



## Fiji Annual Reflection and Planning Workshop Report

November 2019

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# Executive Summary

## Background

The Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Program (*Pacific Women*) is a 10-year AUD320 million initiative (2012–2022) funded by the Australian Government to assist Pacific countries enhance progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women. Under *Pacific Women*, AUD26 million was committed to support the empowerment of women in Fiji which includes financing of the Fiji Women’s Fund (the Fund). The Fund, which is the first of its kind in the Pacific region, will provide up to AUD10.5 million over a five-year period (2017–2022) in direct funding and capacity building support to women’s groups, organisations and networks to expand and enhance their empowerment and gender equality work in Fiji.

The Fund has a special focus on reaching women living in rural and remote areas and those who are marginalised, including women with disabilities and those experiencing various forms of discrimination. The Fund aims to become an independently funded and managed women’s fund by the end of 2022.

*Pacific Women* and the Fund have collaborated in holding annual reflection and planning workshops in 2017 and 2018, which were considered highly beneficial by grantees, partners and program staff alike. The third *Pacific Women* and Fiji Women’s Fund Fiji Annual Reflection and Planning Workshop was held 26–27 November 2019 and attended by a total of 76 people including staff, partners and grantee organisations throughout Fiji. This report summarises the workshop approach, objectives, key learning outcomes and participant recommendations.

## Objectives

The primary objectives of the workshop were for participants to:

- reflect on overall progress in advancing gender equality at various levels;
- share experiences and lessons learned in promoting women’s economic empowerment, enhancing women’s leadership opportunities and capabilities, ending violence against women and coalition building;
- develop knowledge and skills in self-identified areas of interest,
- learn about the *Pacific Women* Six-Year Evaluation;
- strengthen relationships between grantees and other stakeholders.

## Key Findings and Lessons Learned

Several organisations involved in community-level work noted that women are continuing to “find their voice” through leadership and other empowerment programs. There are also examples of women moving from the economic empowerment space to the leadership space. It was emphasised that real change takes time and occurs when people understand the need to work together for the common good: the Fijian practice of *solesolevaki* (see Section 2.4). The need to allow for diversity in age, identity and approach was also stressed.

Concern about “backlash” for women and girls after leadership training was raised, especially if community leaders, husbands and other family members were not involved and do not understand the purpose of the program. Having church leaders address domestic violence from a biblical perspective can also help to change mindsets and behaviour.

The impact of women’s economic empowerment is gaining broader support for ending violence against women. For instance, organisations have found that once it becomes apparent that women’s economic activity contributes to family income and increases social well-being, male

leadership within communities become more open to addressing domestic violence and other social justice issues.

The importance of involving and educating whole communities was stressed, along with the need to “use culture to change culture”. For example, some partners stressed the need to engage more men who are committed to ending violence against women (EVAW) to dispel strongly held cultural beliefs that perpetuate abuse. However, others expressed concern that men may resist women’s leadership, try to “take over” or subvert accountability. As such, it is essential that men’s work in EVAW is carefully managed, including the content of advocacy messages, and regular reviews of impact are conducted.

It is critical that disability inclusion is mainstreamed in all EVAW work, including translation services within the criminal justice system. Examples were provided of investigations and prosecutions being undermined because police are not proficient in sign language. Referral systems also do not accommodate the needs of people with hearing, sight and other communication challenges.

Partners expressed a strong need to address inter-generational divisions and to “make space” for younger women to “navigate and direct their own activities and decision making” in response to their self-determined agendas. In this regard, partners are developing customised leadership toolkits and strategies to facilitate more active and meaningful participation of the younger generation.

The importance of working within existing power structures to build support for women and girls in leadership initiatives was emphasised. Partners also expressed concern about the future of the women’s movement; “the torch will not be passed” to young women if the opportunities for them are not created and/or their contributions are not validated.

Grantees recognise the need to broaden partnerships in order to expand their reach and impact. This includes increased engagement with the private sector, banking institutions and saving schemes (such as the Fiji National Provident Fund) and academic institutions to mainstream gender equity and social inclusion through organisational policies and processes.

There was repeated recognition of how beneficial collaboration among partners is. Examples include: medical and service organisations working together to support women and families in crisis; women’s groups supplying products for women producers; organisations helping each other in collective farming; and women mentoring other women across generations and sectors. The work of the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation was also seen as significant in facilitating connections between organisations and groups of women needing specific services (such as sexual and reproductive health information), developing and sustaining EVAW work and supporting financial literacy in rural areas.

Increased self-awareness and self-care emerged as essential for activists involved in the women’s movement given the high susceptibility to burnout, especially with frontline workers and those who continue to take on new activities on top of already busy schedules. People also stressed the need to remain cognisant of individual power and how this is used within the movement, especially in relation to younger and less experienced colleagues.

## Recommendations and Next Steps

Further development of all aspects of financial literacy is required, along with the need to provide “female friendly” banking practices and more accessible business development advisory services to better support and empower women entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas. It was suggested that *Pacific Women* could provide assistance by: brokering meetings between mainline banks and partners; conducting an analysis of partner business development service needs; and/or hosting a second women’s economic empowerment (WEE) forum to develop a clearly articulated plan of action to address these concerns.

It is recommended that disability inclusion strategies are developed and supported to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are better addressed in all aspects of EVAW work.

In recognising the potential for “backlash” for women and girls as they become confident and assertive in their families, communities and workplaces, safeguard strategies need to be in place to deal with any negative impacts that arise. There is also a need to work on changing patriarchal attitudes at all levels.

The importance of transforming the attitudes of parents, teachers and other key influencers that reinforce traditional gender roles in education, employment and sexuality and restrict the options and choices of young women was stressed.

A key challenge is the prevailing homophobia that exists in Fiji society and the need to create safe spaces for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) community.

The need for better baseline information to inform program/service design and to produce credible, evidence-based evaluation data to assess short- and long-term outcomes was stressed. This is an area in which partners requested additional support, including engagement of local researchers able to contextualise research findings in the Fiji context.

As partners and funders, there is a need to widen our influence “beyond the usual accomplices” to create sustainable and transformative social change. In this regard, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation intends to develop a gender mainstreaming plan and form mainstreaming action groups to address institutionalised sexism.

