



## PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

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### FORUM ECONOMIC OFFICIALS MEETING

4 – 5 August 2020

### FORUM ECONOMIC MINISTERS MEETING

11 – 12 August 2020

Virtual

### INFORMATION PAPER NO. 4: ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

#### Purpose and Summary

##### Purpose

This paper provides a progress update on key areas for the Economic Empowerment of Women.

##### Summary

- i. Economic wellbeing can only be achieved if all people participate and current gender disparities in labour markets illustrate that Forum island countries (FICS) are ‘off track’ to achieve women’s economic empowerment. Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is key to supporting gender equality and the economic empowerment of Pacific women. An update is provided on the 2017 FEMM tasking on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).
- ii. In the past 12 months a number of regional events have brought the issue of women’s economic empowerment (WEE) to the fore. Most notably the Regional WEE Learning Forum and the preparatory work for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) have facilitated important discussions between government and civil society to identify gaps and necessary actions going forward. Although there have been advances towards gender equality there are still many more challenges that must be addressed.
- iii. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges and created further challenges to women’s economic empowerment. Government stimulus or support packages do not reach the informal sector, where many women work to create incomes for their families; some PICs have introduced ‘one off’ payments for this sector, but the amount is often not commensurate with income needs. The paper prepared by the Secretariat on the social impacts of COVID-19 provides more information.
- iv. There are numerous initiatives that seek to improve women’s economic empowerment. Two of these (i) strengthening market infrastructure and making these areas safe for women, and (ii) financial literacy training are discussed in this paper.
- v. Across the region new approaches are being developed, trialled and evaluated as ways to increase women’s economic empowerment and enhance family and community well-being. Due to the diversity of the region, not all models can work in all settings, but a number of approaches have proved to be adaptable and are being scaled up. These include a family teams’ approach, flexible funding, and most recently, business improvisation to adapt to the ‘new normal’ as a result of COVID-19.

## **A. Overview**

The 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) was endorsed by Pacific Leaders to invigorate gender equality commitments, change social attitudes about women's rights and abilities to be active and valued participants in development, and institute practical objectives for gender equitable development across sectors. In addition to the commitment by Leaders, FEMM has also played an active role in strengthening regional commitment to the economic empowerment of women. This commitment is manifest through the Economic Ministers' decision in 2012 for a report to be provided annually to FEMM on FICs' progress on the economic empowerment of women.

## **B. Update on FEMM tasking**

### *Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)*

2. In 2017 FEMM "tasked the Secretariat, in consultation with relevant development partners, to develop a methodology to adequately capture and track budgetary allocations towards women's economic empowerment, as well as conducting some analysis around benchmarks for gender responsive budgets. This work should also consider the measurement of women's contribution to the economy in the domestic and informal sectors".

3. It should be noted that developing a regional, one-size-fits-all approach to GRB is challenging because of the range of budget tools and processes in use across the region as well as the varying levels of analytical capacity in members to progress this work.

4. The Secretariat has worked with the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) on progressing the FEMM tasking on GRB. To facilitate a collaborative approach, other partners including the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women) Support Unit and UN Women have either been engaged or intend to work on this issue were included. The first step in this work was to map current efforts that addressed GRB in some way as well as plans that were in the pipeline including:

- a. *GRB is being introduced in the 2020-2021 Budget process in Fiji* following a Cabinet Decision (96/2020). This is the second step after a pilot phase led by Ministry of Economy and supported by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation from November 2019 to March 2020 in which a Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Gender Responsive Public Financial Management (PPEFA GRPFM) review was done. Based on the review a ten-step GRB introduction plan was agreed with MoE. GRB will be introduced by piloting in two ministries - Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism (MITT) and the Ministry of Fisheries and Forest (MoFF), the two ministries have done a gender budget analysis of two budget programs using existing national data and statistics and adding in a beneficiary analysis to identify gender gaps in the programs. The analyses will be used to inform the ministry's budget submissions towards the national budget. This approach follows the cycle of the budget and alignment with the national budgetary process is instilled from the very beginning and also including specific monitoring and follow-up actions. The Fiji PEFA GRPFM report will soon be launched at PEFA website.

