

OCEANIC PACIFIC

Regional Convening Outcomes Document Melbourne, Australia

Who we are

The Women Deliver Oceanic Pacific convening from 6 to 7 June 2023 on Wurundjeri Country in Melbourne, Australia, gathered 360 people, inclusive of 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.

Building on the Pacific Outcomes Document: This Outcomes Document should be read in conjunction with the Outcomes Document for the Women Deliver Oceanic Pacific Regional Convening event held in Pacific Harbour, Fiji on 11-12 May 2023. These two events provided an opportunity to identify regional priorities to be taken to the Women Deliver 2023 Conference in Kigali, Rwanda from 17-20 July 2023.

This Outcomes Document captures the key messages from **the Melbourne event – Sisters in Solidarity: Our Stories, Spaces and Solutions** across the following thematic areas identified as priorities for our region:

1. Indigenous solidarity:

It should be a non-negotiable that First Nations¹ women have a say in the decisions that affect them, from the community level to the national level. First Nations women are not homogenous and bring a wealth of diverse knowledges, perspectives and experiences across the communities and countries they represent, including matrilineal knowledge, and the role women play in their families and communities. They know what their community needs and aspirations are but need to be resourced to do the work, as well as to mobilise across communities and share learnings. We recognise the importance of mechanisms to achieve First Nations gender justice and equality, and initiatives such as the landmark National Framework for action to be developed following the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Summit in Australia in May 2023.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on Indigenous solidarity:

- **Wiyi Yani U Thangani Summit:** Over four days, 900 Australian First Nations women and girls came together, raised their collective voice and determined the priorities for First Nations gender justice and equality in Australia at the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Summit in May 2023. As feminists and human right defenders, we stand side by side and support First Nations voices, experiences, and solutions to be centred in decision-making. We recognise the importance of mechanisms to achieve First Nations gender justice and equality, and initiatives such as the landmark National Framework for action that allow First

¹ We use the term First Nations to capture all First Nations groups across our diverse region, and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Nations people of Australia.

Nations women power and control over the decisions that impact them, and where they can put forward their stories and lived experiences as evidence-based and innovative policy.

- **Self-determination:** First Nations women should be empowered to lead on determining and developing policies and programs that affect them, as they have the lived experience and understanding of what works best for their communities. Their voices must be amplified, and their actions resourced, and we must make space for this, including for young First Nations people. The role of existing funders and decision-makers should be to support initiatives that are being led by First Nations communities.
- **Decolonising knowledge:** We must recognise the 65,000 years of continuous culture and knowledge, and that First Nations women across the Oceanic Pacific, including in Australia and Aotearoa, have deep connections to land and culture, which is intertwined in their identity and values. First Nations knowledges, wisdom and leadership in managing the environment and caring and cultivating land and water must be acknowledged and valued. The global feminist movement should prioritise Indigenous women's rights as a minority group who are often silenced, and should provide a platform for Indigenous women voices to be amplified. There is much we can learn from the solidarity within and between First Nations women, and from Indigenous knowledge, culture and practice around inclusion and intersectionality.
- **Building the evidence base:** There are many examples of place-based initiatives and programs that are community led, effective and create sustainable outcomes and significant existing evidence on what is effective. Data sovereignty is important and we need to support First Nations communities to collect and hold their own data and evidence. We support First Nations communities to choose when, where and how data will be shared.
- **Solidarity and allyship:** Solidarity can be built around the collective aim of an ambitious future for First Nations women and girls. To show solidarity, allies must genuinely listen to First Nations women, elevate and amplify their voices by letting them share their own stories, and educate and equip themselves with the knowledge required to carry the conversation forward. The burden of educating others should not fall on First Nations women.

2. 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 their cultural sovereignty, identities, and voices so they have the agency over decisions that impact them. This includes acknowledging connections to land and water, cultural practice and continuation of culture.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on cultural sovereignty and self-determination:

- **Creating space for healing:** Pasifika diaspora, multicultural and First Nations women experience unique challenges to achieving gender equality as a result of colonisation, displacement, discrimination and intergenerational trauma. It is important to recognise intergenerational trauma as a missing context to the conversation around and understanding of these communities, and to create safe spaces for truth-telling and healing.
- **Creating space for reclaiming cultural sovereignty:** Space needs to be made for communities that have historically been marginalised to reclaim their identities. The process of reclaiming cultural sovereignty must be based on principles of self-determination and led by those reclaiming cultural sovereignty. Different approaches are needed to address the unique contexts and needs of different communities.
- **Challenging labels:** We must collectively challenge the labelling of communities that results in the internalisation of shame for people from these communities, impeding their free participation in society, or which reduce certain cultures to a problematic behaviour. For example, gender-based violence is often referred to as a 'culture problem' rather than looking at the context of the behaviour such as colonialism,

trauma, systemic discrimination, and intergenerational trauma. The responsibility of challenging labels should not fall to Pasifika, multicultural and First Nations women and girls to lead.

