



Pacific
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15TH TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF PACIFIC WOMEN & 8TH MEETING OF PACIFIC MINISTERS FOR WOMEN

BRIEFING NOTE: GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLIMATE JUSTICE



GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLIMATE JUSTICE – BRIEF

This brief summarises key gender equality issues relating to climate justice in the Pacific region. Part of realising global commitments to address climate change (e.g., United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris Agreement, etc.) is integrating gender equality into climate and other environmental policies and action. Mainstreaming gender across policy areas linked to climate change such as energy, agriculture, trade, and the environment will ensure meaningful action is taken so that women - particularly Pacific women at the frontlines of climate change - play a critical role in decision making and response to the climate crisis. The brief aims to provide Ministers for Women and senior government officials with current updates on this priority theme, inform discussions and provide some recommended actions for consideration during the 15th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the 8th Pacific Ministers for Women meeting.

1. Summary of the Issue and Progress in the Region

Climate justice is an approach to climate action that focusses on the unequal impacts of climate change on the marginalised groups and places least responsible for the problem. It seeks solutions (e.g., a just transition from a fossil fuel-based economy, political and economic systems that promote sustainable use of land and marine resources and biodiversity protection) that address the root causes of climate change and also the human rights of marginalised groups. This includes respect for traditional knowledge and resource management practices, and ensuring an equitable contribution to efforts to mitigate the climate crisis. In recognition of the interconnection between gender equality and climate justice, both critical issues in the Pacific region, the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in 2021 discussed these issues in depth and agreed priorities for action.

In 2022, Honourable Esa Mona Ainu'u[1] was appointed as the first Pacific Political Champion for Gender and Social Inclusion. This was also the first year in which “gender” was a regional priority for Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) at the Conference of Parties (COP).[2] Following this, a Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) One-CROP team has worked closely with member countries in their preparations for COP and to support the inclusion of gender and social inclusion text reflecting the priorities of PICs in the negotiations at COP.[3] The team has worked with Pacific gender equality negotiators and other climate change negotiators from across the eight areas that the PSIDS follow. In addition, it has shared Pacific-specific examples of climate change strategies and programmes that have mainstreamed gender equality and/or have been led by women at the community level.

[1] Niue's Minister of Natural Resources.

[2] Pacific Community (SPC), COP 27 : Climate Change is a gender issue. Available on: <https://www.spc.int/updates/news/2022/11/cop-27-climate-change-is-a-gender-issue>

[3] Ibid.

There has been notable progress made across countries in the Pacific on the commitments from the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women. Some examples of progress are below.

- The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has comprehensively reviewed climate change-related policies and the National Adaptation Plan (2023), embedding gender equality and human rights are at the core of climate action.[4] RMI has also developed a Coordinated Approach to Mainstreaming Gender into Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Interventions in 2023, in addition to its RMI Gender and Human Rights Analysis: Ensuring a gender-responsive National Adaptation Plan.[5] The RMI COP Gender Action Plan (GAP) Report shared recommendations stemming from the Gender and Human Rights Assessment for RMI's Climate Change Mitigation Policy and Planning, which led to NGOs and grassroots organisations engaging in decision-making processes and enabled the collection of disaggregated data.[6]
- Kiribati reviewed its Joint Implementation Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2019–2028, which mainstreams gender equality. The Kiribati government acknowledged the importance of the participation of both the government ministries that lead on gender and climate change at COP27 and COP28. This ensured the integration of gender equality into national government priorities following the COP meetings.[7]

2. Strategic Alignment to other Regional/International Commitments

Numerous commitments to gender equality and addressing climate change have been made at the national, regional and global level. Commitments include:

- Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (PPA) 2018–2030
- Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (2023)
- Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP)
- Boe Declaration on Regional Security (2020 and Action Plan)
- Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
- Pacific Framework on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Communiqués of the Ministers for Women meetings (2013, 2017, 2021)
- Recommendations made at various Commissions on the Status of Women (convened annually) and at the Triennial Conferences of Pacific Women (2013, 2017, 2021)
- Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
- Gender Action Plan adopted at COP23 (2017)
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015–2030).

[4] RMI Written submission, 2024. United Nations Framework for Climate Change – Gender Action Plan, 31 March 2024.

[5] RMI government Written submission, 2024. United Nations Framework for Climate Change – Gender Action Plan, 31 March 2024.

[6] Ibid

[7] Kiribati government, 2024, Submissions review of the enhanced LWPG GAP, April 2024.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action identified three strategic objectives and multiple actions related to women and the environment: (1) involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels; (2) integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development, and (3) strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional, and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women. The PPA and S.A.M.O.A Pathway (2014) also recognise that gender equality and the effective participation of women and indigenous peoples are important for effective action on all aspects of climate change. Adopting these objectives and actions within the ideals of climate justice is mutually reinforcing.