- b. *Tonga was also the 9th pilot for the PEFA program's new PEFA gender responsive PFM framework*, with strong cooperation provided by Tongan officials. The GRB assessment team was also supported by an official from the Fiji Ministry of Economy, the aim of which was to broaden experience with GRB in the region. As with the Agile PEFA report, the PEFA gender responsive PFM assessment was completed within the same timeframe. The Tongan experience, along with the other pilots, clearly demonstrates that the PEFA gender responsive PFM can be undertaken with only marginal increase in resources but provides enormous benefits on benchmarking GRPFM in a country and providing a platform for further reform.
- c. *Pacific Partnerships for Ending Violence Against Women (PPEVAWG)* is developing budget tracking tools to support sectors involved in ending violence against women prevention and response. The tracking tools that will be developed may include gender aware budget statement templates, gender aware policy appraisals, sex disaggregated public expenditure incidence analysis, sex disaggregated beneficiary assessments, and disaggregated tax incidence analysis. Regional convening and capacity building on gender responsive budgeting to end violence against women and girls is planned for 2020-2021.
- d. *UN Women* under the Spotlight Programme will be rolling out beginning in 2020 studies on the Economic Cost of Domestic Violence in Solomon Islands, Fiji and Marshall Islands. A component of the study will also look at developing an agreed methodology on costed plans for the implementation of national domestic violence policies and legislation.
- e. *CSOs Study on Economic Cost of Violence*: To ensure regional coherence in undertaking economic costing studies and CSOs consistent engagement following the 2019 FEMM outcome supporting CSOs' to undertake a study on economic costs of violence. A CSO Reference Group has been established and PIFS support to CSOs has been around engagement with existing partners such as UN Women to ensure CSOs efforts are aligned and connect to the economic costs of violence studies conducted by UN Women. CSOs will continue to provide technical inputs and provide perspectives that will inform the methodologies and tools used to finalise the regional studies by UN Women. The study is still in the early stages and there is scope for this to be discussed in the online discussions at the CSO Forum scheduled for 3-9 June.
- f. *UNDP Pacific Risk Resilience Project (PRRP)*: taking a 'development-first' approach to managing risk and ensuring that it disaggregates risk for different groups. In an effort to mainstream risk and resilience efforts across sectors, submissions to national budget formulation are screened for gender and climate change. The first phase of the project ended in December 2019 and is currently in the design stage of the second phase.
- g. *Disability Inclusive Budgeting* – Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) has conducted training with a number of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) on analysis of public expenditure over recent years, specifically on persons with disabilities and looks at how official development assistance (ODA), regional cooperation and relevant policy analysis and meaningful consultation are critical in ensuring that inclusive budgeting is mainstreamed into national public financial management systems. PDF continues to work with DPOs and development partners to monitor disability-related expenditure and advocate for Members to adopt cost-effective ways to provide support for persons with disabilities and make mainstream services inclusive.

## **i. Effective partnerships**

5. To encourage the economic empowerment of women, Ministers are urged to firstly note and consider supporting the relevant recommendations from the *13<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Pacific Women Ministers<sup>1</sup>*, held in Suva in October 2017 as outlined in **Attachment 1**. A key outcome of the 13<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of Pacific Women was the need for effective partnerships between academia, governments, CROP, civil society, development partners and the private sector to conduct studies, gender analysis, research and to generate knowledge on women's economic empowerment. Over the last 12 months, two key events were undertaken in support of this recommendation.

### *A Regional Learning Forum on Women's Economic Empowerment*

6. The Pacific Women Regional Learning Forum on Women's Economic Empowerment (Learning Forum) was held at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva, Fiji from 27 – 31 May 2019. More than 200 policy makers, practitioners, and academics attended the five-day forum.

7. The forum brought together a diverse group of women working in the informal economy, including market vendors, women working in fisheries, agriculture, crafts and dairy; social enterprises; internet businesses; policy, planning and finance decision makers (government, development partners, regional organisations); program practitioners; regional and international organisations; research institutions; civil society and community organisations; and representatives from the private sector. Participants heard from women who were both new to business and entrepreneurship and those who had been in the industry for a longer period and provided insight into their experiences.

8. Outcomes of the Learning Forum included research ideas, policy implications for women's economic empowerment and ways for improving implementing practice on women's economic empowerment initiatives. Moderators, panelists and participants debated how research should inform the work of Pacific Women to ensure real impact and adaptive learning. The plenaries and panel sessions identified multiple research themes, concepts and questions that have potential to improve women's economic empowerment initiatives in the Pacific.

