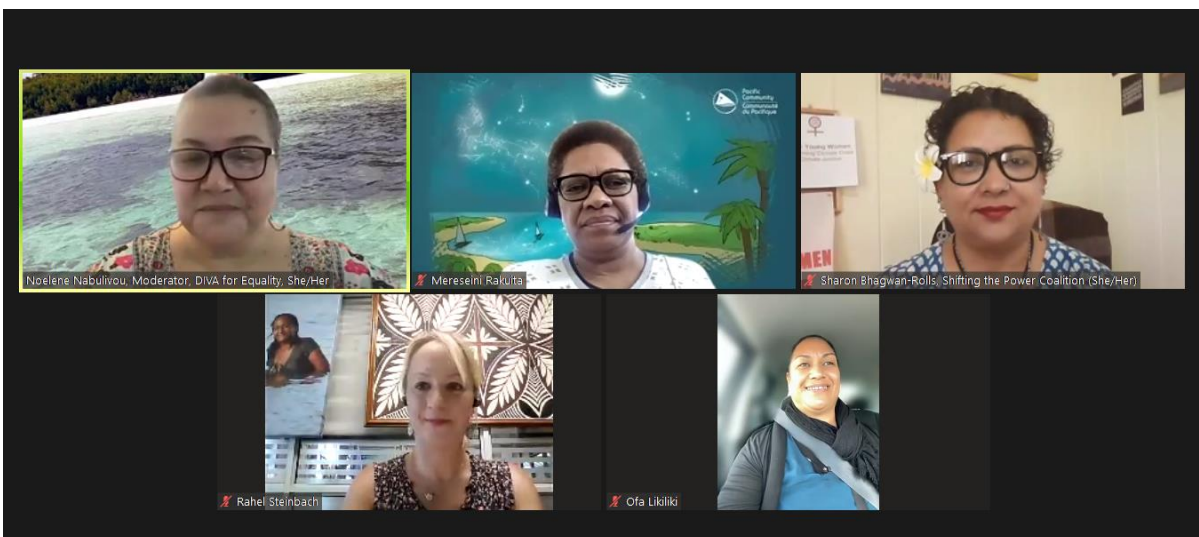


# PACIFIC APPROACHES TO GENDER, DISASTER RESPONSE & SUPPORTING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Pacific Preparatory Webinar for the Asia and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction



Moderator: **Noelene Nabulivou**



## 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.

Noelene, 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) and 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.**

## KEY DEFINITIONS & CONCEPTS

Noelene covered some definitions<sup>1</sup> pertinent to the session, including:

- **Disaster risk reduction:** DRR is aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risks and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to

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<sup>11</sup> 2022. Beyond Barriers, Behaviours to enable a more resilient Pacific

the achievement of sustainable development.

- **Climate change adaptation:** the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate change and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or make use of beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may help adjust to expected climate and its effects.
- **Integration:** the intentional combining of interventions that are considered part of CCA and DRR, designed to improve humanitarian and development outcomes for at-risk and crisis affected populations.
- **Community:** a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings to prepare for or respond to disaster.
- **Resilience:** the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.

**Noelene then discussed how people frame resilient communities in the Pacific as strong family networks,** community cooperation (solesolevaki), existing local governance structures and leadership, interactions of state and non-state actors, and strong social capital as ways that communities organise while waiting for strong, consistent, localised and resourced government and other relief organisations to arrive. However, while this is important, it is not enough. Some important questions that need to be posed are: what can we contribute to discussions on resilient communities? How do we reduce risk from disasters? How do we increase community resilience, and in order to do this - what must we all change in Asia and the Pacific, about the ways that we think about, and act for social, economic, ecological and climate justice, and universal human rights?

**Part of this important process is examining and determining where in the decision-making processes are women, girls and gender non-binary individuals represented,** and specifically are they included in disaster risk reduction and the decisions around it. There is a need to determine what the situation is for women, girls and gender non-binary individuals. There is also a need for discussions around how to reduce risks and how to address the gaps and obstacles that women, girls and gender non-binary individuals face before, during and after disasters.

**Helpful to this process are feminist tools and framings for how to view the world.** Feminists use an intersectional and interlinked approach for analysis and action, linking work around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), political economy and globalisation, political restructuring and social transformation, political ecology and sustainability. Feminists focus simultaneously on gender and sexuality/SOGIESC, universal human rights, climate justice, DRR, Economic justice and Ecological sustainability, degrowth & more. This is part of their work for material and long-term structural change.