Partners also stressed the urgent need to increase the number and skill of trained counsellors and to better nurture and support frontline EVAW workers and women’s movement leaders who are at risk of burnout.

## Conclusion

This workshop participants strongly confirmed the value of the work *Pacific Women* and the Fund are supporting in pursuit of gender equality in Fiji. The workshop also enabled staff of the Support Unit and the Fund to receive feedback from grantees and gain insight into their accomplishments and challenges and the kinds of support required in future.

## Participant Feedback

Review of participant evaluations revealed an overall high level of satisfaction with the content and design of the workshop. The two-day agenda worked well and provided adequate time for in-depth discussion without being burdensome. People also appreciated the venue which provided opportunities for both large and small group interaction. The theme of partnership resonated strongly with attendees as shown through reflection and evaluation exercises.

There were requests to make next year’s event more interactive and more accessible for people with disabilities. It was also suggested peer skills-building sessions could be better orientated to “skills transfer” rather than informational presentations.

# 1. Background, Context and Objectives

## 1.1 Country Context

The current population of Fiji is approximately 900,000 with a mean age of 28 years. Almost 60 per cent of people now reside in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> Fiji's gross domestic product is expected to grow by about 3 per cent in 2020, with a similar rate of inflation increase.<sup>2</sup> In 2019, Fiji was ranked 98 out of 189 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index.<sup>3</sup> However, the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index (which measures gender disparity in four domains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; political empowerment; and health and survival) ranked Fiji 103 out of 153 countries.<sup>4</sup>

The *Pacific Women* Fiji Country Plan summarises important gender equity achievements and challenges, such as strong patriarchal beliefs and practices that continue to dominate formal decision-making and planning processes and serve to seriously limit women's participation and voice. Labour force participation rates show a significant gender discrepancy; 81 per cent of males (aged 15 and above) are employed or actively seeking work compared to 46 per cent of females. Further, the rate of violence against women in Fiji is among the highest in the world at 64 per cent, twice the global average.<sup>5</sup>

The Government of Fiji recognises these issues and has demonstrated its commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through endorsement of numerous international conventions and agreements, regional platforms and domestic laws and policies. The 2014 Fiji National Gender Policy focuses on promoting women's human rights, gender mainstreaming (across government agencies), sustainable development and addressing the structural and social barriers that impede gender equality. In addition to government efforts led by the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, civil society organisations in Fiji make a significant contribution to the advancement of women through advocacy, awareness raising, training and service delivery.

Analysis of gender inequality in Fiji highlights the need for a multi-pronged approach including targeted interventions with individuals, families and communities as well as strategies that address formal systems and national, provincial and district structures that discriminate against women.

## 1.2 Program Context

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) was announced by the Australian Government at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting in August 2012. It commits up to AUD320 million over 10 years in 14 Pacific Islands Forum member countries. The program aims to improve opportunities for the political, economic and social advancement of Pacific women. *Pacific Women* will support countries to meet the commitments they made in the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration in 2012. The outcomes sought by *Pacific Women* are:

- Women, and women's interests, are increasingly and effectively represented and visible through leadership at all levels of decision making.
- Women have expanded economic opportunities to earn an income and accumulate economic assets.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on forecasting of the latest United Nations data: retrieved from: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/fiji-population/>

<sup>2</sup> Asian Development Bank Economic Fact Sheets. Retrieved from: <https://www.adb.org/countries/fiji/economy>

<sup>3</sup> Human Development Index 2019, Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/FJI>

<sup>4</sup> 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, World Economic Forum: [http://www.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2020.pdf](http://www.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> UN Women: Global Database on Violence against Women. Retrieved from: <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/oceania/fiji>

- Violence against women is reduced and survivors of violence have access to support services and to justice.
- Women in the Pacific will have a stronger sense of their own agency, supported by a changing legal and social environment and through increased access to the services they need.

To achieve these outcomes, the program works with a wide range of implementing partners, including governments, multilateral organisations, international and national civil society organisations to implement country-specific plans. Country plans are the mechanism through which *Pacific Women* outcomes and activities are planned and agreed between the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and counterpart governments following an extensive research and consultation process. The program is managed by DFAT and the *Pacific Women* Support Unit, based in Suva with a sub-office in Port Moresby, provides logistical, technical and administrative support.

The *Pacific Women* Fiji program has committed about AUD26 million from 2012–2022 to support initiatives that advance women’s equality and empowerment. The first Fiji Country Plan was developed in 2013 and updated in 2015 to align with Fiji’s National Gender Policy. In 2017, a review was conducted to assess program successes and lessons learned, with findings used to inform the design of the second Fiji Country Plan (2018–2021).

The second country plan aims to reach women and girls of all diversities, particularly those who are most vulnerable such as women with disabilities, adolescent girls, women who live in rural and remote areas, survivors of violence and those discriminated against based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The plan also focuses on: increasing women’s accessibility to safe spaces; enhancing their participation in community, district and national decision making; supporting female market vendors to work together in leading market reform; and encouraging women’s organisations and coalitions committed to gender justice, ecological sustainability, peace, freedom, equality and human rights for all.

A key initiative under the Fiji program was the establishment of the Fiji Women’s Fund in 2017 to better support women’s groups, organisations and networks, especially those working in remote and rural areas. The Fund recognises that women and their organisations are not a homogenous group and different forms of finance and technical assistance are required.

## 1.3 Workshop Objectives and Methods

### Objectives

The primary objectives of the workshop were for participants to:

- reflect on overall progress and key challenges to advancing gender equality at national, regional and global levels;
- share progress and lessons learned in efforts to advance women’s economic empowerment, leadership, ending violence against women and coalition building;
- update grantees and partners on preliminary findings of the *Pacific Women* Six-Year Evaluation, alongside an overview of monitoring and evaluating program outcomes;
- enhance participant knowledge and skills in self-identified learning areas;
- develop and strengthen relationships with and between grantees and other stakeholders.

### Methods

In recognising the significant expertise of Fiji grantee organisations and partners, the workshop methodology sought to draw from this experience to build collective capacity through formal and



informal peer learning opportunities and by creating space for networking and relationship building. The approach also included keynote speakers, panel presentations, small group reflection, skills building sessions and a marketplace for grantees to showcase and sell their products. The methods used also reflect the results of previous country reflection workshop evaluations through incorporating participant feedback.

