

# Pacific Technical Cooperation Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

7 - 11 April 2025 | Suva, Fiji



Pacific Community  
Communauté du Pacifique



PACIFIC ISLANDS BUREAU



UNITED NATIONS  
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## Preliminary Report and Vote of Thanks

### Preamble

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders meeting held in 2023 Fiji tabled a paper proposing a Pacific session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women ('the CEDAW Committee'). This paper was unanimously endorsed and escalated to the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting where it was also supported.

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ('CEDAW Committee') subsequently convened the Pacific CEDAW session in Suva, Fiji from 7-11 April 2025. More than 1,000 participants engaged in person and online, representing governments, civil society organisations (CSOs) and Pacific communities. The Pacific CEDAW Session comprised two parts: the first a regional technical and capacity development programme involving 15 Pacific governments and CSOs from across the Pacific engaging with each other and with the CEDAW Committee on priority gender equality issues. The second being the State reviews by the Committee of Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

The objectives of the Session were twofold:

- (1) to accelerate progress towards gender equality in the Pacific through enhanced implementation of CEDAW, the Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED), Pacific Platform of Action for Gender Equality (PPA), Outcomes of the 15<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, and 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.
- (2) To capture evidence on the nature and value of engagement of the United Nations Treaty body sessions at a regional level.

Participants included Pacific Island countries government delegations (including Prime Ministers, Ministers, Attorneys General, Permanent Secretaries and other Senior Officials), CSO representatives (including from organisations of persons with disabilities, youth and elders), traditional and faith leaders, development partners, academia, private sector and other stakeholders from within the Pacific region and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

### Preliminary Report

During the Pacific CEDAW sessions the participants from Pacific Island Country Governments and other participants discussed the importance of:

#### Culture and faith

- Recognising and understanding the intersection between culture, religion and human rights.
- Utilising linkages to identify and strengthen solutions and strategies for achieving gender equality.
- Encouraging conversations with cultural and faith leaders together to develop strategies to advance gender equality.

#### Children and Youth

<sup>1</sup> The CEDAW Session was attended in person by representatives from the following countries: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

- Inclusion of youth and children in discussions on eliminating discrimination against women and girls.
- Investing in youth and children in all their diversities to meaningfully participate in decision-making spaces and provision of leadership opportunities, and the implementation of the Pacific Youth Development Framework.
- Acknowledging the power of the youth movement, particularly in spaces such as climate change, inclusion of girls with disabilities, education and awareness raising.
- Active engagement of men and boys in progressing gender equality.
- The CEDAW Committee working closely with the Convention of the Rights of the Child, in the delivery of their respective mandates.
- Exploring the possibility of establishing a Special Rapporteur for the Girl Child.

#### **Consultation on GR 41: Gender Stereotypes**

- Recognise gender stereotypes as root causes of discrimination, underscoring the urgent need for updated guidance through GR 41 in today's evolving context.
- Recognising Pacific culture as a source of strength, challenge and opportunity. While it can reinforce gender roles, it also holds powerful potential to drive inclusive change when reframed as a tool for transformation and development.
- Challenging patriarchal interpretations of scripture, highlighting efforts in the Pacific to promote gender-equality theology and reinterpret sacred texts as tools for advancing women's rights and dismantling harmful stereotypes.
- Acknowledging social and mass media as powerful spaces where gender norms are shaped; youth are uniquely positioned to challenge and transform these stereotypes.

#### **Political participation**

- Engaging traditional and cultural leadership to promote gender equality and shift norms to support women in leadership.
- Investing in women and youth leadership development through education, mentoring, mock parliaments, and leadership opportunities at all levels.
- Strengthening supportive environments for women's political participation, including media influence, family support, temporary special measures, and gender-responsive budgeting.
- Increasing community awareness of and alignment with regional and international frameworks (such as the PPA and PLGED) to promote women's rights and political participation.

#### **Women with disabilities**

- Increasing leadership and decision-making participation of women and girls with disabilities at all levels through affirmative action, inclusive policy development, and meaningful consultation, including in climate change and disaster resilience spaces.
- Strengthening inclusive environments and ensuring accessible infrastructure, services, and communication systems across health, justice, education, and community sectors.
- Mainstreaming intersectionality in data collection and monitoring, improving sex and disability-disaggregated data in national statistics, censuses, regional, global and CEDAW reporting.
- Aligning actions with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PFRPD) and CEDAW to

enhance the visibility and representation of women with disabilities in policy spaces and decision-making processes.

### **Gender-based violence**

- Partnerships between government and CSOs on survivor-centred program design, implementation, and advocacy including contextualised implementation of family protection legislation and peer-to-peer learning for effective implementation of family protection legislation.
- Male advocates of gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, who should speak in support of women rather than speaking for them, advocate for better laws and policies, challenge misconceptions of women within their networks and their own male privileges.
- Using data to change attitudes towards women and advocate for ending GBV.
- Understanding and addressing the emergence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- Recognising how climate change exacerbates existing violence and discrimination.

### **Climate Change**

- The Pacific continuing its role as a global leader in advocating for addressing the causes and impacts of climate change, focusing on inter-generational protection of the right to a healthy environment, gender equity, the protection of persons and statehood as provided by the Boe Declaration and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.
- Continuing the regional approach to develop international law, endorsing frameworks and instruments such as the 2021 Maritimes Zones Declaration and 2023 Statehood Declaration that seek to respond to the impacts of climate change-related sea-level rise, with a specific focus on the protection of persons and the rights of women and girls.
- Economic empowerment, financial literacy and savings programs to strengthen resilience for women and girls and communities in the face of gender-discrimination and the impacts of climate change.
- Acknowledging the lack of first-hand narratives in climate change media and the need for these voices to be central to reporting, which will then ensure lived experience is at the heart of climate change policy, strategy.
- Acknowledging the ongoing victimisation of communities including women and girls through the impacts of climate change, whilst adapting to their circumstances.
- Institutions such as churches and faith-based organisations in bringing lived experiences to the fore.

### **Country Reviews and Regional Participation**

The leadership shown by the three countries under review was acknowledged. By submitting their State reports and putting themselves forward for review, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu voluntarily opened themselves up to scrutiny not only by the CEDAW Committee but also by the other Pacific Island Countries and in doing so demonstrated a commendable level of accountability. This sentiment was extended to all the other country delegations<sup>2</sup> who elected to participate, reflecting the regional commitment towards achieving gender equality.

### **Regionalised initiatives of the United Nations**

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<sup>2</sup> Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu

Participants reported a range of positive impacts arising from the regional nature of the Treaty Body Session in relation to future implementation of CEDAW obligations, and support was expressed for future similar initiatives.

### **Vote of Thanks**

Participants acknowledged:

- The leadership of Fiji and all other participating countries in hosting and bringing the CEDAW Committee to the Pacific.
- The CEDAW Committee for travelling to Fiji for the first ever treaty body reporting held outside of Geneva or New York and participating in the technical and capacity development program ahead of and during the country exchanges.
- The Governments of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu for their submission, reporting and discussion on their country CEDAW State Reports and participation during the technical and capacity development program and country exchanges.
- Governments and CSOs representing Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu for their engagement and participation during the technical and capacity development program and country exchanges.
- Government of Australia through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as the primary funder of this event, with additional support from the Government of Sweden through the Swedish International Cooperation Agency, the European Union, GIZ and the Pacific Feminist Fund.
- Partner organisations – PIFS, SPC, UN Women and OHCHR.