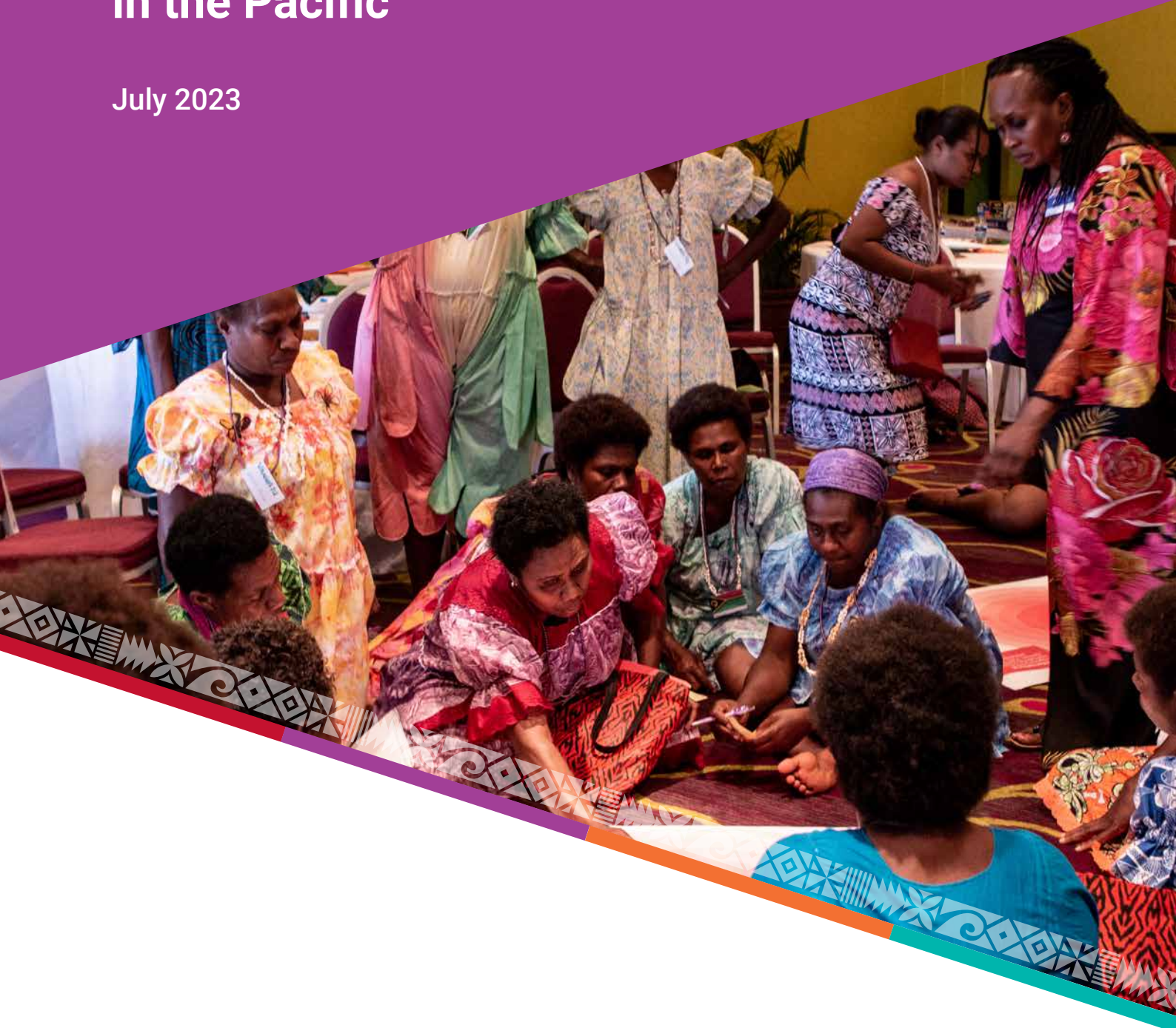


Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework  
for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

# Thematic Report on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction in the Pacific

July 2023



## Disclaimer

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country or territory or of its authorities or concerning the delimitations of its frontiers or boundaries. The designations of country groups in the text and the tables are intended solely for statistical or analytical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process. Mention of the names of firms and commercial products does not imply the endorsement of the United Nations.

Note: The designations employed and the presentation of maps in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC IGO); <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/igo/legalcode>

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that UNDRR endorses any specific organization, products or services.

The use of the UNDRR logo is not permitted. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation below: "This translation was not created by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). UNDRR is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing: UNDRR information products are available for non-commercial use. Requests for commercial use, rights and licensing should be submitted via: <https://www.undrr.org/contact-us>

This publication may be freely quoted but acknowledgement of the source is requested.

Citation: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). (2023, July). *Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030: Thematic report on gender equality and social inclusion in disaster risk reduction in the Pacific*.

© 2023 UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

For additional information, please contact:

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)  
7bis Avenue de la Paix, CH1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland, Tel: +41 22 917 89 08

Cover: Members of Women Wetem Weta at a planning session to discuss leadership, training and inclusive climate and disaster resilience action. Photograph: ActionAid.

## Acknowledgements

UNDRR would like to acknowledge its donors for their support.

This report was developed by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney. It was produced in partnership by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), with the Australia Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP) and funding from the Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The authors wish to thank interview participants from Shifting the Power Coalition, Vanuatu Skills Partnership, and Tonga's Outer Islands Renewable Energy Project, for giving their time for interviews and consenting to use their information from past projects conducted by Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Overarching trends and developments since 2015</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Summary of themes in gender-responsive DRR since 2015	6
2.2 Trends in gender-responsive DRR clustered by Sendai Framework Priorities	7
<b>3. Case studies</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Case Study 1: Tonga Outer Islands Renewable Energy Project	12
3.2 Case Study 2: Vanuatu Skills Partnership – Skills for Handicraft	15
3.3 Case Study 3: Shifting the Power Coalition	18
3.4 Case Study 4: Women’s Resilience to Disasters programme (contribution from UN Women)	21
3.5 Case Study 5: Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction (contribution from UNDRR)	23
<b>4. Pathways that promote GESI for community resilience</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>5. Emerging gaps and looking ahead to 2030</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>7. References</b>	<b>30</b>



## Abbreviations and acronyms

Term	Definition
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APCP	Australia Pacific Climate Partnership
APMCDRR	Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
COP	Conference of the Parties
CREWS	Climate risk and early warning systems
CSO	Civil society organization
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [Australia]
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
FDPF	Fiji Disabled People's Federation
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
ISF	Institute for Sustainable Futures
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other forms of gender and sexual minorities
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade [New Zealand]
MHEWS	Multi-hazard early warning systems
MTR	Midterm review
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NGO	Non-government organization
OIREP	Outer Islands Renewable Energy Project
PICAN	Pacific Islands Climate Action Network
PIEMA	Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PRF	Pacific Resilience Forum



SPACE	Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19: Expert advice
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
StPC	Shifting the Power Coalition
TC	Tropical Cyclone
TPL	Tonga Power Limited
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
WDF	Women Delegates Fund
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization
WIN DRR	Women's International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WRD	Women's Resilience to Disasters [programme]
VSP	Vanuatu Skills Partnership
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association







Women and girls at church in the Cook Islands. Photograph: ChameleonsEye/Shutterstock.com.



At the market near Suva, Fiji. Photograph: Australia Pacific Climate Partnership.



# Executive Summary



## Introduction

This report provides a thematic review focusing on progress made towards gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in disaster risk reduction (DRR) as part of the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework in the Pacific. The research underpinning this thematic report was conducted between August and November 2022. The Australia Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP) commissioned the University of Technology Sydney, Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS-ISF) to gather and synthesize relevant evidence of progress towards GESI integration in DRR and resilience programmes through Australian Government-funded investments, which will contribute to assessing implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Pacific from 2015 to 2022.

## Purpose of the report

This report aims to capture pathways for community resilience that promote and integrate GESI in DRR. The review provides examples of best practice of GESI integration in the Pacific with the use of case studies, common themes and pathways that promote GESI for community resilience. Gaps and areas where progress is most needed are also identified from the range of Australian Government-funded investments included in the review.

## Scope and methodology

The scope of the report focuses on gender equality and social inclusion, and how this relates to DRR. The majority of evidence and discussion is around gender equality, and how gender intersects with aspects of social inclusion including age, disability, marginalisation and (low) income status. The report was based on a thematic review of literature on DRR with a GESI lens in the Pacific. Literature focused on Australian Government-funded investments in the Pacific over the period 2015 to 2022. Case studies were also used to explore examples of best practice of GESI integration in DRR. Three case studies were based on APCP-funded research, and two of the case study summaries were provided by UN Women and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), respectively.

## Overarching trends and developments since 2015

The review of Australian Government-funded programmes, initiatives and case studies identified four key themes and trends in integrating GESI perspectives into Pacific DRR approaches.

**Theme 1: Women are leaders in reducing risk.** Women are leading activities in multi-hazard early warning systems and risk-informed development, and participating in anticipatory actions to proactively reduce risks.

**Theme 2: Women are building disaster and climate resilience at community levels.** Women's leadership and participation at the local level is contributing to stronger and more resilient communities.

**Theme 3: Women are advocates and communicators of DRR and climate action from global to local contexts.** Women from national governments are being upskilled as global climate negotiators. At the local level, women knowledge brokers are translating risk information for communities.

**Theme 4: Women in leadership roles enable shifts in mindsets and gender norms, normalizing GESI in DRR and paving the way for transformative change.** Changes in mindsets of women's traditional roles are occurring as a result of diverse women leading DRR and resilience-building activities.



## Trends in gender-responsive DRR clustered by the priorities of the Sendai Framework

**Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk.** Women-led civil society organizations (CSOs), international non-government organization (NGOs), and national and regional technical organizations, are designing and implementing women-focused actions to increase women's knowledge of disasters at the community level. This, in turn, increases the community's resilience, builds capacity and supports women, communities and decision-making organizations to make informed and targeted decisions.

**Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk.** While the Sendai Framework lacks significant mention of GESI integration within DRR governance, actions implemented within some DRR investments in the Pacific region have had a focus on integrating GESI in DRR governance. Female representation at local, national and global levels to amplify women's voice in DRR and climate action strategies and practices has been recognized across the Pacific region.

**Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.** There are some indications that GESI and DRR-focused investments are becoming more common since 2015, as donors and regional organizations are realizing the significance of gender-responsive DRR in community resilience building. Examples of GESI and DRR investments include the Shifting the Power Coalition programme, Women Delegates Fund initiative, and within infrastructure investments. While such gender-responsive DRR investments are welcome, the review also found that more disaster risk financing is needed to further progress gender equality targets for the region.

**Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.** A number of investments have been made since 2015 to promote women's empowerment and women's leadership for effective preparedness, response and recovery at all levels. For example, at the community level, women are taking up knowledge broker and communicator roles through different climate change and disaster resilience programmes. Civil society-led activities and programmes focused on community preparedness and resilience are prioritizing diverse women's leadership and participation in DRR. Increased leadership and participation of diverse women (including young women, women with disabilities, and those who are marginalized) in disaster contexts is ensuring gender-equitable and accessible response and recovery resources.

## Pathways that promote GESI for community resilience

Four pathways are identified that promote GESI for strengthening community resilience. These pathways highlight how resilience to disasters can be achieved with a strong GESI lens.

**Pathway 1: Women-led partnerships and coalitions.** Women-led partnerships and coalitions build momentum and amplify diverse experiences for a collective and stronger voice for advocacy on climate and disaster resilience.

**Pathway 2: Women's economic empowerment for DRR.** Economic empowerment of women for effective disaster preparedness, response and recovery, supports women's agency and enables women and their communities to build back better and be more resilient to multiple risks.

**Pathway 3: Diverse and long-term partnerships.** Long-term partnerships between local women leaders, national agencies – e.g. National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), and National Meteorological Services – and regional organizations – e.g. Pacific Community (SPC), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) – support two-way dialogue for ongoing gender-responsive approaches in DRR.

**Pathway 4: Directly influencing individuals, policy and the environment.** Investments and actions to directly influence individuals, organizations and the environment, such as funding for upskilling women leaders as change agents, policy change through incentives, and upgrading local market infrastructure, have enabled positive developments.





## Emerging gaps and looking ahead to 2030

Despite evidence of progress gained, women's contributions to DRR need to be reflected more comprehensively in sub-national and national governments and regional organizations, through genuine mainstreaming of gender equity and social inclusion. Four emerging gaps are provided, which should be priority areas of future focus for more gender-inclusive DRR in the Pacific.

**Gap 1: Structural barriers limit women's participation and leadership in DRR, from regional to community levels.** Women's expertise and knowledge are not always valued or widely promoted within decision-making forums or processes.

**Priority as we look ahead to 2030:** Continue to identify and address structural barriers to women's participation, and consider long-term systemic changes needed while also incorporating short-term "work-arounds" while systems change takes place.

**Gap 2: Inadequate disaster risk financing for women-led organizations; or limited funding allocated to gender-related components within programmes.** Locally-led women's organizations have less visibility at the donor level to be considered for funding or grants. The additional compliance requirements for local organizations can be a challenge. There are also institutional barriers to supporting funding for locally-led and gender-equitable DRR approaches and allocating finance for local organizations.

**Priority as we look ahead to 2030:** Recognize the growing contribution and impact women-led organizations and coalitions are making in DRR in the Pacific and consider scaling up financing for these organizations through multi-year and flexible financing options. Work towards a Sendai Framework Gender Action Plan may also support addressing this gap.

**Gap 3: Gaps in policy environments (regional, national, and local) in mainstreaming gender equality and addressing GESI dimensions in government practice, including LGBTQI+, disability, and violence against women and girls.** Mainstreaming the intersection of disaster resilience, climate change and GESI across government policies and practices is not adequately prioritized across the region.

**Priority as we look ahead to 2030:** Continued advocacy, awareness-raising and prioritization is needed for the rights of LGBTQI+, gender minorities, and women and girls with disabilities, and addressing violence against women and girls. As noted for the above gap, the continued work towards developing a Gender Action Plan for the Sendai Framework would further support progress on closing this gap.

**Gap 4: COVID-19 restrictions have delayed progress towards anticipated outcomes of gender-focused DRR programmes, due to necessary changes in programme delivery.** The emergence of COVID-19 and related restrictions since 2020 have caused changes and alterations to the implementation of many programmes. Some positive outcomes also occurred as a result of COVID-19 imposed travel restrictions. Local and national government and non-government organizations stepped into leadership roles in the absence of outside organizations, making progress in efforts towards localization.

**Priority as we look ahead to 2030:** Recognize the impact COVID-19 has had on programmes and focus efforts on collaborative and locally-led interventions and partnerships that achieve multi-scale and multistakeholder impacts for increased gender equality in DRR.



## Conclusion

The midpoint of the Sendai Framework offers an opportunity to reflect on progress, lessons learned, and gaps and priorities for the future. This report has reviewed Australian Government-funded investments in GESI and DRR in the Pacific since 2015 and provides overarching trends and developments and how these link to the Sendai Framework's four Priority Areas. Pathways that promote GESI for community resilience are provided, which are important to learn about *how* progress is achieved. While celebrating and learning about progress in GESI and DRR is important, critical gaps are also described. This report also reflects on the gaps and offers priorities to focus on as we look ahead to 2030.

# 1. Introduction

The Australia Pacific Climate Partnership commissioned the University of Technology Sydney, Institute for Sustainable Futures, to gather and synthesize relevant evidence of progress towards gender equality and social inclusion integration in disaster risk reduction and resilience programmes through Australian Government-funded investments, which will contribute to assessing implementation of the Sendai Framework from 2015 to 2022.

This report serves as a background report as part of Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework in the Pacific. Being one of the several thematic reviews, this report captures the breadth of changes in DRR and GESI that have contributed towards meeting the Sendai Framework targets from 2015 to 2022. The research underpinning this thematic review was conducted between August and November 2022. An emerging findings document was shared prior to the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR). This report builds on those findings, providing additional details, evidence and case studies.

## Purpose of this report

As a contribution to the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework in the Pacific, this report aims to capture pathways for community resilience that promote and integrate GESI in DRR. The review provides examples of best practice of GESI integration in the Pacific with the use of case studies. Common themes emerging from the intersection of GESI and DRR are identified and linked to the Sendai Framework's four Priority Areas. It was also important to understand *how* the successes over the 2015 to 2022 period took place. Pathways that promote GESI for community resilience are therefore also identified. Gaps and areas where progress is most needed to ensure future efforts help to reach the expected outcomes and goals of the Sendai Framework are also identified from the range of Australian Government-funded investments included in the review.

## Scope and methodology

The scope of this report focuses on gender equality and social inclusion, and how this relates to DRR. The majority of evidence and discussion is around gender equality, and how gender intersects with aspects of social inclusion, including age, disability<sup>1</sup>, marginalisation and (low) income status.

The research supporting this report was undertaken using two main approaches:

**Document review:** A thematic review of literature on DRR with a GESI lens in the Pacific was undertaken to ascertain: (a) common themes and trends of GESI integration in DRR in the Pacific and pathways that promote GESI for community resilience; and (b) emerging gaps and priority areas for future efforts to reach the goals and outcomes of the Sendai Framework. Literature focused on Australian Government-funded investments in the Pacific over the period 2015 to 2022.

<sup>1</sup> A separate thematic report focuses on disability and DRR, and so disability is considered only in terms of its intersection with gender in this report.

**Case studies:** Five case studies are included in this report using two approaches. The first set of case studies are based on GESI findings within APCP-funded past projects on climate change and disaster resilience. Three Australian Government-funded investments were selected to showcase best practice examples of GESI integration in DRR:

- Outer Islands Renewable Energy Project (OIREP), Tonga
- Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) – Skills for Handicraft, Vanuatu
- Shifting the Power Coalition programme (StPC), Pacific region.

These three case studies were developed by: (a) revisiting and analysing primary data from previous APCP projects, Community Resilience Case Studies in the Pacific, and Outcome Harvesting Evaluation, to form the basis of the case studies<sup>2</sup>; and (b) primary data collection, drawing on complementary interviews with the participants from the above-mentioned projects to validate existing information and learn latest developments and updates of the projects.

An additional two case study summaries were provided by UN Women and UNDRR. These summaries showcase good examples of GESI integration into DRR from the Women’s Resilience to Disasters (WRD) programme in the Pacific region (provided by UN Women), and the Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR) (provided by UNDRR).

## Background to Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

Adopted by the United Nations in 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction provides a blueprint for an all-of-society and all-of-state institutions engagement in preventing and reducing disaster risks. It advocates for the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health, and aims to achieve significant reduction of disaster risk across the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

In advance of the Sendai Framework reaching its midpoint in 2023, a midterm review was conducted in 2022 by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). In collaboration with countries and stakeholders, the review examined the progress and challenges experienced since 2015 and explored efforts to integrate disaster risk reduction into decision-making, investment, and behaviour.

The global midterm review included stakeholder consultations, regional forums, and written submissions. It resulted in a comprehensive collection of regional reports, national reports, thematic reports and literature reviews.

For the Pacific, the regional midterm review was led by the UNDRR Pacific Office and formed part of the broader Asia-Pacific review. The UNDRR Pacific Office supported Pacific island countries to undertake their own reviews as part of the National Voluntary Review process. The Pacific Office also coordinated reviews into key thematic areas of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion<sup>1</sup>; Disability Inclusion; Climate and Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure; and Local, Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge.

To best understand these themes, the UNDRR Pacific Office worked with regional partners through the Pacific Resilience Partnership, and engaged a wide range of stakeholders including national and local governments, civil society organizations, development partners and financial institutions.

The findings and recommendations of these thematic reviews are designed to be practical and grounded in the real-world experiences of those living in the Pacific. They seek to provide a clear basis for discussion of the future of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction with a view to maximizing its effectiveness to 2030.

<sup>2</sup> All data from past projects used in the current project received consent from past research participants.





Woman with flowers in a Vanuatu market. Safe and inclusive markets help build community resilience. Photograph: Cavan-Images/Shutterstock.com.

## 2. Overarching trends and developments since 2015



### 2.1 Summary of themes in gender-responsive DRR since 2015

Review of Australian Government-funded programmes, initiatives and case studies identified four key themes and trends in integrating GESI perspectives into Pacific DRR approaches.

#### Theme 1: Women are leaders in reducing risk

Women are leading activities in multi-hazard early warning systems and risk-informed development, and participating in anticipatory actions to proactively reduce risks.

Since 2015, there has been increased focus on empowering women and facilitating women's leadership in DRR and resilience-building activities at regional, national and community levels. Women's leadership in disaster preparedness and early actions and resilience building at community levels has been demonstrated through multiple initiatives across the Pacific region. Women leaders are playing significant roles in DRR and strengthening community resilience.





## Theme 2: Women are building disaster and climate resilience at community levels

Women's leadership and participation at the local level is contributing to stronger and more resilient communities.

