisonment for up to four years. Providers of abortion services may be sentenced to up to five years if the procedure is consensual or up to 12 years if it is performed without the woman's consent. Healthcare professionals—including doctors, midwives, paramedics, and pharmacists—who provide abortions outside these exceptions could see their sentences increased by one-third.

Moreover, anyone supplying medication intended to induce an abortion, including those who recommend or imply its use, risks **imprisonment for up to four years** and may lose their professional credentials. This includes pharmacists or other healthcare professionals indirectly facilitating access to such medications.

Under the new code, "Anyone without authorisation who publicly displays, promotes, distributes, or demonstrates how to access contraceptive devices to minors" may be fined up to IDR 1 million (approximately US \$ 64). The term "authorised officials" is mentioned but

not clearly defined. Although an exception is made for actions aimed at “knowledge/education,” the broad language of the provision makes it likely to be interpreted in a restrictive manner, as distinguishing between education and actions that lead to abortion could be contentious.

Ensuring that individuals of all ages have access to comprehensive information about contraception and abortion remains essential.^{clvi} The combination of broader access to abortion in specific cases but heightened barriers and punitive measures underscore a complicated and restrictive reproductive health landscape in Indonesia.

Religious Conservatism and SRHR Policies and the New Criminal Code

The new criminal code was passed to align Indonesian legislation with Indonesian values, as stated by several Indonesian politicians. Indeed, the Deputy Minister of Law and Human Rights of Indonesia, Edward Omar Sharif Hiariej, stated: *“We are proud to have a criminal law book that is in accordance with Indonesian values”*. The law received support from several Islamic groups (see more below) and was passed regardless of the opposition’s reticence. According to President Joko Widodo’s deputy chief of staff, none of the nationalist parties, which dominate the ruling coalition, favoured the morality clauses but eventually agreed to an amended version because **support for the morality laws carries a political advantage**. Politicians who support this Criminal Code can claim that they have succeeded in realising “law and order” that have failed for years. They can emphasise the “family values” of conservative morality that can help them gain support from voters. This is important for nationalist politicians who want to strengthen their religious credentials. Behind the scenes, secular nationalist parties holding a majority in parliament opposed the tighter laws on morality. Still, they risked being branded supportive of adultery if they remained unyielding in their opposition. What resulted was a compromise between political parties and the government.^{clvii}

Indonesia’s conservative political and public opinion religious landscape depicted above is shaped by both **Islamic and Christian traditional influences** that heavily dictate their stances on SRHR. Religious groups dominate civil society and resist progressive reforms. Though historically tolerant toward adult LGBTIQ+ practices, societal conservatism surged after **Suharto’s fall**, with growing cultural mobilisation around Islamic values leading to **anti-SRHR legislation**.³ Groups like the **Family Love Alliance or AILA** (derived from the Arabic term for family and in Indonesian called Aliansi Cinta Keluarga) and **Muslim Scholars’ Council (MUI)** spearhead anti-SRHR campaigns, and are often bolstered by vigilante organisations like the radical **Islamist FPI**. These groups enforce religious conservatism through “fatwas” and legal advocacy, influencing legislation such as the **2022 law criminalising extramarital sex**, a direct result of their lobbying efforts.^{clviii}

³ Tim Lindsey, “20 Years After Soeharto: Is Indonesia’s Era Reformasi Over?” Pursuit, 21 May 2018. Accessed via: <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/20-years-after-soeharto-is-indonesia-s-era-reformasi-over> (accessed 26 November 2024). During Soeharto’s regime, Indonesia experienced economic growth with Western investment, but it was an authoritarian system with military influence entrenched in governance and the economy. Wealth concentrated among a select elite, including the military, led to widespread dissatisfaction, which escalated after the Asian Economic Crisis triggered nationwide riots. On 21 May 1998, Soeharto resigned, ending his rule. Over the next five years, surviving elites, oligarchs, and civil society leaders worked to establish a democratic system emphasizing the rule of law and human rights. However, the rise of Islamist hardliners, previously suppressed, has since challenged Indonesia’s commitment to pluralism, positioning them as the nation’s equivalent of the alt-right.

Religious groups notably influenced the 2022 bill criminalising extramarital sex. AILA first petitioned the Indonesian Constitutional Court in 2016 to criminalise sex outside marriage and between homosexual partners.^{clix} Although the Constitutional Court initially rejected this petition, amendments led to the law's passage in 2022. The 2022 bill criminalising extramarital sex was notably influenced by religious groups^{clx}, in particular AILA, which, as explained, first petitioned the Constitutional Court in 2016.^{clxi} Although the Constitutional Court initially rejected this petition, amendments led to the law's passage in 2022. Indonesians familiar with AILA's work have noted that although they are small, it has strong links to both academia and the government with similar conservative views. This is one of the factors that makes AILA successful and effective. JfP was told that AILA is one of the biggest threats to gender equality in Indonesia since, at least officially, they are the ones 'promoting' it.^{clxii}

AILA's leadership includes individuals affiliated with academic institutions and other conservative organisations. For instance, Euis Sunarti, a prominent figure in AILA, is associated with the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilization (INSISTS) and the Council of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals and Young Ulemas (MIUMI). These affiliations suggest that AILA operates within a network of conservative Islamic groups that influence both academic discourse and public policy in Indonesia.^{clxiv}



Figure 32: AILA petitioning to ban gay and extramarital sex (2016).^{clxiii}

Although MUI is an independent NGO, it receives state funding, issues lucrative halal certifications, and is involved in Indonesia's sharia economy. MUI wields influence through "fatwas", religious opinions on Islamic law. Though not legally binding in Indonesia, fatwas have a strong social impact when disseminated by radical imams and can influence court rulings or legislative decisions.^{clxv} For instance, MUI endorsed the new criminal code. When Abdul Aziz, a doctoral candidate at the Kalijaga Islamic State University, defended a thesis arguing that extramarital sex is not prohibited under Islamic law, MUI criticised the work, calling it "distorted thinking" and advising the Muslim community to reject it. Aziz subsequently agreed to revise his dissertation.^{clxvi}

Large parts of Indonesian society are influenced by fatwas; for instance, the Indonesian Medical Association and the Indonesian Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology have called the new legislative provisions expanding abortion from six weeks to fourteen "murder". They have insistently called for the abortion permission to be held at six weeks. Their objections were based on religious grounds rather than medical ones. They referred to a fatwa issued by the MUI in 2005 that declared that abortions were only permissible within 40 days of conception, at which point, according to Islamic belief, the foetus gains a soul. "Those of us who are Muslim will, of course, follow the MUI fatwa".^{clxvii}

These groups are not funded but inspired by Family Watch International. They also have a relationship with Salafist groups in the UK and Malaysia but deny any foreign funding. However, this link has been unexplored and needs further research to be confirmed and explained.

Foreign and Religious Interventions

JFP found that Saudi Arabia has long influenced Indonesia through Salafist⁴ organisations promoting stricter Islamic adherence. In contrast, Western evangelical groups like the **Pro-Life Foundation**, an evangelical Christian organisation, have increased its advocacy efforts in Indonesia. **Dr Calum Miller**, a researcher and medical doctor based at Oxford University in the United Kingdom, has been affiliated with this organisation and has supported anti-abortion and anti-gender movements in Indonesia since August 2022 through meetings with high-ranking officials, including those in the Ministry of Health, to maintain or strengthen restrictive abortion policies.^{clxviii} During his visit to Indonesia, he visited the Pro-Life Foundation^{clxix}, as well as with the Indonesian Bethel Church or Bethel Full Gospel Church of God, known as GBI (Gereja Bethel Indonesia), which are a collective network of Pentecostal Churches in Indonesia, of which he interacted with further after he departed Indonesia.^{clxx}

Also, during his meeting in Indonesia, he held an interview with the Indonesian Bethel Church or Bethel Full Gospel Church of God, known as GBI (Gereja Bethel Indonesia), a collective network of Pentecostal Churches in Indonesia.^{clxxi}

Moreover, the ultra-conservative American **ADF** has amplified anti-abortion and anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives in Indonesia. Through its international branch, ADF International, the organisation extends its influence globally, including in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, ADF International has engaged with local partners to promote policies that align with its conservative stance on SRHR and LGBTIQ+ issues. This involvement has contributed to shaping public discourse and influencing legislative measures in Indonesia, often advocating for traditional family values and opposing the expansion of rights for LGBTIQ+ individuals.

clxxii

⁴ Salafi Muslims reject religious innovation and advocate for the enforcement of Islamic law. Scholars and journalists often classify the movement into three political categories: purists, who avoid political involvement and form the majority; activists, who actively engage in politics; and jihadists, a minority that endorses armed struggle to revive early Islamic practices. In legal interpretations, Salafis generally favour *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) over *taqlid* (strict adherence) to traditional schools of Islamic jurisprudence. However, some continue to draw upon these schools without being bound by their final rulings". Salafism: Politics and the Puritanical." *The Economist*, 27 June 2015. Archived on 28 June 2015.

Meanwhile, **Russia's influence** emerges through soft power initiatives such as **media training programs, such as Russia Today's** (RT: the Russian state-controlled international news television network) **launch of an academy for journalists in the region**, which RT said would establish **"direct lines of communication... between local journalists and the RT international newsroom"** and **state propaganda on Telegram**, targeting narratives about Ukraine and promoting its geopolitical agenda.^{clxxiv}

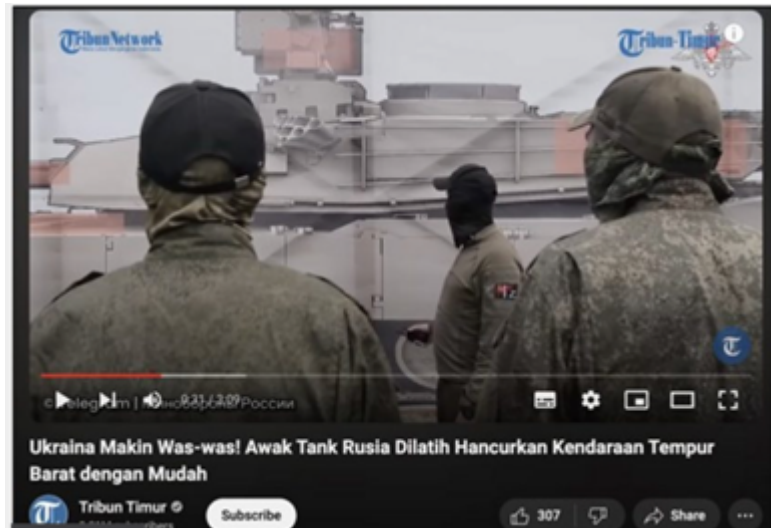


Figure 33: Tribun Timur's pro-Russian perspective on the war in Ukraine.^{clxxiii}

Like frequently seen in the region, certain Indonesian news channels republish Russian disinformation. For instance, the Indonesian news portal media "Viva" initially published content by Russian disinformation outlets. This includes a report published by Viva from the Strategic Culture Foundation, a Russia-based online journal allegedly directed by Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). The report said the US had conspired with Israel to create Covid-19.^{clxxv}

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Expanding Gulf Influence

Since the 1980s, Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in Indonesia, building over 150 mosques, establishing educational institutions, and offering scholarships to study in Saudi Arabia. This has contributed to the spread of Salafist teachings. Additionally, the establish-

ment of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic (LIPIA) in Jakarta serves as a pivotal institution in disseminating Salafi ideology.^{clxxvi} LIPIA offers free education with a curriculum focused on Arabic language and Islamic studies, aligning closely with Saudi interpretations of Islam. Saudi Arabia has provided numerous scholarships for Indonesian



Figure 34: Minister of Islamic Affairs Dr Abdullatif Al-Sheikh supports Saudi Arabia's construction of a Mosque in the Faculty of Education at Sharif Hidayatullah University 2022.

students to pursue higher education in Saudi universities. This initiative aims to cultivate a generation of scholars and religious leaders who adhere to Salafi teachings, thereby influencing religious practices upon their return to Indonesia.

