

Expert Group Meeting

Sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 69)

‘Beijing +30: Emerging issues and future directions for gender equality and women’s rights’

Virtual, 13–15 August 2024

## **Pacific Feminist Approaches to Ensure Effective Accountability: Sharing from Our Small Pacific Island States**

Expert paper prepared by:

Laisa Bulatale\*

Programme Director, Fiji Women’s Rights Movement

---

\* The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of UN-Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

## **1. Overview**

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement is a national feminist organisation committed to removing all forms of discrimination through institutional reform and attitudinal change. We are part of the We Rise Coalition, which is a Pacific feminist coalition of seven key partners operating in Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Australia and Vanuatu. FWRM is also part of the larger Pacific feminist movement.

Forming the basis of this written submission, particular regard is made to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Beijing Platform for Action, Commission of the Status of Women, Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, national gender policies, and as well as other human rights commitment that Pacific Small Island Developing States have endorsed.

Endorsing these international and national priorities indicate that women are also equal partners in decision-making and implementation rather than just being beneficiaries. It also recognises the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs); people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and expressions; and the different ways they are affected by existing policies and laws.

In May 2023, FWRM with other key feminist organisations in the region convened the third Pacific Feminist Forum that convened with over 150 feminists, human rights and climate justice defenders. Amongst key human rights issues highlighted in this Forum, for us, the climate crisis poses the greatest immediate, urgent threat to all Pacific Island communities. It disproportionately impacts women and girls in all their diversities. This is having profound implications for their bodily autonomy, impacting their sexual reproductive health and rights, poverty, and long-term resilience and economic justice.

Pacific Island States are signing to all sorts of international commitments – but these just mean empty words, rarely turns into transformative action on the ground. We have been calling for stronger commitment and political will in protecting ourselves, other species and the living Planet by ensuring national policies, programming and budget related to climate change and disaster risk reduction incorporate gender mainstreaming.

## **2. Research and data**

Any advocacy ask must be linked to evidence-based analysis, research and data. Pacific feminists and organisations work with grassroots women's groups, activists and rural women leaders to document:

- (a) Women's stories of struggle and resilience in this climate crisis whether it is to do with access or relocation of communities e.g. big issue with women's unpaid care work in the

community and at home increasing – no respite as conditions worsen, menstrual hygiene issues etc.

- (b) We triangulate the data government and INGOs are providing with what is actually happening in communities as an accountability tool.

### **3. Where is the money**

Any advocacy ask must be linked to resources and how the State is using its money. In country, Pacific feminists and organisations work with their governments to strengthen capacities of different ministries to incorporate gender responsive budgeting.

In Fiji for instance, women’s human rights groups have been advocating for gender responsive budgeting where there is better integration of all women’s and girls’ needs, interests, concerns, contributions and perspectives into policies, strategies, programmes and budgets and with the establishment of effective coordination mechanisms as well as enhancing technical knowledge, competence and resources on transformative gender mainstreaming across government institutions.<sup>1</sup>

The initiative is in line with international commitments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Fiji has ratified and the Beijing Platform for Action +25. The ICD supports the implementation of national commitments including the Fiji National Development Plan, National Gender Policy and the forthcoming Fiji National Action Plan to prevent Violence against Women and Girls.

FWRM is supporting the implementation of the ICD as a technical partner, working closely with the Fijian government, ensuring that women and girls voices, experiences and perspectives are included at all levels, and that policies, programmes and governance is responsive and effective to everyone’s needs, without leaving anyone behind.

### **4. Technical advice and input**

Accessing and monitoring climate finance can be complex and time intensive. Through advocacy and lobbying, Pacific feminist organisations are part of sectoral working groups that provide technical advice and input to the design, financing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate finance projects and investments that address climate change goals.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development (ICD) initiative  
<https://www.mwesp.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ICD-Booklet-for-Approval-180120-ver2.0.pdf>.  
FWRM Media Release: <https://www.fwrn.org.fj/news/media-releases/media-release-fwrn-welcomes-new-gender-transformative-institutional-capacity-development-icd-initiative>.

## **5. Strengthen feminist movements through capacity building**

We work with organisations that do work around climate justice, and help strengthen their capacities in Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) so that when they're designing their projects or programmes, it incorporates these things. Trainings include GEDSI, PSEAH, Gender Analysis and Access to Justice (GBV). We also train specific government ministries that requests such trainings

Our ethos centres on the belief that any policy and legislative change on key women's rights issues in Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) must be led and advocated by the women's rights groups, organizations and activists, and doing that means strengthening the capacities of the women's movement in the region.

## **6. Protests, marches and rallies**

We also co-organise marches, rallies and protests for climate justice with other Pacific feminists' groups, organisations and NGOs – a recent one being our march last year in response to Japan's plans to release the Fukushima Nuclear Wastewater into the Pacific Ocean. The march and rally were our effort to urge, support and encourage the Fijian Parliament to continue to condemn Japan's dumping (of Nuclear Wastewater) into the Pacific, encourage the government to act on this resolution and emphasize the need to protect our oceans and the well-being of Pacific communities.

## **7. Intentionally part of global to local processes**

We are intentionally in spaces that keeps our Pacific leaders and governments accountable. We are part of the Women's Major Group.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Women's Major Group <https://womensmajorgroup.org/about-us-3/>.