Women-led CSOs at community level are partnering with provincial and national networks, and international NGOs, and implementing strengths-based approaches in DRR practices. This is enabling increased participation of local women in resilience-building activities.

## Theme 3: Women are advocates and communicators of DRR and climate action from global to local contexts

Women from national governments are being upskilled as global climate negotiators. At the local level, women knowledge brokers are translating risk information for communities.

Different disaster and climate action investments and programmes are aiming to improve women's DRR knowledge and capacity to contribute at regional, national and community levels. Women in government are being trained to join national delegations to global platforms, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Women working in communities are being trained to become community knowledge brokers. Pacific women leaders and women's agencies are increasingly taking up advocacy roles and bridging gaps between decision-making levels and community levels.

## Theme 4: Women in leadership roles enable shifts in mindsets and gender norms, normalizing GESI in DRR and paving the way for transformative change

Changes in mindsets of women's traditional roles are occurring as a result of diverse women leading DRR and resilience-building activities.

Initiatives supporting women in leadership positions are contributing to shifts in traditional views of women's roles. Communities see the positive outcomes of women's leadership and participation in DRR activities, which further shift perspectives on women's leadership in other private and public spheres. Shifts are also occurring with the emergence of gender-diverse and LGBTQI+ focused CSOs in climate and disaster resilience dialogue.

## 2.2 Trends in gender-responsive DRR clustered by Sendai Framework Priorities

This section presents examples and evidence of how the key themes described above align with the four Priority Areas in the Sendai Framework. Progress is demonstrated towards the framework targets through implementation of actions to integrate gender considerations within DRR strategies and practices.

### Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

Findings from the document review demonstrate that women-led CSOs, international NGOs, and national and regional technical organizations, are designing and implementing women-focused actions to increase women's knowledge of disasters at community level. This, in turn, increases the community's resilience, builds capacity and supports women, communities and decision-making organizations to make informed and targeted decisions.

Women-led CSOs and local women leaders are leading collaborative programmes with technical organizations, including international NGOs and scientific organizations, to facilitate women's knowledge-building activities. For example, in Vanuatu, local women's network, *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* (Women Talk Together), partnered with an international NGO (ActionAid Australia) to implement a ni-Vanuatu women's leadership initiative. Women participated in training in disaster preparedness, response and recovery, with the reported outcome being that participants perceived a better understanding of root causes of risks and vulnerability (Henty, 2022).



This outcome of increased women's knowledge was demonstrated when the women leaders from the network undertook an early assessment to identify priority areas for post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation within the community. Following Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold in 2020, these women leaders were consulted by ActionAid Australia about recovery and rehabilitation requirements to improve local women's post-disaster well-being. Consultation with local women supported ActionAid Australia in understanding risks and vulnerabilities, to take informed recovery-rehabilitation decisions based on the trusted evidence from women. As noted by the authors of the companion thematic report focused on climate and disaster-resilient infrastructure (UNDRR, 2023a), while the importance of local knowledge and observations (including those of women) in post-disaster assessments are acknowledged, more needs to be done to systematically build this into post-disaster needs assessments.

Women-led innovative and sustainable ways of learning are also leading to an increased understanding of climate and disaster risks across selected Pacific communities. Pacific women are leading different multi-hazard early warning initiatives, including Women's Weather Watch in Fiji, *Women Wetem Weta* in Vanuatu and *Meri Gat Infomesen* in Papua New Guinea (PNG) under the Shifting the Power Coalition programme. These initiatives support women to work with national and regional scientific organizations, such as National Meteorological Services and SPREP, to increase their technical knowledge in DRR and lead risk-informed and pragmatic disaster approaches. Women are demonstrating a high level of skill and capacity to understand risks and vulnerabilities, and improving their critical thinking to build resilience, through formal training and skill development activities. Women involved in these initiatives are also learning to translate technical information on climate science and weather events into simple local language appropriate for their communities. This enables the women leaders to disseminate technical climate and weather knowledge in an accessible way to the community and improve the community's disaster risk knowledge (StPC et al., 2022).

## Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

Strengthening disaster risk governance is significant for managing disaster risk efficiently and effectively and requires clear guidance, planning and coordination, and collaboration among different sectors and stakeholders. While inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation in DRR forms the basis of the Sendai Framework Guiding Principle 19d, a greater focus is needed to ensure this principle informs implementation of the framework, particularly for Priority 2. This section provides examples of improvements in gender inclusion in governance, and examples from Australian Government-funded investments of how these improvements have led to better outcomes – and also where further areas of progress are needed.

Female representation has improved at local, national and global levels to amplify women's voice in DRR and climate action strategies and practices, with several examples from DRR programmes across the Pacific region. The *Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016–2030* addresses the need for women's leadership and participation to ensure good practice in DRR. The Vanuatu Department of Climate Change is working closely with the Department of Women's Affairs to effectively integrate women's voice in their plans and activities (Henty, 2022). This push for greater women's representation is an indicator of progress towards more gender-balanced and coherent disaster risk governance within different sectors. While this policy progress in Vanuatu is commendable, it is also important to recognize the long way to go in women's representation, with 2022 marking the first year since 2008 that a woman has been elected to parliament (Fennell, 2022).

Women-led organizations and women leaders from the Pacific region are emerging as drivers of national and regional policy reforms to ensure inclusive DRR strategies. Women leaders from the Shifting the Power Coalition programme participated in dialogue with Pacific Ministers and bureaucrats at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) in 2022 to discuss national and regional DRR strategies for future years (see Case Study 3). Promoting gender-inclusive practices, creating places for women in organizational structures, and women's strong role as leaders for change, are gradually shifting the gender norms within communities and enabling transformative change in the community (see Case Study 1 and 2 for more details).



Women working in government departments and agencies are being supported through formal training, mentorship programmes and different engagement opportunities to take negotiator roles in national delegations to global UNFCCC meetings. For example, feminist NGO Women's Environment Development Organization (WEDO) and UNFCCC designed training courses as a capacity building initiative for Pacific female professionals in the climate change and disaster sector. The courses are helping women to sharpen their leadership skills and expand their knowledge in DRR to take representative and negotiator roles (Burns, 2022). The initiative has influenced women to move beyond "observer only" roles and participate as delegates in the 2021 Conference of the Parties (COP) in Glasgow. Recognizing women's potential as leaders in global and national decision-making platforms, women working in the government and technical organizations are being offered advanced in-person workshop modules to upskill their capacity and take leadership roles in national, regional and global platforms (Burns, 2022). Thirteen women completed the advanced training and seven of them participated in the 2019 UN Climate Change Conference (COP25). Women negotiators from Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Samoa, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia and eight other Pacific island countries met in Samoa prior to COP27 in Egypt in September 2022 to consolidate the Pacific's position on climate change issues for the Pacific. This demonstrates the increasing role of Pacific women negotiators in global climate dialogue.

Since 2015, there has been an emergence of initiatives supporting women-led DRR mechanisms. For example, through the Shifting the Power Coalition, ActionAid Australia is supporting 13 autonomous diverse women's agencies and leadership in the areas of DRR and collectively working to address gender-based violence, food and water insecurities, and communication and protection needs of women with disabilities (WRD et al., 2022). This kind of support is enabling women to actively participate in national and regional decision-making forums and contributing to developing gender-inclusive governance (see Case Study 3).

Women are increasingly acting as community representatives and advocating for policy reforms and behavioural changes on gender equality and inclusiveness in DRR. For example, international organizations including Red Cross and Oxfam International, and UN agencies such as UN Women, are supporting Pacific women to lead regional and locally-led women's rights organizations, including Diverse Voices and Action for Equality and femLink Pacific (Nguyen et al., 2022; Dwyer & Woolf, 2018). Women's advocacy role within communities has been encouraged and promoted by Vanuatu Government. The Ministry of Women's Affairs in Vanuatu introduced a Gender and Social Protection Cluster, which enabled women to engage in the community recovery strategy for TC Harold and COVID-19 (Henty, 2022).

Successful leadership of women, and effective contributions to strengthening DRR governance at community, local and national levels, are enabling positive shifts in traditional views and behavioural changes towards women. Women leaders from the *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* network in Vanuatu participated in the previously male-dominated local election. Women's Weather Watch Vanuatu members participated in a dialogue with local parliament members to discuss community resilience priorities, where women set their own agenda and presented the community's demands (StPC et al., 2022). Women's success in voicing communities' needs at policy levels has created opportunities for women to contribute to decision-making in communities. The shift in gender norms in leadership and decision-making is gradually shifting power structures and social dimensions of communities, demonstrating evidence of transformative change (StPC et al., 2022; Tung et al., 2022; Plan International, 2018). Case studies from Vanuatu and Tonga also describe evidence of shifting gender norms as women take on roles outside those traditionally ascribed to women (see Case Study 1 and 2).

### Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

Investments to reduce disaster risks play an important role to improve individual or collective economic, social and health situations, and strengthen resilience through building capacity and availing of resources. As noted in the companion thematic report focused on climate and disaster-resilient infrastructure (UNDRR, 2023a), GESI approaches are increasingly being integrated into infrastructure investments in the Pacific. Integration of GESI is also present in social investments, particularly in COVID-19 responses. For example, investment for recovery purposes post-COVID-19 through the cash transfer programme, SPACE (Social



Protection Approaches to COVID-19: Expert advice), enabled households of Fiji and Vanuatu to respond to immediate economic and social impacts that resulted from COVID-19 (Attenborough, 2021). The monitoring and evaluation evidence of the programme suggests that women as part of the household units equally benefited from the one-off cash support (Cabot Venton, 2021). The programme took a holistic approach to ensure women-led households received equal benefit as men-led households in the communities. However, there was a gap in data to identify whether women in situations of domestic violence benefitted through the programme (Costella, 2021).

Resilient development and GESI-focused investments often have direct and indirect DRR outcomes. For example, the Women's Resilience to Disasters programme, and Vanuatu Skills Partnership – Skills for Handicraft, are two programmes primarily focused on women's economic empowerment. Improvement in financial situations and more resilient livelihood options have been shown to increase women's preparedness and recovery capacity, and strengthen overall community resilience. Infrastructure and construction investment in the UN Women Markets for Change programme has a strong GESI lens, with a subsequent focus on building community resilience. The Markets for Change programme recognizes that most of the local market vendors are women; therefore, local women were included in re-designing the Gizo Market in Solomon Islands and Luganville Market House in Vanuatu. Reconstruction of the markets supported the local economy through protecting and enabling the selling of products during cyclones and extreme weather events, and strengthened resilience within communities. These types of investments are becoming more common as donors and regional organizations are realizing the significance of values of intersecting GESI in DRR (UNDRR, 2023a).

