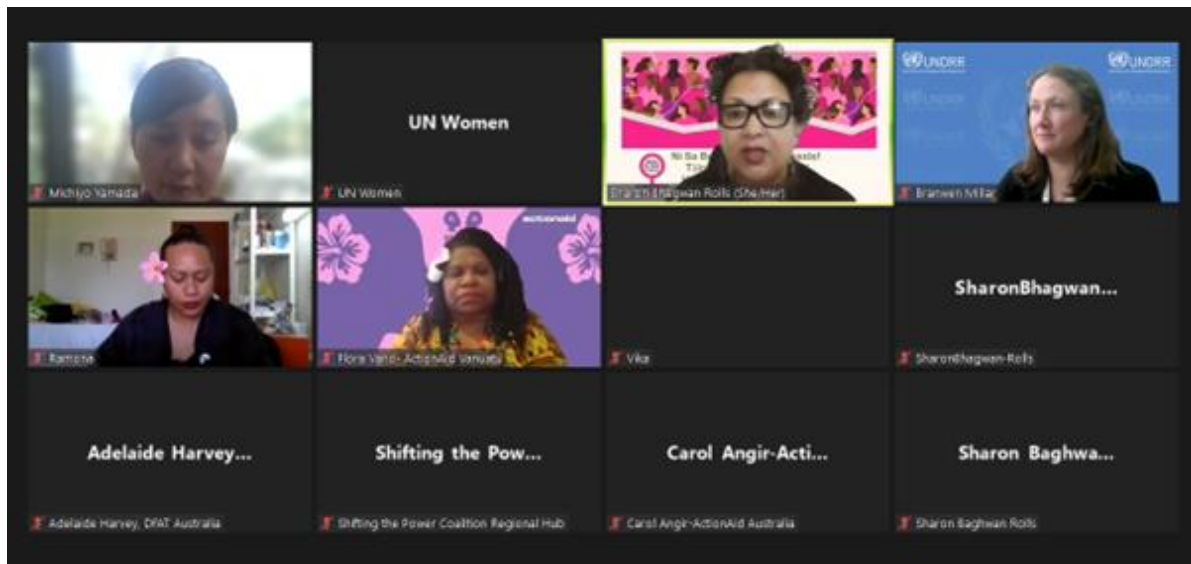


# INVESTING IN INCLUSIVE RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS

Pacific Preparatory Webinar for the Asia and Pacific Ministerial  
Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) 2022



Moderator: **Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls**



## WEBINAR OBJECTIVES

The session was convened by the [Women's Resilience to Disaster programme](#), UN Women, and Australian Aid with the aim of providing knowledge, skill-sharing, and sharing lessons learnt on community resilience from gender and DRR work carried out by civil society groups and CROP agencies.

Sharon, the session moderator first introduced the **webinar objectives**:

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- **Build knowledge on evidence, innovation and approaches** on gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction, with a particular focus on resilient communities.
  - **Hold dialogue** on how to prioritise gender, community resilience and disaster risk reduction at national level, in the Pacific and Asia, and in global discourse.
  - **Strengthen relationships and networks** among Pacific disaster risk reduction, feminist, gender justice and development justice activists and advocates, practitioners and policymakers.
  - **Strengthen Pacific input** into the APMCDRR and Sendai Framework.
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## APMCDRR


The Asia and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) will take place between 19-22 September and will result in the Brisbane Declaration. The theme for the conference is: *'From Crisis to Resilience: Transforming the Asia-Pacific Region's future through disaster risk reduction'*, and the conference is rooted in the following three pillars:

- Investing in resilience and preparedness;
- shock-proofed infrastructure and systems; and
- resilient communities.

The conference will also examine the three cross-cutting themes of: **Localisation, Inclusion, and Science, technology and knowledge.**

## SETTING THE SCENE

2022 has been and continues to be a pivotal year for advancing gender-responsive disaster risk reduction. Most notably, the 66th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) broke new ground by exploring the nexus between gender, climate change, environment, and disaster risks while the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR,2022) also provided an opportunity to learn at the global level what is being done to advance gender-responsive disaster risk reduction. There is now an opportunity to drive further progress at the APMCDRR.