**Underscoring this are the massive global ecological disasters, and losses and damages.** These include ocean acidification, massive biodiversity destruction, the loss of forests and coral reefs, increases in food and water crises, and increases in extreme weather. This is compounded by the fact that even as we work towards a 1.5 degree world, we have already violated at least five out of the nine planetary boundaries. However, much like other crises, this one presents an opportunity for change. Climate change, disaster risk reduction, ecological, economic and social justice work can be more intersectional, interlinked and inclusive. We can all do much more to strengthen gender equality and universal human rights, in law and in practice. To do that, we can:

- **Examine all areas of life for women, girls and gender non-binary people, as well as men,** and transform individual and collective approaches to societal knowledge, action, decision-making and individual and collective leadership, so communities are truly resilient.
- **Examine and change those parts of societal structure and material conditions that harm,** and in doing so create better, more just, effective ways to live that are centred in human rights, gender justice and ending coloniality and racism.
- **Break and build away from patriarchal systems toward liberation and justice on all territories.**
- **Pay special attention to differentiated needs,** for instance, Countries, people, women and Gender Non-Binary people affected by conflict and humanitarian crises; LGBTQI+ people in small islands, in rural areas, and in urban informal settlements, young people, people with disabilities, and others.
- **Pay careful attention to material conditions, negotiate power and political will, and make behavioural and structural changes** that reconfigure state and society. Include gender, DRR and climate justice analysis in all decision-making, and accordingly reconfigure governmental laws, policies, processes and society.

**Noelene ended with the following quote:**

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**“Correcting the inequitable distribution of resources and power between women and men (my addition: and gender non-binary people) is the only way to achieve sustainable development, and reduce the effects of a disaster.” - (Kabir, 1995)**

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## **SPEAKERS**

Noelene then introduced the session and the speakers as follows:

- **Ms. Caitlin Wilson**, Assistant Secretary of the Humanitarian and Refugee Branch, Government of Australia, Sustained support for gender and DRR initiatives, lessons learnt and proposals on transformative actions toward resilient communities


- **Ms Mereseini Rakuita**, Principal Strategic Lead, Pacific Women, SPC, stocktaking on progress in regional multisectoral approaches to Gender, CC, DRR and Development
- **Ms Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki**, Tonga Women and Children’s Crisis Centre - Pacific woman community representative engaged in frontline Pacific disaster response
- **Ms. Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls**, Shifting the Power Coalition, Pacific Islands Feminist Action Coalition, stocktaking on Pacific community and CSO-led movement initiatives on Gender, CC, DRR and Development
- **Ms. Rahel Steinbach**, Programme Specialist, Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Action, UN Women, enablers, challenges, and reflections from CSW66, GP and the ongoing Sendai mid-term review process leading into APMCDRR

## Caitlin Wilson

**Noelene introduced Caitlin Wilson and stated that there is significant investment in gender and disaster response by the Australian Government in the Oceania region, and wider.** Systemic response to disasters and climate change requires avoidance of construction of new risks, addressing pre-existing risks, and preventing disaster losses being absorbed by other development outcomes and creating additional poverty. This is where joint efforts to build resilient communities, advance women’s rights and intersectionality, progressive social and economic policy and more, is important. Noelene then asked Caitlin what are the most urgent gender transformative priorities to take forward at the APMCDRR to ensure that in the midst of massive complex and linked disaster risks, countries are best prepared to face the difficult decades ahead?”

**Caitlin thanked Noelene and began by commenting on the tragic earthquake that had just occurred in Papua New Guinea.** She stated that events like this are instances to be aware of how communities respond to disasters and how women and girls are in turn impacted by it. Caitlin explained that the Australian government will take forward 5 priorities at the APMCDRR based on a number of principles. **These 5 key areas are:**

1. **Gender transformative change starts with recognition.** We need to prioritise the recognition of women and girls as leaders, first responders and agents of change. When disasters hit women and men are both victims as well as survivors however, we need to recognise the role of leadership that women and girls assume. At the community level, there is also a need to build on existing capacity and innovation.
2. **Women have equal opportunity to participate in decision-making.** We need to ensure that in all our engagements that we are encouraging that women have equal opportunity to participate in decision making and that is in all facets of society. This is the only way we believe you can eventually have gender-transformative disaster outcomes. With the upcoming conference, Australia has worked really hard to ensure that there is a gender balance in speaking roles. They are also asking women experts to speak on their own areas of expertise as opposed to just asking them to speak on gender.
3. **We need to prioritise support to address the underlying social, cultural and economic**



**inequalities that can lead to vulnerability.** Gender discrimination can limit the role that women and girls have over decisions that govern their lives, as well as access to resources and opportunities. This can also heighten their exposure to risk often resulting in women and girls experiencing higher mortality, morbidity and loss of livelihood, particularly during times of disaster.