### *25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action*

9. The year 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the 25th anniversary of the Pacific Plan of Action, the 20th anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security and commemorates five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. All these commitments require, to a greater or lesser extent, government commitment to macro-economic, trade, fiscal, labour, and taxation policies and regulations that support the economic empowerment of women.

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<sup>1</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Pacific Women Ministers, held in Suva in October 2017

10. The 2019 Pacific Regional Preparatory meeting, in the lead up to the UN Asia-Pacific Ministerial conference, highlighted women's economic empowerment as a key component in advancing gender equality in the Pacific. The meeting noted factors that hindered women's ability to fully participate in the economy included outdated regulations, lack of social protection for workers, and the need for gender responsive support for women. Women's contribution in the informal sector was recognised as was the need to ensure inclusive and sustainable opportunities for all women. For example, most women with disabilities excel in the informal sector but are not fully included in existing incubator programmes, and lesbians, bisexual women, transgender and intersex persons (LBTI) are often not included in mainstream gender and development initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

## ii. Other initiatives

### *Strengthening market infrastructure and making these areas safe for women.*

11. Marketplaces can be unsafe for women particularly in large urban centres and where law and order is weak. Women may not be able to protect their goods or money when they in transit to and from markets, or in the marketplaces themselves. Toilet facilities are often not secure, and women may experience sexual harassment or assault when using existing facilities. Women who overnight away from home to sell their produce may not have safe places to sleep and/or store their goods.

12. Historically women have not had a voice or control of how markets are run, nor have they had input into services available for vendors. Under the Markets for Change project, collaboration between UN Women and city councils seeks to address this issue. New or renovated marketplaces in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands<sup>3</sup> and Papua New Guinea provide market vendors a cleaner and safer working environment. Women have access to better facilities to display their produce and wares. Some markets have designated areas where women who travel from rural areas are able to sleep or rest. Others have worked with local banks to enable vendors to do their banking with a bank officer who visits the market to provide basic banking services. A welcome outcome of this project is the evolution of existing or new market vendor associations where 100% of the leadership positions are held by women.<sup>4</sup>

### *Financial literacy training*

13. For women to be able to be financially independent and empowered, it is crucial that they are financially literate and have access to financial services. Organisations such as the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme (PFIP) work to close the gender gap in access to financial services, recognising that women comprise half of the potential client base for financial services providers. PFIP works with service providers to highlight the importance and benefits of gender equality and to design appropriate messaging that will attract women as clients. At the same time PFIP works with grantees to support their increased access to services. This has included gender-sensitive financial education and mobile phone literacy training.<sup>5</sup> All these approaches build women's confidence and empower them to make informed decisions about household budgets, their own earnings and business management.

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<sup>2</sup> Outcomes document of the Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting on the Beijing +25 review (Oct 2019).

<sup>3</sup> <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2019/05/partnership-for-cleaner-healthier-marketplace> and <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2019/08/celebrating-partnerships-for-gender-equality-in-the-marketplace> and <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2018/09/savusavu-market-to-undergo-major-upgrade>

<sup>4</sup> SPC (2019). Pacific B+25 Draft Report

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pfip.org/about-us/about-pfip/>

14. Several Pacific countries have national financial literacy strategies<sup>6</sup> and some PICTs provide financial literacy training for women and micro-credit facilities for them. The Samoan National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020 led by its central bank in partnership with the Development Bank of Samoa facilitated 778 beneficiaries (558 female and 220 male). A key benefit has been the provision of financial literacy and training, unemployed women as well as women who have been victims of domestic violence have been assisted to establish 138 micro-businesses.<sup>7</sup> There are other important initiatives in the region that must be acknowledged such as decreasing the cost of remittances as this is a significant source of income for women, especially older and widowed women.

15. More detailed information on financial literacy programmes and the gender related results are outlined in the FEMM paper referenced *PIFS(20)FEMM.Info.7 – Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme*.

### iii. Challenges

16. Rural women may be earning more from market produce, however social norms mean that they are not necessarily in control of the income that they earn in terms of decision making about how it is spent or saved. Women face increased obligation to contribute financially to extended family, community and church obligations, resulting in a reduced portion of that income going to their own children and families. In some cases, women face increased violence in the home due to their increased earnings and power dynamics in their homes. Provision of mobile banking facilities and savings groups are two strategies that can support women to manage their earnings safely.