Day one of the workshop included panel presentations on progress in the women's movement and small group discussions on successes and challenges in partner/grantee work in women's economic empowerment (WEE), ending violence against women (EVAW), leadership and coalition building. On Day two, partners and grantees led peer skills building sessions and participants were able to select topics of interest to them. The workshop was facilitated by staff from the Support Unit and the Fund.

## 1.4 Workshop Participants

The workshop was attended by a total of 76 people (64 women and 12 men) including 39 grantees representing 18 organisations and 37 partners from government, national and international civil society organisations, the private sector and staff from DFAT, Support Unit and the Fund.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.5 Report Overview

The report is intended to serve as a reference for workshop participants, DFAT and staff of the Support Unit and the Fund.

Section 2 provides a summary analysis of progress to date as well as issues impacting the achievement of gender equality in Fiji from the perspective of workshop participants. Section 3 outlines promising practices, lessons learned from work to date and recommended next steps. Section 4 shows a useful technique to assess program inputs, outputs and outcomes and overviews, which was applied to the *Pacific Women Six-Year Evaluation* process. In addition, the report contains a number of annexes including the workshop agenda, participant list and workshop session summaries.

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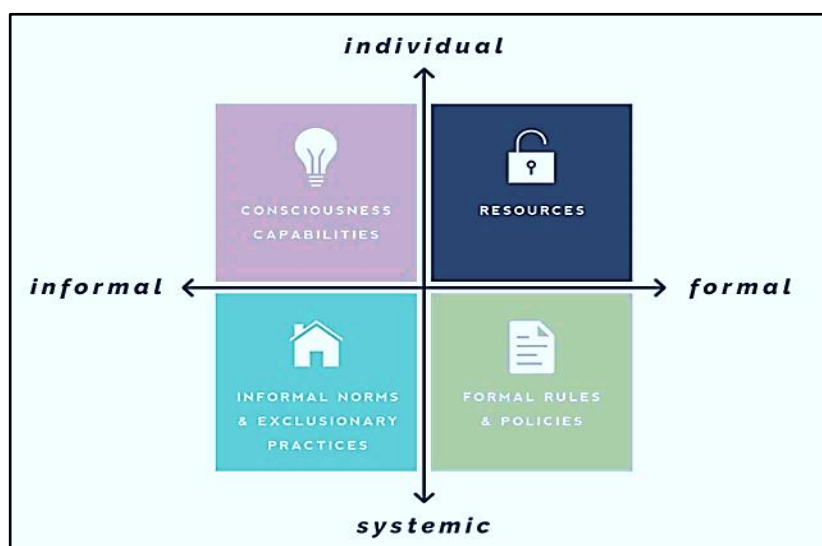
<sup>6</sup> Day one was attended by 73 participants (63 women and 10 men) and day two was attended by 51 people (44 women and 7 men).

## 2. Progress, Challenges and Lessons in Pursuit of Women’s Empowerment

This section summarises key achievements, barriers and lessons learned in advancing women’s empowerment in Fiji and the Pacific region at various levels (individual, institutional and coalitional) and in different domains (leadership, access to resources and ending violence) as shared by panel members and discussed during plenary and *talanoa* sessions.<sup>7</sup>

Both *Pacific Women’s* and the Fund’s theories of change recognise the inter-relationship between gender equality, organisational dynamics and institutional frameworks and the need to fundamentally change restrictive policies, exclusionary practices and underlying power dynamics that perpetuate inequity at household, community and national level. This is illustrated in the “Gender at Work Framework” (Rao and Kelleher, 2005) as shown in Figure 1.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 1: Gender at Work Framework



Following a summary of the discussion on progressing gender equality led by three prominent Fiji-based women’s activists, this chapter highlights progress, constraints and lessons in relation to formal, informal, individual and systemic issues as highlighted by participants. For ease of reference, discussions are summarised by outcome. Further details can be found in Annexes 3 and 4.

### 2.1 Setting the context: Progress in gender equality

Following introductory comments and introductions, the workshop commenced with a *talanoa* panel, facilitated by Tara Chetty, Support Unit Gender Adviser. The panellists, Virisila Buadromo (Urgent Action Fund for Asia and the Pacific), Mamta Chand (Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM)) and Veena Singh (Pacific Community), were asked to discuss what the women’s movement means to them personally and to provide reflections on the overall progress of the movement, locally, regionally and internationally in 2019. Questions and discussion followed.

<sup>7</sup> *Talanoa* is a traditional word used in Fiji and across the Pacific to reflect a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue. The purpose of *talanoa* is to share stories, build empathy and to make wise decisions for the collective good.

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>

Mamta raised the issue of the women's movement needing to be both *inter-generational* and *inter-sectional*, while also being a place for solidarity and accountability.

Veena talked about potential toxicity and the ups and downs of her time within the movement, causing her to reflect on her own role and contribution to the space, while recognising the way people treat each other within the movement can be a result of the intensity of experiences doing the work. She spoke about the political nature of change and the need to confront oppressive power structures everywhere.

*"We all need to work together to interrupt and disrupt power."*

*Veena Singh*

Virisila talked about the diversity in the women's movement and also mentioned the potential for toxicity. She appreciates the political aspect of the movement in addressing inequality and discrimination, while cautioning about the dangers of charismatic leadership. There's also the challenge of actively dismantling power both externally and internally, following the lead of women's groups in Latin America and Africa.

Noted highlights over the past year include increased solidarity amongst diverse groups in the movement and increasing the outreach and collaboration with younger women. Other highlights mentioned were regional events such as the Pacific Feminist Forum, the Micronesian Women's Conference, the upcoming 2020 Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, convergence with climate change efforts and the #MeToo movement, as well as engaging with the Beijing Platform for Action. Ongoing concerns included responding to human rights violations and preparing for a potential global economic downturn will have on women and other vulnerable citizens.

There was also discussion about the meaning of some terms used by the panel and the need to ensure that our use of language does not exclude others. In response:

- ***Inter-generational*** was defined as the "different cohorts and generations that we are trying to bring together in the movement".
- ***Inter-sectionality*** refers to "individuals having different identities, experiences, educational backgrounds, ethnic identities, gender orientations and opportunities in life. This means we are affected differently by events that happen around us, therefore we cannot put all women into one group".