4. **Prioritise the design of gender-responsive and disability inclusive disaster risk reduction tools, policies, plans and initiatives.** This is essential to achieving positive outcomes for all community members.
5. **We need to ensure that all community members can adequately prepare for disasters.** When communities have access to robust and timely information, we can all take action to reduce loss.


**16 Pacific delegations will be attending APMCDRR which is significant** as this is the first time that the Pacific will be engaged as a region in this conference which is something that Australia has been pushing for. It is a really critical opportunity for Pacific countries to be in the room. There will be great opportunities to learn from each other on gender and disability inclusive implementation of the Sendai framework, to hear from leaders, and to look for ways to accelerate DRR efforts. Caitlin also confirmed that they will be producing a co-chairs statement with the UN instead of a negotiated document.

Noelene thanked Caitlin for her interventions and then moved to introducing the next speaker.

## Mereseini Rakuita

**Noelene introduced Mereseini Rakuita noting how she has been working for decades in the area of gender, human rights and development** as a Fiji lawyer, civil servant and past Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, and now as Principal Strategic Lead at Pacific Women in SPC. Noelene then asked her what are the most transformative enablers of community resilience when working on gender, Climate Change and DRR, and what is missing in this work encouraging her to give examples from regional initiatives/SPC where possible. Noelene also asked what are the top 3-4 Pacific strategic priorities linked to community resilience that we must urgently advance into the Brisbane Declaration at APMCDRR and the Sendai Framework?

**Mereseini thanked Noelene and began by acknowledging that women play a crucial role in disaster risk response** and that we need to constantly ask how can we deliver the essential transformational changes to survive and at the same time improve the status of women and girls in the Pacific region. She stated that her role is to drive gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across the Pacific region and while gender equality must be embedded in all that we do, gender mainstreaming is missing in this work. While there is action on the funding for the design of tools for sector specific networks, and there is a plethora of tools available - these tools do not get applied unless we get a gender expert to apply them for us. This is unsustainable and constantly calls for capacity building for



climate change and DRR experts to enable them to apply and mainstream gender within their sector themselves.

**In this context, there is an opportunity under the UNFCCC for parties to appoint and provide support for a national gender and climate change focal points** for climate negotiations, implementation and monitoring. 99 parties have appointed such a focal point however, only one country in the Pacific, Papua New Guinea, has done this. We must work together to increase this, but at the same time, we must not see this as a long-term solution to the gap we have in this area in the Pacific. What we must all aspire to do is to build the capacity of our sector specific experts to mainstream gender themselves.


**Designers should be bold to say when something doesn't work**, educators need to be accountable for the awareness they roll out in communities, and community practitioners need to be champions of adaptive and innovative solutions to suit rather than take on one-size-fits-all models. We are a region that is rich in traditional knowledge that has sustained the livelihoods of our ancestors over time - how much attention are we paying to that traditional knowledge hub in designing tailor made solutions for communities.

- An example of this is SPC's protege initiative where in New Caledonia, agroforestry plots have been established to restore and reforest national areas in one community with all community members involved. SPC's kiwa initiative builds both local and national capacities to protect, sustainably manage and restore biodiversity.

**The Pacific region is very complex and challenges include the need for national and global reform**, especially around climate change financing, more specifically disaster risk financing as well as Sendai implementation, combined with local solutions to ensure that women and girls are in the room and sitting at the table, contributing to decisions that affect their lives. From a gender and community resilience perspective, the climate change and DRR space is daunting. It ranges from the UNFCCC global platform and associated state party commitments, to regional processes, and to life at the family level.