Within the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, regional cooperation and collaboration is required to build the capacity and resilience of communities to effectively address the impacts of climate change and disasters, including the gendered impacts they pose. Furthermore, the Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration recognises that climate change and disasters have a disproportionate impact on women and girls in all their diversity and that to meet climate-related goals requires their full contribution. It was in recognition of the need to ensure adequate focus to climate justice that ensures the rights of women and girls that the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women focused on this as its theme. A host of recommendations were made at the conference, which will be revisited at the upcoming Triennial Conference.

At the international level, in recognising the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, the UN Human Rights Council called on States to adopt policies addressing gender equality. Likewise, the Paris Agreement preamble calls on State parties to specifically consider gender equality and women's empowerment. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the CEDAW Committee set out how climate change is a women's human rights issue, and how it links to conflict, migration, and displacement, among other issues.[8] Given this, Pacific States have obligations to protect, respect, and fulfil the rights of women, girls, and gender-diverse persons in the context of the climate crisis.

Thus, strategic alignment of these regional and international commitments with the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights can encourage governments in the region and beyond toward specific actions such as: including women at all levels of decision-making and leadership; incorporating gender mainstreaming across all policies and programmes; adopting gender budgeting as a means to deploy resources more efficiently and effectively to achieve gender equality; developing accountability mechanisms that ensure that those making decisions and implementing climate change policies are answerable to the women and girls such policies aim to benefit; and collecting disaggregated data for comprehensive analyses of the impacts of climate change on different genders.

[8] See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, General Recommendation No. 37 on gender related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.

3. Recommendations

While a single droplet of water alone does not have much impact, many droplets can make powerful collectives - like storms from the ocean. One tiny ripple from a drop of water can cross many other similar ripples to create a strong current that can sweep down the mightiest forms of oppression. It all starts with a single drop that can have a long-lasting impact. With this in mind, it is recommended that the Conference continues to address gender equality and climate justice by ensuring ongoing support and investment in the recommendations agreed in the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women. These recommendations, still relevant to the way forward on this theme, are:

1. Ensure a gender-responsive approach to the climate crisis that recognises women's agency, knowledge, and leadership, and facilitate women's active participation in climate change decision-making platforms regionally, nationally and within communities.
2. Ensure women and other marginalised groups meaningfully participate in all stages of the design and implementation of national and sectoral policies, strategies and plans relating to climate change and disaster risk management as well as ensure such policies, strategies and plans are gender-responsive and include gender indicators.
3. Recognise the value of and adopt gender-responsive and inclusive budgeting within all climate change and disaster risk management policies, strategies and plans to ensure financial support for activities and programmes that address climate change impacts on women and girls.
4. Acknowledge the link between gender equality and climate change impacts and the need to consider a human rights-based approach at the legislative, policy and programme level – contextualised using cultural practices, norms and proverbs.
5. Recognise the value of traditional knowledge, skills and expertise – alongside scientific knowledge – and the role of indigenous, faith-based and local communities in climate action and disaster resilience.
6. Mainstream gender and social inclusion – one of the most effective approaches for building climate and disaster resilience – in responses to the climate crisis. Support governments to meet social and environmental safeguards when applying for the Green Climate Fund and other climate financing mechanisms. Ensure national women's machinery and women's organisations are partners in the implementation of climate resilience activities and provide them with appropriate levels of support for work in this regard.
7. Invest in culturally-responsive collection, analysis and use of gender-sensitive and socially inclusive sex-, age-, disability- and other variable disaggregated data, to enhance understanding of the gendered impacts of climate change. Support the implementation of national surveys that measure aspects of the gender–environment nexus, including training for gender data gatherers. Convene a Pacific Group on Disaster-related Statistics to share better practices on disaster-related data disaggregation, monitoring and application.

8. Invest in knowledge hubs and appropriate and accessible platforms (e.g. in indigenous and local languages), including digital platforms, and particularly those that demonstrate local women-led innovation, to increase inclusion and access to and dissemination of knowledge to all Pacific women on climate change and responses.
9. Acknowledge the link between climate change, disaster risks, gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and ensure all women and girls can access GBV and SRHR information and services including in times of disaster.
10. Ensure strengthened coordination and capacity building on gender and human rights, including integration in climate and disaster gender policies, through the utilisation of existing mechanisms to promote a holistic approach to addressing the gender dimensions of Climate change and other crises.