17. Access to, and control of, resources remains a key challenge for women to engage in income generation and small business. In general, finance and the economic ministries have more male than female senior decision makers. This can limit gender responsive policy adaptations and program innovation. Evidence from global research indicates however that if women had the same access to credit, markets, technology and land as men, the returns to women, particularly in the informal sector, would significantly increase.<sup>8</sup> More equitable economic policies will be enhanced through increased equity in decision making in households. Historically economic decision-making at the household level has been a male domain but *Demographic and Health Survey* data from some countries<sup>9</sup> shows this appears to be changing in favour of joint decision-making.

18. Women with disabilities are often subjected to double discrimination due to their gender and disability status and continue to be at a disadvantage in most spheres of society and development. Employment rates for women with disabilities are significantly lower than those for men with disabilities in most countries in Asia and the Pacific. The gender gap is even wider compared with men without disabilities, with women with disabilities being two times less likely to be employed. Among those employed, women with disabilities are two times less likely to work as legislators, senior officials or managers.<sup>10</sup>

19. Despite gender parity being achieved in education, and more women and girls reaching and graduating from tertiary education, this has not translated into an increased share of formal sector employment for women.

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<sup>6</sup> Fiji, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu have Financial Inclusion Strategies.

<sup>7</sup> SPC (2019). Pacific B+25 Draft Report

<sup>8</sup> OECD (2012). Women's Economic Empowerment: The OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality

<sup>9</sup> Notably Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga

<sup>10</sup> Disability at a Glance (2015)

20. Due to COVID-19, many women entrepreneurs are facing significant losses to their businesses. Job losses, reduced working hours, movement restrictions, and social distancing have meant that they do not make as many sales as they previously would have, especially for those in casual or part-time work, including those in the informal sector and ‘households as employers’ sector (housekeepers, nannies, etc.).

#### **iv. Emerging approaches**

21. Across the region new approaches are being developed, trialled and evaluated as ways to increase women’s economic empowerment and enhance family and community well-being. Due to the diversity of the region, not all models can work in all settings, but a number of approaches have proved to be adaptable and are being scaled up.

##### *Family teams*

22. The ‘family teams’ approach aims to encourage more effective, sustainable and gender-equitable farming and business practices. It uses a strengths and assets-based community development orientation and guides farming families to explore issues of gender and culture within families.<sup>11</sup>

23. Family teams’ approaches raise awareness of all family members about the importance of balancing responsibilities and supporting women as they participate meaningfully and effectively in the economy. Assessments have shown that families who follow this approach are more inclined to set goals and make decisions together, budget and save successfully, and work together to increase the productivity and income of their farm. In Papua New Guinea where it is most widely used, the family teams’ approach has been used in Western Highlands, East New Britain, Eastern Highlands, Bougainville and New Ireland Province.

24. Variations of the approach are being used by multiple organisations in Polynesia and Melanesia. A key aspect of family teams is that they promote shared and equitable benefits for entire families and build respect for women’s ability to contribute to community well-being and decision making. Examples from Tonga indicate that supporting women in the production of ngatu and other handicraft has positive financial outcomes for everyone in the family.

##### *Flexible funding*

25. Growing evidence suggests that supporting women’s groups, networks, organisations and the women’s movement is an effective way to bring about gender equality. The Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program established the Fiji Women’s Fund (the Fund) to provide \$10.5 million of flexible funding over five years to women’s organisations, with a focus on reaching women in remote, rural areas and other marginalised women. The aim of the Fund, the first in the Pacific region, is to become an independently funded and managed women’s fund by the end of 2022.

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<sup>11</sup> ACIAR (2016). Building gender equity through a family teams’ approach

26. The Fund uses two main mechanisms to reach women. The first is the creation of partnerships with organisations that work in rural and remote areas or support networks of otherwise hard to reach women. The second is provision of direct financial and non-financial assistance to women's groups, organisations and networks in Fiji to expand and enhance their work on women's empowerment and gender equality.<sup>12</sup> The Fund supports diverse groups working in economic sectors ranging from tourism, handcrafts, agriculture and aesthetics. Concurrently the fund supports organisations and initiatives to undertake community development, increase the status of women and accelerate gender equity in decision-making.