3. Decolonisation:

Decolonisation is a gendered and feminist issue, and we all need to take action in our own spheres to challenge colonial structures and coloniality, including the prioritisation of knowledges of the minority world. Increased gender inequality is linked to colonisation and colonialism has stripped women of the rights they traditionally had in many communities across our region. Genuine self-determination requires a move away from tokenistic inclusion, in order to pursue authentic structural and societal change towards decolonisation. Decolonisation is not a one-size fits all approach and a range of different approaches are required to address the unique challenges faced by different groups.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on decolonisation:

- **Decolonising knowledges:** First Nations women have unique Indigenous ways of being, thinking, doing and knowing and in practicing decoloniality, we must challenge the coloniality of knowledges.
- **Power shifting:** We need to rethink our norms and put women back at the centre of decolonisation efforts. There is a need to shift to ways of working that strengthen cultural identity and integrity, and which are consistent with self-determination and sovereignty. This includes challenging colonial attitudes, processes and structures, including in our funding approaches and professional spaces, including power dynamics within and between organisations.
- **Continued impact of colonisation:** All levels of society must recognise the continuing impact of colonisation on nation states, systems, institutions and individuals. This requires a journey of unlearning at different levels, transparency and honesty around whose voices and choices count, and further discussion about the harms caused by colonisation. Decolonisation is necessary to advance self-determination and community-led solutions and more opportunity is required for truth-telling about the past and the impacts of colonisation.

4. Intersectionality:

Effective and impactful long-term solutions to the inequalities and social justice issues we currently face can only be realised by applying a business-as-usual intersectional lens to policy and practice. We must actively include people with diverse lived experiences in decision-making processes, particularly the voices of youth and ensure that no one is left behind in our pursuit for intersectional gender equality. Intersectional approaches must also consider the compounding disadvantages experienced by First Nations women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on intersectionality:

- **Intersectional evidence base:** An intersectional lens is crucial to advancing gender equality as experiences of gender inequality are not uniform. To do this, we need to build a strong intersectional evidence base by accurately capturing intersectional data and conducting research with diverse groups in a decolonised manner. This will help us to understand how intersecting forms of inequality overlap to exacerbate gender inequality, and form evidence-based and community-centred solutions to these issues.
- **Adopting power-sharing models:** An intersectional lens reveals how power dynamics in society privilege certain groups and disadvantage others. When working with people with different intersecting identities, we need to ensure that we adopt power-sharing models and apply decolonising methods to avoid tokenism and paternalistic interventions, which reinforce existing inequalities.

- **Self-determination and co-design:** Intersectionality is more than just listening to different perspectives – it is empowering people by applying principles of self-determination and co-design to decision-making processes.
- **Transparency:** We need to be transparent about the barriers we encounter when advocating and applying an intersectional lens in existing structures, systems and processes. This requires creating safe spaces for uncomfortable conversations, which highlight structural inequalities and challenge the status-quo.

5. Gender data and evidence:

Robust gender-sensitive and disaggregated data is crucial for transformative gender equality action. It enables us to accurately assess circumstances and define issues, and identify who is being reached and gaps, measure progress, inform decision-making, ensure accountability, and make the case for investment. However, there are still significant gaps in collecting and accessing gender data. Urgent action is needed to address data gaps and to make data accessible. We need to also consider how best to use data to amplify lived experience in ways that enables it to be used by decision and policy makers, while also prioritising inclusion and safety through data collection.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on gender data and evidence:

- **Reliable, comprehensive, multidimensional, and intersectional data** is foundational to achieving gender equality and makes visible the extent and nature of gender inequality and informing more responsive, effective action. This should not be viewed as optional but essential for holding decision makers accountable.
- **Accessibility:** Information-sharing and clear presentation of data is critical to ensure accessibility of data. To be accessible, data needs to be presented in a way that is clear and understandable by people who are not data specialists, including using graphics and easy-to-read language. Data should also be made easily accessible to the public, for instance published online and readily found.
- **Training and education:** Intersectional data has historically been lacking. Its collection must be prioritised using inclusive and safe practices which are culturally sensitive. Specific training and education need to be implemented to support intersectional data collection.
- **Resourcing for intersectional gender data:** Sufficient financial investment in collection of intersectional gender data, gender expertise, and systems that support mainstreaming of intersectional gender analysis are key enablers of informed action for gender equality. Organisations of all kinds have a role in shaping expectations about the availability and use of intersectional gender data. Collaborative capacity building at the local level is integral to influencing meaningful change.
- **Investment in research:** Partnerships between researchers and community service organisations are necessary to ground knowledge production and translation in the local context and promote learning, sharing and dialogue across sectors and the region.
- **Indigenous data sovereignty:** We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other First Nations and Indigenous communities should have governance, choice and control over data collected from and about their communities.

