

Harnessing the Power of Coalitions

Fiji Regional Enhancing Agency

November 25, 2016

Project name: Strengthening feminist coalitions and partnerships for gender equality (We Rise Coalition)

Project partners: Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA), FemLINKPACIFIC, Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and IWDA

Total funding: \$4,800,000

Funding timeframe: 2015–2019

Four organisations have demonstrated that by working together as a coalition, they can increase their reach and impact. The vision of the We Rise Coalition is a Pacific where there is gender justice, ecological sustainability, peace, freedom, equality and human rights for all.



We Rise Coalition partners signing the Coalition Memorandum of Understanding in Melbourne, April 2016. Photo: IWDA.

DIVA, FemLINKPACIFIC, FWRM and IWDA have a 'herstory' of partnering successfully. In 2015, they further developed their collaboration by forming the We Rise Coalition to implement activities in Fiji and the Pacific.

'We work together as Pacific feminists recognising that the whole is greater than the sum of our parts,' explained Ms Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, the Executive Producer-Director of FemLINKPACIFIC.

The We Rise Coalition partners join their strengths, resources and networks together towards a collective objective: to develop, demonstrate and strengthen feminist coalitions and partnerships in order to grow and uphold inclusive governance, equality, diversity, justice and women's human rights.

With support from Pacific Women, 2,235 people have been involved in We Rise Coalition activities: 2,048 women, 79 men and 108 people who identified as transgender. This included 396 women participating in national-level and 194 in community-level learning events on topics such as coalition building, feminist analysis and practice; and 189 women participating in activities supporting women's leadership.

The coalition works in a number of ways to influence decision making, at local, national, regional and global levels, including strategic advocacy at intergovernmental meetings. Examples include DIVA's participation in the Expert Group Meeting on Gender and Climate Change; DIVA and FemLINKPACIFIC at the 60th CSW; and FWRM's participation in the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. A common thread through all these events has been the push for gender equality commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Coalition has played a driving role in coordinating Pacific civil society engagement with the 2030 Development Agenda.

Working locally in Fiji in the wake of Cyclone Winston, the We Rise Coalition was active in post-cyclone communications (including through a Women's Weatherwatch campaign) and the recovery response, demonstrating the adaptability of the model in emergency situations. The Fiji-based partners stayed in close communication during the early post-cyclone period, visiting and providing immediate relief to women and marginalised groups in affected communities. All partners then shared the stories they heard during this early response to advocate for better policy and practice in official government and intergovernmental agency response and recovery activities.

In addition to working with communities and leaders at all levels, the Coalition also invests time in defining and understanding the benefits of this Pacific grown coalition model. Noelene Nabulivou, DIVA's political adviser, acknowledged the value of being part of the coalition: 'The We Rise Coalition model is assisting DIVA to sustain ourselves as an organisation, and as individual Pacific LBT (lesbian, bisexual and trans) feminist activists working in small island societies. The We Rise Coalition model, for DIVA, is becoming clearer and more relevant as time goes on. It is not always easy, but we are committed to the Coalition's feminist vision.'

For FWRM's Michelle Reddy, the strength of the coalition approach 'is much more than just four organisations working together on joint projects. It is a way of partnering to build strength in each of our organisations, and the women's human rights movement in Fiji and the Pacific.'

This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2015-2016](#). All values are consisted with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).