The influx of Saudi-funded religious infrastructure and education has contributed to a more conservative atmosphere within Indonesian Islam. Salafi interpretations have increasingly supplanted traditional practices, leading to shifts in religious observance and community norms. This transformation reflects a broader trend of Saudi Arabia's efforts to propagate its brand of Islam globally.^{clxxvii}

7.5 Australia

Key developments

- **Overturning the Misinformation and Disinformation Bill:** *The Misinformation and Disinformation Bill became a focal point for anti-rights actors, such as the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL), who framed it as an attack on religious freedom and medical ethics. Their campaign claimed that the bill threatened deeply held religious beliefs on issues like euthanasia, gender identity, and bioethics, labelling them as potential hate speech. This backlash led to the bill's overturning on 24 November 2024, showcasing the influence of anti-rights lobbying in shaping public policy.*
- **International Alliances to Counter Liberal Values:** *Australian conservative groups, supported by international alliances, are part of a broader movement resisting liberal values while reinforcing traditional hierarchies. Through global networks like the WCF, they amplify anti-SRHR and anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric, aligning with geopolitical actors like Russia and Hungary to challenge Western liberalism. Examples include Australian anti-rights figures attending conferences in Russia and Hungary and global anti-rights conferences being hosted in Australia in 2013 and 2014, attended by currently sanctioned Russian individuals.*
- **Training for Anti-Rights Advocacy:** *Anti-Rights actors in Australia have developed training organisations to enhance fundraising, political strategy, and agenda-setting, modelled after groups like the ADF and Ordo Iuris in Poland. The Human Rights Law Alliance is a key player in this effort, influencing anti-rights actors to push against LGBTIQ+ and SRHR rights. A recent example of this influence is Liberal Senator Alex Antic's 2023 attempt to introduce a bill banning gender reassignment surgery and treatment for teenagers.*

Background

Australia is home to a growing wave of ultra-conservative organisations opposing SRHR and LGBTIQ+ inclusion, aligning with transnational movements pushing traditional Christian values. Groups like **Endeavour Forum Inc.**, the **National Civic Council (NCC)**, and **Cherish Life Queensland** are critical players in a coordinated effort to dismantle progressive policies under the guise of "protecting the family". Their actions reveal a deeply rooted resistance to gender equality, reproductive rights, and LGBTIQ+ advocacy.

Recent Developments: Navigating the Debate: The Australian Christian Lobby and the Disinformation Bill

In recent years, the **Australian Christian Lobby (ACL)**, led by CEO Michelle Pearse, has become a prominent voice in public policy discussions, championing issues that align with its conservative Christian values. As the **WCF** partner association in Australia, the influence of the ACL can be seen in its efforts to campaign against the federal government's proposed Misinformation and Disinformation Bill.^{clxxviii}

The **Misinformation and Disinformation Bill** has become a focal point of ACL's advocacy, with the ACL attempting to bring attention to religious freedom, disinformation legislation, and medical ethics. This concern stems from fears that legal provisions might label deeply held religious views on contentious issues—such as euthanasia, gender ideology,

and bioethics—as hate speech. The ACL and other religious and conservative organisations, such as the Women’s Forum Australia, argue that these laws could hinder discussions on moral and spiritual topics central to their faith.^{clxxix} They contest that such laws are necessary to protect vulnerable groups from harm and discrimination.



Figure 35: Campaign by Australian Christian League against the Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024

In 2021 alone, the ACL received over **AU \$ 8 million** from individual contributors. These donations originate from a diverse pool, ranging from grassroots supporters to wealthy benefactors who align with the ACL’s mission. While primarily reliant on private donors, the ACL has occasionally benefited from government grants. In 2021, the organisation received AU \$ 250,000 in government funding, raising questions about allocating public funds to advocacy groups.^{clxxx} While the specifics of these grants remain unclear, their existence illustrates the complex interplay between government funding and politically active organisations, despite the ACL illustrating that it maintains financial transparency by submitting annual reports and political expenditure returns to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).^{clxxxi} In 2022, the ACL was designated as a hate and extremist group by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE).^{clxxxii}

The ACL argues that the bill’s definitions are overly broad and could inadvertently remove content reflecting legitimate social and moral perspectives, particularly those rooted in Christian values, arguing that protecting the plurality of voices in public discourse is vital to a healthy democracy, as an argument against the bill’s proposed intention to increase major digital platforms’ transparency and accountability and responses to seriously harmful mis- and disinformation.^{clxxxiii}^{clxxxiv}

One of the ACL’s most polarising campaigns has been its opposition to gender transition treatments for minors. In October 2024, the **organisation launched a petition in the Northern Territory, calling for a suspension of medical and surgical treatments for children undergoing gender transition.** The petition, signed by 463 individuals, called for an independent inquiry into such treatments’ scientific and ethical basis and was tabled to be debated within the parliament of the Northern Territory.^{clxxxv}

The Human Rights Law Alliance, set up in Canberra in 2016 with funding from the ACL^{clxxxvi}, has stated that Australia’s approach to treating children with gender confusion has stifled free speech and punished doctors as a response to the ACL’s most recent cam-

paigh^{clxxxvii}. It can be seen from the operational practices that the Human Rights Law Alliance is mirrored to replicate the American ADF. **The influence of the ACL's campaigns highlights its role as a key player in shaping Australia's cultural and policy debates.**

Key Anti-SRHR and Anti-LGBTIQ+ Actors in Australia

Endeavour Forum Inc: Anti-Feminist Legacy

Founded in **1979** by the late **Babette Francis**, Endeavour Forum was designed to counter feminist movements. The group's core mission is to defend "traditional family values" and fight against abortion, euthanasia, and LGBTIQ+ rights. It framed marriage equality and transgender rights as existential threats to the family unit.^{clxxxviii}

Despite Francis's passing in 2023, Endeavour Forum remains aligned with far-right Christian networks, notably the **WCF**. Endeavour Forum amplifies its reach through this global connection, participating in international events alongside anti-SRHR and anti-LGBTIQ+ groups in the **US** and **Europe**. While its funding remains opaque, private donations from conservative Christians underpin its operations, reinforcing a platform of far-right ideology.

National Civic Council: Anti-Communist Roots, Anti-Rights Agenda

Founded in the **1940s** by **Bob Santamaria**, the **National Civic Council (NCC)** evolved from an anti-communist movement into a stronghold for traditional Catholic conservatism. Opposing abortion and LGBTIQ+ rights, the NCC frames progressive policies like same-sex marriage as threats to "the sanctity of the family".^{clxxxix} Under leaders like **Peter Westmore**, the NCC cultivated alliances with Catholic institutions and traditionalist factions, such as **Opus Dei**. Its influence extends internationally, connecting with Poland's **Law and Justice Party (PiS)** and far-right Catholic networks in the United States. The NCC's magazine, *News Weekly*, doubles as both a propaganda tool and a modest funding source, while private donations from Catholic supporters sustain its agenda.

Cherish Life Queensland: Vocal Pro-Life Advocacy

Formerly **Queensland Right to Life**, **Cherish Life Queensland**^{cxc} focuses almost exclusively on opposing abortion. Under **State President Teresa Martin**, the group aggressively lobbies against abortion access, labelling itself "pro-life" while opposing broader SRHR initiatives. By advocating for "traditional family values," Cherish Life implicitly resists LGBTIQ+ rights, framing them as antithetical to their mission.

Cherish Life's influence extends far beyond Australia. It is tied to international movements like the **International Right to Life Federation** and **LifeSiteNews**, which place it ideologically alongside American far-right factions, including elements of the **Republican Party** and European ultra-conservative groups.

Australia's Conservative Crusade: A Global Alliance with Ultra-Right Ideologies

Australia's ultra-conservative networks, led by groups like **Endeavour Forum Inc.**, **National Civic Council (NCC)**, and **Cherish Life Queensland**, are deeply intertwined with international efforts to oppose SRHR, LGBTIQ+ rights, and gender equality. These groups leverage platforms like the **WCF** to align with global right-wing populist movements, creating a coordinated front against progressive values.

World Congress of Families: Australia edition

In 2013, Sydney hosted a pivotal WCF conference, attracting prominent Russian actors like **Vladimir Yakunin**, **Konstantin Malofeev**, and **Alexey Komov**—critical architects of Russia’s geopolitical soft power. These figures have used the WCF to promote anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-SRHR ideologies under the guise of "traditional family values" while advancing Russia’s cultural and political interests.

Australian leaders such as **Babette Francis** (Endeavour Forum), **Peter Westmore** (NCC), and **Teresa Martin** (Cherish Life) attended, aligning their agendas with Russian-backed advocacy. Following this, they participated in the rebranded WCF event, held in the Duma within the Kremlin and emphasised Russia’s ideological influence globally (for more on this, see the deep dive into the WCF in Chapter 6).

Binary Australia

In 2018, Marriage Alliance, an anti-marriage equality organisation, rebranded itself as **Binary Australia** (BA) to oppose the rights of transgender, gender-diverse, and intersex individuals. During the 2017 same-sex marriage referendum in Australia, BA leader Kirralie Smith propagated the false notion that **redefining marriage could pave the way for the legalisation of paedophilia**. She described this shift as part of a “socialist Marxist agenda to destroy the family”. In 2018, BA declared its mission to celebrate the inherent differences between men and women, asserting that there are only two complementary genders. The organisation aimed to resist efforts to “de-gender” society in areas such as education, health, business, politics, and law, as well as to shield children from programs it claimed to promote the LGBTIQ+ agenda while silencing opposition.