## 2.2 Leadership and Decision Making

Women are continuing to find their voices through leadership and other empowerment programs as reported by several organisations involved in community level work. There are also examples of women moving from "the WEE space to the leadership space". For example, Talanoa Treks is strengthening the network of rural women involved in sustainable tourism and empowering them to increase their roles and voices in the management of their community tourism enterprises; and Delailasakau Women's Group are engaging village men through traditional structures to good effect.

*"Women sometimes face major opposition when they go home after attending leadership training... the more threatened men feel, the worse it is for the women."*

Despite these gains, there can be "backlash" for women and girls after leadership training, especially if community leaders, husbands and other family members were not involved and do not understand the purpose of the program. In recognising this risk, some partners have developed strategies such as engaging village coordinators to monitor for negative impacts and assist in resolving concerns. In addition, grantees stressed the importance of respecting and working within traditional structures (such as provincial councils) in order to establish shared goals, earn community support and accelerate lasting change.

It was recognised that younger women are often not being reached by existing programs and services, despite feeling the heavy weight of social and economic stressors. Partners, including the

Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, emphasised the need to find innovative ways to engage young women in all aspects of the work. In this regard: International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is implementing the “The Future She Deserves” initiative which aims to empower young girls; FWRM has developed a leadership toolkit for younger women and is working with the Fiji National University to mainstream gender equity and social inclusion into institutional practises; Graduate Women Fiji is advocating for key influencers (such as parents, teachers and church/community leaders) to support girls in choosing to study sciences, technology, engineering and maths (STEM); and Adventist Development Relief Agency Fiji (ADRA) is encouraging older women to more actively engage with and mentor younger women. There are also opportunities for partners to work together to increase support for young women. For example, the Fiji Girl Guides and FWRM are strategising about how to best obtain parental support for sexual and reproductive health education and how to better access young women through schools, church groups and informal networks.

In terms of leadership within the women’s movement, there was discussion about the need to put aside prejudices to better serve marginalised members of the community. In this regard, organisations like IPPF are training their staff on disability inclusion, sexual diversity and access to reproductive health services for all.

There was also discussion on the need to examine how leaders use their personal power and the impacts this has on other people within organisations and the movement as a whole. People spoke about equality-centered movements being relational, political, intense and diverse. Movements can also be “toxic” if power is misused and/or lead to “burn-out” if there is not adequate solidarity and co-responsibility. As such, there is a need for movements to share power and accountability and become more self-aware.

*“As a women’s movement, we need to focus on dismantling power in the external world and in the internal world - meaning in ourselves and in our organisations.”*

## 2.3 Ending Violence against Women

One of the challenges in EAW work is an underlying perception that violence against women should only be addressed by women. The reasons for this were said to be the personal or private nature of the issue, alongside a fear that men could “take over” or monopolise work in this area. As such, some participants stressed the need to engage more men as activists in condemning and addressing violence against women. For instance, House of Sarah is training male perpetrators as advocates. They also make use of male volunteer activists. However, other organisations expressed strong reservations about this trend, noting concerns about accountability at different levels (for victims, communities, organisations and the women’s movement as a whole). As such, they stressed the need to ensure that the work of male advocates is thoughtfully managed, including the content of advocacy messages.

To assist in coordinating work in this area, the National EAW Task Force, led by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, meets every six months to provide a forum for policy makers and service providers to discuss issues and options and report on progress. This engagement with the Ministry was said to be highly valued by non-state women’s organisations. The Ministry also supports a child helpline and a domestic violence helpline and engages with women and girls on violence issues through their district offices.

Partners have found that working on economic empowerment can segue into addressing other gender issues including domestic violence. For example, through the process of introducing and supporting economic activities for women, Rise Beyond the Reef was able to establish sufficient confidence and trust within the wider community to enable them to address the high rates of gender-based violence in rural communities. As a result of community transformation and mobilisation efforts, village leaders supported the establishment of “Safeguarding Teams” who act as first responders when violence occurs and provide a safe haven for women and their children.



Given the distance from formal crisis services, these community-based teams are providing a critical protection and support function.

### Case Study: Segue to “Sensitive Issues”

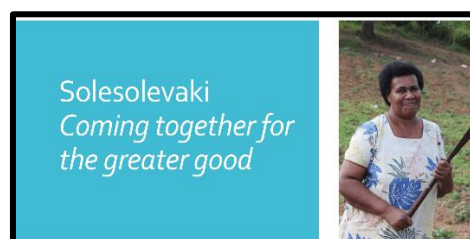
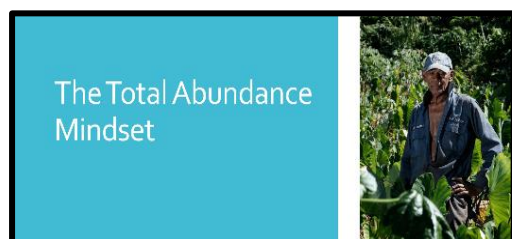
Rise Beyond the Reef started with the goal of addressing the high rates of domestic violence in rural communities. Their strategy was to “empower women to find their voice and choice within the family” by helping them develop a market presence and contribute financially to household income. After four years of successful economic work involving 350 women (and 60 waitlisted), Rise Beyond the Reef had finally established sufficient trust to enable them to raise “sensitive” issues with community leaders, including violence, with buy-in from the community. A recent study found that 95 per cent of women said earning income lessened tensions in their families. Another tangible outcome of transformed attitudes is the newly established Safeguarding Teams, which act as first responders when incidents of violence occur in communities.

Some organisations working on domestic violence have joined forces to strengthen and expand their programs. For example, Medical Services Pacific (MSP) and Survival Advocacy Network (SAN) are working in collaboration to better address the needs of survivors and increase services for perpetrators, especially in rural areas. Due to difficulties in responding to the needs of people with drug and alcohol dependence, MSP has recruited a clinical psychologist and drug and alcohol specialist. Organisations working in this space recognise the need to increase the number and skill of trained clinicians.

A key concern raised by partners working on violence issues is the need for frontline workers to practise better self-care given the high incidence of “burnout” and negative impacts on health and overall well-being, including personal relationships. As such, ways to nurture and protect frontline EVAW workers need to be explored and actioned.