**Ms. Adelaide Harvey, Policy Officer (Gender, Disability and Inclusion Lead), Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Section, DFAT** set the scene for the webinar stating that each of these forums have provided a unique learning opportunity to ensure the gender-responsive and disability-inclusive implementation of the Sendai Framework as well as address the underlying causes of gender inequality.

**These collective actions can be progressed further during COP27 and the ongoing Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction Midterm Review**, as effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) means ensuring the meaningful participation of the most marginalised in the design and implementation of disaster management activities - women and girls, people with disability, indigenous peoples, the elderly, youth and other marginalised communities:

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**“We need to recognise women and girls as leaders, first responders and agents of change, not just as victims and survivors of disasters. Similarly, people with disabilities have unique knowledge and experience essential to the survival and to the resilience of their communities. Identifying these capabilities and planning for the needs of marginalised groups transforms resilience across all levels.”**

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**It is one of the reasons why for the APMCDRR, in partnership with UNDRR, Australia has worked hard to ensure a gender balance** in speaking roles as well as supporting women leaders in their capacity to attend the event in person:

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**“We have also ensured that women experts have been given speaking roles in their areas of expertise, not just the gender-related panels, as so often occurs.”**

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**Ms. Harvey further highlighted that Australia seeks to accelerate disaster risk reduction efforts**, to protect development gains and economic prosperity, and achieve a more climate and disaster resilient future by:

- **Ensuring disaster risk reduction efforts are inclusive, gender-responsive and reflect the needs of the whole community** is critical for effective and equitable policies and strong, resilient communities.
- **In the Pacific, this particularly involves including women’s local and traditional knowledge**, technical expertise and innovation in the design of disaster risk reduction and climate change tools, plans and action.

**Australia is demonstrating this commitment through its partnership with UN Women to deliver the Women’s Resilience to Disasters (WRD) Programme in the Pacific** to ensure systems, plans, policies and tools that are gender-responsive, empowering women to lead Pacific solutions to prevent, prepare for, and recover from disasters.

**Additionally, the support for the Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR)** across the Asia-Pacific region is a way to foster women’s decision-making and leadership in the field of DRR; and women’s achievements in DRR across the Asia-Pacific region are recognised through the annual WIN-DRR Leadership Awards.

## INVESTING IN PREPAREDNESS THROUGH INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE MULTI-HAZARD EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS (MHEWS)

**Esline Garaebeti the Director General of the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geohazards Department and winner of the 2022 WINDRR Excellence Award, and Flora Vano of ActionAid Vanuatu** brought attention to how women are working together at national level that demonstrate how Multi Hazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS) can integrate women-led MHEWS such as Woman Wetem Weta (WWW) in Vanuatu. Esline emphasised that communities are the reason for the establishment of Early Warning Systems and must contribute to disaster-resilient plans in times of natural hazards. Both speakers highlighted how technology must be **inclusive and appropriate**, such as using radio, as well as **accessible**, to reach all communities including all persons with disabilities.

**Flora Vano highlighted how the Women Wetem Weta platform managed by ActionAid Vanuatu** has supported young Ni-Vanuatu women to learn about weather patterns, understand reports coming from the Bureau of Meteorology, and be able to develop early warning messages to inform their communities of impending cyclone and other extreme weather events and hazards.

**Speakers highlighted that APMCDRR can support the enhancement of two-way communication between women’s networks and MHEWS** to ensure we have inclusion in all stages of disaster management as well as investing in community and women-led initiatives as an essential part of the MHEWS ecosystem.

**Women-led MHEWS initiatives can help increase access to information**, and strengthening links between women-led MHEWS and scientific entities ensures accurate risk knowledge is communicated widely. This may require adaptations to laws and policies, annual budget allocations, and the composition of decision-making bodies to be more inclusive of women, persons with disabilities, and community-led initiatives:

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**“Traditional knowledge is merged with scientific knowledge.** Woman Wetem Weta (WWW) is a strategy to work on early warning and preparedness, with a feedback loop. We work with the climate division to do awareness and getting to know the signs. So, they all intersect, and it brings out what it means to have this information. When a disaster strikes, they initiate Woman Wetem Weta (WWW). We belong to the communications cluster and put out the simplified messages and we take it from there and amplify it to the ground. It’s a bottom-up approach that makes it work. Using the same tools, we’re using it to respond to different priorities as well: food, water, health, displaced settlement, protection risk of GBV. This allows the women to define short-term solutions and long-term solutions. WWW enables communication flow from the bottom up - so women can share with us the information and we share it to the NDMO, the food sector, department of water, GBV referral pathways. The roadmap is clear and linking it to existing work. It is transforming women’s lives” – **Flora Vano**

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**The webinar also drew attention to the research report “[Inclusive and Accessible Multi-hazard Early warning systems \(MHEWS\)](#)”** produced by UNDRR in collaboration with the Shifting the Power Coalition and ActionAid Australia, that identifies a number of recommendations that can be adapted by



governments for more inclusive and accessible MHEWS, which can be applied in different contexts.

**These recommendations include:**

- **Build on existing connections and networks within communities:** Listening, learning, and engaging with existing networks, particularly women's networks, helps to build strong community connections, and MHEWS can benefit from locally led information gathering and greater resource efficiency. Ensuring positive, safe and inclusive participation, and engagement that acknowledges and respects women's experiences and reflects the diversity within each community, helps broaden ownership and community buy-in for MHEWS. A key component of this is ensuring universal design through use of effective communication in different languages and improving accessibility.
- **Build and unlock community knowledge:** Improving community awareness, and in particular women's understanding of climate change and disaster risks, using both traditional and modern scientific knowledge, helps to inform community level disaster risk management and empower women to participate. Developing advocacy and communication skills to effectively engage with and influence different stakeholders, can ensure no one is left behind.
- **Facilitate community-based data collection and hazard monitoring:** Supporting communities through appropriate resourcing and capacity development to engage in systematic data collection about hazards, socio-economic vulnerabilities and disaster impacts in their local area and strengthen information and data sharing between the community and national level.
- **Deliver effective early-warning messages:** Ensuring early-warning messages are received and acted upon, by involving communities in the development of messaging and using different communication channels to transmit messages. Establishing a two-way communication feedback mechanism that allows communities to share real-time information helps to support continued improvement.
- **Integrate and invest in community- and women led initiatives as an essential part of the MHEWS ecosystem:** Officially recognising, supporting and investing in community- and women-led MHEWS initiatives, and connecting them as part of the broader national and regional MHEWS ecosystem, can help to increase access to information, and strengthening links between women-led MHEWS and scientific entities ensures accurate risk knowledge is communicated widely. This may require adaptations to laws and policies, annual budget allocations and the composition of decision-making bodies to be more inclusive of women, persons with disabilities, and community-led initiatives.
- **Recognise the broader benefits of gender transformative change:** There are widespread positive ripple effects from well-supported community- and women-led MHEWS, including greater gender equality and status of women, and broader community-level engagement and empowerment.

**While the challenges of developing inclusive and accessible MHEWS are well known** and documented, these recommendations can help to increase the availability of, and access to, multi-hazard early-warning systems and disaster risk information in a way that is inclusive and accessible to all, leaving no one behind.

## WOMEN-LED RESILIENCE BUILDING

As UN Women's [Women's Resilience to Disasters Programme \(WRD\)](#) is rolled out in the Pacific region, we will have more evidence on how women and girls define their resilience and the way they are organising to build more resilient communities whether it is in response to disasters, including climate-related disasters and health pandemics, in order to contribute to sustainable, secure, and thriving communities.

**Angeline Chand of the Pacific Disability Forum** outlined how such programmes can ensure women with disabilities and their networks determine approaches to implement the principle 'nothing about us without us' in disaster risk reduction planning and implementation:

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**“Partner with DPOs, women with disabilities and ask us directly how to support us. We can share our lived experiences and we know how to best support us. If you look at accessibility in evacuation centres, there’s a lot that’s not accessible. Why are persons with disabilities not moving (evacuating)? Because it’s not accessible. Invest in multiple forms of accessible communications to respond to deaf challenges. Access to information – online platforms – are not conducive to participation. Keep the focus on being inclusive for all persons with disability” – Angeline Chand, Pacific Disability Forum**