BA has adopted an aggressive anti-transgender stance, creating resources that target the transgender community, including educational materials for parents. Smith stated that these materials aim to inform parents of their rights and protect children from “radical transgender indoctrination”. BA has also sent out an email blast to subscribers explicitly inciting violence, stating, “We are going to **carpet bomb** the electorates in Western Sydney, exposing the cowardly MPs who won’t stand up for women and girls”. When the state of Victoria proposed a legislative ban on conversion therapy, Binary Australia opposed the bill, with Smith labelling it “outrageously bigoted” due to its protections for transgender individuals. She criticised politicians who supported the bill, accusing them of undermining parental rights and endangering children.^{cxci} BA is reportedly connected to Senator Alex Antic (see below).^{cxcii} Binary Australia is detailed as an extremist and hate group by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE) in 2022.^{cxci}

Rise Up Australia (RUA)

The Rise Up Australia Party, established in 2010 and renamed RUA in 2019 after losing its political party status, is a far-right Christian organisation known for its slogan, “Keep Australia Australian,” and its branding as “The Christian Conservative Patriotic Voice”. Founded and led by Danny Nalliah, a Pentecostal minister originally from Sri Lanka who previously lived and worked in Saudi Arabia, the group promotes nationalist and Christian fundamentalist values. Nalliah’s political career began in 2004 when he unsuccessfully ran for a Senate seat under the Family First Party. His campaign sparked controversy when National Party candidate Barnaby Joyce criticised a brochure where Nalliah urged prayers to “pull down Satan’s strongholds,” which included brothels, casinos, mosques, and temples. Following the backlash, Nalliah left Family First.

Nalliah has publicly claimed that pro-choice legislation and pro-LGBTIQ+ policies are responsible for governmental issues, such as marital crises in Parliament. RUA's policies focus on protecting Australian traditions, opposing Islam, and rejecting multiculturalism, which it argues fosters ethnic enclaves and parallel societies. The organisation has also voiced concerns about Sharia law in Australia and advocates for preserving the nation's "Judeo-Christian heritage" by restricting Muslim immigration. Nalliah's book, *The 21st Century Culture War in the West*, heavily criticises Islam, reflecting the group's opposition to the religion. RUA also opposes same-sex marriage, with Nalliah asserting in a 2011 interview that homosexuality is "not OK" and advocating for children to be shielded from public displays of homosexual affection. He further claimed that gay individuals could be "made straight" through education and religious conversion.^{cxciv} Rise Up Australia is detailed as an extremist and hate group by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE) in 2022.^{cxcv}

Tony Abbott (Former Prime Minister)

A prominent figure in the global conservative movement, the former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott has aligned himself with Hungary's anti-LGBTIQ+ government. In **2019**, he delivered a keynote address at Hungary's **Budapest Demographic Summit**^{cxcvi}, praising traditional family policies. He advocates for "pro-family" values in international forums and maintains ties with far-right European actors.^{cxcvii} Tony Abbott also attended a conference held by the Danube Institute in Budapest in September 2024 on the theme "Whose New World Order?".^{cxcviii}

Furthermore, Tony Abbott was congratulated when he was appointed Prime Minister of Australia between 2013 and 2015 by Larry Jacobs, the managing director of the **World Congress of Families**, Vice President of the **Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society** and board member of **Heartbeat International**. In this congratulatory statement, Jacobs stated that he looked "forward to working with them to advance the interests of the natural family following their stunning success in Saturday's election".^{cxcix}



Figure 36: Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott talks during the conference hosted by the Danube Institute, a conservative think tank that receives Hungarian State Funding on 18 September 2024.

Cory Bernardi (Former Politician, Senator for South Australia and leader for Australian Conservatives, now disbanded)

Bernardi has consistently lobbied against SRHR and progressive legislation, including abortion and gender equality initiatives. He shares ideological ties with current Dutch Prime Minister **Geert Wilders**, leader of the Partij Voor de Vrijheid (PVV, or Freedom Party), known for his anti-Islam positions. Bernardi supports Christian lobby groups opposing laws that challenge misinformation and discrimination under the guise of protecting "religious freedoms".

Figure 37: A figure illustrating Dutch populist politician Geert Wilders giving a speech at the Q Society of Australia during his visit, an extreme-right, identitarian organisation describing itself as "Australia's leading Islam-critical organisation", which is defunct as of 2020.^{cc}



Lyle Shelton (Family First Party)

Although Lyle Shelton was absent at the WFC 2013, he is a significant figure in the Australian conservative movement. Since May 2022, Shelton has been the **National Director of the Family First Party**, advocating for policies rooted in conservative Christian values^{cci}. Previously, he was the **managing director of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL)** from 2013 to 2018, during which he played a leading role in the "No" campaign against same-sex marriage during the **Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey**. After resigning from the ACL in 2018, Shelton joined the **Australian Conservatives political party** as its federal communications director, continuing his work in advancing socially conservative policies.

Since August 2019, Shelton has worked for **Oodgeroo MP Mark Robinson**, supporting legislative initiatives aligned with conservative Christian values. In 2022, he expanded his influence by hosting a program on **ADH TV**, where he frequently criticised same-sex marriage, arguing that it negatively impacts children and undermines religious freedoms. X^{ccii} Shelton is also a member of the **Australian Church's Gambling Taskforce**, where he has highlighted the societal harm caused by poker machines, particularly their detrimental effects on children and families.

Internationally, Shelton participated in **The Cape Town Declaration** in December 2016, an initiative launched by conservative groups in South Africa to affirm marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman^{cciii}. Domestically, he has been a vocal opponent of the **Safe Schools Program**, a national initiative designed to support LGBTIQ+ students, framing it as contrary to traditional family values (Safe Schools opposition article). Through these efforts, Shelton has cemented his role as a prominent advocate in Australia's conservative movement.

Furthermore, Lyle Shelton's influence within the 'natural family movement' stretches beyond Australia. Shelton is affiliated with **Family First New Zealand**, where he was attended as the Gala Dinner Speaker due to his role as National Director of the Family First Political Party in Australia. On 5 July 2024, Family First New Zealand hosted an interview with Dr Calum Miller, a researcher and medical doctor based at Oxford University in the United Kingdom, supporting anti-abortion and anti-gender movements under the guise of pseudo-medical advice. He was described within the interview as "an eminent voice in the pro-life space".^{cciv} Dr Calum Miller has been active in the region previously, visiting Indonesia in August 2022, as well as presenting a keynote lecture at the 2023 Heartbeat International Annual conference^{ccv}. **March 2024, Brian Brown** was in a podcast interview with Shelton on "defending children, family and faith against the tyranny of the woke".

John Anderson (Former Deputy Prime Minister)

As patron of the **WCF Sydney**, Anderson advocates for evangelical Christian education and opposes reproductive rights. His work extends beyond Australia; he chairs the **Overseas Council Australia** to promote evangelical initiatives in developing nations.

John Anderson was deputy prime minister and leader of the **National Party** for 6 years between 1999 and 2005. He consistently supported interventions that undermined both the secular state and women's reproductive freedom; he often spoke on the causes and costs of family breakdowns. He was one of the patrons, alongside George Pell (Australian cardinal), to **WCF 2013 Sydney**. He also supports the work of the **Scripture Union**, which deploys chaplains and religious instructors to public primary and secondary schools at taxpayer expense to fulfil their organisational aim of "mak[ing] God's Good News known to children [and] young people" so "they may come to personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ... and become committed church members". Casting his evangelical net beyond Australia's shores, **Anderson also chairs the Overseas Council Australia**, which invests in strategic evangelical Bible colleges throughout the developing world.

Alex Antic

Liberal Senator Alex Antic and National Party Senator Matt Canavan in 2022 sought to revive the **Children Born Alive Protection Bill**, initially proposed by former Nationals MP George Christensen. The bill aimed to require medical practitioners to provide "medical care, treatment and statistics on children born alive as a result of terminations". However, an inquiry into the proposal concluded that there was no legal, ethical, or medical justification for the bill, and it made no recommendations for government action. When questioned about taking a stance on this issue amid the Liberal Party's low representation of women in Parliament, Antic dismissed the criticism, stating that the "'gender card' is nothing but a grievance narrative".^{ccvccvii}

Antic is associated with the right faction of the South Australian Liberals and was linked to the National Right faction of the Liberal Party during the Morrison government. He frequently appears on *Sky News Australia* and has been a guest on far-right platforms, including **Steve Bannon's** podcast. In November 2019, he opposed efforts to decriminalise prostitution in South Australia, arguing that in that case sex workers were being exploited and that supporting decriminalisation was hypocritical.^{ccviii}

During a Senate estimates hearing in November 2022, Antic accused the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) of "**grooming children with [...] adult content**" over a *Play School* segment featuring drag queen Courtney Act reading a children's book.^{ccix} In late 2023, Antic introduced a bill seeking to ban gender reassignment surgery and treatment for teenagers.^{ccx} As said before, Antic is also reportedly tied to Binary Australia and is set to launch a book titled "*Devastated: How gender ideology is tearing Australian Families apart*". In the same year, Antic hosted a group of anti-trans campaigners in Parliament House, sponsoring Binary Australia's 'Why can't women talk about sex?' forum.^{ccxi}

Matt Canavan

Senator Matt Canavan is a member of **Cherish Life Queensland** and has long demonstrated his opposition to abortion and LGBTIQ+ rights. For instance, in 2017, when Cory Bernardi moved a motion to ban abortion on gender grounds, Canavan was one of ten MPs who voted for the motion, which was defeated with 36 votes^{ccxii}. Canavan has also attended and given talks at a number of anti-abortion rallies in Queensland, hosted by

Cherish Life – alongside other conservative politicians such as Senator and former Assistant Minister for Women Amanda Stoker, Senator Malcolm Roberts and former MP George Christensen.^{ccxiii} Furthermore, Canavan opposes and calls for gay and lesbian Australians to "grow a spine" in the face of homophobia.^{ccxiv}

Dr Joanna Howe

Anti-abortion campaigner, Dr Joanna Howe, has been banned from the South Australian parliament, in what she says is a "hit job" in an attempt to silence her.

Dr Joanna Howe, a professor of law at University of Adelaide, was involved in preparing the Forced Birth law, which would have seen late term abortions stopped in favour of the babies being birthed alive and adopted out. In response, she was banned from the South Australian parliament, in what she described as a "hit job" in an attempt to silence her.

