

OCEANIC PACIFIC

Regional Outcomes Statement

In the lead up to Women Deliver 2023, the Oceanic Pacific region hosted two Women Deliver convening events. The first was in Pacific Harbour, Fiji, on 11 and 12 May 2023, and the second in Melbourne, Australia, on 6 and 7 June 2023.¹

We gathered at the events to discuss gender justice and human rights in the Oceanic Pacific region. We represented and embodied women, girls and gender diverse people in all our intersecting identities. The event allowed those of us who work for gender equality in the region to determine the region's priorities. We will take these priorities to the Women Deliver 2023 Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, which will take place on 17 to 20 July 2023.

This statement was prepared and endorsed by the Oceanic Pacific Regional Committee. It is a broad summary of the outcomes documents produced at each regional convening event. This statement reflects the diverse individual and collective experiences and insights of the participants and will guide our regional delegation's participation at Women Deliver 2023. We identified 12 priority themes for our region (in no particular order).

Women Deliver 2023 is an opportunity for those working towards gender equality in the Oceanic Pacific region to engage strategically in this global arena. The priorities below centres Pacific Nations, and voices of First Nations and diaspora communities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. It also builds on Oceanic Pacific gender equality efforts.

PRIORITY THEMES

Indigenous solidarity

It should be a non-negotiable that First Nations² women have a say in decisions that affect them, from the community level to the national level. First Nations women are not homogenous. First Nations women bring a wealth of diverse knowledges, perspectives and experiences from community and country, including matrilineal knowledge (knowledge passed down by mothers), and the role women play in families and communities.

[1] The Women Deliver Oceanic Pacific convening event in Pacific Harbour, Fiji, gathered 36 people and included Women Deliver Oceanic Pacific Regional Committee Members, civil society activists, allies and observers. The Women Deliver Oceanic Pacific convening on 6 and 7 June 2023 on Wurundjeri Country in Melbourne, Australia, gathered 360 people, including Women Deliver Oceanic Pacific Regional Committee Members, government representatives, gender equality sector and women's organisations, civil society activists and other stakeholders from philanthropy, business and academia.

[2] We use the term First Nations to capture all First Nations groups across our diverse region. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Nations people of Australia.

First Nations women know what their community needs and aspirations are, but need resources to do the work, and to organise across communities and share knowledge. We recognise the importance of specific mechanisms to achieve First Nations gender justice and equality, for example the national framework for action that will follow the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Summit in Australia in May 2023.³

Climate Justice

The Pacific is at the frontline of the climate crisis. It is at the centre of worsening disasters and biodiversity loss, and threats to our ocean. These are all made worse by the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 and the long-term effects of conflict in some places.

All work on women's human rights and gender equality must consider humanitarian, disaster, development, peace and post-conflict contexts. Our lived experiences, countries and peoples are not just 'projects', 'issues' or 'parts of a program cycle'.

We acknowledge that some groups experience compounding discrimination and distress associated with climate disasters. Such groups include LGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, and women and communities that live in remote places. Our feminist work must consider the connections between:

- climate and ecological justice
- disaster risk reduction
- sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- gender-based violence (GBV)
- unpaid care
- other gender equality work.

Decolonisation

Decolonisation is structurally a gendered and feminist issue. We need a massive shift from unequal colonial practices to those based on power-sharing and reimagining, co-design, co-creation, co-responsibility and co-accountability. This is critical to develop fair partnerships and empowered relationships with the Oceanic Pacific, including Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. We must move away from tokenistic inclusion and pursue authentic structural and societal change towards decolonisation. We all need to take action. We need to remove barriers to participation and decision-making for First Nations women to enable genuine self-determination.

[3] [Summit Communique | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

Cultural sovereignty and self-determination

For Pasifika diaspora, multicultural and First Nations communities (of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand), there is a priority need to address systemic racism and enable spaces for marginalised communities to reclaim our cultural sovereignty, identities and voices to ensure greater agency over decisions. This includes acknowledging connections to land and water, cultural practice and continuation of culture.