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**The Talitha Project Executive Director, Vanessa Heleta drew attention to how inclusive and equitable resilience requires women’s leadership,** and gender and disability inclusion and strategies that contribute to social and community well-being, including psycho-social support:


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**“After the eruption, we saw the need to come together and collaborate between government, communities and NGOs to remember what happened.** There was no warning. At least with a cyclone, we know where it’s going. On this day, there was no preparation and we’re still experiencing shock. After the eruption, we got up - still in fear and shock – we partnered with NEMO and conducted assessments with our members, young girls in the west of Tongatapu. We took food, sanitary items and water. After that, we sat in the displaced centres and conducted gender & disability analysis, using focus group discussions. With parents away on seasonal work schemes, we see the increased burden on women to clean up and survive. There is a negative impact on mental well-being. We are providing psycho-social support, and disaster mechanisms and processes must also consider that - before, during and after”

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**Ramona Tugaga, the President of the YWCA of Samoa as well as Talitha Project’s Humanitarian Officer, Vika Savieti** also drew attention to how women’s networks and coalitions, such as the Shifting the Power Coalition are providing inter-generational support and dedicated resources to address the gender-gaps experienced by young Pacific Island women, including through the design and implementation of disaster-risk management, resilience-building & climate justice training programmes and activities.

**Michiyo Yamada, of UN Women Fiji Multi Country Office** highlighted that WRD programmes in Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu will support national governments, CSOs and communities



develop and implement locally led solutions that amplify women’s voices across the prevention, preparedness, and recovery spectrum. She also emphasised the need to tackle the underlying root causes of vulnerability and inequalities:

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**“In Kiribati, the WRD will support the establishment of climate resilient livelihood options for women. This will be done by skill building in producing quality and standard branding and packaging of local products; and working on agrometeorological products through women farmer self-help group, to support their resilient and adaptive agriculture/farming.”**

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**Partnerships are important to integrate gender and inclusion in disaster risk reduction and climate change actions.** Current partners for the WRD include the University of South Pacific (USP) and the Pacific Disability Forum. The WRD Programme will also support integrating gender equality across the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) and the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) including supporting roll-out of the [Pacific Resilience Standards](#).

**Of further importance is supporting women leaders,** advocates and young and aspiring leaders to share their experience, knowledge and bring their expertise and recommendations to the table whether it is at global and regional meetings including APMCDRR or local community disaster and climate change committees.

## THE WAY FORWARD

There are widespread positive ripple effects from gender transformative action including in all aspects of disaster risk reduction.


The [Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (GPDRR) Summary of the Co-chairs also reaffirmed that:

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**“Disaster risk reduction leadership must be more inclusive. More can be done to strengthen gender equality and the participation of women and girls in decision-making, implementation and leadership. Specific targets and timelines to achieve gender balance and a gender action plan to achieve the Sendai Framework should be established. Policies and programmes must also be supported by an understanding of gender dimensions of disaster risk. Greater investment in women-led civil society organizations and networks should be facilitated for their meaningful participation in and influence on decision-making.”**

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**The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) is a high-level commitment to progress gender equality on climate change and disaster risk reduction** through the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP). Most Pacific Island countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), both of which recognise equal access to rights for women with



disabilities, including during crises. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also have a focus on achieving gender equality (Goal 5) and ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (Goal 16).

**Women’s organisations, disability rights organisations, and feminist coalitions have the solutions** to address under-representation of Pacific Island women in local, traditional and national governance spaces, to shift the power on the disaster management and climate change agenda.

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The Shifting the Power Coalition is an example of how we have brought together peacebuilding, community-led activism, Pacific-driven innovation and humanitarian expertise – with tools such as ActionAid’s Gender Transformative Framework for Responding to Climate Change and Disasters to build consistent approaches to gender equality that value women’s localised knowledge, leadership and collective networks and tackle the harmful gender norms that continue to prevent women’s full and equitable participation in society. Together with the Pacific Island Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice, it is demonstrating how women-led civil society can support government officials to implement national commitments to gender equality and women’s rights as well as ensure resources reach women and their communities when they need it, how they need it.