According to her own personal website, Dr Joanna Howe stated that, "In 2022 Joanna co-founded Enid Lyons List, a new Australian organisation aimed at empowering prolife women into the public square."

The Enid Lyons List is affiliated with other anti-rights actors, with Michelle Peace from Australian Christian Lobby, Rachael Wong from WomensForum Australia and Nick Goiran, a member of the Liberal Party and of the Western Australian Legislative Council (MLC), speaking at the Enid Lyons' Leaders Summit 2024 in July 2024.^{ccxv}

Global Ties and Russian Influence

The participation of Australian groups in WCF events highlights their alignment with international anti-right actors. As explained, the WCF's agenda is influenced by Russian oligarchs, who use the platform to export Russia's anti-Western and conservative values globally. Russian-backed initiatives extend to financial and ideological support for far-right European parties, embedding their narratives into Australian and Asia-Pacific discourse. While the Sydney conference was organised in 2013, Australian conservatives and WCF connections still exist. **As described above, early 2024, Brian S. Brown, the president of WCF, appeared on the Lyle Shelton's podcast.** He discussed the worldwide anti-SRHR and anti-LGBTIQ+ agenda for the coming years in strong language.

Other global actors like **Steve Mosher**, who heads the **Population Research Institute** (PRI), depicted those involved with international family planning as "killing machines". He characterised the central cause of PRI as a series of "**battles against the International Planned Parenthood Federation**" and has referred to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria as the "Global Fund for Abortion, Prostitution and the Homosexual Agenda". Though frequently billed as an anthropologist, a sociologist and an "expert," Mosher's bio fails to mention him holding a doctorate in any subject. Additionally, he often speaks in the media as an expert on Russia and China,^{ccxvi} providing his opinion on the Russian invasion of Ukraine by **justifying Russia's actions** on the ground through the argument of NATO expansionism.^{ccxvii}

Tradition, Family and Property (TFP) is a very active international organisation dedicated to fight for the protection of traditional values, the institution of the family, and the right to private property, and **was present at WCF 2013**. The 49-year-old **Australian of Croatian origin Valdis Grinsteins** is an international activist working with the TFP organisation. While Valdis is predominantly based in Eastern Europe and South America, on those occasions that he has visited Australia, he has had a close working relationship with the **Sydney Traditionalist Forum** and local reactionaries in the Sydney region^{ccxviii}. He is active throughout the entire region, including in Fiji, according to 'Australia Needs Fatima'.

In the Pacific region, TFP operates through various national branches, including **TFP Australia** and the **Philippine Crusade for the Defense of Christian Civilization**. TFP Australia focuses on promoting ultra-religious socio-economic thought and fight for traditional values within Australian society and in the region. Similarly, the Philippine Crusade for the Defense of Christian Civilization, under the leadership of President Dr. Jose Maria Alcasid, works to progress traditional Christian values in the Philippines. These organisations actively push ultra-conservative values, including opposing liberal policies and societal changes, and collaborate with like-minded groups across the Pacific, aiming to counter 'attacks' on societies rooted in their cultural and religious heritage.

Australia Needs Fatima is another Australian-based organisation that aligns with the global TFP movement to promote traditional Catholic values. It focuses on resisting societal changes such as secularism, abortion rights, and same-sex marriage, which it perceives as threats to Christian morality. Australia Needs Fatima extends its programs to Papua New Guinea and Fiji, leveraging strong Catholic and Christian communities to promote prayer campaigns, distribute religious materials, and advocate conservative values. These efforts aim to influence local leaders and populations with its traditionalist message.



Figure 38. TFP Australia is the regional chapter of Tradition, Family, Property, an ultra-traditionalist and conservative Catholic organisation

Australia's conservative groups, bolstered by international alliances, are part of a broader movement to resist liberal values and reinforce traditional hierarchies. Through global networks like the WCF, they amplify anti-SRHR and anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric, operating a **cohesive anti-progressive agenda** while aligning with geopolitical actors like Russia to counter Western liberalism. These coordinated efforts represent a significant challenge to human rights and progressive policies domestically and worldwide.

7.6 Malaysia

Key developments

- **Resurgence of Islamic Organizations Opposing Pluralism:** *There has been a resurgence of Islamic organisations, such as ISMA, advocating for Malay-Muslim nationalism influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. These groups actively oppose pluralism, LGBTIQ+ rights, and women's advocacy organisations. Through religious fatwas, they promote xenophobia and gender conservatism, framing these ideologies as part of Islamic supremacy.*
- **Lack of Action on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):** *Efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM) in Malaysia have been limited despite the country's international commitments under CEDAW. Advocates have criticised the government's inaction, citing the lack of official data, national coordination, and comprehensive action plans as significant obstacles to addressing FGM.*
- **Government-Endorsed Setbacks for the LGBTIQ+ Community:** *The LGBTIQ+ community in Malaysia has faced severe setbacks, with government-supported "rehabilitation" programs continuing. In 2023, new conversion therapy centers were announced and backed by the government, further reinforcing discriminatory practices against the community.*

Islamist Conservatism: Shaping Malaysia's Policies and SRHR Landscape

The increasing prominence of Islamist conservatism in Malaysia has become a significant socio-political trend, driven by the activities of Islamic NGOs such as **Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA)** and **Hizb ut-Tahrir Malaysia (HTM)**. This phenomenon is further **reinforced by foreign actors leveraging Islam as a counterforce to Western liberal ideologies to advance their strategic interests in Malaysia**. The heightened **emphasis on Islamic principles has impacted SRHR in the country**. This chapter explores these developments within the broader framework of cultural, political, and international dynamics that shape Malaysia's policies and societal landscape.

Recent Developments: Deterioration of SRHR and LGBTIQ+ Rights

Over the past decade, Malaysia has faced mounting challenges in **women's rights, SRHR, and LGBTIQ+ rights**. In 2014, the **Selangor Islamic Religious Council's fatwa** declared **Sisters in Islam (SIS)** a deviant organisation, a decision upheld in 2024, illustrating the constraints on women's advocacy.^{ccxix} SIS is dedicated to promoting gender equality, justice, freedom, and dignity within the framework of Islam, aiming to empower women as agents of change in Malaysia and globally.

Established in 1988 by a group of Muslim women, SIS initially sought to address the injustices faced by women under Shariah law. Today, SIS is a significant player in local and global women's movements, offering insights into rights-based interpretations of Islam, advocating for reform, and influencing policies and laws shaped by Muslim governments or minority Muslim communities.^{ccxx}

The Court of Appeal approved this decision after an attempt by the SIS to annul the fatwa.^{ccxxi} Despite the introduction of the **Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (2022)** and the Tribunal for Anti-Sexual Harassment (2024), gender equality progress remains slow. Restrictive **abortion laws** and minimal access to **sexual education** have hindered reproductive autonomy.

On such example is seen through the continued practice of FGM which seems deeply embedded in cultural and religious norms, with most practitioners associating it with Islamic

teachings despite no clear Quranic or Hadith basis.^{ccxxii} Globally, Islamic jurists have argued that FGM is not inherently Islamic and predates the religion, indicating it is a cultural rather than a religious practice.^{ccxxiii} Studies suggest medicalisation is common, with over 20% of Malay-Muslim doctors performing FGM for religious or cultural reasons despite it not being taught in medical schools. The Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) has not established an official stance, leaving healthcare professionals without clear guidelines. Efforts to eradicate FGM have been limited, with Malaysia failing to act decisively despite international commitments such as CEDAW. Advocates have criticised the lack of official data, national coordination, and comprehensive action plans to address FGM.^{ccxxiv}

For the **LGBTIQ+ community**, setbacks have been severe. Government-supported "rehabilitation" programs persist, with new **conversion therapy centres** announced and supported by the **government** in 2023.^{ccxxv} The cancellation of the Good Vibes Festival, demanded by the Malaysian government in response to a same-sex kiss, underscores Malaysia's growing intolerance and ultra-conservatism.^{ccxxvi}

Rise of Islamist Conservatism

Malaysia's traditionally moderate Islamic practices have shifted toward **Middle Eastern-influenced puritanism**, driven by groups like **Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA)** and **Hizb ut-Tahrir Malaysia (HTM)**.^{ccxxvii} These organisations leverage deficiencies in public education^{ccxxviii}, such as **Lack of Investment in Early Childhood Education** (approximately 40% of children aged 4-6 do not attend preschool, with public spending on early childhood education at only about 0.4% of GDP, compared to the OECD average of 0.8)^{ccxxix}, to promote conservative values, with nearly 900 private Islamic schools opening between **2011 and 2017**.^{ccxxx} ISMA's **Malay-Muslim nationalism, influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood**, opposes pluralism and LGBTIQ+ rights, promoting xenophobia and gender conservatism under the guise of Islamic supremacy.^{ccxxxi} Such groups claim that the Ministry of Health should not provide PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis – a preventive strategy for individuals at high risk of HIV infection). Their argument to counter its distribution is that "it will promote sex out of wedlock".^{ccxxxii} Although these organisations are influenced by Salafist-Wahabis actors, they use the language and methods of US Christian evangelicals to influence society. For instance, they **offer HIV medicine in exchange for accepting the process of conversion therapy**.^{ccxxxiii}

Furthermore, the **National Fatwa Committee** in Malaysia (NFC) has also impacted SRHR, specifically around FGM. The 2009 national fatwa issued by the Fatwa Committee of The National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia declared female genital mutilation (FGM) as part of Islamic teachings, mandating the practice unless deemed harmful.^{ccxxxiv} This religious edict has significantly influenced societal perceptions, reinforcing the belief that FGM is obligatory among Malay-Muslim communities. However, this influential fatwa is not legally binding, leading to inconsistencies in implementation across states, such as Perlis, which ruled FGM as non-compulsory.^{ccxxxv}

Foreign Influences Shaping Policy

Malaysia's **deepening ties with Russia and China** highlight the interplay between economic and ideological alignments.^{ccxxxvi}

Russia: Figures like oligarch **Konstantin Malofeev** export socially ultra conservative narratives, aligning with Malaysia's anti-LGBTIQ+ stance. The alignment of Malaysia's anti-LGBTIQ+ stance with Malofeev's ideology has contributed to a closer relationship between Moscow and Kuala Lumpur.^{ccxxxvii} Malaysia's coal imports from Russian-occupied **Luhansk**

link economic cooperation with support for Russia's geopolitical agenda.^{ccxxviii} **Russia is preparing to export coal from mines in the occupied territory of the Luhansk Region. Potential buyers include India, Iran, China, Uzbekistan, and Malaysia.**^{ccxxix}