There are some indications that GESI and DRR-focused investments are becoming more common since 2015, as donors and regional organizations are realizing the significance of gender-responsive DRR in community resilience building. For example, investments such as the Shifting the Power Coalition programme, Women Delegates Fund initiative, and Gender Inequality of Risk and Promoting Community Resilience Project in Solomon Islands, primarily focus on women's inclusion in DRR practices at different levels. These programmes enabled women's leadership and increased women's participation in DRR at community, local and regional levels through facilitating training and promoting women's agency. This review also identified investments that were focused on diverse gender and social inclusion aspects, such as women with disability and gender minorities in DRR approaches. For example, the Pacific Humanitarian Capacity Building Project explored the vulnerability, risks and lived-experience of the LGBTQI+ and gender-minority community following TC Winston (2016) in Fiji to inform the government agencies and NGOs implementing DRR programmes in the Pacific. As part of multi-hazard early warning systems (MHEWS) initiatives, the Fiji Disabled People's Federation (FDPF) Emergency Operations Centre has a strong focus on including women with disability and working to ensure their well-being in disaster emergencies. While such gender-responsive DRR investments are welcome, the review also found that more disaster risk financing is needed to further progress gender equality targets for the region (see Gap 2 later in this report).

#### **Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction**

The Sendai Framework includes mention of women's critical role in designing and implementing gender-sensitive DRR policies and practices and integrating DRR into development actions to build community resilience against disasters. The framework stresses women's empowerment to progress towards community resilience through increasing disaster preparedness, response and recovery-rehabilitation capacity. A number of investments have been made since 2015 to promote women's empowerment and women's leadership for effective preparedness, response and recovery at all levels, and these are described below.

At the community level, women are taking up knowledge broker and communicator roles through different climate change and disaster resilience programmes. Within these roles, women are improving the effectiveness of early warning information, disseminating information by drawing on women's traditional and local knowledge, working through women's networks to facilitate risk-informed decisions around preparedness, which has been mentioned in the companion thematic report focused on local, Indigenous





and traditional knowledge (UNDRR, 2023b). For example, women in Fiji, Vanuatu and PNG have been trained to translate weather information into simple and local language as part of the MHEWS initiatives. The trained women have become knowledge brokers, translating technical weather and climate information to their communities and advising contextually-relevant approaches for local communities (StPC et al., 2022). The governments of some Pacific island countries, including Fiji, Vanuatu and PNG, are encouraging integration of traditional knowledge and scientific information in early warning systems and enacting policies, plans and programmes to use traditional knowledge complementing scientific DRR and climate information (UNDRR, 2023b).

Civil society-led activities and programmes focused on community preparedness and resilience are prioritizing diverse women's leadership and participation in DRR. Innovative models and methods, such as feminist and strengths-based approaches, are facilitating women's participation and leadership in DRR and resilience programmes and activities. For example, in Fiji and Vanuatu, the Women's Weather Watch initiative undertook a strengths-based approach to maximize women's contributions to MHEWS initiatives. Women were asked about their preferences for their participation and trained in mobile technology and translating early warning signs, based on their personal preferences and prior experiences. Having a voice and the opportunity to work in their area of interest enabled women's effective participation and influenced more women to participate in the initiatives (StPC et al., 2022).

Increased leadership and participation of diverse women (including young women, women with disabilities, and those who are marginalized) in disaster contexts is ensuring gender-equitable and accessible response and recovery resources. For example, the Shifting the Power Coalition programme has a greater focus on promoting diverse women's leadership at different levels to genuinely integrate women's voice at different levels. While the examples provided above are encouraging and demonstrate progress, perceptions of gender in the Pacific are primarily binary, with greater progress needed to extend inclusion to gender and sexual minorities (see more on emerging gaps later in this report).



Local girls on Rah Island in Vanuatu. Photograph: Jantira Namwong/Shutterstock.com.



## 3. Case studies

### 3.1 Case Study 1: Tonga Outer Islands Renewable Energy Project

#### Introduction

This case study focuses on the Outer Islands Renewable Energy Project (OIREP) in Tonga, and the community resilience and DRR outcomes of specific gender equality initiatives within the project. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) implemented the programme (2013–2022), which aims to increase the reliability, efficiency, and affordability of power in nine of Tonga’s outer islands. The impact of OIREP is expected to be a reduced dependence on fossil fuels by increasing access to solar generation. This multi-donor ADB project is co-financed by ADB, Australia, European Union, Denmark, and the Global Environment Facility. It is worth over AUD 40 million, towards which Australia contributed AUD 9.6 million. OIREP increased its focus on resilient infrastructure following Tropical Cyclone Ian’s impact on the Ha’apai islands in 2014, which caused damage to 90% of the power network’s distribution lines in Ha’apai.

A key contribution of OIREP and the focus of this case study is the increased role of women in the energy sector workforce. Informed by Australian Aid’s strategic focus on gender equality, OIREP supported more women to join the Tonga Power Limited (TPL) workforce, transforming gender roles and increasing family incomes. TPL used creative means (as described below) to increase women’s participation in the energy sector workforce. At the outset of OIREP, no women were trained as “line-workers” through Tonga’s local training colleges. Traditional gender roles meant that working in the energy sector was not considered a “woman’s job”. As a result of OIREP’s focus on gender equality, there are now increasing numbers of women who are training to be line-workers and a strong appreciation of the role of women in all parts of the workforce in TPL.

#### Outcomes of the programme

Two key outcomes are described in this case study that demonstrate contributions to gender DRR and community resilience through the gender equality activities of OIREP.

**Outcome 1: Women’s increased participation in the energy sector workforce in Tonga has contributed to transformative change through shifting traditional gender norms from family to national level.**

OIREP provided transformative roles for women as active employees in the TPL workforce. Prior to OIREP, within TPL it was understood that women “should” be working in the office, not in the field. However, when the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) joined the OIREP investment as a donor, its involvement came with the requirement that OIREP include a strong gender focus. This focus was broader than a Gender Action Plan and included the recruitment of a Gender Adviser and implementation metrics. These metrics included the requirement for a percentage of women to be recruited in different parts of the TPL workforce. Milestone payments to TPL were tied to implementation and the achievement of targets.

Women were not traditionally employed as line-workers, and the local technical college had not trained any qualified women who were available for recruitment. OIREP had to use alternative plans to encourage women into the TPL workforce. Therefore, TPL recruited a group of women based on their interest and motivation and accredited them on-the-job with a training programme specifically developed for them. These women are now fully qualified to work at TPL, and other women are also

seeing the trade of line-workers and working in different areas of TPL as an attractive job. Women are now being trained at the technical college, and a change in mindset has occurred about the types of roles women can and should take on, as described in the quote below.

*“Why should they [men] be the only ones to be able to do the work when we are perfectly capable?”*  
Female Energy Technician, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Climate Change and Communications, Tonga.

Despite initial concerns, the female line-workers were accepted into the TPL workforce with little to no backlash from the existing male workforce. In fact, there was an understanding that their motivation, hard work and care of the equipment had lifted the performance of the entire cohort of TPL workers. There was initial resistance from some women’s families when they were recruited to OIREP; however, this changed to encouragement once steady income was received.

*“The families see changes – the women contribute financially to families and communities. Before I interviewed the lineswomen, their families didn’t agree with it initially but after a year [of seeing the benefits] they supported it. It’s about the culture and tradition – before it was thought that they should be in the office managing everything, not outside. We [women] have skills for anything.”* ADB, Tonga.

This outcome describes transformative change in traditional gender roles for women from family to national level. This in turn supports more effective leadership for DRR, response and recovery. As women gain confidence and experience in new roles and sectors, a new generation of women leaders will emerge, who are able, accepted and willing to support broader leadership efforts in strengthening resilience to disasters in their communities. Furthermore, families are benefiting from the income earned from the women’s roles in the energy sector, providing an extra level of financial support.

**Outcome 2: The talent pool and size of workforce within the energy sector has increased with the addition of women, providing Tonga and its Pacific neighbours with greater skills and personnel in times of crisis to “build back better”.**

The addition of women as workers in the energy sector provides Tonga and its Pacific islands neighbours with a necessary boost in skills and expertise to cope with energy repairs after severe weather events. One of the first elements of the energy system to be damaged during a tropical cyclone is the power lines. Prior to OIREP, and in locations where power line upgrades have not taken place, power lines are not designed to cope with cyclone-force winds. With the addition of women to the energy sector workforce, there is now a greater pool of skilled experts to repair damaged electricity infrastructure including the power lines, meaning electricity can be connected again more quickly after a severe weather event.

A larger pool of energy sector experts provides a boost not only for Tonga, but for the country’s Pacific islands neighbours as well. In line with the Pacific’s policy on Regionalism, in times of crisis (e.g. after a severe tropical cyclone), skilled workers from an unaffected country travel to an affected country to support response and recovery efforts, including repairing power lines. While there are yet to be documented reports of women joining these support crews, the addition of women to TPL’s team means a greater ability to serve regional efforts of response and recovery for the energy sector.

In addition to a greater quantity of workers, research participants also noted an increase in the quality of work as a result of women joining TPL. When women joined to be trained on-the-job with TPL, the project managers noticed two things related to the quality of work. Firstly, women put in a huge amount of effort to ensure their work was up to standard. Secondly, the men did not want to be outperformed and began to “up their game” – and the overall quality improved.



*“The quality of the work is better. Speaking with both men and women line mechanics, they saw how hard the women worked and this made them [the men] work harder. One of the women was the supply manager who checks equipment in and out, which has resulted in better quality equipment. You don’t really see a gender focus in infrastructure in the Pacific, but this was really successful.” DFAT, Tonga.*

These examples provide evidence of the multiple benefits of pursuing gender equality outcomes.

### Enablers of gender-inclusive outcomes for community resilience

Changes were enabled in two ways, as described below.

**Enabler 1: Having a clear and direct focus on gender equality with achievable milestones.** DFAT’s contributions to OIREP led to positive outcomes for gender equality. Intentional steps were taken to promote gender equality; for example, within the Gender Action Plan, performance targets and metrics related to gender equality were included. Performance targets and activities that supported the achievement of gender equality outcomes include the inclusion of a Gender and Safeguards Specialist on the Project Team; and ensuring equal pay for equal work for male and female workers and contractors, whenever culturally appropriate, will be encouraged to provide work for unskilled and semi-skilled labour for local people (target of 30% women). Performance targets were developed collaboratively and worded carefully to mitigate any potential pushback among project stakeholders.