#### *Adapting to the current situation*

27. Out of necessity, and in an effort to stay financially afloat, many women entrepreneurs have been forced to change direction with their business during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several businesses owned and operated by women, particularly small and micro enterprises, have switched to producing face masks, home delivery and catering of food, and a greater online presence to maintain some cash incomes.

28. Another interesting phenomenon that has arisen in direct relation to the pandemic is the surge in online bartering, taking a modern twist on a traditional Pacific practice. In Fiji, a Facebook page created on 21 April 2020 to encourage non-cash trading has accumulated over 114,000 members as of 4 May 2020, and this has been replicated in other PICs. Members, a large majority of whom are women, have been able to barter agricultural produce, books, household items, art and craft, baked goods and groceries. Anecdotal evidence indicates that many who have either lost their jobs or have had work hours reduced are able to trade either services or goods in exchange for groceries and household items to support their families.

### **C. Next Steps**

29. Next steps on the GRB work entail further collaboration with partners to assess appropriate models that Members can adapt to suit the national context and to further address the FEMM tasking.

30. Ministers will be kept informed of the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on women's economic empowerment through the update paper to FEMM.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat  
29 June 2020

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<sup>12</sup> <https://pacificwomen.org/stories-of-change/flexible-funding-for-womens-organisations/>





Economic empowerment of Pacific Women  
L'émancipation économique des Océaniennes

**Thirteenth Triennial Conference of Pacific Women**

**and**

**Sixth Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women**

2–5 October 2017, Suva, Fiji

**Recommendations and outcomes**

Endorsed on 5 October 2017



Pacific  
Community  
Communauté  
du Pacifique

## PREAMBLE

1. The 13<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, hosted by the Pacific Community (SPC), was held from 2 to 5 October 2017 in Suva, Fiji. The theme of the Conference was '**economic empowerment of Pacific women**'.
2. Meeting participants included representatives of 20 SPC member countries and territories – American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna – and civil society and academic institutions, CROP agencies,<sup>1</sup> and international and regional non-governmental and development partner organisations.
3. The Conference reaffirmed the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED), the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the advancement of women and gender equality (RPPA), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of its subsequent reviews, which laid the foundation for the implementation of the S.A.M.O.A Pathway and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
4. The Conference reiterated that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provide an international legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for realising gender equality, equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and empowerment of all women and girls of all diversities,<sup>2</sup> including their economic empowerment, throughout their lives.
5. The Conference recognised that gender equality is a prerequisite for the full achievement of the objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the Pacific Youth Development Framework, the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Moana Declaration and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific.
6. The conference recognised the right of persons with disabilities, including women, to work on an equal basis with others. This includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work, freely chosen or accepted, in a labour market and work environment that is open, safe, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, and to safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work.
7. The Conference recognised the importance of the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards related to women's right to work and rights at work, which are critical for women's economic empowerment, and recalled the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Decent Work Agenda.
8. The Conference welcomed the regional overview of the current status of economic empowerment of Pacific women, which shows that women's work, including unpaid work, is fundamental in building Pacific

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific.

<sup>2</sup> To clarify the use of women and girls of all diversities, the meeting took guidance from CEDAW Article 1 and suggested the following wording. For the purposes of the present convention, the term 'discrimination against women' shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

economies, sustainable development and resilience, and emphasises key drivers of their economic empowerment.

9. The Conference and the Ministers' Meeting provided an opportunity to review and adopt the *Pacific Platform for action for gender equality and women's human rights 2018–2030*.

10. The *Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) 2018–2030* proposes measures to accelerate implementation of gender equality commitments made by Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) at the global, regional and national level, in particular the PLGED. The PPA has five strategic objectives:

- ❖ Enhance the generation of knowledge to inform policies and decision-making, and support advocacy for gender equality
- ❖ Mainstream gender across all legislation, policies, programmes and services delivered by government, CROP agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs)
- ❖ Develop and strengthen effective partnerships between governments, institutions, CSOs, the private sector and faith-based organisations (FBOs), so that women and men of all ages across all levels of society are empowered as individuals and communities to prevent violence and all forms of discrimination
- ❖ Mobilise resources and sustain investment to advance gender equality
- ❖ Establish mechanisms and systems to make stakeholders accountable for implementing commitments to gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls

11. The Conference made recommendations to achieve economic empowerment of Pacific women in line with the PPA's strategic objectives and the priority areas of the PLGED.