Russia's interest in Malaysia's growing Islamic conservatism could explain its plan to supply high-class halal products to Malaysia.^{ccxi} Trade between Malaysia and Russia has experienced consistent growth, **particularly in sectors such as Halal-certified food products.** In 2022, Malaysia's Halal exports to Russia reached RM465.7 million (US \$ 104.2 million), up from RM351.6 million (US \$ 78.7 million) in 2021, which is anticipated to continue expanding.^{ccxli}



Figure 39 Halal Development Corporation Berhad hosts Nail Latypov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Malaysia, H. E Rustam. N. Minnikhanov, Rais of the Republic of Tatarstan, HDC Khairul Azwan Harun Chairman, and HDC Hairol Ariffein Sahari (13th August 2024).^{ccxlii}

Middle East: Longstanding ties with **Saudi Arabia** bolster Salafist ideologies, influencing Malaysia's conservative policies. Saudi Arabia has provided **scholarships** for Malaysian students to study in Saudi universities, exposing them to Salafi teachings. Upon returning, many graduates have assumed influential roles in Malaysia's religious and educational institutions, promoting Salafi doctrines. Saudi-funded institutions have also been established in Malaysia to disseminate Salafi teachings. These include religious schools and mosques that align with Saudi interpretations of Islam, contributing to the spread of Salafism within the country.^{ccxliii}

China: As well-known major trading partner, China supports Malaysia's positioning as a hub for **non-Western alliances**.^{ccxliv}

Geopolitical Strategies and Global Realignments

Malaysia's opening with Russia in the **Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in 2024** signals a rejection of Western liberalism. Leaders emphasised a **new multipolar world order** rooted in traditional values and anti-globalist rhetoric, highlighting Malaysia's ideological alignment with Russia and China against Western hegemony.^{ccxlv}

The speakers emphasised that Russia is a great Pacific power, that the centre of gravity in world politics is shifting to the East, that Eurasia is the zone where the primary demographic, natural and economic resources are concentrated, and that the future lies in Southeast Asia, where the great (eternal) civilisations - Russian Orthodox, Confucian, Indian, Islamic and Buddhist - converge. They emphasised the importance of building a constructive dialogue between them, expanding economic cooperation, supporting integration initiatives and creating a system of collective security, excluding the aggressive hegemon - the West, globalism and colonial elites, which they claim are oriented towards unipolarity and desperately clinging to the world domination.^{ccxlv}



Figure 40 Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's discussion with Vladimir Putin at the Eastern Economic Forum (12 November 2024).

7.7 The Philippines

Key developments

- **Influence of Religious Organizations on Social Norms and Legislation:** Religious organizations such as Evangelism Explosion, Open Doors Philippines, and Opus Dei play a significant role in shaping social norms and legislative agendas in the Philippines. These groups advocate for traditional family values and lead efforts against SRHR, including abortion, contraception, and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).
- **Online Disinformation Campaigns:** The national branch of CitizenGO has actively promoted ultraconservative values in the Philippines through online disinformation. Their campaigns target abortion, LGBTIQ+ rights, and progressive gender policies, fostering a climate of resistance to gender equality and reproductive rights.
- **Foreign Influence on Anti-SRHR Campaigns:** Anti-SRHR campaigns are also strongly influenced by foreign organizations. Groups like Human Life International, a US-based Catholic apostolate, provide backing for local anti-rights efforts, including "legal activism" that involves working with far-right bishops and lawmakers to oppose reproductive rights and influence public policy.

Bound by Tradition: The Impact of Catholic Culture on SRHR Lawmaking

Faith and family are central in Filipino society, with organisations such as **Evangelism Explosion, Open Doors Philippines, and Opus Dei** playing influential roles in shaping social norms and legislative agendas and addressing issues like poverty and resource accessibility. **These organisations' emphasis on traditional family values has driven advocacy efforts against SRHR.** Nevertheless, **such lobbying limits the possibility of passing effective SRHR laws—the rising tide of conservatism warrants close monitoring, posing a potential risk to preserving hard-won rights.**

Recent developments: SRHR Under Threat

Despite the enactment of the **Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (2012)**, access to contraceptives for minors remains limited due to **parental consent requirements**, creating barriers for adolescents. The **COVID-19 pandemic** worsened these challenges, leading to a rise in **unintended pregnancies** and unmet family planning needs.^{ccxlvii} Meanwhile, the long-delayed **SOGIE Equality Bill** has stalled efforts to protect the LGBTIQ+ community, compounded by events like the **2020 arrest of peaceful Pride marchers**, exposing persistent discrimination.^{ccxlviii}

Efforts by Filipino advocate to decriminalise abortion face significant obstacles. The Philippines Commission on Human Rights has retreated from its previous support for abortion rights after 'anti-abortion members' of Congress, supported by the Roman Catholic Church, threatened to cut its funding. Anti-abortion campaigns in the Philippines receive backing from organisations like **Human Life International**, a **US-based** Catholic apostolate that engages in "legal activism" by working with far-right bishops and lawmakers to oppose reproductive rights.^{cxxlix}

Divorce remains illegal in most cases in the Philippines, leaving individuals, including those in abusive marriages, without a legal avenue to dissolve their unions. Although annulments are an option, their high cost and lengthy process make them inaccessible to many. Public opinion, however, appears to be shifting, with growing support among Filipinos for the legalisation of divorce. As the *ABC* reported earlier this year, this prohibition also means that women in abusive relationships are unable to escape, even when there is infidelity in the marriage. In line with Catholic teachings, they may annul their marriage in a range of circumstances, including "psychological incapacity"; where one partner is homosexual, or if one party has an incurable sexually transmitted disease.^{ccli}

Religious and Conservative Power Structures

The Philippines' **Catholic majority** remains a dominant force in politics and society. Organisations like **Opus Dei** wield substantial influence through education and pro-life advocacy. Members of Opus Dei, such as **Francisco Tatad**, former Philippine senator and senate majority leader in 2001, actively oppose SRHR policies, framing them as attacks on Christian values. Tatad has been a vocal critic of the **Reproductive Health (RH) Law**, enacted in December 2012 aimed at **providing affordable contraception to low-income groups**. He has characterised the RH Law as "anti-Catholic" and an instance of "religious persecution," arguing that state funding for contraception undermines a core religious doctrine. Tatad has consistently opposed family planning, abortion, and LGBTIQ+ rights, advocating instead for a traditional family structure. Notably, he once proposed legislation requiring lawmakers to resign if found to have extramarital affairs.^{ccli}



*Figure 41
Francisco
Tatad in
the Phil-
ippine
Senate.*

His wife, Fenny Tatad, is the executive director of the **Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines Bishops-Legislator Caucus** (CBCP), reflecting their shared alignment with conservative Catholic values. The **CBCP actively lobbies politicians to reject reproductive health laws**, framing SRHR as a direct challenge to Christian – or Catholic - values. They support pro-life rallies and legal challenges to abortion access. Another similar conservative group with consequent influence is the **Pro-Life Philippine Foundation**. These groups frequently publish materials that depict SRHR initiatives as immoral and harmful to family life. For instance, CBCP has reaffirmed its strong opposition to legalising divorce. Despite acknowledging the separation of church and state, in July, Filipino politicians were cautioned against "jump[ing] on the divorce bandwagon". Catholic leaders have organised prayer rallies and petitions to resist the reform, emphasising the Church's significant influence in the Philippines. Over 40 religious organisations formed the **Super Coalition Against Divorce** to collectively oppose what they view as "anti-family and anti-life" legislation.^{cclii}

Other similar organisations that work towards defending traditional family values are Evangelism Explosion, Open Doors Philippines, and the International Federation for Family Development.^{ccliii}

Russia and China's Growing Influence

While historically overshadowed by Western allies, **Russia and China** are expanding their influence in the Philippines. **Russia** leverages cultural exchanges and geopolitical narratives, such as its **Academic Conference on the Philippines** held 25-26 October 2024, to deepen its knowledge of the country.^{ccliv} This event brought together scholars to explore diverse facets of Philippine society, politics, and international relations, **potentially indicating Russia's intent to strengthen its regional influence**. The presentation topics **covered SRHR laws in the Philippines**, the South China Sea dispute, the Philippines' role in ASEAN, literature's role in fostering democratic values, Filipino immigrant families in Australia, and their use of digital media to maintain cultural ties. Most importantly, for Russia, many presentations included **research on Russian influence on the Philippines or how Russia could improve its relations with the country**. One of the presentations analysed **the influence of Orthodox Christianity in the Philippines**, particularly the soft power of the Russian Orthodox church in the Philippines. Finally, the **role of reproductive governance in the country** was discussed, underlining how policies of "discipline" mirror authoritarian tendencies aligned with China's and Russia's influence, allowing a shift away from traditional US alliances.^{cclv}

Foreign and Domestic Misinformation

Russian state-backed media manipulate public opinion, spreading disinformation on **SRHR and gender issues** to hinder progressive reforms. These campaigns align with domestic conservative movements and organisations like **CitizenGo**, which use social media to amplify anti-rights narratives and conspiracy theories about global population control). As explained, CitizenGo operates in over 50 countries and maintains strong connections with other ultra-conservative groups, including the **WCF**. Leaders from both organisations often collaborate, exchanging strategies for campaigns and lobbying.

For example, Ignacio Arsuaga, CitizenGO's leader, has frequently spoken at WCF events. Komov, both serves on CitizenGO's board, and is the WCF director for Russia, and works for Konstantin Malofeev. Although CitizenGO claims to rely solely on "small online donations" for funding, leaked documents suggest otherwise. The organisation has substantial ties to Christian far-right groups and Russian oligarchs, with initial funding reportedly linked to the Vatican, Russian oligarchs, and the US Christian right.^{cclvi}

CitizenGO's website indicates that it offers campaigns in Tagalog (out of 12 languages) – confirming its engagement in the Philippines – followed by "We influence institutions, governments and organisations in 50 different countries".^{cclvii}



Figure 42: CitizenGo X publications encouraging X users to sign the petition to hinder the Divorce bill enacted in the Philippines and the image accompanying the official petition page



In the Philippines, public distrust in mainstream media has grown due to the government's authoritarian tendencies and manipulation of the press. As a result, more Filipinos are relying on social media for information. Both domestic and foreign actors have exploited this distrust, using online platforms to spread misinformation and advance their agendas.^{cclviii}

CitizenGo has been actively engaged in the Philippines at least since 2019, when it launched a petition opposing the "Equality Act", which aimed to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The petition garnered over 10,000 signatures. In 2020, the organisations also partnered with the **Family First Foundation in New Zealand** to oppose the legalisation of euthanasia.