**Enabler 2: Removing structural barriers for women’s participation.** The OIREP Project Team recognized that the existing system supported males to work in the energy sector, but was not encouraging of women’s participation. With the support of the Gender and Safeguards Specialist, women were recruited and trained as TPL workers. Since systems change takes time (e.g. designing a gender-responsive electrical engineering course at the Tonga Institute of Science and Technology), a more immediate approach was required. The approach taken incorporated “work-arounds” and taking on a certain level of risk to achieve the milestones in the Gender Action Plan. For example, women were trained and certified on-the-job, which meant extra care needed to be taken to ensure the safety of the women and their male colleagues. The work-around paid off with no negative consequences, and the TPL teams have benefited greatly from women’s contributions to the workforce.

### Links to the Sendai Framework

#### **Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction**

This case study links closely to Priority Area 4, through the contributions of women in the energy sector to “build back better”. Women in Tonga are now participating in building the resilience of critical infrastructure, through the “climate proofing” of the electricity network as part of OIREP. The visibility of women, as they go about their roles as line-workers, is noticeable for the Tongan population to see. This supports ongoing shifts in traditional gender norms that limit women to certain roles.





## 3.2 Case Study 2: Vanuatu Skills Partnership – Skills for Handicraft

### Introduction

This case study focuses on the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, providing an example of how women's economic empowerment and shifts in traditional gender norms support community resilience. The Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP) is a co-investment between the Governments of Australia and Vanuatu for the continued development of the national skills system. VSP is currently in its fourth phase of implementation (2017–2022; AUD 20 million). The partnership is locally-led and works with relevant government ministries across streams, including skills for tourism (with the Department of Tourism and Vanuatu Tourism Office), handicraft (with the Department of Industry), agribusiness (with the Department of Agriculture), and training providers (with leaders across national and provincial governments). Social inclusion (gender equality and disability inclusion) and climate change resilience are embedded across all streams.

Skills for Handicraft is one of the four streams of VSP and focuses on supporting rural economic growth and women's economic empowerment through creative industries. Handicrafts are a significant source of income for women in rural and provincial areas of Vanuatu. Produced using pandanus and wild hibiscus leaves, handicrafts include bags, baskets, hats, fans and Christmas decorations. Within this case study, learning about women's roles in community resilience building is centred on the province of Malampa, Vanuatu. The Malampa Handicraft Centre, established in 2014, supports the sale of handicrafts from over 300 handicraft producers in Malampa Province.

### Outcomes of the programme

This case study describes the community resilience outcomes achieved by the women and their communities participating in the Skills for Handicraft programme, and how they demonstrate contributions to gender-responsive DRR.

#### **Outcome 1: Wala Island community was more resilient to the shocks and stresses of climate and disaster risks as a result of women's economic empowerment.**

Women traditionally do the weaving in Wala community and, through the Skills for Handicraft programme, were able to turn these skills into income-generating activities. As a result of these skills and participation in additional training, women were able to earn money from the sales of their handicraft products. The research revealed several instances where women in Wala had become the primary income earners and had new skills in financial literacy. This in turn enabled women, their families and communities to take steps to reduce risks and demonstrate growing resilience to climate and disaster impacts.

Income generated from the sale of handicrafts was spent on building resilience of families and communities. One handicraft producer noted she could weave a basket that sells for 1,000 vatu (approximately AUD 12.50) in the Malampa Handicraft Centre in one day – she received 900 vatu (approximately AUD 11.40) from the sale. As per cultural norms in Vanuatu, income and other resources are shared among extended families, thus supporting resilience beyond the individuals participating in the programme.

*"The extra income that I earn, I can save and be able to get a loan – it was approved, and I bought a new sewing machine and bread maker... Before, I couldn't have done this – without the income from the handicraft. I already paid the loan off – it took three months."* Handicraft producer in Wala.

*"From the extra money, I have an account with the national bank and save half the money and the other half on kids' schools fees."* Handicraft producer in Wala.

Men also expressed their support of women in these activities, noting how it helped the whole family:



*"Women who have been selling handicraft – some of the money from the sales helped to rebuild the houses [after TC Hola, 2018]. It also helped with the family." Male from Wala community.*

Women who earned income from weaving and selling their products were therefore more resilient, including in times of disaster preparedness, response and recovery, as they were able to afford to buy items to support their livelihoods, as described above.

**Outcome 2: Shifts in traditional gender roles at the community level resulted in women taking on leadership roles in the community.**

Shifts in traditional gender roles in the Wala Island community resulted from participation in the Skills for Handicraft programme. Women's participation in weaving activities resulted in increased income from the sales of their handicraft products. On multiple occasions, women described instances of their husbands recognizing the financial benefits of the programme. The men in the community appreciated the change in women's roles, expressing greater respect for women and actively supporting the women to continue their weaving and handicraft production. Instances where couples were working together on the business were also reported, as they supported each other on various tasks associated with handicraft production.

*"I work on handicrafts, which has influenced my family a lot – I earn money, can pay for food and other things. Now my husband is very supportive – instead of me looking for materials for roofing, my husband goes, and I stay behind and do the handicraft. I support my family more now and pay for their needs. My husband is more supportive and respects me more." Female handicraft producer, Wala, Vanuatu.*

The VSP team have also paid particular attention to any potential negative outcomes or responses to the new roles women were playing in their communities as a result of their weaving businesses. VSP has engaged specific roles within the programme that focus on gender and inclusion, and more recently a gender-based violence specialist. VSP has also developed a new Better Balance Strategy (focusing on a better balance in female and male roles, relations and opportunities for an inclusive and prosperous Vanuatu), which demonstrates the commitment to supporting positive outcomes of the programme.

Women in Wala also demonstrated new forms of leadership through the coordination of village events associated with weaving and other activities. For example, one of the handicraft producers and trainers mobilized the community during the Research Team's visit, organizing two community lunches and directing people (men and women) to carry out tasks. The Research Team's national consultant noted: "I could sense that the men were listening to her. She made a plan and instructed the community to organize for the food. All the men helped." This leadership was noted as a new role for women in this community.

Participation in the handicraft business activities also provided women with disabilities a pathway for self-employment and a career through weaving, business management, training and income opportunities, and leadership roles. Such participation is made possible due to VSP's training requirements being inclusive of people with disabilities. The Research Team observed women with disabilities who were active and successful handicraft producers and income earners, because of their participation in the Skills for Handicraft programme. This was transformational for women with disabilities in Wala. In the past, people with disabilities were not welcome to participate in community activities. Their inclusion in the Skills for Handicraft programme enabled the wider Wala community to see people with disabilities as active and capable in handicraft production. Subsequently, participation of people with disabilities in community life in general increased – along with their confidence levels.



Participation in the programme also provided women with disabilities with leadership opportunities. One woman with a physical disability had become a handicraft weaving leader, and organized other women so they could meet as a group and make handicraft products to meet orders for buyers who wanted to get their products by specified deadlines. She noted that she felt more confident and was in charge of her own life. She also reflected that she was now independent (financially – her husband was overseas), and could create new designs and had skills, so she could make handicraft products anytime. She noted that:

*"I don't depend on my husband anymore, now I can do things for myself. When there is a family need, I can respond ... Although my husband travels to New Zealand for work, this house was built from my income. And I buy things for my other relatives from the income. For example, I have bought solar lights."* Female handicraft producer, Wala, Vanuatu.

## Enablers of gender-inclusive outcomes for community resilience

Changes were enabled through three main approaches, as described below.

**Enabler 1: Intentional prioritisation of gender and social inclusion as a key aspect of the programme from the outset and ongoing resourcing to maintain focus.** VSP prioritized gender and social inclusion from the outset of the programme, and genuinely embedded GESI across all activities. Investments were made in creating specialist roles within VSP, which have continued to support the integration of GESI across the programme.

**Enabler 2: Recognize the role of women's economic empowerment as a contribution to disaster risk reduction.** Women's new roles as income earners, through their skills in producing high quality handicrafts, led to communities being more resilient to the shocks and stresses of climate and disaster impacts.

**Enabler 3: Locally-led implementation, enabling shifts in gender norms to be managed in culturally appropriate ways.** While acknowledgement and celebration of women's contributions to the successes of the programme were important, it was also necessary to acknowledge that the men and husbands also played critical roles in the success. The pride in success was shared and felt by both the women and men in the community.

## Links to the Sendai Framework

### Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

This case study has highlighted the increasing role of women as primary income earners for their families and communities. The research found examples of women and their families re-investing their earnings from the sale of handicrafts into risk reduction activities at the family and community levels. Examples of investments in risk reduction and preparedness measures include the purchasing of additional income-earning products (bread makers, and sewing machines), materials supporting community resilience (solar lights, and more robust housing), and investments in children's education through payment of school fees.

### Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

Through their participation in the VSP Skills for Handicraft programme, women are taking on more leadership roles in their communities – including in times of disaster. Research revealed that women were taking on roles in the Village Council (which previously was men only), as well as forming coordinated groups to support the smooth production of their handicraft products to maximize efficiency and support each other collaboratively. These examples demonstrate contributions to community building, good communications, and relationships, which are all critical in times of disaster response and recovery.



### 3.3 Case Study 3: Shifting the Power Coalition

#### Introduction

This case study focuses on Shifting the Power Coalition (StPC), which is a regional coalition of 13 women-led CSOs across six Pacific island countries, in addition to the international NGO, ActionAid Australia. StPC emerged in 2016 with a vision to strengthen collective power and build leadership capacity of diverse women in responding to DRR and climate action. Initially, the member CSOs formed a coalition to address women's disadvantage during and after disasters in the Pacific. Feminist organizations in the Pacific therefore sought to design a programme with a strengths-based approach, recognizing women's knowledge and capacity in disaster contexts, instead of treating women as disaster victims. StPC aims to champion women's leadership and present an amplified voice on humanitarian response and climate resilience. The CSO members of StPC have diverse priority areas across humanitarian response and climate resilience, including promoting young women's leadership, and advocating for gender minorities and women with disabilities, and different gendered aspects of humanitarian issues. As part of StPC, the CSOs are working together to promote diverse women's leadership in humanitarian action at local, national and regional levels.

StPC is a great example of an effective partnership and coalition between an international NGO and local CSOs, where ActionAid Australia has been playing the facilitator's role to support Pacific women-led CSOs. DFAT has supported StPC with funding through ActionAid Australia since 2018. This case study describes how the funding from DFAT has promoted new pathways for women-led CSOs to connect with regional climate change and disaster resilience organizations and enabled two-way learning and dialogue for more effective and gender-responsive DRR.