6. Climate Justice:

Our feminist work must critically consider the interlinkages between gender, climate, socio-economic and ecological justice as well as between climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity protection and sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, unpaid care and other sets of gender equality work. Climate justice work must be transformative at the state, societal and individual levels. Women, in all their intersecting identities, must be at the decision making and negotiating table to affect progressive

action on climate crisis and disaster response and resilience. We must also acknowledge the climate impacts on connections to land and waters, continuation of culture and ability for communities to practice culture.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on climate justice:

- **Women's participation and leadership in climate crisis and disaster response:** While women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, they are not represented in decision-making processes in climate crisis and disaster response and mitigation spaces. Women must be represented at the decision-making table, so their specific needs, experiences and diverse perspectives are included in immediate, medium and long-term response and resilience efforts. For instance, consideration should be given to incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices around caring for country and managing the natural environment.
- **Inclusive climate crisis and disaster response action:** Any response to the climate crisis and disasters must take on a feminist and intersectional lens, be inclusive and accessible to all and address the unique barriers experienced by different groups of women. Tailored responses are needed for those groups which experience compounding discrimination and distress associated with the climate crisis, such as LGBTQIA+ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities and remote women and communities. Young people need to be supported to amplify their voices and needs, and to access resources, training and education so they can contribute to climate justice efforts.
- **Gender and climate financing:** Resourcing for increased capacity building to partner on local projects is required across community and government sectors, and local communities and traditional owners must be part of decision making for projects on Country. Funding should be prioritised for work and research at the nexus of climate and gender, and to capture the experiences and elevate the voices of marginalised groups most impacted by the climate crisis.
- **Non-renewable energy practices:** These practices have an impact on the sustainability of land, water and natural resources and the social impact of these industries on the community, particularly on women residing in remote and regional communities where many of these industries are concentrated.

7. Leadership and representation:

We must address the low representation of women in political leadership and decision making across the Pacific and pursue more equitable representation for 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.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on leadership and representation:

- **Positive action to support women's participation in decision-making:** There are a range of legal, social and political measures that can support the participation of women of all diversities in decision-making positions – at local, national, regional and international levels and in all institutions in public and private spheres.
- **Diversity as a strength:** The diversity of skills, expertise, perspectives and lived experience is required for good governance and decision-making that best serves the interests of a diverse community. Leadership and representation initiatives need to include the participation of women of all diversities to ensure intersectional perspectives in decision-making.
- **Gender quotas:** Gender quotas and targets have an important role in improving gender diversity in governance and leaderships positions. When complemented by intersectional data collection and the development of plans to measure and improve performance, they provide accountability and support effective and informed decision-making.

- **Breaking down of gender stereotypes:** Rigid gender stereotypes and beliefs, particularly socially dominant forms of masculinity, play a role in limiting women's participation in politics. The under-representation of women in politics is due to a multitude of factors and barriers. Some of the drivers of under-representation in our diverse region include the pervasiveness of masculine political cultures, the view that politics is 'men's work', electoral systems that tend to favour men and women's lack of access to election campaign financing.

8. Resourcing for women's rights:

Feminist funding is about disrupting power and putting resources into the hands of the people most impacted by the problem. It must be flexible, trust-based, long-term and participatory. Accessibility, intersectionality, multi-sectoral and community-led approaches need to be embedded into long-term funding processes. Women are underrepresented in spaces where decisions are made 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.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on resourcing for women's rights:

- **Intersectionality and capacity-building:** There is a need to embed both intersectionality and a capacity-building lens at the outset when designing funding models and processes. For instance, by prescribing co-design, collaboration and active participation in funding guidelines, approaches and evaluation. This ensures that resourcing is inclusive and promotes self-determination in the community.
- **Gender responsive budgeting:** Gender responsive budgeting should not be restricted to feminist or gender equality initiatives but should be applied to the distribution of all resources. The introduction of impact assessments for resource distribution can help ensure transparency, make visible the unequal distribution and impact of financing, and support the flow of resources to those who need it most.
- **Accessibility:** Information and application processes for resourcing opportunities must be more accessible and streamlined where possible. The lack of clarity and ease for applying for funding can be a barrier for many grass-roots organisations who are already operating at capacity.
- **Long-term funding:** A shift to long-term and flexible funding is necessary for organisations to operate efficiently and implement sustainable and effective solutions, particularly in crisis contexts.