Most recently, CitizenGo has been lobbying for donations for its campaign to oppose SRHR reform in the Philippines, stating they need the funding to "establish operations in the Philippines and protect their values. Unlike globalist ideologues, we don't have millions in funding. But we do have you and thousands of generous supporters like you" (16 July 2024).^{cclix}



Figure 43 Screenshot of CitizenGO's Facebook page of 31 August 2024 continued the call for donations for its campaigns in the Philippines.^{cdx}

Chinese state-owned media have also been accused of providing a platform for anti-LGBTIQ+ narratives, thereby shaping public opinion against progressive policies. Russian-funded outlets have similarly disseminated content that undermines gender equality and promotes "traditional values", aiming to weaken the social progress achieved by rights activists in these countries. This media interference causes a divided public opinion and can hinder reforms, leveraging social conservatism as a political tool to maintain influence. ^{cdxi}

7.8 Fiji

Key developments

- **Influence of the Social Democratic Liberal Party and Methodist Church:** The Social Democratic Liberal Party, has aligned itself with the Methodist Church. In 2023, the Methodist Church gained a profit of US \$ 2.9 million, which has been used to lobby against gender and reproductive health policies under the guise of defending "traditional values". Their rhetoric of balancing the "three-legged stool" of church, government, and indigenous leadership strengthens their role as gatekeepers of conservative norms in Fiji.
- **Active Role in the UN to Undermine Protections for Marginalized Groups:** Fiji has become increasingly active in the United Nations, voting in favor of amendments that remove references to sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIEC). These actions undermine protections for marginalized groups, particularly those needing support due to the climate crisis, reducing international advocacy for their rights.
- **Growing Influence of China and Russia:** Like other countries in the region, Fiji is increasingly under the influence of China and Russia. In June 2024, Russia organized an event to bring together Russian and foreign business representatives to explore investment prospects in Fiji and other small island states, deepening their economic and political foothold in the region.

Concerning Developments

In March 2024, Fiji was shaken by the brutal murder of 19-year-old Esther, a gender-diverse activist. Abducted, tortured, and killed outside her home, Esther's death laid bare the persistent dangers faced by the LGBTIQ+ community. While police cited medical complications as the cause of death, allegations of prior assault raised calls for justice from human rights

groups. The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre strongly condemned the police's response, describing it as “shameful and ineffective”, and criticised the authorities for allegedly normalising hate crimes through their handling of the case.^{cclxii}

Influential Actors and Recent Events

The Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA) is a conservative political party in Fiji. It has historically aligned itself with the Methodist Church to advance policies reflecting traditional Christian values, particularly concerning SRHR and LGBTIQ+ issues. In the 2022 general election, SODELPA emerged as a ‘kingmaker’ with its three parliamentary seats, ultimately forming a coalition government with the People’s Alliance and the National Federation Party.^{cclxiii} During parliamentary debates SODELPA representatives have strongly resisted policies to enhance SRHR services, arguing that they undermine cultural and religious norms.^{cclxiv}

Despite 2023 being a booming financial year for the **Methodist Church of Fiji** – with profits of US \$ 2.9 million from property developments (marking a 1.7 million increase from the previous year) – the Church channels its power into lobbying against gender and reproductive health policies, disguising its agenda as a defence of “traditional values”. Its rhetoric – centred on the “three-legged stool” and balancing church, government, and indigenous leadership – cements its role as a gatekeeper of conservative norms. The Church uses its significant influence to lobby against progressive policies related to gender and reproductive health. Sermons often frame LGBTIQ+ rights and SRHR initiatives as attacks on Fijian culture and Christian values. Its religious leaders frequently attempt to hide this type of involvement by framing their campaigns as promoting Fijian culture and traditional values rather than focusing on their opposition to specific human rights issues.^{cclxv}

In August 2023, during its annual conference, the **Methodist Church of Fiji**, as the nation’s predominant religious institution, reaffirmed its stance against same-sex marriage, emphasising adherence to traditional Christian teachings.^{cclxvi} Additionally, the church has expressed concerns over LGBTIQ+ issues raised by overseas-based Methodist congregations, maintaining its conservative position on these matters.^{cclxvii}

SRHR

In Fiji, socio-cultural and religious values play a dominant role in shaping societal views on women’s rights, SRHR, and LGBTIQ+ rights. **Traditional customs, coupled with predominantly Christian beliefs**, often reinforce conservative gender roles and stigmatise deviations from these norms.

Fiji’s challenges in advancing **SRHR and gender equality** reflect a nation grappling with the tension between **traditional values and modern rights-based approaches**, underscoring the need for culturally sensitive yet transformative advocacy. Critical gaps remain in Fiji’s efforts to address SGBV and implement SRHR policies. Despite legal frameworks like the Domestic Violence Act and constitutional protections against discrimination, enforcement is inconsistent, particularly in rural areas, due to cultural stigma, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient training. LGBTIQ+ individuals face persistent societal discrimination, with limited specific legal protections and ineffective policy enforcement exacerbating these challenges.^{cclxviii}

A Nation Torn: Progress, Tragedy, and Influence in Fiji

On the global stage, Fiji made headlines with its controversial stance on a **2022 United Nations resolution** addressing extrajudicial executions. The nation voted in favour of an amendment to remove references to sexual orientation and gender identity as risk factors, sparking criticism for undermining protections for marginalised groups.^{cclxix}

Fiji's geopolitical significance, positioned strategically in the South Pacific, adds layers to its complex narrative. Once a British colony, Fiji now navigates the competing influences of global powers. The country nurtures a close and long-standing bilateral relationship with Australia, spanning several areas but most prominently in development assistance.^{cclxx} However, China's shadow looms large, with 2022 trade soaring by 21% and cementing Fiji as a vital partner in Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

China

China has significantly deepened its ties with Fiji through economic investments and development aid in recent years. In 2022, bilateral trade between the two nations reached US \$ 546 million, a 21% increase from the previous year. China's exports to Fiji amounted to US \$ 503 million – a 27.1% rise – positioning Fiji as China's second-largest trading partner in the South Pacific region.^{cclxxi} Chinese enterprises have invested in various sectors, including infrastructure, mineral resources, manufacturing, and trade. Notably, in 2023, Fiji entered into a US \$ 300 million deal under **China's Belt and Road Initiative** to enhance infrastructure and economic cooperation.^{cclxxii}

In 2011, Fiji signed a police cooperation agreement with China, which led to training Fijian officers in China and providing equipment such as **Chinese surveillance gear and drones**.^{cclxxiii} In March 2024 Fiji's Home Affairs Minister, Pio Tikoduadua, confirmed that Fiji would uphold the policing cooperation agreement. Additionally, China has supplied Fiji with advanced equipment, such as surveillance technology and drones.^{cclxxiv} Nevertheless, in June 2023, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka indicated that Fiji was reconsidering its security ties with China, particularly this 2011 police cooperation agreement, due to concerns over differing systems and values.^{cclxxv}

Russia

While China's presence is more pronounced, Russia has also sought to strengthen its influence in Fiji. This is evident through **military cooperation and training programs**. Concerns have been raised within the United Nations regarding the calibre of training the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) receive from China and Russia, impacting Fiji's peace-keeping reputation. Australia and New Zealand have been encouraged to help mitigate these concerns by rebuilding defence ties with Fiji.^{cclxxvi} In 2016, Fiji received a shipment of Russian weapons, including AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, as part of an US \$ 8.8 million arms deal aimed at rearming the Republic of Fiji Military Forces.^{cclxxvii} In 2013, Fiji and Russia signed a memorandum of understanding on military and technical cooperation, facilitating the provision of military equipment and training.^{cclxxviii}

On **7 June 2024**, a "Unique Investment Opportunities of Small Island States" roundtable was held in St. Petersburg, Russia, organised by the Honorary Consul of Fiji in Russia's North-West region. The event brought together Russian and foreign business representatives to explore investment prospects in Fiji and other small island states, with presentations from notable figures in business and investment sectors.^{cclxxix}

7.9 Nauru

Key developments

- **Launch of Citizenship by Investment (CBI) Programme:** Nauru, struggling with economic dependency on commodities, announced during COP 29 in November 2024 that it will launch a CBI programme to attract foreign nationals. This move follows in the footsteps of Vanuatu and mirrors the intentions of the Solomon Islands, opening pathways for increased foreign influence in exchange for economic relief.
- **Limited Access to SRHR Services:** Despite recent legal reforms, access to SRHR support in Nauru remains limited, particularly in rural areas. Barriers such as religious and cultural stigmas, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and societal norms restrict access to emergency contraception and sexual health services, especially for survivors of sexual violence.
- **Withdrawal of Abortion Legislation for Refugees:** In November 2016, Nauru's government withdrew a bill that would have legalized abortions for refugee and asylum-seeking women. The introduction of this bill was reportedly aimed at deterring pregnant asylum seekers and refugees from traveling to Australia or PNG for abortion services, highlighting an unwillingness to address reproductive health needs for marginalized groups.

A Nation of Complex Contrasts and Challenges

Nestled in the Pacific, Nauru stands as a study in contrasts—a nation simultaneously embracing modernity and clinging to deeply rooted conservatism. Legal reforms like the landmark 2016 Crimes Act showcased a leap toward aligning with global human rights standards, decriminalising homosexuality and addressing critical issues like marital rape and child marriage. Yet, as progress unfolds, Nauru remains staunchly resistant to SRHR developments.