## 2.4 Women’s Economic Empowerment

Rise Beyond the Reef noted that the Fijian practise of *solesolevaki* (working together for the common good) has become a fundamental part of their working model and that this concept can be applied in other communities and contexts to facilitate engagement and change. Rise Beyond the Reef also spoke about the importance of promoting “total abundance” thinking and the need for “radical” listening when working at community level. A “total abundance” mindset refers to a conscious choice to focus on what’s positive and abundant in life (rather than what is scarce) and taking full advantage of opportunities that arise. “Radical” listening means dismantling the filters people may use when listening (such as questioning and judging) and providing a space to let someone express their story wholly, without interruption. It is about trusting someone and letting them own their knowledge and experience.



*Slides courtesy of Rise beyond the Reef Skills Building Session Power Point presentation*

Partners also spoke about the importance of “using culture to change culture.” For instance, women have found it beneficial to include men in their business ventures, indicating that once men in their families and communities understand the financial value of women’s enterprises, they are

more likely to be supportive and contribute to business and family responsibilities. For example, dairy farming has always been a male-dominated industry and men were initially resistant to the Naitasiri Women's Dairy Group's efforts. However, after the group had produced about 5,000 litres of milk in their first year (and 7,000 in the subsequent year), men exhibited new attitudes about women's leadership capabilities and began to see the positive impacts of working together.

*"Partnerships need to be resourced not just taken for granted ... they need to come from a place of kindness and mutual respect."*

Partners also noted that gaining family and community support can be a lengthy, hard earned process. Specifically, it has been difficult for some men to relinquish their role as household money managers. Examples were given of spouses and fathers assuming control over and using the women's income for personal needs (when that money may have been allocated to other uses, including re-investment into the business). As such, grantees working at the grassroots level recommended "taking things slowly" and allowing beliefs and behaviours around gender norms to be acknowledged and adapt, which seems to yield better outcomes. In addition, when the Spa Academy noticed parents were "taking over" the earnings or bank cards of their trainees, they provided training on managing income to good effect.

Grantees emphasised the benefits of working in partnership with the private sector and the difference this collaboration has made to the viability of women's micro-enterprises. For example, Rise Beyond the Reef was able to improve direct access to the tourist market by entering into supply contracts with major outlets. In addition, private sector expectations for a consistent supply of high-quality product reinforced the need for an effective community-based quality assurance process. In other examples, the Spa Academy is connecting women harvesting *nama* (sea grapes) with market outlets. The Spa Academy also reported they had increased their reach and impact by becoming involved with private sector boards and networks.

#### Case study: Getting men's support for women's economic empowerment

The Delailasakau Women's Group opened a shop with the plan to rebuild the community recreation/evacuation centre. To ensure cooperation, the women strategised to engage the village men through traditional structures in the provincial councils. In full swing, the shop could bring in FJD100–200 per day. When a community leader started taking too many items on credit, the women remained silent in keeping with cultural expectations. But, with the success of their business, their emerging financial literacy and the engagement of other men in their community, they finally addressed the issue of the community leader's credit. Now he pays cash for whatever he takes. The women's growing confidence also enabled them to approach a local mining company for assistance to rebuild their shop after it was affected by flooding.

Issues surrounding women and banking were also emphasised. For example, extensive documentation is required to register a small business, open a bank account or access services. This creates special difficulties for women living in remote areas who are unable to easily deposit money earned from market sales and other activities which leads to cash being demanded by others and/or used for unintended purposes. The need for relevant and accessible business development advisory services was stressed, along with the need to tailor financial products for rural women.

Multiple partners have received financial literacy training through the Fund or *Pacific Women* projects to ensure a more confident transition into managing funds, while at the same time providing financial training to their clients: ADRA has worked with Bank South Pacific (BSP) to assist vulnerable women; UN Women's Markets for Change (M4C) is working with other banks; and the Women's Entrepreneurs and Business Council is teaching budgeting and financial management. Rise Beyond the Reef is encouraging market analysis and teaching partners to be

flexible and responsive to market changes, while M4C is helping women diversify their product base.

## 2.4 Coalitions for Change

There are multiple and varied forms of partnerships within the women's movement in Fiji that involve financial and/or technical support, knowledge sharing, advocacy, mentoring and modelling. Numerous grantees indicated they felt a strong sense of common purpose and "strength through solidarity" due to their relationship with *Pacific Women*, the Fiji Women's Fund, grantee organisations and other partners.

While the level of partnership formality ranges from written agreements (such as a contract or memorandum of understanding (MOU)) to more casual, ad-hoc connections, it is essential that inter-agency relationships are nurtured by both parties and not "taken for granted". Participants stressed that reciprocity, trust and honest communication are fundamental to effective partnerships. Issues surrounding confidentiality within partnership arrangements was mentioned, including the need to ensure that internal organisational and human resource information is not disclosed without the full consent of the agency and individuals involved.

Partners provided examples of how they have been able to address major challenges through networking and collaborating with other grantees. For example, MSP and SAN share health expertise, training and counselling support and the Fiji Association of the Deaf has recently signed an MOU with FWRM to work with girls with hearing impairments in school settings.

### Case Study: Working Together to Address to Women's Reproductive Health Concerns

Women in Vanuabalavu had little information about menopause and what was happening to their bodies. On one hand, they were citing it as a disability on medical forms and on the other hand, there were stories that their lowered libido led their husbands to believe their wives were having affairs, or worse, to become violent towards them. The local doctor referred ADRA to the Ministry of Women who referred them to the Reproductive and Family Health Association who provided talks on menopause and the reproductive system. The talks were so popular that even the young women attended. Thanks to the Ministry of Women, the connections made for these rural women helped demystify the changes that were happening within their bodies and relationships and made it easier for their families as well as themselves to understand what was going on.

### Case Study: Creating a Sanctuary for Young Mothers

The House of Sarah reported that, after 18 months of intense work with three rural Anglican communities, they have built good relationships with various service providers (including the police and department of social welfare). This has resulted in positive benefits for women. For example, in one community, young single mothers used to dread weekends because of the harassment and violence they experienced. They now report that this is no longer the case; police response time to complaints is greatly reduced and the black-market sale of alcohol has significantly decreased.