9. Care work and economic justice:

Despite steps forward in advancing gender equality, the majority of unpaid care still falls to women which prevents their full participation in the economy and broader society. While further support must be offered to women in the workforce, more must be done to challenge attitudes and systems which perpetuate that the responsibility of domestic work falls to women. A whole of community response is required for long-term reform, including through policy changes and compensation approaches.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on care work and economic justice:

- **Sharing care-work:** There is an urgent need to challenge the paradigm that results in women carrying the responsibility of care-work which has long-term impacts on numerous areas of their life. The redistribution of care-work is necessary to allow for women to fully participate in the economy. The unequal distribution of unpaid care work has been exacerbated through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Education and awareness raising:** Dedicated efforts are needed to change community attitudes around care work and to challenge unhealthy gendered stereotypes. This is critical to achieving effective long-term change in the distribution of care work.

- **Support for women in the workforce:** Practical and legislative solutions to assist women in the workforce should be implemented, including flexible working hours and remote working, and increased pay for women in the care sector. Extending the duration of parental leave and enabling leave to be shared between partners (particularly for fathers) supports redistribution of care-work so that women can pursue their careers if they choose to.
- **Policy and legislative response:** Further discussion is needed to explore the implementation of legislation to compensate care work. Informal care employees are often left out of policy and legislation development, and not included under workplace protection laws. There is a need for all care workers and care receivers to contribute to and shape policy priorities as it relates to care work.

10. Gender-based violence:

Acknowledging that gender inequality is the key driver of gender-based violence, including family violence, it is imperative that attitudes and social norms which lead to violence are challenged, including those that limit women's autonomy and promote rigid gender stereotypes. Multiple sectors need to work together across the continuum of prevention and response to more effectively address gender-based violence.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on gender-based violence:

- **Person-centred, coordinated, integrated and holistic support:** Prevention and response are inseparable and exist along a continuum. There's a significant opportunity to better join up gender-based violence work and reduce siloes, to be more coordinated, integrated and person centred, including through sharing lessons learned across different contexts. Trauma informed and survivor-oriented approaches are critical.
- **Strengthen consent legislation and respectful relationship education:** Affirmative consent legislation and respectful relationships education in schools are crucial in stopping violence against women and must address the influence of pornography, particularly on young people's development, attitudes and beliefs about sex and intimacy. We must provide training to enable bystanders to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours, including online.
- **Importance of community-led responses:** Communities must be engaged in prevention and response efforts, to ensure approaches appropriately respond to their specific contexts and challenges. We must fund community-led and place-based responses to address violence against women, and long-term partnerships with community organisations in order to effectively do this work. For instance, there is a significant need for greater investment in culturally safe, Aboriginal led, family violence response services to help address the disproportionate impact of gender-based violence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia.

11. Sexual and reproductive health and rights:

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are human rights. SRHR education and support services must be accessible for all, with cultural safety a necessary component of access to quality care. Young people, women with disabilities, trans women and gender diverse people face compounded barriers to SRHR access, equity and agency. We recognise that recent backlash and erosion against SRHR is gendered.

Key messages and learnings from the Melbourne event on sexual and reproductive health and rights:

- **Equitable access to SRHR:** Overlapping forms of structural discrimination contribute to inequitable access to sexual and reproductive health, and affect women and girls' experiences of reproductive coercion and violence, including forced sterilisation. There is a significant lack of information, services and support for women and girls to manage a series of holistic health needs and pelvic pain including

menarche, premenstrual syndrome, menstruation, perimenopause, menopause and common conditions like endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome.

- **Agency and empowerment** should be central to SRHR responses, with a focus on person-centred and strengths-based approaches within the continuum of care. Tailored approaches are needed to ensure SRHR information and education is inclusive and accessible for all.
- **SRHR, climate change and disasters:** There is a link between climate disaster and reduced sexual reproductive health and rights. We must ensure that all women and girls can access SRHR information and services during times of disaster, and that they are represented in decision-making across the spectrum of emergency management response, prevention, preparedness, and recovery.