As of mid-2021, the US government estimated Nauru's population to be 10,000. According to the 2011 census, 95% are Christian, with the largest groups being the Nauru Congregational Church (36%), Roman Catholics (33%), and the Nauru Independent Assembly of God (13%). Smaller groups include Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, Baptists, and Church of Jesus Christ members, each under 1%. Two per cent have no religious affiliation, and the ethnic Chinese population (5%) practices Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity or are non-religious. The **Nauru Congregational Church**, established in 1948, is the largest Protestant denomination and plays a vital role in the island's social and cultural life. The Catholic Church also has a strong presence – operating schools and social programs.^{cclxxx}

While the government has made strides in decriminalising same-sex relations and addressing GBV, the churches' teachings often reflect traditional views, which negatively affect public perception and policy implementation. For instance, despite legal reforms, **access to comprehensive SRHR services remains limited, particularly in rural areas – due to religious and cultural stigmas and inadequate healthcare infrastructure.** Similarly, societal stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals persist, with specific legal protections lacking and existing policies not effectively enforced.^{cclxxxi}

In Nauru, contraceptive use among women aged 15-49 was reported at 35.6% in 2019, with 25.1% using modern methods. High unmet needs for family planning stem from limited access to services, particularly in outer islands, cultural and religious opposition, inadequate provider skills, and misconceptions about side effects. Emergency contraception and sexual health services for survivors of sexual violence exist but face barriers like

stigma and cultural norms. Adolescent reproductive health services are also limited, contributing to a high teenage birth rate of 94 per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 (2012-2020).^{cclxxxii}

Regarding LGBTIQ+ rights, Nauru's laws do not explicitly prohibit discrimination or recognise LGBTIQ+ individuals or families, leading to instances of social bias and occasional police intimidation. Domestically, same-sex sexual activity was decriminalised in May 2016 with the passage of the Crimes Act 2016. However, there is no legal recognition of same-sex unions, and protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity are lacking. Legal gender recognition is unavailable, though there are no reports of conversion therapy or restrictions on LGBTIQ+ expression or assembly. Instances of violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity have been reported.^{cclxxxiii}

Recent Developments

In November 2016, Nauru's government withdrew a bill that would have legalised abortions for refugee and asylum-seeking women. The law was reportedly introduced to deter pregnant asylum seekers and refugees from travelling to Australia or PNG to access abortion services. The proposal, introduced by Border Protection Minister David Adeang, faced opposition from both government and opposition members of parliament, leading to its withdrawal. Politicians and other experts traced this back to Nauru's Christian-conservative views, stating the wider community would oppose such legislation. A Nauruan lawyer reportedly said, "A law like that would never pass muster in Australia. It's racially discriminatory in that only one class of person is entitled to a termination in Nauru [...] It's simply a distortion of Nauruan society to accommodate Australia's cruel immigration policy".^{cclxxxiv}

A Nation at a Crossroads

Nauru's journey underscores the **complex consequences** of economic dependence on external powers. While legal reforms signal progress, deep-seated opposition to SRHR and reliance on foreign arrangements—such as Australia's asylum policies—highlight ongoing challenges. As Nauru navigates its precarious position in the Pacific, its story serves as a cautionary tale of economic and diplomatic dependency's social and political costs.

During the COP29, on 13 November 2024, Nauru publicly launched the Nauru '**Passport for Sale**' Economic and Climate Resilience Citizenship Program. An initiative that, very much like Vanuatu has in place and Solomon are launching December 2024, allows individuals to acquire additional citizenship. According to the Nauru government, acquiring citizenship for US \$ 105,000 will allow for visa free travel to Hong Kong (SAR China), Ireland, Singapore, the UAE, and the UK, and will contribute to the Island's climate adaptation and sustainable development projects.^{cclxxxv}

Economic Struggles and Diplomatic Manoeuvres

Nauru has long grappled with economic hardship. Its reliance on phosphate mining has dramatically impacted the island's physical landscape, while unemployment rates hover around a staggering **90%**, second only to Zimbabwe.

The country has, furthermore, engaged in "**chequebook diplomacy**" – switching allegiances between **China and Taiwan** in exchange for financial incentives – including ministerial stipends, as revealed by WikiLeaks. By 2008, however, the diplomatic game ceased, leaving Nauru in economic turmoil. Nauru's controversial **selling of passports to members of terrorist groups** ended in 2003 under US pressure until it is now coming back.^{cclxxxvi}

In 2009, Nauru recognised the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, regions that declared independence from Georgia with Russian support. This recognition was reportedly influenced by financial aid from Russia, highlighting Nauru's pragmatic approach to foreign relations.^{cclxxxvii}

Nauru has been proactive in the International Seabed Authority – advocating for the expedited development of regulations for **deep-sea mining**. This stance aligns with China's interests, as China is a significant player in deep-sea mining and has substantial investments in the sector.^{cclxxxviii}

Regarding Nauru's political direction demonstrated in multilateral organisations, the country voted in favour of Resolution ES-11/5, which called for Russia to pay war reparations to Ukraine.^{cclxxxix} In April 2022, Nauru also supported the resolution to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council due to reports of human rights violations in Ukraine.^{ccxc} Nauru also consistently voted in favour of several resolutions condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine (GA Resolution ES-11/1; GA Resolution ES-11/4; GA Resolution ES-11/6).

In March 2011, Nauru was among the 85 countries that endorsed the United Nations Human Rights Council's Joint Statement on "Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity". This statement condemned violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals and called for the protection of their human rights.^{ccxci}

Nevertheless, in 2019, during a United Nations General Assembly vote on a resolution to ensure universal access to SRHR, Nauru was among the eight countries that voted against the inclusion of a specific preambular paragraph reaffirming this commitment. The paragraph aimed to reaffirm the commitment to ensure universal access to SRHR as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences. The recorded vote was 121 in favour, 8 against (including Nauru) and 19 abstentions.^{ccxcii}

Growing anti-Australian sentiment might also have impacted local perceptions of progressive reforms in Nauru, contributing to resistance against advancements in SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights, as some Nauruans view such reforms as external impositions rather than organic societal changes. In summary, Nauru's foreign policy demonstrates a pattern of strategic realignments, balancing relationships with Western nations and Eastern powers like China and Russia. Economic considerations and geopolitical dynamics within multilateral organisations often influence these shifts.

7.10 Tuvalu

Key developments

- **Lack of Protections for the LGBTIQ+ Community:** Tuvalu lacks hate crime or anti-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation, leaving women and the LGBTIQ+ community vulnerable to intimidation and stigma, with incidents often going unreported. In 2023, Tuvalu amended its constitution to explicitly ban same-sex marriage, highlighting the country's deep-seated conservatism and limited progress toward LGBTIQ+ rights.
- **Restricted Access to SRHR and Gender-Based Violence Issues:** The geographical isolation of residents on outer islands restricts their access to comprehensive SRHR services, as healthcare facilities are largely centralized in the capital, Funafuti. Additionally, with around 20% of women facing gender-based violence annually, the need for strengthened legal support systems and preventive measures is evident but largely unmet.
- **Security Agreement with Australia:** On the geopolitical front, the 2023 Tuvalu-Australia security agreement grants Australia a significant role in Tuvalu's defence, policing, and infrastructure.

Tuvalu: A Complex Balance of Tradition, Rights, and Geopolitics

Tuvalu, a small Pacific nation, finds itself at the intersection of deep-rooted cultural traditions, emerging human rights debates, and geopolitical influence. While its laws harshly penalize same-sex relationships, enforcement appears absent. At the same time, progressive strides in reproductive health signal a more forward-thinking approach, even as cultural and religious barriers persist. On the global stage, Tuvalu's strategic partnership with Australia underscores the tug-of-war between addressing climate change and maintaining sovereignty in the face of external influences.

Stance on SRHR

Tuvalu's laws impose **up to 14 years in prison for male same-sex relationships**, though **enforcement is reportedly absent**, according to the US State Department^{CCXCIII}. With no hate crime or anti-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation, the LGBTIQ+ community faces **intimidation and stigma**, discouraging reports of discrimination, leaving LGBTIQ+ individuals vulnerable to abuse and without equal rights or protections, including recognition of their families or bias-motivated crimes.^{CCXCIV} In 2023, the constitution banned **same-sex marriage**, reflecting the nation's entrenched conservatism. Despite this, Tuvalu recognises the **pinapinaaine**, a traditional transgender identity integrated into certain societal roles.^{CCXCV}

In Tuvalu, the predominant religious institution is the **Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu)**, of which 86% of the population belong to which holds significant influence over societal norms and values. This church, along with other Christian denominations in the country, traditionally upholds conservative views on sexuality and gender roles. These perspectives often conflict with the acceptance of LGBTIQ+ identities and the promotion of SRHR.

Discussions around SRHR are sensitive. This **cultural stigma hinders open dialogue** and education on SRHR and uptake of modern contraception.^{CCXCVI} Furthermore, geographical isolation for residents of outer islands, results in restricted access to comprehensive SRHR services. This is due to the centralisation of healthcare facilities in the capital, Funafuti.^{CCXCVII}

^{CCXCVIII} Moreover, 19.8% of Tuvaluan women aged 15-49 report experiencing physical and/or

sexual violence by a partner in the previous 12 months as of 2018. This prevalence underscores the need for strengthened support systems and preventive measures.^{ccxcix} Concerning abortion, legislation is limited to permitting the procedure only to save the mother's life.^{ccc}

Geopolitical Influence on Tuvalu

On the geopolitical front, the **2023 Tuvalu-Australia security agreement** grants Australia a strong role in Tuvalu's defence, policing, and infrastructure. This arrangement is widely viewed as a Western strategy to **counter China's growing influence** in the Pacific. Critics argue that the pact reflects a **neocolonial dynamic**, emphasising Australia's leverage over Tuvalu's security decisions.^{ccci} This agreement has been criticised by climate activists and Tuvaluans who are worried for the future of their island. Indeed, although the agreement provides the opportunity to migrate to Australia for 280 Tuvaluans annually, it does not tackle the root cause of climate change: climate emissions. This means that the physical and cultural future of the Island remains endangered.

Tuvalu's contrasting approaches to LGBTIQ+ rights, reproductive health, and international alliances reveal a nation navigating **cultural traditions, limited rights, and strategic geopolitical pressures**.

Furthermore, as of November 2024, the President of Taiwan will visit Tuvalu between 30th November and 6th December, alongside Palau and Marshall Islands^{ccci}, as the only Pacific countries not to hold diplomatic affiliation with China, especially as China is increasingly using economic opportunities as a card to win over Pacific Island countries. According to an American diplomat specialised on the Pacific region, "China is pushing countries in the region to choose black and white choices. However, the PRC's (People's Republic of China's) influence is not as 'without conditions' as they tell the local countries". (Anonymous source of Diplomatic Corps in region). Such an example can be observed in Tuvalu, where in 2019, Chinese companies offered to build artificial islands in the country in an attempt to undermine its relations with Taiwan.^{ccciii}

8 Recommendations

The report makes four main recommendations to:

- 1) *ensure early detection,*
- 2) *conduct continuous investigations,*
- 3) *address the problem cross pillar*
- 4) *and support local organisations.*

These recommendations should be seen in the full context of the report's objective and main findings. In addition to these four recommendations, JfP respectfully suggests progressive democratic governments consider developing (or reconfirming) a **cross-sectoral strategy to counter anti-rights influence and foreign state subversion in the Asia Pacific**.

8.1 Recommendation 1: Ensure Early Detection

Two tactics are especially favoured by the actors in their modus operandi. These include gaining influential positions at multilateral institutions and influencing legislation. These activities require early detection, which can only be done by treating this file as a cross-pillar challenge and paying consistent attention to the mechanisms and players behind them. This recommendation, therefore, covers several aspects of these mechanisms.