Grantees also recognise the need to broaden partnerships arrangements in order to expand their reach and impact. For instance, the Spa Academy is exploring the potential of Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) paying course fees through member contributions, and FWRM is working in collaboration with academic institutions for the first time to mainstream gender equity and social inclusion through organisational policies and processes.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation expressed a desire to be more structural and transformative and to collaborate with other organisations who are addressing power relationships within communities to change social norms and behaviours that constrain women.

## 3. Emerging Themes, Lessons and Recommendations

### 3.1 Leadership and Decision Making

It has been difficult to break through prevailing negative attitudes about women in leadership positions at all levels, including those engaged in management roles and undertaking higher-level education. As such, there is a need for increased focus on social norm change and involving partners, families and community leaders. In this regard, several partners working at grassroots level stressed the importance of using culturally sensitive socio-economic models to avoid resistance about upsetting traditional ways of doing things.

Experience has shown that when women assume additional work burdens, including the responsibility for community-based micro-enterprises, this can lead to negative impacts on their health and overall well-being. As such, it is essential that organisations support better self-care and be more aware of the dangers of overburdening women who take on income earning ventures without a proportionate shift in the distribution of gendered household or community labour and obligations.

Partners expressed a strong need to address inter-generational divisions and “make space” for younger women to “navigate and direct their own activities and decision making” in response to their self-determined agendas. Experience has shown that combining women of different ages can make it difficult for younger women to express differences of opinion or identify topics of specific interest to them. Older women sometimes believe their views should not be challenged by younger community members. Further, while older women have greater autonomy, it can be difficult for young women to attend meetings and trainings as their husbands are more likely to question their participation. As such, there is a need to customise community-based approaches to better respond to the circumstances and expectations of younger women. To facilitate this work, FWRM developed a leadership training tool kit for younger women.

There is also concern that girls are not being supported by their families and other key influencers (such as teachers and church or community leaders) in choosing to study STEM. Therefore, the importance of helping adolescent girls, parents, school personnel and community leaders understand why STEM subjects are important for both girls and boys was stressed.

### 3.2 Ending Violence against Women

It is critical that disability inclusiveness is mainstreamed in all EAW work, including translation services within the criminal justice system. Examples were provided of investigations and prosecutions being undermined because the stories of women with disabilities (such as hearing impairment) went unheard. There is also a need to ensure effective referral mechanisms are in place for people with disabilities and other special needs. To facilitate work in this area, the Fiji Disabled People’s Federation (FDPF) has conducted refresher training on their EAW Toolkit with members and affiliates and involved their members in service delivery protocol training. In addition, FDPF has built networks and partnerships at divisional level and which is enabling people with disabilities to have greater voice in EAW planning and review processes. Other organisations were encouraged to make use of disability focal points to assist with disability inclusive work in EAW as well as other areas.

The possibility of partnering with men as allies and advocates generated considerable discussion. As men in patriarchy are used to holding positions of power, there was concern they may revert to traditional power dynamics. Support was requested for broader community education on gender



equality and social inclusion concepts so that the onus would not be on the women to assume the role of educator. Some also felt that engaging men through traditional structures could result in lasting cultural change.

Organisations working on the frontline of domestic violence noted the serious shortage of qualified, specialist counsellors in Fiji (and throughout the Pacific) and the urgent need for additional training and support in dealing with survivors and perpetrators. Awareness-raising efforts have increased community condemnation and more women and families are reaching out for assistance. As such, the supply of counselling services is not keeping pace with the growing demand.

### 3.3 Women's Economic Empowerment

There is opportunity for women's organisations to collaborate more in meeting their supply chain requirements. For example, the Spa Academy has committed to purchasing a minimum amount of sea grapes (*nama*) from women in the Yasawa Group and are currently in conversation with the Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group to supply aloe vera for beauty products.

The benefits of developing a collective strategy for more effective engagement with the private sector were discussed. This would include: creative financing strategies; tapping into markets which may otherwise be inaccessible; and developing products and services in response to market demand. It could also involve an analysis of partner/client business development service needs as the basis for planning and delivery of customised responses.

### 3.4 Partnerships and Coalition Building

Based on partner success in working with the private sector and other non-traditional partners, women's organisations believe they should pay more attention to identifying possible allies "outside the usual accomplices". In this regard, religious bodies, industry groups, higher education institutions, traditional leaders, divisional/provincial authorities and the private sector were frequently mentioned.

The theme of partnership affirmed the strength participants felt in numbers. While not always like-minded in their approach, the shared commitment to gender equality proved unifying among many partners. There was an eagerness to learn from and benefit from each other's experience, with some of the panellists seeing their greater work as creating women's coalition for change. Continued facilitation and support for networking was requested from the Fund and Support Unit.

In the case of formal partnership agreements, MOUs need to be carefully constructed and involve a thorough risk assessment, clearly stated mutual responsibilities and timelines and include regular review by all parties. When organisations do not have a lot of experience, it could be beneficial to have a third party serve as a "partnership broker", especially when there is an unequal balance of power and/or cases where parties have not worked together before. It is also important to explore how relationships can be sustained after a formal partnership ends so that learning continues. Relationships change, morph and evolve and this should be seen as "normal and healthy".

Ideological differences between partners sometimes manifest over organisational policies such as payment of sitting fees and allowances for women and community members engaged in program activities. Administrative policy differences can be highly problematic when women and community groups are working with more than one agency. As such, it was suggested that these kinds of discrepancies be discussed and negotiated up-front to avoid creating community and organisational conflict.