12. The Conference recognised the many forms of discrimination and adversity that women experience at different stages of their lives. Acknowledging that women's economic empowerment depends on the links between their social, economic and environmental conditions, the Conference stressed the importance of adopting a combination of measures, taking a multi-sector and integrated approach.

13. The Conference stressed that women's economic empowerment requires strong public–private partnerships and that the private sector has a responsibility to implement the principles of decent work, including a social responsibility to promote gender equality and support women's economic empowerment.

14. The Conference acknowledged the valuable role of CSOs, in particular women's human rights organisations, in promoting gender equality, human rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and women's leadership, and supporting measures to eliminate gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination against women and girls of all diversities.

15. Acknowledging that peace and security are preconditions for women's economic empowerment and resilience, the Conference called for the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes, where appropriate, to address the inter-generational effects of nuclear testing, including on women's health and other areas. The conference noted the forthcoming Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

## **Enhance the generation of knowledge to inform policies and decision-making, and support advocacy for women's economic empowerment**

16. Governments, in partnership with academics, CSOs, FBOs and the private sector, and with the support of CROP agencies and development partners, need to collect, analyse and use data disaggregated by sex, age and disability on a regular basis and conduct gender analysis to better understand and track progress of women's economic empowerment and identify economic opportunities for women, in all their diversities and throughout their life cycle, including Indigenous women and those from ethnic minorities, urban poor, those living in rural and remote areas, young women, women with disabilities, and lesbian and bisexual women.

### **The Conference:**

17. Acknowledged ongoing work done at the regional and national level to identify and expand promising practices to support women's economic empowerment.

18. Called for PICTs to strengthen the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of accessible statistical data on women's economic empowerment in the region and for CROP agencies and development partners to continue providing technical assistance and support.

19. Recognised the need for effective partnerships between academics, governments, CROP agencies, development partners and the private sector to conduct studies, gender analysis and participatory research to generate knowledge on:

- a) women's contribution to economies, especially in the informal sector, including cultural industries
- b) unpaid work and care, including household and community-related activities
- c) conditions for work and activities in the informal and formal sectors, to inform legislation and policies
- d) causes of pay disparity between women and men from different segments of the population, and potential measures to ensure women of all diversities receive equal pay for work of equal value
- e) effective measures to support the resilience of women's economic activities in the context of climate change and disaster impacts
- f) income-generating activities, including development of value chains, employment, and livelihood opportunities for women, especially for women with disabilities, young women, rural women, and lesbian and bisexual women
- g) causes and social and economic impacts of gender-based violence, and strategic approaches to address harmful social norms
- h) examples of practices in the Pacific region that contribute to the redistribution of unpaid work and care
- i) impacts – both positive and negative – of legislation and policies, including macroeconomic policies, structural reforms and aid and trade agreements, on women's productive assets and economic empowerment

- j) economic models and measures adapted to the Pacific context that protect traditional knowledge and practices and communal property rights, respect the human rights of women of all diversities, and acknowledge the benefits of technological and social innovations.

## **Mainstream gender across all legislation, policies, programmes and services delivered by governments, CROP agencies and CSOs**

20. Women's economic empowerment must be supported by all sectors, including information and communication technology (ICT), education, finance, justice, public service, water, agriculture, marine resources and infrastructure, and by sub-national and local government and the private sector. Central and local governments, with the assistance of CSOs, FBOs, CROP agencies and development partners, are encouraged to mainstream gender across their policies, legislation, programmes and services.