#### Outcomes of the programme

This case study describes how StPC has changed the way women are leading and engaging in dialogue about climate change and disaster resilience. Two significant outcomes are illustrated below, which directly contribute to effective GESI integration in DRR and strengthened community resilience.

##### **Outcome 1: Increased leadership skills, knowledge, and confidence of young Pacific women to access and use climate change and disaster information to engage in local and national disaster and climate change coordination mechanisms.**

StPC creates opportunities for CSO members, including young women's organizations, to increase their technical knowledge in DRR and support them to effectively use the knowledge in practical settings. Through the programme, young women from different CSOs connected with climate scientists and technical experts from national and regional organizations, including National Meteorological Services, SPREP, and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Local and regional climate and weather experts introduced multi-hazard early warning systems and weather forecasting tools to the women, and facilitated training on translating climate science information for risk-informed decisions. Young women were upskilled through this training and learned how to link their experiences with technical knowledge and gain confidence to apply their knowledge in future work.

*"I developed skills and capacities for more effective leadership in future projects, including providing consulting services as local expert."* Taimalelagi Ramona Tugaga, President YWCA, Samoa.

Engagement between the StPC members and national and regional agencies has been a two-way learning process. National and regional organizations gain a better understanding of gendered needs to design evidence-based climate change and DRR strategies while providing technical support to the StPC members. For example, while working with women from YWCA, Samoa's





Meteorological Service and SPREP officers identified gender-related gaps in previously available climate information resources. The officers recognized the need to acknowledge women's roles in DRR and value of women's knowledge and skills for effective dissemination of information. This enabled partnerships between YWCA Samoa and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and SPREP to design and implement gender-inclusive climate change strategies. Pacific young women's engagement with decision-making agencies provided young women with opportunities to voice their requirements and demonstrate their capacity on national platforms. Having access to speak in male-dominated agencies is a significant milestone in Pacific feminist practice and contribution to bringing gender transformative change, as described in the quote below.

*"This is probably one of the [first] projects where young women had the opportunity to talk at high-level [national level] and present the work we are doing by ourselves."* Carolyn Kitone, StPC Learning Coordinator.

**Outcome 2: Strengthened influence of diverse Pacific women in regional climate change-disaster resilience through increased connections and more effective networks among local women-led CSOs.**

StPC implements adaptive strategies to create communication channels beyond national level as a leadership pathway for women and to promote regional engagement of women. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, StPC facilitated an online knowledge sharing session at the Pacific Resilience Forum (PRF) in 2020. Technical and logistical support made available at the StPC National Hubs facilitated young women's participation in the forum.

StPC encourages women's leadership and contributions through creating opportunities for women to participate and represent the community's voice at high-level events. For example, women from member CSOs engaged in the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women in 2021. Additionally, the StPC Learning Coordinator presented the programme's work progress in 2021 at Meteorological Services offices across the Pacific countries.

StPC is actively communicating, collaborating and interacting with other regional networks to develop a stronger collective voice and gain access to provincial decision-making agencies. For example, StPC organized two regional meetings in 2022 with external CSOs, including Pacific Climate Change Warriors network, Young Women's Network in Fiji, and the network of LGBTQI+ community. Additionally, StPC is supporting member CSOs to expand their connections with external CSOs to promote gender-responsive DRR approaches. For example, YWCA Samoa is currently working with other YWCA partners across the Pacific and partnering with regional consulting agencies to advise different aspects of climate change and DRR practices.

As the reputation, outcomes and impact of the coalition grows, StPC's work is being recognized and valued by existing regional organizations. Key climate and disaster-focused organizations in the Pacific are considering StPC as a prominent actor in climate change and disaster resilience. For example, StPC has been offered a membership from the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN), and SPREP and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat partnered with young women-led CSOs within StPC. Young women's increased involvement at the regional level has been a significant change brought about through the programme, indicating shifts in traditional mindset on leadership roles for young women.

*"In the Pacific, 'youth' often corresponds to young men. However, the significance of young women in youth leadership has been surfacing gradually through the regional engagement of young women."* Carolyn Kitone, StPC Learning Coordinator.



## Enablers of gender-inclusive outcomes for community resilience

Changes were enabled in the following three ways:

**Enabler 1: Working together through partnerships and coalitions for amplified voice on gender-responsive DRR.** StPC provides a mechanism for women-led CSOs to work together on climate, disaster, humanitarian and resilience issues. Progress has gained momentum as a result of coalition members working, learning and sharing together. This has been a very effective strategy and enabled pathways to increase diverse women's leadership and participation in building resilience.

**Enabler 2: Long-term and sustained partnerships between local women-led CSOs and national and regional organizations.** Continued engagement and building mutual trust between partner CSOs and climate and DRR organizations enabled a supportive environment for further partnerships and progress towards women's advocacy roles within climate change and disaster resilience practices.

**Enabler 3: Holistic approach to amplify diverse women's voice and promote gender-equitable policies and practices across the Pacific.** The programme promoted diverse women's networking and facilitated women's participation in major national and regional events to highlight women's capacity and future potential. Women's participation and elevated voice in decision-making platforms are bringing cultural shifts in gender norms in the Pacific leadership role and leading towards transformative change.

## Links to the Sendai Framework

### Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

This case study highlights significant shifts in decision-making that better enable women's contributions and participation. Diverse women have been increasingly playing roles in community leadership in DRR, advocacy on DRR issues and regional dialogue. These examples demonstrate evidence of transformative change, particularly with regard to shifting gender norms as women take on roles outside those traditionally ascribed to women.

### Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

The objective and activities of Shifting the Power Coalition demonstrate a strong commitment to women's empowerment and women's leadership to implement actions for Priority 4. This priority has a focus on gender and social inclusion at all levels of DRR strategies and practices, which has been widely promoted through the coalition's activities to strengthen voice of diverse women, including women with disabilities, women from marginalized groups, and women in all their diversity.



### 3.4 Case Study 4: Women’s Resilience to Disasters programme (contribution from UN Women)

#### Introduction

This case study focuses on the Women’s Resilience to Disasters (WRD) programme, which aims to render the lives and livelihoods of women and girls resilient to disasters, including climate-related disasters and pandemics, to contribute to sustainable, secure, and thriving communities. WRD provides a comprehensive but flexible package, which can be tailored to unique regional and country circumstances. The programme recognizes the importance of country-driven and locally-owned action that is focused on local priorities, but supported by regional and global elements, which together creates an enabling environment for women’s agency, leadership, coordination, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. WRD adopts a transformative approach, which focuses on structural and systems change at all levels as a basis for building an enabling environment for reducing women’s risk and leveraging women as agents of change. Similarly, it seeks to tackle the underlying root causes and drivers of women’s risk, including inequality and social norms, by: (a) challenging the deeply entrenched and unequal power imbalances; and (b) addressing the root causes of women’s vulnerability. The WRD programme is being implemented in the Pacific with sister programmes in other regions. Fiji, Kiribati, and Vanuatu are the initial WRD countries in the Pacific.

WRD programme implementation is driven at the country level and supported by regional and global components. The country component provides targeted action to strengthen women’s resilience and build gender-responsive systems. The country component also advances different elements of WRD, depending on the national context, policy priorities, existing initiatives, needs, and capacities. The regional component focuses on knowledge management, advocacy, gender, and disability support for regional mechanisms, movements and coalitions, including the Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR). The global component advances gender-responsiveness in global disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation processes, and ensures global knowledge sharing and advocacy on women’s leadership for disaster resilience. It provides a platform (the WRD Knowledge Hub – linked to Prevention Web and the UN Women website) for sharing good practices and voices across the globe.

#### Outcomes of the programme

This case study describes how WRD has been a crucial landmark for boosting women’s voice and agency in disaster and climate risk reduction and resilience building; with game-changing potential for gender equality, women’s empowerment and leadership.

**Outcome 1: More countries, regional initiatives, and UN agencies use prevention, preparedness, and recovery policy frameworks, systems, processes, and tools, which are gender-responsive and implemented as a result of local women’s and girls’ advocacy (Building the enabling environment).**

**Outcome 2: More women and girls in WRD countries have voice and agency to withstand multiple hazards, recover from disasters, and increase their resilience to current and future risks (Targeted action).**



## Enablers of gender-inclusive outcomes for community resilience

Changes were enabled in the following ways:

**Enabler 1: Building the evidence base, sharing knowledge, and providing training on the gender dimensions of disaster and climate risk, including through research and the development or engendering of tools and training materials.** For example, the WRD Knowledge Hub<sup>3</sup> is the first “one-stop-shop” for all gender-related disaster, climate change, and resilience knowledge, tools, and expertise. It includes 1,583 resources in the WRD library, 18 topic pages, women’s perspectives, case studies, events, the WRD Expert Register, expert blogs, and specific Pacific and ASEAN pages.

**Enabler 2: Advocating and engendering global frameworks and mechanisms, including opening the avenue for gender-responsive implementation of the Sendai Framework.** A Joint UN Study (2021) was undertaken with 25 UN entities on the status of the UN system’s work on advancing gender equality and women’s leadership in DRR, along with initiatives such as: a new consultative Global Group of Gender Experts; a CSW66 side event with nearly 400 participants on a gender-responsive midterm review process; the provision of guidance for Member States to support gender-responsive Sendai Framework reporting; and advocacy for a Gender Action Plan for the Sendai Framework were supported through the WRD programme.

**Enabler 3: Holistic approach to amplify diverse women’s voice and promote gender-equitable policies and practices across the Pacific.** This involves supporting NDMOs and climate change ministries to mainstream gender into national DRR policies, processes, and climate action. At the same time, it is important to build capacity for women, including women with disabilities, and young women, to advocate and influence regional and global DRR and climate change platforms and processes for gender-responsive implementation and outcomes.

### Links to the Sendai Framework

#### Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

The WRD Knowledge Hub has increased the knowledge base and understanding of the gender dimensions of risk, piloted leadership assessment tools, and established a roster of gender experts on DRR and resilience.

#### Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

The programme is supporting Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu to develop the governance environment for gender-responsive prevention, preparedness, and recovery systems, plans and tools.

#### Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

In Fiji, the WRD programme is working with United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the Markets for Change team to provide micro-insurance cover to women market vendors and women in grassroots communities as a way to protect incomes and recover from disasters.

#### Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

Through partnerships with government, local disaster risk reduction stakeholders, and women’s organizations, the programme is supporting the development of inclusive and gender-responsive preparedness and early warning systems in Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://wrд.unwomen.org/>





## 3.5 Case Study 5: Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction (contribution from UNDRR)

### Introduction

This case study focuses on the Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction, which is a professional network to support and promote women working in disaster risk reduction, in all their diversity. The overall goal of WIN DRR is to empower women to attain leadership and enhance their role in decision-making for more inclusive and effective disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region. The network has four main priorities: building the evidence base for women’s leadership in DRR; recognizing women’s achievements; strengthening leadership capacities; and supporting institutions to enhance women’s leadership. WIN DRR operates regionally across Asia and the Pacific with approximately 1,000 members, and is implemented by UNDRR through support from DFAT in Australia. WIN DRR connects and celebrates the existing efforts of women leading DRR efforts across the region.

### Outcomes of the project

This case study describes how WIN DRR has reduced the barriers faced by women and supported higher participation and leadership of women in DRR across the Pacific. WIN DRR has two key outcomes to enhance women’s leadership:

#### **Outcome 1: A greater evidence base on women’s leadership in DRR is generated and used to adopt strategies and policies to enhance women’s leadership.**

Through mapping and commissioning research on women’s leadership in DRR, individual and institutional barriers are identified and addressed with tailored recommendations and actions. For example, the findings from a WIN DRR study on learning from women-led early warning systems across the Pacific has informed the integration of gender and disability across the early warning early action value chain in Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative projects globally. WIN DRR is also supporting DRR institutions to reduce the barriers women face in furthering their careers.

*“If you understand the risk, then you can understand how to cope with it.”* Esline Garaebiti, Director General of the Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Environment, Energy and Disaster Management in Vanuatu, and winner of the WIN DRR Leadership Awards for Excellence for 2022.

#### **Outcome 2: The work of women DRR professionals is celebrated, and they receive professional support to enhance their careers.**

The WIN DRR network has profiled numerous Pacific women working on DRR in different sectors, creating connections and networking opportunities, and recognizing women’s achievements. These case studies and profiles have been shared and disseminated globally, highlighting the invaluable contributions Pacific women are making to DRR. This has also been recognized with Pacific women winning the WIN DRR Leadership Award for Excellence two years in a row. In addition, over 230 Pacific women have participated in WIN DRR training focused on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction, including 60 young Pacific women.



## Enablers of gender-inclusive outcomes for community resilience

Changes were enabled in the following ways:

**Enabler 1: Inspire action through positive story telling.** WIN DRR emphasizes the success stories of women leading and participating in the field of DRR across the Pacific, not only inspiring other women doing the same, but enhancing a sense of belonging within a male-dominated field. A WIN DRR hub on PreventionWeb<sup>4</sup> includes a number of case studies and profiles, showcasing the breadth of women's contribution to reducing disaster risk, including the publication: *Building a resilient Pacific: Pacific women leaders reducing disaster risk*<sup>5</sup>.

**Enabler 2: Promote evidence-based gender-responsive DRR decision-making.** By commissioning research on women's leadership in disaster risk reduction, the WIN DRR initiative is strengthening the evidence base for gender-responsive DRR decision-making.

### Links to the Sendai Framework

#### Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

WIN DRR enhances the evidence base through commissioned research and mapping of the barriers and intersecting factors women experience that contribute to risk; as well as illustrating improved DRR outcomes through women's leadership and participation, by publishing good practices and case studies.

#### Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

The leadership and decision-making capacities of individual WIN DRR members have been enhanced to lead and partake in decision-making to prevent, prepare, and recover from disasters. Collaborating with and supporting governing institutions to adopt more inclusive practices and policies has translated to more inclusive disaster risk management.



Melanesian woman with her child waiting at the local health centre in Vanuatu. Photograph: Laszlo Mates/Shutterstock.com.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.preventionweb.net/collections/profiles-women-leaders-drr>

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.undrr.org/publication/building-resilient-pacific>

## 4. Pathways that promote GESI for community resilience



This section describes four pathways identified through the research that promote GESI for strengthening community resilience. These pathways highlight how resilience to disasters can be achieved with a GESI lens. There are strong intersections between pathways, whereby actions taken that support one pathway reinforce others. These intersections are also mentioned below.

### Pathway 1: Women-led partnerships and coalitions

Women-led partnerships and coalitions build momentum and amplify diverse experiences for a collective and stronger voice for advocacy on climate and disaster resilience.

There is growing evidence and recognition of the importance of women's organizational partnerships, alliances and coalitions to building resilience to climate change and disasters in the Pacific. Women-led alliances and coalitions are moving beyond feminist movements to contribute to DRR and climate justice issues. For example, Shifting the Power Coalition partners are building women's leadership and advocacy on climate change and DRR. Women-led CSOs from the coalition are representing diverse Pacific women in regional platforms, such as the Pacific Triennial Conference in 2021, and the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2022, and gaining visibility for their voice to be heard and included in decision-making.

Women-led organizations and partnerships are engaging at community, national and regional levels with more confidence and bridging the gaps between community and national levels through advocacy roles. For example, women leaders from the Women's Weather Watch Vanuatu initiative met the parliament members, enabling them to voice their community's needs for effective DRR approaches and strengthening community resilience (StPC et al., 2022). The most effective women-led partnerships and coalitions require long-term investments to build trust between members – this links to Pathway 3 below.

### Pathway 2: Women's economic empowerment for DRR

Economic empowerment of women for effective disaster preparedness, response and recovery, supports women's agency and enables women and their communities to build back better and be more resilient to multiple risks.

Several examples demonstrate how women's economic empowerment supports DRR and resilience building. Case Study 2 described the way women's economic empowerment contributed to DRR. Women's new roles as income earners, through their skills in producing high quality handicrafts, empowered women with the ability to purchase items (e.g. bread makers, and sewing machines) and make investments (e.g. children's education, savings, and loan repayments) to build their own and their family's resilience.

Investments focused on women's economic empowerment increase community capacity and contribute to resilience building as indirect outcomes. For example, in Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu, the WRD programme implemented by UN Women aims to develop women's capacity for disaster and climate resilient businesses and livelihoods (UN Women, 2021). As part of the programme, women and girls are empowered to advocate for gender-responsive disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to reduce economic loss, contributing to community resilience.



A third example of how women's economic empowerment supports resilience is the Markets for Change programme, which promotes gender equality and women's empowerment by addressing issues of safety, inclusion and discrimination of women in marketplaces in rural and urban areas in Fiji and Solomon Islands. Marketplaces such as Gizo Market in Solomon Islands and Luganville Market House in Vanuatu have been upgraded to be more resilient to disasters and climate change. The marketplaces were designed and reconstructed to reduce vulnerability of local market vendors, the majority of whom are local women. The upgrades to the Luganville Market House building prevented goods from being damaged from TC Harold (in 2020) and helped cyclone-affected businesswomen to resume their livelihood activities seven days after the cyclone. (APCP, 2020; APCP, 2019; Selby & Jiwanji, 2016). Supporting women's economic empowerment also links to Pathway 4 – directly influencing individuals, policy and the environment.

### Pathway 3: Diverse and long-term partnerships

Long-term partnerships between local women leaders, national agencies (e.g. NDMOs, and National Meteorological Services), and regional organizations (e.g. SPC, SPREP, and PIFS) support two-way dialogue for ongoing gender-responsive approaches in DRR.

Continued partnerships and ongoing dialogue between women leaders, and national and regional organizations, build mutual trust and understanding, enabling collaborative relationships for inclusive and effective DRR approaches. For example, the Shifting the Power Coalition is building partnerships with regional climate organizations such as SPREP, and CSOs such as the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network. Women leaders from *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* and FDPF worked with NDMOs in Vanuatu and Fiji through the MHEWS initiatives. Women from *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* network worked with NDMO officials in Vanuatu to map out ways of integrating traditional knowledge with technical climate information and to disseminate information in easily understood local language. In Fiji, the NDMO facilitated FDPF with a free online platform to explore the experiences of people with disabilities during TC Harold and COVID-19 for advocacy purposes (StPC et al., 2022). Over time, long-term partnerships may form coalitions (Pathway 1), which are shown to be effective means of creating transformative change.

### Pathway 4: Directly influencing individuals, policy and the environment

Investments and actions to directly influence individuals, organizations and the environment, such as funding for upskilling women leaders as change agents, policy change through incentives, and upgrading local market infrastructure, have enabled positive developments.

A key pathway to successful gender-inclusive DRR was through directly influencing individuals. For example, WEDO designed skill development training courses for women employees in government agencies across 12 Pacific countries. Increased capacity and confidence through the training encouraged women to take leadership roles and connect to the global gender climate change network. Women employees working in the government have been engaging with COP and representing their country on regional and global platforms (Burns, 2022). The need for more focused and targeted capacity building for women is also mentioned in the companion thematic report focused on local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge (UNDRR, 2023b), particularly due to women's roles as first responders in times of disaster.

Directly influencing policies and strategies has also been an effective pathway to integrate GESI in DRR. DFAT's advisory support and funding for the SPACE programme helped to draft legislation and guidelines for an accountable and accessible cash transfer system in the Pacific countries and Timor-Leste. This played a direct role to bring systems change in the policy environment and enabled successful cash transfers among the target population (Costella, 2021). Case Study 1 also described how gender equality metrics, and payments tied to the achievement of targets, also provided incentives to take gender-focused actions seriously.





Directly influencing the environment – including infrastructure – has also been a pathway for gender-inclusive DRR (and women’s economic empowerment – see Pathway 2). For example, infrastructure investments, such as upgrades to the Gizo Market in Solomon Islands and Luganville Market House in Vanuatu, reduced risks from inundation and damage of goods during cyclones and extreme weather events (UNDRR, 2023b; APCP, 2020; APCP, 2019). The infrastructural development of the markets benefited market vendors, the majority of whom are women and were consulted about the designs, and also supported local economy and strengthened community resilience.

## 5. Emerging gaps and looking ahead to 2030

Despite evidence of progress gained, women’s contributions to DRR need to be reflected more comprehensively in sub-national and national governments and regional organizations through genuine mainstreaming of gender equity and social inclusion (Burns, 2022; UNDRR, 2023b; Selby & Jiwaji, 2016). Progress in gender-responsive DRR is uneven and inadequate, with greater efforts required for more widespread inclusion to promote women’s leadership across scales – for example, see *Mid-term Review of Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA) Project* (Gero et al., 2020). This section provides four emerging gaps that should be priority areas of future focus for more gender-inclusive DRR in the Pacific. In addition to the gaps identified from this review, there have also been calls for a Gender Action Plan as a mechanism to address the gender limitations of the Sendai Framework. For example, at the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2022), a side event focused on this topic. This highlights the growing recognition of the need to more genuinely include a gender-responsive approach to DRR.