Regarding cross-pillar issues, governments are recommended to strengthen inter-agency cooperation between Health and Education Departments and bring these together with agencies such as National Police, Tax Authorities (including for anti-money laundering), National Intelligence (mainly Counter-Intelligence and foreign interference specialists), and foreign aid agencies.

8.1.1 Early Detection in the Legal Realm

The most obvious attacks on laws and rights are seen across the globe in taking measures that restrict or roll back the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people. A blatant example is Vanuatu's proposed legislation banning LGBTIQ+ advocacy and funding. Many countries globally have started adopting such legislation, varying in scope and enforcement, but generally aim to limit the visibility and rights of LGBTIQ+ communities.

Thus, it is necessary to detect early on the other legal mechanisms that restrict, close the loop, and infiltrate systems and society. **Governments should continuously track legislative trends, share findings with stakeholders, and counteract disinformation. It is recommended to keenly watch for early detection of other types of legislation, including:**

- ***Foreign Agent Laws:*** Target NGOs receiving foreign funding, stigmatising and restricting their activities.
- ***Anti-LGBTIQ+ Laws:*** Censoring LGBTIQ+ content, restrict advocacy, and impose penalties on same-sex relationships.
- ***Media and Consumer Laws:*** Banning LGBTIQ+, gender, or equality representation in media, advertising, or public education under the "protection of minors" or promoting "family values".
- ***Cybersecurity Laws:*** Regulation of online platforms, monitoring content, and suppression of advocacy under vague definitions of "social harmony".

Governments could consider taking proactive action against such developments by:

- ***Advocating for transparency:*** Demand clear definitions and accountability for laws to avoid the abuse of vague or ambiguous terms like "political activity," "family values," or "social harmony". This applies to every level of lawmaking and policy development.
- ***Building Coalitions:*** Partner with domestic and international NGOs, human rights bodies, and supportive governments to amplify advocacy efforts. Either bilaterally or in multilateral forms, such as the UN.
- ***Promoting Public Awareness:*** Educate the public on the value of inclusive laws and the dangers of discriminatory restrictions.
- ***Leveraging Legal Challenges:*** To contest oppressive laws, use national courts for strategic litigation, human rights tribunals, and international legal frameworks. This can also entail setting up funding mechanisms for NGOs like the European Commission's Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values (CERV) strategic litigation funding program.
- ***Engaging Private Sector Allies:*** Collaborate with tech firms, media outlets, and financial institutions to resist censorship and restrictions on civil society. This could include efforts to change exemptions for political speech on social media platforms.

8.1.2 Early Detection in the Policy Realm

To address such developments effectively, the regression of SRHR should be seen in a broader political and economic context. Constitutional and legislative re-engineering provides the ground for a shift in political economy structures, moving towards **authoritarian neoliberalism** and **economic patriotism**. Dismantling of core institutions of the market economy (e.g. consumer law) happens under the guise of "strengthening national sovereignty" with a rise in economic populism and the "patriotic state". Such legal, political, and economic transformations enable governments to mainstream their illiberal agenda and instrumentalise the law. This is not reserved for national governments; foreign actors, including Russia and China, actively benefit and influence this development to progress their regional influence and position.

If governments state that protecting national values and national security is the motivation to restrict SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights, then governments with progressive, inclusive policies must equally acknowledge this as a means to undermine and destabilise systems and (bilateral or multilateral) relations.

8.1.3 Early Detection Influential Positions

Human rights language is used to position "traditional family values" against SRHR and LGTBIQ+ rights; the ambiguity of such narratives is used to erode norms of inclusion, democracy, and equality, leading to a regression in formal norms and policy, regulations, and legislation. This is also seen in the language used at the UN. Ambiguous provocations combined with leveraging democratic credentials through the UN, can help actors reframe their provocations and violations against SRHR, LGBTIQ+, and gender as "allowed" and make it difficult to push back against them. This has affected governments' preparedness to (financially) support global efforts towards SRHR, LGBTIQ+, and gender equality in the multilateral dimension, most notably in the UN, and their ability to set norms for the protection and advancement of these issues. This leaves rights defenders and progressive, inclusive policy, laws, and practice of these rights with a strategic dilemma in answering such violations, let alone developing the exemplary narratives to push back against them.

Governments can be more sophisticated and proactive in garnering support for SRHR at the UN. To achieve this, it is recommended that governments invest in assessing any discrepancy or congruence between the international, multilateral positions of Member States and the domestic/regional dynamics, including CSOs active in those Member States. This can be used to predict the possible impact on the formal positions of Member States and to identify which norms can be highlighted or addressed more effectively.

UN Permanent Representatives should prioritise and proactively take and support initiatives, especially in drafting (or providing feedback) on the language of relevant resolutions, reports, and other guidance or policy recommendations (tailored to UN body mandates).

This will make them more effective in activating and collaborating (bilaterally or multilaterally) with Member States and (bilaterally) empower the influence of smaller Member States.

8.2 Recommendation 2: Conduct Continuous Investigations

The investigations conducted for this report and the developments previously flagged as problematic by IPPF across the region (and globally) make clear that more research and investigations are warranted. Within recent years, many NGOs, from LGBTIQ+ and SRHR to human rights defenders, have used resources to monitor their opposition. From opposition monitoring newsletters by IPPF Europe to Ipas (US) to AWID (US), they have all worked hard to document opposition and describe the detrimental effects on the communities and rights they represent.

8.2.1 Investigations by civil society

NGOs' responses need to be more cohesive and sophisticated. Tasking advocacy and interest groups to go beyond their organisations' core missions to conduct the required investigations undermines the collective organisations' ability to respond to opposition effectively. **A coordinated approach with professional intelligence informed by (high-level) strategy is more urgent than ever.**

A dedicated and specialised investigation capacity is needed to move the needle. A centralised investigation capacity enhances our understanding, anticipates threats, and responds proactively and strategically. It will enable NGOs across the fields to play to their strengths and form a more responsive, forward-looking, complementary network. This also means setting up a dedicated and specialised investigation capacity for civil society that services multiple NGOs from the same table for coordinated strategic response. Organisations such as IPPF have already begun exploring the possibility of setting up such a mechanism.

It is recommended that civil society actors in the region engage with IPPF and its partners to explore the possibility of joining a strategic alliance to set up a central investigation unit as shared resource.

8.2.2 Investigations by governments

Governments and policymakers should explore how to support NGOs in setting up such a civil society capacity. Such capacity can and should be organised on multiple levels and locations. For national governments, this would entail defining the problems described in this report differently from their current dominant understanding and **embedding its handling with various agencies.**

In light of this report's findings, **it is recommended to invest in further understanding the role of religious institutions** such as the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in the region, including when used as foreign state influence instrument as we saw in Ukraine. Recommendation 3 addresses what governments can do internally to shape such investigations.

8.3 Recommendation 3: Go Cross-Pillar

This report offers evidence and insights to sustain the argument that this is a fundamentally destabilising issue, making it a national security risk. Stoking culture wars are still a very real part of foreign interference and foreign information manipulation.

Throughout this report, the interactions between actors have been described as operating and occurring in what JfP describes as 'the triangle.' This is another key to understanding the problem. If it is labelled as an issue for a specific community or of a specific nature, the risk that materialises is that its handling is equally siloed and fragmented. Joint efforts are necessary, especially because the threat is diffuse, often within legal bounds, or closely related to other forms of subversion, including corruption and money laundering.

These key elements clarify that the problem needs to be redefined as a cross-pillar, cross-government, and national security issue and tackled as such. One approach that different governments can take is to establish a dedicated working group that brings together relevant law enforcement and intelligence agencies to address the issue collaboratively. From here, each agency will be better positioned to designate and embed the threat in their operations. This could be shaped in a task force or joint investigations unit or by secondment of staff from other agencies to the agency that will lead any new joint efforts. This approach can be further enhanced through engagement with international cross-organisational and multilateral cooperation platforms.

8.4 Recommendation 4: Support Local Organisations

Local organisations can often do things that governments cannot. Ironically, their ability to operate between different layers of society is exactly why anti-rights actors rely so heavily on these entities. Sadly, CSOs are also the primary targets of threats and attacks. Several recommendations have been made for continued investigations, utilising legal and policy mechanisms and specific proactive multilateral action.

The necessary strategic, sophisticated, proactive actions also need to be reflected in the support of local organisations. Their ability to respond to and deal with opposition to their work should be seen as an extension of government efforts to counter the undermining of their democracies and societies. **Governments must find ways to support local organisations to leverage local, regional, and international mechanisms to counter the influence of the anti-rights movement.**

Based on JfP's experience partnering in grass-roots coalition building across the EU, the US and Latin America, some recommendations are:

- ◆ **Invest in capacity-building initiatives for NGOs** to enhance their compliance with legal requirements and resilience against restrictive measures. This could be shaped by offering financial support programs for strategic litigation or facilitating pro bono advice from leading law firms or financial organisations. Another opportunity could be supporting NGOs already dedicated to offering legal support and materials to other NGOs facing such legal challenges, including advice on how to use the national courts

and international standards to push back against anti-rights attacks. This support can also be extended to NGOs through donor government embassies and in-country missions.

- ◆ **Bring together broad coalitions with gender equality, anti-corruption, and democracy actors.** Often, facilitating convenings or organising such events is beyond the financial capacity of NGOs. Governments could explore supporting conferences, workshops, or even online presentations. This would reinforce the participation and solidarity among these coalitions fighting anti-rights or anti-democratic actors.
- ◆ **Invite NGOs to provide input in platforms to facilitate dialogue between governments, civil society, and private sector actors.** This can be done by distributing information and insights about rights violations, disinformation or corruption findings to private sector entities, including banks and multinational corporations committed to upholding human rights.
- ◆ **Support the development of counter-narratives to challenge harmful stereotypes and misinformation about marginalised groups.** Crucial in this development is to engage with business and marketing experts who can support NGOs in designing an effective process to build such campaigns. This is often too expensive for NGOs, so government funding or pro bono support from such businesses and expert organisations to support them is key.
- ◆ **Facilitate training and workshops and provide tools that increase media literacy and the ability to identify disinformation.** Furthermore, support investing in digital security tools to protect local organisations against disinformation and online hate speech. Facilitating training in documenting such cases can also enable local organisations to enhance their reporting mechanisms.
- ◆ **Expand documentation and reporting skills** to document information and evidence gathering for the pursuit of legal action at the national level or even seeking international sanctions against individuals involved in corruption and undermining democracy.

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actors in the Asia-Pacific
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A Report

UNVEILING SUBVERSIVE POWER

Shedding light on anti-rights actors in the Asia-Pacific region



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