### **The Conference:**

- 21. Urged governments to adopt, review, and implement legislative measures to:
  - a) reform discriminatory legislative and regulatory frameworks to promote gender equality and women's rights to decent work and employment, equal pay, decent living wages, timely and accessible justice, freedom and personal safety, sexual and reproductive health, property, inheritance and citizenship
  - b) ensure appropriate social protection measures for poor women and their dependants that provide cash and in-kind transfers, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of marginalised people
  - c) protect migrant workers and the human rights and social protection of women migrant workers
  - d) increase the number of women in national and sub-national parliaments and legislatures, in customary institutions and in senior decision-making positions in government
  - e) address all forms of sexual and gender-based violence in all areas of life
  - f) ensure access to SRHR is available to all people, with increased support and protection for girls and young women, including enhancing access to education and appropriate resourcing, human and financial.
- 22. Called on the public and private sectors to support the development of women's productive assets and capacities by:
  - a) reviewing early childhood, primary and secondary education curricula, teacher education and student assessment to promote and guarantee gender equality and human rights and challenge gender stereotyping and similar harmful norms
  - b) promoting lifelong learning for all women, of all diversities, and encouraging and supporting young women to develop skills in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and economics, and gain qualifications that enhance their employment prospects
  - c) improving the educational environment for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to attract women, young women and girls into technical fields and apprenticeships
  - d) adopting measures to promote and guarantee that all places of learning and work are safe places for women, young women and girls of all diversities

- e) providing incentives for the private, not-for-profit and state sectors to train and employ women
- f) taking measures to ensure women with disabilities have access to decent work in the public and private sectors, and that work environments are inclusive of, and accessible to, all persons with disabilities
- g) designing programmes and services that support women's roles as managers and custodians of natural resources in sectors including agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and mining
- h) promoting financial and economic literacy programmes and access to financial services
- i) improving delivery of gender-responsive programmes
- j) ensuring measures for climate change adaptation and disaster risk management address the needs of cultural industries, small-scale agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture
- k) improving the provision of basic services and infrastructure, such as water, sanitation and energy, to alleviate the burden of women's unpaid care work
- l) providing high-quality, accessible and affordable childcare
- m) implementing mechanisms to support gender mainstreaming processes across central, sub-national and local government programmes and services
- n) increasing women's access to ICT and digital services, including for women with disabilities and women living in remote areas
- o) supporting government and regional organisations to undertake and implement gender-responsive budgeting.

23. Called on the public and private sectors to improve working conditions for women by:

- a. adopting gender and social inclusion policies
- b. supporting enterprises to introduce and strengthen violence and harassment policies and conduct gender audits to identify measures to ensure gender equality at all levels, establish respectful and safe workplace environments for women and men, and enable reconciliation of work and family responsibilities
- c. removing biases and stereotypes in human resource policies, adopting practices to reduce gender gaps in hiring, promotion and pay, and establishing accountability mechanisms including appropriate protocols for pay equity processes, with objective criteria for initial pay and promotion, and regular reviews of pay equity
- d. improving infrastructure and governance of market places to create inclusive and gender-responsive environments
- e. implementing training, mentorship, internship, apprenticeship and sponsorship programmes to enable female employees to develop their skills
- f. ensuring that structural reforms, budgets, economic policies, taxation, aid arrangements and trade agreements do not disadvantage women
- g. introducing appropriate gender equity measures in public procurement to encourage women-led businesses in the formal and informal sector to bid on government tenders, or providing assistance to

women-owned enterprises, such as setting mandatory procurement targets and subcontracting goals in supply chains.

24. Called on the public and private sectors, CSOs, FBOs, CROP agencies and development partners to adopt measures to promote gender equality in all areas of life by:

- a) setting appropriate targets for the representation of women, men and marginalised groups across the key decision-making areas noted in the PLGED, and considering adopting temporary special measures, where appropriate, to increase women's representation in legislatures
- b) encouraging women's participation and leadership in trades unions, organisations for informal workers, employers' and business organisations and professional associations
- c) promoting women's influence and agency by supporting the capacity of special interest groups, such as market vendors, to develop their bargaining power in economic areas.

**Develop and strengthen effective partnerships between government institutions, academics, CSOs, FBOs, CROP agencies and the private sector so that women and men of all ages, across all levels of society, are empowered as individuals and communities to address gender justice issues**

25. Strong and effective partnerships at all levels of Pacific governments and the private sector are required to lift women's economic empowerment by developing and implementing policies and practices that support their employment and entrepreneurship. Similarly, CROP agencies and development partners must ensure their own programmes are gender responsive and support women's economic empowerment. In many countries, CSOs play a part in informing women (and men) of their rights, and raising awareness in the public and private sectors of areas for improving women's working conditions.