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As highlighted by Branwen Millar of UNDRR, the Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR) as a professional network to support women working in disaster risk reduction, plays an important role within the UN system to bring attention to women’s leadership across the DRR spectrum. This is evident by the increasing number of Pacific Island women nominated for this year’s Leadership and Rising Star Awards as well as the opportunity to have more Pacific Island women of all diversity participate as expert speakers at APMCDRR.

UN agencies and programmes such as the Women’s Resilience to Disasters and WIN-DRR have a critical role to create the space to bring our networks and coalitions to the table with our governments to ensure steps are taken from local to national level to achieve gender transformative action. They can also resource and support women-led efforts to increase access to information including investment needed to strengthen the links between women-led MHEWS, and scientific entities; ensuring accurate risk knowledge is communicated widely to diverse women and communities as well as persons with disabilities. There are widespread positive ripple effects from gender transformative action including in all aspects of disaster risk reduction.



## THE SPEAKERS

1. **Ms. Adelaide Harvey, Policy Officer** (Gender, Disability and Inclusion Lead), Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Section, DFAT.
2. **Esline Garaebeti the Director General for Meteorology and Geo-Hazards in Vanuatu and winner of the 2022 WINDRR Excellence Award.** She brings experience in building up the geohazards capability in Vanuatu and across the region. While working as Geo-Hazards Manager for Vanuatu she initiated the establishment of the Oceania regional seismic network ([ORSNET](#)) between Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Samoa to improve tsunami detection system in the region and to reduce risks of tsunami in these countries.
3. **Flora Vano who was shortlisted for the WIN DRR Rising Star awards.** She is the Country Programme Manager of ActionAid Vanuatu leading women-led localised response to COVID-19 and other disasters in Vanuatu. Through the Women I TokTok Tugeta (WITTT) forums, Action-Aid Vanuatu were able to organise women to learn more about reducing disaster risk and preparing for disasters in order to reduce humanitarian impact, starting with doing Women Led Community Based Protection Assessments and setting their priorities and action plans. She also coordinates the national Woman Wetem Weta hub.
4. **Vanessa Heleta and Vika Savieti of the Talitha Project Tonga** have worked very closely with the NEMO contributing to the Kingdom of Tonga's new Disaster Policy approach that moves from 'Emergency Management' to 'Disaster Risk Management'. Both will speak to their roles in building gender transformative resilience drawing from their experience leading women-led protection assessments and immediate response to the Hunga Crisis and COVID19 earlier this year, as well as the community led initiatives in response to recent cyclones
5. **Ramona Tugaga is the President of the Samoa YWCA.** She is leading the development of Samoa's first women-led early warning and information system. POWER stands for Pacific Owned, Women-Led Early Warning & Resilience (POWER) Systems which aims to support women's leadership in humanitarian response, resilience building and climate change adaptation including by providing a safe space for women to speak openly, and in their own way, about climate change as well as amplify core messages on women's leadership, human rights and protection in early warning and preparedness. POWER will support women to access and use climate services and weather information to enhance preparedness, protection & inclusive resilience as well as engage in multi-hazard early warning & response systems for local health and other crises
6. **Angeline Chand is the Gender and Human Rights Officer of the Pacific Disability Forum.** Coordinating the women with disability network, she brings more than three decades of local, national, and regional organising for disability rights including campaigning for appropriate and accessible information and communication system within the disability and wider women's rights movement.



## SAVE THE DATES

### Women's leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction Webinar Series

Join us for conversations about women's leadership and gender inclusive and responsive disaster risk reduction (DRR).

In the lead up to the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction we've invited key Pacific leaders in DRR to discuss "Investing in Inclusive Resilience and Preparedness" and "Pacific approaches to gender, disaster response and supporting resilient communities".

We warmly invite you to be part of these conversations which will further inform discussions about gender inclusive and responsive DRR and women's leadership at the regional level conference in Brisbane in late September.

#### Investing in Inclusive Resilience and Preparedness

Date: 8 September 2022  
Time: 2pm - 3:30pm (Fiji)  
Moderator: Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls

#### Pacific Approaches to Gender, Disaster Response and Supporting Resilient Communities

Date: 13 September 2022  
Time: 11am - 1pm (Fiji)  
Moderator: Noelene Nabulivou



For more information, please visit:  
[wrd.unwomen.org](http://wrd.unwomen.org)