Leadership and representation

Progress towards gender equality in the Oceanic Pacific is being slowed by structural barriers and underlying social, cultural and economic barriers. We must adopt a range of legal, social and political measures to:

- ensure women, in all their diversity, can take part in decision-making and leadership positions, at local, national, regional and international levels, and in public and private spheres
- address the low representation of women in political leadership across the Oceanic Pacific region
- enable fair representation of First Nations women in Aotearoa New Zealand and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia, and for women with intersecting identities across the region.

Resources for women's rights

We need gender responsive and transformative funding for gender equality and all aspects of Pacific development justice. This includes funding and resourcing autonomous feminist and women's organising.

We know that women are underrepresented in spaces where we make decisions about funding. Yet, organisations and movements led by women and gender diverse people are often the ones on the ground working to solve complex issues. Feminist funding is about disrupting power and putting resources into the hands of the people most affected by the problem. Gender-responsive budgeting must be flexible, trust-based, long-term and participatory. We need to embed accessible, intersectional, multi-sectoral, community-led and self-determined approaches in long-term funding processes to allow a sustainable culture of sharing and recognising the importance of knowledge, networks and people.



Care work and economic justice

It is important to consider unpaid care, domestic and communal work in the context of advancing gender justice and human rights. Unpaid care prevents full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the economy and in broader society. Men and faith-based individuals must engage with reforms and we need legislated responses to protect and compensate care work.

We will meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)⁴ target to ‘recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through providing public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and promoting shared responsibility within the household and the family.’

Gender-based violence

Pacific women and girls experience twice the global average rates of gender-based violence and violence against women and girls (GBV/VAWG). First Nations women in Australia are 32 times more likely to end up in hospital because of family violence, and 11 times more likely to die from assault than non-Indigenous women in Australia.⁵ Women and girls with disabilities also experience much higher rates of GBV/VAWG.

It is a human rights violation by individuals, communities, states, laws and institutions. It must end. GBV has no place in our societies, cultures, faiths or traditional spaces. It has damaging effects on survivors, families, communities and societies. Gender inequality is the key driver of GBV. We must challenge attitudes that lead to violence, or that use culture to foster violence.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are human rights. SRHR are essential for sustainable development because of:

- their link to gender equality and women’s wellbeing
- the impact on bodily autonomy and integrity, sexual decision-making, maternal, newborn, child and women’s health throughout life
- their roles in shaping future socio-economic and ecological sustainability, development and climate justice.

SRHR education and services must be accessible for all. Young people, women with disabilities, trans women and gender diverse people face compounded barriers to SRHR access, equity and agency. We recognise the recent backlash and erosion against SRHR is gendered.

[4] <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

[5] Australian Human Rights Commission, *Wiyi Yani U Thangani: Securing our rights, securing our future report*, AHRC, 2020, accessed 7 June 2023. <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/wiyi-yani-u-thangani>

Backlash

There is clear global and local backlash against human rights, dignity and gender justice. This global backlash is powerful and organised. We need to work together, inside and outside institutions and structures, to stop the erosion of women's human rights. We need strong regional commitments and solidarity from Pacific leaders, Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and UN agencies to address any backlash against gender equality and women's rights.

Intersectionality

We acknowledge that intersectionality is a strength, and we celebrate the diversity of voices across the Oceanic Pacific region. We need to:

- embed intersectionality and diverse lived experience in all areas and structures
- understand issues with an intersectional lens to install effective long-term solutions
- elevate youth voices and involve youth in decisions that affect them by creating space for them.

Gender data and evidence

Gender disaggregated data includes specific and detailed information about women, girls and gender diverse people. Gender data is crucial for transformative action, including across the priority themes in this Statement. Gender disaggregated data enables us to:

- measure and define issues with accuracy
- identify gaps
- inform decision-making
- ensure accountability.

There are still significant gaps in collecting and accessing gender disaggregated data. We need urgent action to address data gaps and data accessibility. We need to use data to amplify our lived experience. We need to ensure that decision-makers and policy-makers use it, while also prioritising inclusion and safety through data collection. We must invest in Indigenous data sovereignty so community-led organisations can collect and analyse their own data.

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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