

COVID-19 website “hub”: <https://pacificwomen.org/news/pw-supporting-gender-inclusive-covid-19-responses/>

# *Pacific Women*: Supporting gender-inclusive COVID-19 responses

March 5, 2021

*This page will be regularly updated as new information is received. (Last update: 8 March 2021)*

- [Webinar](#)
- [Pacific Girl Survey](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Partner activities](#)
- [Background](#)
- [Recommendations](#)

The impacts of COVID-19 are not gender-neutral.

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by crises compared with men and boys, and so both women and men need to be included in response planning as leaders and decision makers. Women are key to an effective response. [Read more in this blog.](#)

To encourage gender inclusive COVID-19 responses, *Pacific Women's* Support Unit continues to support 164 partners across its portfolio of 171 gender equality initiatives in 14 Pacific Islands, funded through the Australian Government.

Government, civil society, private sector, development and other partners working on gender equality and women's empowerment in the Pacific are driving incredible COVID-19 initiatives and advocacy approaches.

## Webinar: Women's Economic Empowerment and COVID-19 in the Pacific

A webinar about women's economic empowerment (WEE) in the context of COVID-19 and the Pacific was held on 22 July. The webinar aimed to identify measures for a gender-aware and feminist response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls in the Pacific. [Read a full summary and watch a recording of the webinar here.](#)

It also sought to broaden a shared understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on women and marginalised groups in the Pacific, including on changes in women's paid and unpaid labour. You can also read the [pre-event](#) and [post-event](#) stories from the webinar.

## Pacific Girl Survey

The *Pacific Women* Support Unit has conducted a survey for adolescent girls in the Pacific, 'Pacific Girl Speak Out: COVID-19 Survey'. It sought to hear from Pacific girls' about what they're feeling, doing and how they're being impacted during this COVID-19 period. The

survey also featured an option for girls to share their messages of solidarity with adolescent girls across the Pacific. These messages can be viewed in [this album on the Pacific Women Facebook page](#).

The survey closed on 30 June 2020, with messages of solidarity still able to be submitted via this form: <https://pacificwomen.typeform.com/to/YVmge1i5>

The survey findings, among other sources, have been included in the [Thematic Brief – Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescent girls in the Pacific](#). This Thematic Brief provides information and analysis about emerging impacts of COVID-19 on adolescent girls in the Pacific.

A webinar built on the findings of the 'Pacific Girl Speak Out: COVID-19 Survey' and other sources that have been included in the [Thematic Brief – Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescent girls in the Pacific](#). The webinar was held on Thursday 15 October 2020: <https://pacificwomen.org/news/webinar-pacific-girls-and-covid-19/>

## *Pacific Women COVID-19 Resources*

The following gender and COVID-19 analysis, messaging and tools have been developed by the Support Unit, which provides technical, knowledge sharing and convening support to the portfolio of 159 partners and 177 initiatives.

[Thematic Brief – Gender and COVID-19 in the Pacific](#) – The Thematic Brief provides information and analysis about emerging gendered impacts and recommendations for response for COVID-19 in the Pacific.

[Thematic Brief: Gender and COVID-19 Economic Recovery Measures in the Pacific](#) – The five key messages outline the gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Pacific, and highlight how a lack of gendered economic policy and budgeting results in economic response measures that benefit men, whilst largely failing to reach women.

[Key Messages and Talking Points – Gender and COVID-19 in the Pacific](#) – These key messages are useful 'Talking Points' for people working in government, civil society, private sector, donor and other organisations in the Pacific to engage media, government and other partners about the importance of gender-inclusive responses to crises.

[Checklist – Gender-inclusive COVID-19 Response](#) – This Checklist proposes strategic actions to encourage and support a gender inclusive COVID-19 responses in the Pacific.

[Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Indicators](#) – The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Brief and Indicators documents provide useful GESI indicators and instructions to help people working in government ministries, private sector, civil society organisations (CSOs) and other agencies to best plan, monitor, analyse and report on COVID-19 response and impacts.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## COVID-19 partner activities

*Pacific Women* supports more than 160 partners across 14 Pacific Islands countries, many of whom are adapting their programming in light of COVID-19. Below is a snapshot of how many of these partners are leading and supporting COVID-19 responses, as detailed online including via social media:

Crisis service providers, such as [Bel isi PNG](#), [Chuuk Women's Council \(CWC\)](#) and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, are adapting their approaches to ensure help is available when needed, especially with physical distancing measures. To support this, [new infographics promoting the helplines of crisis services](#) have been developed with partners (in collaboration with UN Women) to reach social media users in the Pacific Island countries. Women and Children's Crisis Centre (WCCC) in Tonga, Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) and CWC are also encouraging survivors to make contact via Facebook Messenger, plus CWC has introduced a second phone helpline during this period and WUTMI launched its 24-hour telephone line.