### Gap 1: Structural barriers limit women’s participation and leadership in DRR, from regional to community levels.

Women’s expertise and knowledge are not always valued or widely promoted within decision-making forums or processes. Despite greater contributions at community levels, women and women-led organizations have limited accessibility to leadership roles at national and regional strategic levels. Women leaders experience discrimination and feel uncomfortable voicing their requests and views within male-dominated environments, which are major barriers for women’s participation in decision-making platforms across local, national and regional levels (Henty, 2021). The lack of roles for women in DRR at national level is also acknowledged in the companion thematic report focused on local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge (UNDRR, 2023b).

Donor-funded community-focused initiatives often do not consider aspects such as intersectionality and marginalized groups, which limit diverse women’s participation in resilience-building activities. For example, some skill development activities in the MHEWS initiatives were designed without adequately addressing the need for additional support for women coming from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds. The lack of support and accessibility discouraged these women to participate in the programme (StPC et al., 2022).

**Priority as we look ahead to 2030:** Continue to identify and address structural barriers to women’s participation, and consider long-term systemic changes needed, while also incorporating short-term “work-arounds” while systems change takes place.



## Gap 2: Inadequate disaster risk financing for women-led organizations; or limited funding allocated to gender-related components within programmes.

Locally-led women's organizations have less visibility at the donor level to be considered for funding or grants. The additional compliance requirements for local organizations can also be a challenge. Local organizations often have to partner with international organizations and face challenges to integrate their organizational perspectives within partnership programmes, due to underlying power dynamics, language barriers and differences in expectations. Women-led organizations in Vanuatu identified this issue as the key barrier to enabling gender-responsive localisation aspects within the humanitarian sector (Henty, 2022).

There are institutional barriers to supporting funding for locally-led and gender-equitable DRR approaches and allocating finance for local organizations. For example, the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme lacked a clear structure for CSO grants and budget execution. This delayed CSOs' involvement to advocate and monitor regional and national commitments towards gender equality and eliminating gender-based violence, and to reach the planned outcome of the programme (Hera & Aid Works, 2021). The challenges in addressing violence against women and girls are ongoing, due to the pervasive nature of the problem, the difficulty in openly discussing the issue, and the limited priority it takes on government agendas in the region.

**Priority as we look ahead to 2030:** Recognize the growing contribution and impact women-led organizations and coalitions are making in DRR in the Pacific and consider scaling up financing for these organizations through multi-year and flexible financing options. Work towards a Sendai Framework Gender Action Plan may also support addressing this gap.

## Gap 3: Gaps in policy environments (regional, national, and local) in mainstreaming gender equality and addressing GESI dimensions in government practice, including LGBTQI+, disability, and violence against women and girls.

Mainstreaming the intersection of disaster resilience, climate change and GESI across government policies and practices is not adequately prioritized across the region. For example, government agencies in Vanuatu allocated funding to offer capacity building training for women employees working in the disaster-climate sector. However, the funding was ad hoc and a one-off practice, not a consistent and ongoing initiative (Henty, 2022). The need for greater collaboration between national decision-makers and local communities was also raised in the companion thematic report focused on local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge (UNDRR, 2023b).

There is a need for good practice guidelines of integration linking GESI and disaster resilience. Without such comprehensive guidelines, considerations such as gender-based violence, disability, LGBTQI+, and sexual minority and intersectional groups are often sidelined in the DRR policy. For example, despite evidence of increased gender-based violence at post-disaster settings in the Pacific, women's safety has not been adequately addressed in the national disaster response-rehabilitation guidelines (Nguyen, 2022). Although the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme initiated support services such as counselling for abuse survivors, there are gaps in implementation practices to effectively integrate the services with the post-disaster recovery phase following disasters (Hera & Aid Works, 2021). In Fiji, there are documented reports of transgender people losing their jobs over cis-gender displaced population following TC Winston, due to lack of inclusiveness of employment practices (Dwyer & Woolf, 2018). Overall, the document review found the prevailing definition of gender in the Pacific to be of a binary nature. This represents an area for future attention when considering what gender-responsive DRR means, to be more inclusive of gender and sexual minorities.



**Priority as we look ahead to 2030:** Continued advocacy, awareness-raising and prioritization is needed for the rights of LGBTIQ+, gender minorities, and women and girls with disabilities, and addressing violence against women and girls. As noted for the above gap, the continued work towards developing a Gender Action Plan for the Sendai Framework would further support progress on closing this gap.

#### Gap 4: COVID-19 restrictions have delayed progress towards anticipated outcomes of gender-focused DRR programmes, due to necessary changes in programme delivery.

The emergence of COVID-19 and related restrictions since 2020 have caused changes and alterations to the implementation of many programmes. Face-to-face training and workshops have been postponed or shifted to online platforms because of COVID-19, which in some cases reduced the effectiveness of activities. Some programme activities were paused because COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions made implementation impossible. In most cases, programme activities were implemented later, or activities were modified to account for ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. In other cases, programmes were scaled back because of time constraints and travel restrictions, and some activities were cancelled due to multiple and complex reasons, leading to failure to provide project outputs. For example, there were some limitations in UN Women's contributions to the Gender Inequality of Risk and Promoting Community Resilience Project in Solomon Islands due to the travel restrictions (Tung et al., 2022).

It is also pertinent to note that some positive outcomes occurred as a result of COVID-19 imposed travel restrictions. Limitations in travel meant that local organizations had to "step up" into new leadership roles, where in pre-COVID-19 times they may have played supporting roles in projects and programmes. This provided a much-needed push towards localization, and enabled learning-by-doing and confidence building among government and non-government stakeholders.

**Priority as we look ahead to 2030:** Recognize the impact COVID-19 has had on programmes and focus efforts on collaborative and locally-led interventions and partnerships that achieve multi-scale and multistakeholder impacts for increased gender equality in DRR.

## 6. Conclusion

The midpoint of the Sendai Framework for DRR offers an opportunity to reflect on progress, lessons learned, and gaps and priorities for the future. This report has reviewed Australian Government-funded investments in GESI and DRR in the Pacific since 2015 and provides overarching trends and developments and how these link to the Sendai Framework's four Priority Areas. Areas of progress are documented, which highlight encouraging progress, particularly relating to women's leadership and participation in DRR. Three case studies include detailed examples of where and how progress has occurred in specific investments in Vanuatu, Tonga, and regionally through the Shifting the Power Coalition. Two additional case studies summarize the positive outcomes from the WRD programme and WIN DRR. Pathways that promote GESI for community resilience are provided, which are important to learn about how progress is achieved. While celebrating and learning about progress in GESI and DRR is important, critical gaps are also described. These include the structural barriers limiting women's participation and leadership in DRR; the inadequacy of disaster risk financing for women-led organizations and gender-focused programmes; the gaps in mainstreaming gender considerations into policy at regional, national and local levels (including LGBTIQ+, disability, and violence against women and girls); and the delays in anticipated progress due to COVID-19 impacts. The report reflects on the gaps and offers priorities to focus on as we look ahead to 2030.



## 8. References

- Attenborough, J. (2021). *SPACE Learning Brief: Cash responses in the Pacific*.
- Australia Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP). (2019). *Empowering women's economic development in Solomon Islands* [preprint].
- Australia Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP). (2020). *Markets for change and climate resilience*.
- Burns, B. (2022). *Final analytical narrative report: Climate change negotiations skills for women in the Pacific Women Delegates Fund (WDF)*.
- Cabot Venton, C. (2021). *SPACE Learning Brief: Economics of early response and resilience*.
- Costella, C. (2021). *SPACE Learning Brief: Social protection and climate change: Options for scaling up DFAT's efforts in the Indo-Pacific region*.
- Dwyer, E., & Woolf, L. (2018). *Down by the river: Addressing the rights, needs and strengths of Fijian sexual and gender minorities in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response*. Oxfam Australia. <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/down-river-addressing-rights-needs-and-strengths-fijian-sexual-and-gender-minorities>
- Fennell, J. (2022, 27 October). *Vanuatu women "so proud" of first female MP elected in 14 years*. ABC Pacific. <https://www.abc.net.au/pacific/programs/pacificbeat/vanuatu-women-so-proud-of-first-female-mp-elected-in-14-years/101583142>
- Gero, A., Winterford, K., Fong, P., Rumsey, M., Argyrous, G., & Duxson, S. (2020). *Mid-term review of Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA) Project*. Pacific Community. <https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/2021-04/PIEMA%20MTR%20Report%20%28Final%29%202020.pdf>
- Henty, P. (2022). *Leading for resilience: Women's leadership in disaster and climate resilience in Vanuatu*.
- Hera & Aid Works. (2021). *Mid-term evaluation of Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme 2018–2022: Summary report*. <http://www.theveiqiaproject.com>
- Nguyen, H., Pross, C., & Yi-Chen Han, J. (2022). *Review of gender-responsiveness and disability-inclusion in disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific*.
- Plan International. (2018). *Gender transformative climate change action in the Pacific*. Vol. 13.
- Selby, S., & Jiwani, M. (2016). *Risk governance building blocks for resilient development in the Pacific: A policy brief*.
- Shifting the Power Coalition, UNDRR, ActionAid Australia, & WIN DRR. (2022). *Inclusive and accessible multi-hazard early-warning systems: Learning from women-led early-warning systems in the Pacific*. <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/inclusive-and-accessible-multi-hazard-early-warning-systems-learning-women-led-early>
- Tung, D.A.C., Hortle, D.R., May, A., & Sloan, T. (2022). *Final evaluation of gender inequality of risk and promoting community resilience project in Solomon Islands: Draft report*. <http://www.sustineo.com.au>
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). (2023a, July). *Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030: Thematic report on climate and disaster-resilient infrastructure in the Pacific*.



UNDRR. (2023b, July). *Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030: Thematic report on local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge for disaster risk reduction in the Pacific.*

UN Women. (2021). *Programme brief: WRD programme in the Pacific.* <http://www.unwomen.org>

Women's Resilience to Disasters (WRD), UN Women, and Australian Aid. (2022). *Pacific approaches to gender, disaster response and supporting resilient communities: Pacific preparatory webinar for the Asia and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction [webinar transcript].* [https://wrw.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Webinar%20report\\_Resilient%20Pacific%20communities\\_v2.pdf](https://wrw.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Webinar%20report_Resilient%20Pacific%20communities_v2.pdf)



Women from Wala Island, Vanuatu, participate in a focus group discussion about community resilience (November 2019). Photograph: Anna Gero.