**The Conference:**

26. Encouraged the development and strengthening of partnerships between women and men, and between government institutions, CSOs, FBOs, unions and the private sector to:

- a) promote gender equality and the human rights of women of all diversities in the workplace
- b) establish high-level corporate leadership of gender equality to advance policies for addressing gender-based violence, discrimination and sexual harassment, and promote the appointment of women to leadership positions
- c) support family life education that promotes gender equality and human rights, including SRHR
- d) support the initiatives of CSOs to challenge harmful gender norms, gender-based violence and discriminatory practices, and to promote equality and the human rights of women and girls of all diversities
- e) support programmes that engage men and boys as allies in challenging gender stereotypes and reducing women's double burden of paid and unpaid work
- f) support dialogue with customary institutions, where appropriate, on reviewing practices that hinder women's access to productive assets

- g) work with women, particularly the most marginalised, to amplify their voices and support representative organisations to negotiate with national, sub-national and local government and private sector bodies
- h) promote a safe and enabling environment for all civil society actors, with a specific focus on women human rights defenders, and more equitable access to resources for grassroots, local, national and regional women's organisations and CSOs to support women in asserting their economic rights.

## **Mobilise resources and sustain investment to advance gender equality**

27. Achievement of gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the Pacific requires governments to work alongside CSOs, FBOs, CROP agencies and development partners. Long-term investment is needed to address the issues that combine to create gender inequality in the region. More specifically, there is a need to develop effective action on the commitments made by Pacific Leaders and Economic Ministers.

### **The Conference:**

28. Called for governments, the private sector, CROP agencies and development partners to increase financing and sustained investment to:

- a) support women's entrepreneurship
- b) facilitate financial inclusion of women
- c) support cultural industries
- d) build women's resilience to climate change impacts<sup>3</sup> and sustain their livelihood in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, recognising their traditional knowledge and sustainable, traditional adaptation and mitigation practices
- e) provide affordable, high-quality and accessible care services, such as child care, elder care, mental health care and disability care
- f) improve basic infrastructure and services, including sustainable energy, accessible ICT and transport
- g) strengthen social protection measures to support women's economic security throughout their lives
- h) develop and support legislation, policies and programmes that challenge harmful and unjust gender norms, gender stereotypes and all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence
- i) establish and sustain merit-based scholarship programmes supporting young women, of all diversities, to study in areas of country priorities including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

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<sup>3</sup> Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work: Agreed conclusions of the 2017 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), paragraph 40 (hh), page 13.



## **Establish mechanisms and systems to make stakeholders accountable for implementing commitments on gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls**

29. Pacific governments have made repeated commitments to gender equality and women's economic empowerment, but tracking tools and accountability mechanisms, and the capacity of people to do the work, need to be strengthened. Regular and evaluative monitoring and reporting processes for governments and CROP agencies are necessary to demonstrate their efforts to deliver on these commitments.

### **The Conference**

30. Called on PICTs, CROP agencies and development partners to establish or support the implementation of, and reporting on, existing commitments with accountability mechanisms that demonstrate:

- a) adoption and implementation of legislative and policy measures to increase women's digital, financial and property assets
- b) that women's human rights are protected within macroeconomic policies, in structural reforms and in aid and trade agreements
- c) government budget is invested in basic infrastructure and services that contribute to alleviating the burden of unpaid care work and support women's economic empowerment
- d) removal of barriers to women's participation in the workforce and in decision-making, and enforcement of equal opportunity practices
- e) development and implementation of legislative measures, policies and programmes to eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence and harmful gender norms in the workplace
- f) adoption and implementation of laws and policies promoting decent work, pay equality, and support for the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.

31. The **Sixth Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women** was held in Suva, Fiji, on 4 and 5 October 2017. The Ministers adopted recommendations to uphold gender equality and women's human rights across the regional development and resilience agenda and to promote these Pacific priorities in the global development and climate change agenda.

32. The Ministers endorsed the *Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030* and recommended that reports be presented to Triennial Conferences of Pacific Women on action under the PLGED and on progress against, and the effectiveness of, the measures contained in the PPA.

33. Ministers noted the need for CROP agencies and development partners to support the region's gender equality commitments, and to ensure that monitoring and evaluation frameworks, under the PPA's strategic objectives, are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and other regional and international commitments.