

Diverse voices are stronger together

Fiji Papua New Guinea Regional Samoa Tonga Vanuatu
Enhancing Agency

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Feminists, women and human rights defenders and gender equality advocates celebrate the Pacific Feminists Charter for Change at the Pacific Feminist Forum in 2016. Photo: Pacific Women / Shazia Usman

‘We are bringing together our strengths and resources and building a collective voice to effectively advocate and address women’s human rights issues in the Pacific,’ explained Nalini Singh, Executive Director of Fiji Women’s Rights Movement, a member of the We Rise Coalition.

There are several women’s coalitions in the Pacific. We Rise Coalition brings together autonomous, feminist organisations on women’s issues. Shifting the Power Coalition brings together a network of 13 women-led organisations

from seven Pacific Island Forum countries supporting diverse women to use their collective power and leadership to influence and transform disaster management and humanitarian systems.

These coalitions are addressing social norms to create a more equal society for women and men, supported by Pacific Women. They are able to harness combined resources and networks to influence decision making and ensure accountability to gender and human rights commitments at local, national and regional levels.

We Rise Coalition directly engaged with 7,125 people from 13 Pacific Island countries through its coalition building, feminist analysis and practice activities between 2015–2019. In 2021, We Rise Coalition welcomed four new partners: Brown Girl Woke from Samoa, Sista from Vanuatu, Talitha Project from Tonga, and Voice for Change from Papua New Guinea. They join existing partners in the coalition: femLINKpacific, the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement and International Women’s Development Agency.

‘All of us working on women’s rights issues know why we do this work,’ said Ms Singh. ‘It’s because there is a problem we are trying to address.’

We Rise Coalition is the force behind organising two Pacific Feminist Forums, which mobilised diverse women from across the Pacific to share knowledge and experiences, celebrate achievements and strategise for collective action to achieve women’s human rights.

We Rise Coalition also takes women’s human rights issues to high-level intergovernmental meetings, such as the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This ensures diverse Pacific women and other marginalised groups have their voices heard at some of the most senior forums in the world. This sustains momentum toward gender equality commitments and encourages stronger prospects for funding support and remedial actions.

In a region containing five out of the 15 countries most at risk of disasters in the world, including the top two, Shifting the Power Coalition is supporting women to lead humanitarian action and raise their voices through training, network building and research. It strengthens diverse women’s voices, agency and decision making in disaster preparedness, response and recovery through coalition action.³⁷

Coalitions are able to bring more people together, advocating for the same issue.

‘Often our voices are not heard (but) the Shifting the Power Coalition is a good example of leaving no one behind,’ says Angeline Chand of the Pacific Disability Forum, adding: ‘particularly in the national networks.’



Leaders of Women I Tok Tok Tugetha (WITTT) raise awareness about the importance of women-led responses, by presenting live on air in the radio studio. Photo credit: Shifting the Power Coalition.

Ni-Vanuatu leaders of the Coalition were able to work together through Women I Tok Tok Tugetha (WITTT) to better protect women and girls in crisis via a localised, women-led response. This resulted in two new WITTT forums of 1,500 women, ensuring young women and women with disabilities play a key role in the process.

Through its Rapid Response Mechanism, Shifting the Power Coalition mobilised resources for six partners in Fiji and Vanuatu to take local actions following Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold, TC Yasa and the COVID-19 pandemic, including a women-led rapid needs assessment jointly led by partners in Fiji and Vanuatu. These assessments are guiding ongoing support to partners.

In Fiji, the assessments provided direct assistance to 138 women-headed and 17 lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) headed households including 65 women with disabilities as well as support women's leadership and decision making in disaster management with a focus on the design and management of evacuation centres.

In Vanuatu, the coalition is also ensuring that women receive information about cyclones and COVID-19 through its Women Wetem Weta activities. This includes working closely with the Ministry of Health to develop a simple, non-technical COVID-19 prevention SMS in the local language, Bislama, sent to more than 77,148 people across five islands.

'When we are empowered with leadership skills, information and access to decision making and networks, we can transform problems caused by the climate crisis to solutions that contribute to climate security,' says Carolyn Kitione, Regional Young Woman Focal Point of the Coalition.



Ni-Vanuatu leaders were able to work together through Women I Tok Tok Tugetha (WITTT) to better protect women and girls in crisis via a localised, women-led response. Photo credit: Shifting the Power Coalition