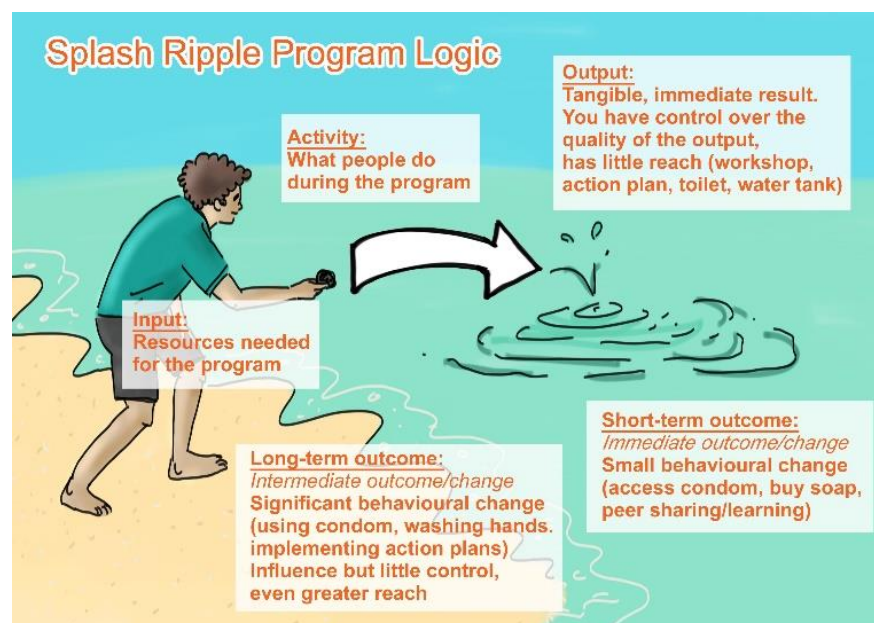
Some partners also reflected on the challenge of partnering with non-feminist groups. While there have been opportunities to work with a broader group of stakeholders, the partnership approach had to be considered from a whole-of-organisation perspective, in line with government/institutional commitments and organisational policy frameworks.

Partners and grantees highlighted a need to avoid duplication and overburdening women and communities. This could be done through available and up-to-date information on what other organisations are working on and in what areas. It was suggested that this could be supported by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in collaboration with *Pacific Women*.

## 4. Measuring Progress

### 4.1 Reporting on Outcomes

Laura Holbeck and Amali Shaw led an interactive presentation on monitoring organisational inputs, outputs and outcomes using a “splash/ripple” analogy as shown below.<sup>9</sup> Participants were then given the opportunity to practice applying this technique in assessing their activities.



More information on collecting data on outcomes is available from:

- *Pacific Women* Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluation Data Collection: <https://pacificwomen.org/key-pacific-women-resources/pacific-women-toolkit-monitoring-evaluation-data-collection/>
- Guideline for Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey: <https://pacificwomen.org/key-pacific-women-resources/kap-surveys-and-advocacy-mel/>

### 4.2 Pacific Women Six-Year Evaluation

Marica Tabualevu, a member of the evaluation team, provided an overview of the current *Pacific Women* Six-Year Evaluation (October 2019–February 2020) being conducted in two phases. Phase one is a review of program progress to date including successes, issues, challenges and opportunities based on an analysis of relevant documentation, country-level consultations (in Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Fiji and Vanuatu), key stakeholder feedback and validation. The proposed Phase two will seek to capture women’s lived experiences. Participants were invited to make recommendations on the approach.

<sup>9</sup> *Pacific Women* would like to acknowledge and thank Jill Wai of CARE Vanuatu for developing and sharing this tool, illustrated by the Support Unit.

## 5. Conclusion

The workshop strongly confirmed the value of the gender equality work *Pacific Women* and the Fund are supporting as evidence through the sharing of innovations, achievements and lessons learned. Participants also affirmed that the resources being provided, both financial and technical, are enabling grantees to successfully expand their work in new sectors and geographic areas.

The workshop design was conducive to reflecting on and discussing work of organisations as well as the women's movement as a whole including successes, challenges, lessons and next steps. Panel discussions, plenary sessions and peer presentations provided opportunity to help partners situate themselves in the wider context of the women's movement. Although the diversity of experience in the room was an initial challenge, an atmosphere of respect was created during the first panel discussion and maintained throughout the workshop.

Aside from engaging with other partners, participants were inspired to engage more with their culture and to explore ways of promoting *solesolevaki* (the coming together for the greater good). It is also reaffirmed that the women's movement continues to confront deeply-entrenched sexism at community and institutional levels.

The workshop also enabled staff of the Fund and Support Unit to receive feedback from their grantees and partners as well as gain insight into their accomplishments and challenges.



## Annex 1: Meeting Agenda

Day 1	Time	Content	Process
Tuesday 26 November Morning	9:00–9:15am	Welcome  Overview of the workshop	Welcome and opening remarks  Outline of workshop objectives and structure
	9:15–9.35am	Introductory exercise	
	9.35–10.35am	<i>Talanoa</i> panel on setting the context	Panel discussion on overall progress of the women's movement (gender equality) in Fiji over the last year. Panellists include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Virisila Buadromo, Urgent Action Fund for Asia and the Pacific</li> <li>- Mamta Chand, Fiji Women's Rights Movement</li> <li>- Veena Singh, Pacific Community (SPC) Social Development Programme</li> </ul>
Morning tea			
	11.00–1.00pm	Thematic group <i>talanoa</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ending Violence against Women (EVAW)</li> <li>- Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)</li> <li>- Women's Leadership and Decision Making</li> </ul>	Partners will form groups based on thematic areas.  Partners in each thematic area explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What's working well?</li> <li>- What is difficult?</li> <li>- What next?</li> </ul>

Day 1	Time	Content	Process
Lunch			
Tuesday 26 November Afternoon	2.00–2.30pm	Partners <i>talanoa</i> panel on thematic area of Strengthening Women's Coalitions for Change	Partner-led <i>talanoa</i> on partnerships, collaboration and women's coalitions for change. Panellists include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rise Beyond the Reef / Talanoa Treks</li> <li>- We Rise Coalition</li> <li>- Naitasiri Women in Dairy</li> </ul>
	2.30–3.30pm	Group discussions on collaboration and coalitions	Partners will form small groups to discuss the progress of partnerships and collaborations in 2019. Partners discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what has worked well?</li> <li>- what are the challenges?</li> <li>- next steps?</li> </ul>
Afternoon tea			
Tuesday 26 November Late afternoon	4.00–4.30pm	Plenary session on common themes and issues	Facilitated discussion on the common themes and issues that emerged from the sessions of the day. This session will give all participants an opportunity to hear feedback from different thematic and partnership groups. <p>Key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what's working well in EVAW, WEE, Leadership and Coalitions for Change?</li> <li>- what are the gaps that we need to work on?</li> </ul>
	4.30–5.30pm	Open Session: <i>Pacific Women Six-Year Evaluation</i>	This session will involve a presentation on the <i>Pacific Women Six-Year Evaluation</i> . It will also include a discussion on contextual issues for exploration and ways to maximise partner's and women's participation.