To support partners, [the Support Unit has trialled remote training to WUTMI and CWC on telephone counselling](#).

Many are supporting public health campaigns: Wan Smol Bag has produced [a series of awareness videos](#) and [UN Women's Markets for Change](#) shared a video on handwashing; [the Chuuk Women's Council](#) and [World Vision](#) are part of outreach awareness teams; [OXFAM in Papua New Guinea and its partners](#) are including COVID-19 information in their ongoing community awareness; organisations such as [FemiliPNG](#), [WUTMI](#) and [World Vision](#) are creating or donating much-needed materials for those on the front lines (like [Medical Services Pacific](#)).

Some partners are integrating COVID-19 measures into disaster response and recovery efforts such as [Shifting the Power Coalition](#) in [Vanuatu](#), [CARE in Vanuatu](#), [Vanuatu Skills Partnership](#) and [the Women and Children's Crisis Centre in Tonga](#).

The Fiji Women's Fund, with the Australian Humanitarian Partnership and *Pacific Women*, provided additional resourcing announced [alongside the grants disbursed as part of the Fund's third call for funding](#). Additional funding through *Pacific Women* has also been [provided to WCCC, Tonga National Centre for Women and Children and the Family Protection Legal Aid Centre](#) to provide ongoing essential counselling services and continuously adapt their projects.

With schools disrupted, partners like [UNICEF](#) and [Equal Playing Field](#) are producing content for children at home during lockdown.

Partners are also supporting strategic efforts to prepare and respond. Some are providing the evidence base and advocacy to inform national responses such as the [Individual Deprivation Measure](#), [PNG National Research Institute](#), [FSVAC](#). and [the COVID-19 Response Gender Working Group](#) in Fiji. The Fiji Women's Rights Movement has also released [a rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on young women and girls in Fiji](#).

***Pacific Women is prioritising the safety of its staff, partners and Pacific communities as we closely monitor the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our region and the world. Together with our partners, we are adapting plans and activities based on this evolving situation. We will continue to diligently follow all government and health advice.***

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Background: Why it is important to have a gender-inclusive COVID-19 response

Health pandemics such as COVID-19 have specific and severe impacts on the lives of women and girls. Since the COVID-19 outbreak first had reported cases, the gendered impacts began being documented in the Pacific and across the world.

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by crises. Existing gender inequalities are exacerbated during a crisis with the result that women and girls face even higher rates of violence and sexual abuse, undertake more unpaid domestic work, access fewer essential health services and are more vulnerable to economic hardship.

It is critical to apply a gender lens to best understand and respond to the different impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls, men and boys, and other marginalised groups in the community.

Recognising the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on marginalised groups is vital to ensure an effective health response which does not further endanger and exclude already vulnerable groups. Crises such as disease outbreaks heighten the vulnerabilities of different groups, accentuating inequalities and leading to the neglect of the needs and rights of the most marginalised. This includes women and girls living in poverty, migrants, people with disabilities, the elderly and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE).

Experience from past outbreaks such as the Ebola and Zika outbreaks have demonstrated the vital importance of incorporating a gender lens to planning, response and re-building to ensure health interventions and humanitarian response are effective and promote gender equality. Recognising how COVID-19 affects women and men differently is fundamental to an effective response.

For more details refer to the [Thematic Brief – Gender and COVID-19 in the Pacific](#).

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Recommendations

The following eight recommendations aim to ensure a gender-inclusive COVID-19 response:

1. Women and girls are at increased risk of physical and sexual violence in their homes

2. Burden of unpaid care work on women will increase
3. Women are working at the centre of the crisis
4. Access to sexual and reproductive health is disrupted and rights are compromised
5. Impacts on women's economic insecurity
6. Reaching vulnerable groups
7. Women as decision makers
8. Women, WASH and shelter
9. Risk of violence and exploitation due to securitisation
10. Adolescent girls (aged 10–19) face specific challenges.

For more details refer to the [Thematic Brief – Gender and COVID-19 in the Pacific](#).