Day 2	Time	Content	Process
Wednesday 27 November Morning	9:00–9:15am	Welcome	Welcome and outline of workshop objectives for the day Recap of day 1 and warm up exercise
	9:15–10:15am	M&E session	This session will focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Splashes and ripples: understanding inputs, outputs and outcomes</li> <li>- Guidance on Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) surveys</li> </ul>
Morning tea			
Wednesday 27 November Mid-morning	10:45–11:45am	Peer skills- building session 1	Partners can choose one of the following sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Starting with the market in economic empowerment programs: Rise Beyond the Reef</li> <li>- Working to change attitudes of power and violence using a faith-based framework: House of Sarah</li> <li>- The national women’s machinery: Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation</li> </ul>
	11.45am–12.45pm	Peer skills- building session 2	Partners can choose from one of the following sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principles for working with people with disabilities: Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation</li> <li>- Collaborating with Medical Services Pacific in provision of sexual reproductive health and rights services</li> <li>- Developing male advocates in remote, rural communities: Rise Beyond the Reef</li> </ul>

Day 2	Time	Content	Process
Lunch			
Wednesday 27 November Afternoon	1.45–2.45pm	Peer skills-building session 3	Partners can choose from one of the following sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainable approaches to women’s empowerment: Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group</li> <li>- Structural support for women’s economic empowerment: Spa Academy</li> <li>- How to develop and communicate stories of change of individual women: UN Women Markets for Change</li> </ul>
	2.45–3.30pm	Reflection and next steps	Partners reflect on the two-day workshop: what is one idea you want to take forward as an organisation?
Afternoon tea			
Wednesday 27 November Evening	5:00–7:30pm	Networking and marketplace event	

## Annex 2: List of Participants

Name	Organisation
Gina Houg Lee	Talanoa Treks Consultancy
Anaseini Radua	Adventist Development Relief Agency Fiji (ADRA)
Inosi Yabaki	Adventist Development Relief Agency Fiji (ADRA)
Mereani Rokotuibau	Balance of Power
Maraia Likuvono	Delailasakau Women's Group
Angeline Fatiaki	DFAT
Kasanita Kotobalavu	femLINKpacific
Kelerayani Gavidu	femLINKpacific
Asinate Tinai	Fiji Association of the Deaf
Mere Tukai	Fiji Association of the Deaf
Orelia Kava	Fiji Association of the Deaf & Sign Interpreters Association Fiji
Lanieta Tuimabu	Fiji Disabled People's Federation & Affiliates
Mere Roden	Fiji Disabled People's Federation & Affiliates
Sera Osborne	Fiji Disabled People's Federation & Affiliates
Anaseini Vakaidia	Fiji Disabled People's Federation & Affiliates
Sera Saladuadua	Fiji Girl Guides
Maraia Tabunakawai	Fiji Women Rights Movement (FWRM)
Mamta Chand	Fiji Women Rights Movement (FWRM)
Michelle Reddy	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF)
Menka Goundan	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF)
Kuini Rabo	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF)
Devina Devi	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF)
Tiriseyani Naulivou	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF)
Erica Lee	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF)



Shyna Ali	Fiji Women's Fund (FWF)
Alisi Qaiqaica	House of Sarah
Josevata waqalala	House of Sarah
Jone Tuiwaiwai	House of Sarah
Ema Asioti	House of Sarah
Robert Verebasaga	International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
Kate Donnelly	International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)
Rupeti Vafo'ou	Laje Rotuma Initiative
Rosalia Fatiaki	Laje Rotuma Initiative
Roselyn Prasad	Medical Services Pacific (MSP)
Ashna Shaleen	Medical Services Pacific (MSP)
Dr Niko Bakani	Medical Services Pacific (MSP)
Emily Veiqati	Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Semisi Siga	Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Susan Pocock	Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group
Seruwaia Kabukabu	Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group
Marica Tabualevu	<i>Pacific Women</i> M&E Panel
Colleen Peacock	<i>Pacific Women</i> M&E Panel
Laura Holbeck	<i>Pacific Women</i> Support Unit
Sian Rolls	<i>Pacific Women</i> Support Unit
Paula Loga	<i>Pacific Women</i> Support Unit
Tara Chetty	<i>Pacific Women</i> Support Unit
Monica Waqanisau	<i>Pacific Women</i> Support Unit
Isabelle Gurney	<i>Pacific Women</i> Support Unit
Jennifer Butukoro	<i>Pacific Women</i> Support Unit
Amali Shaw	<i>Pacific Women</i> Support Unit

Jacqui Berrell	<i>Pacific Women Support Unit</i>
Rusila Naimawi	Reproductive Family Health Association of Fiji (RFHAF)
Esiteri Turagabeci	Reproductive Family Health Association of Fiji (RFHAF)
Sereima Maraivalu	Rise Beyond the Reef (RBTR)
Semi Lotawa	Rise Beyond the Reef (RBTR)
Ana Laqeretabua	SALT
Debra Sadranu	Spa Academy Fiji
Anjaleen Ashmika	Spa Academy Fiji
Sofaia Vodosese	SPC
Wilona Ravato	Striders Women Rugby
Sekola Sirokibau	Striders Women Rugby
Jope Ralawa	Survival Advocacy Network (SAN)
Deavain	Survival Advocacy Network (SAN)
Sesenieli Naitala	Survival Advocacy Network (SAN)
Nicolette Goulding	Talanoa Treks
Nileshni Devi	The Pacific Community - POETCOM
Flavia Ciribello	The Pacific Community - POETCOM
Veena Singh	The Pacific Community – Social Development Programme
Josephine Kalsuak	The Pacific Community - Regional Rights Resource Team (SPC/RRRT)
Farzana Gulista	UN Women
Aleta Moriarty	UN Women
Ariela Zibiah	UN Women
Virisila Buadromo	United Action Fund - Asia & Pacific
Fiona Dansey	Women Entrepreneurs and Business Council (WEBC)
Marama Tuivuna	Women in Fisheries Network -Fiji (WIFN)
Joeli Bili	Women in Fisheries Network -Fiji (WIFN)