**At the global level while we have seen many great initiatives to enhance women's participation in global processes**, progress remains uneven and unacceptably slow. Words on paper are never enough to truly transform participation levels, particularly as gender imbalance in decision-making is a reflection of larger structural, institutionalised gender equality issues. According to research carried out by WGC, the percentage of women in COP national delegations was 38% in 2021 and was lowest in Asia Pacific and Africa. The WGC has successfully lobbied for UNFCCC to monitor and report on delegation members' time at the microphone based on preliminary research showing that men were 60% of active speakers in the plenary and spoke for 74% of the time.

**In this context, Mereseini shared some insights regarding the implementation of SPC's Social and Environmental Responsibility Policy** which makes SPC accountable for environmental safeguards in their work as well as ensuring that gender equality, social inclusion, culture and human rights are central to their work with Pacific island countries and territories.



**Through this review and due diligence process, SPC is shifting from the gender-neutral results and activities to more transformative outcomes** where we have objectives specific to gender parity, governance and decision-making. Mereseini noted that she hoped to see:

- More women and girls in the room and at the table contributing to decisions about them
- More evidence-based solutions that is informed by relevant and current data
- A commitment to truly mainstream gender into this area of work, to strengthen the gender-mainstreaming capacity of our climate change and DRR experts
- More pacific-centric flexible, resource mobilisation strategy that would address access to climate finance issues faced by PSIDS, a strategy that can channel highly concessional finance option through national country systems, and a strategy that is inclusive of and engages with the private sector and non-state actors

**Gender equality and social inclusion requires every individual to be actively engaged in planning and decision-making in our societies.** In this context of climate change and DRR, we must unite in our collective responsibility and purport to leave no one behind. If women are half the Pacific population, then surely women must also constitute half of the capacity that goes into decision-making for resilience-building in our Pacific communities.

Noelene thanked Mereseini and then introduced the next speaker.

## **Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki**


**Noelene introduced Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki citing her role as the head of the Tonga Women’s and Children’s Crisis Centre**, her life, her work and her entire small island society which have been affected by multiple disasters in the past decades, and especially recently. Noelene asked Ofa, as a long-time Pacific feminist working at the frontlines for gender, social, economic, ecological and climate justice, what lessons she has from these experiences that are important to share into the APMCDRR Conference? She also asked if she could discuss some key messages for the Brisbane Declaration on EVAWG, gender, human rights and DRR, particularly given the focus on resilient communities in this webinar.

**Ofa stated that when we talk about women’s resilience it is about how women and girls are leaders and frontliners during disaster response.** But one of the things that is also central to these conversations is the resilience of not being heard. She discussed how women are often overlooked, and undervalued in their contributions to communities, and the resilience they build to that.

Ofa discussed three important questions that need to be asked in the DRR space: Who are we listening to? Who are we being guided by? Whose voices do we give value to?

**Drawing on an example from the community level, Ofa shared a story of a woman leader she worked quite closely with.** She described the woman as a mover and shaker that makes things happen for





women and children in her village and is often called upon to rally the support of women in her community to engage in projects. Mele and other women in the village were told this year after the volcanic eruption that they shouldn't be involved in the response meetings that were called. They were told that women cause trouble during these response meetings and were told by the men to go back to their homes and to clean up and do "useful things".

**Drawing from an example at the national level**, a rapid assessment was conducted after the Tongan volcanic eruption of this year and Ofa shared an excerpt from a woman who was the head of household in one of the most affected areas. She described having to wait for a long period of time for assistance with those tasked with providing assistance systematically ignoring her and moving right past her house on multiple occasion. When she went to the town officer for support, she also received the same treatment despite consistent efforts on her part. to ask for support, she was told that her name was not on the list.

**Drawing from an example at the regional level, she discussed the ongoing debate in Tonga between gender-based violence responses and gender-based violence in emergency responses**, as if they are two different things. Speaking directly to UN agencies, Ofa clarified that they are the same thing and they cannot be separated. The violence that women experience during emergencies is the same violence they experience otherwise - it is all the traditional forms of violence and emerging forms of violence that are simply exacerbated during times of disaster. As soon as a crisis hits, we are on the ground doing a rapid safety assessment with women heads of households and are guided by what women say. That comes to an end almost abruptly because of the different programmes and initiatives that are introduced into Tonga for them to be a part of. The problem with these initiatives is that they take staff away from the direct psychosocial support that they can provide to affected women. These programmes result in staff from local NGOs moving to larger organisations and UN agencies that introduce these initiatives thereby leaving a vacuum that means that the normal and more effective approach that they would have taken as part of local NGOs is now shelved.

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**She ended by stating that all of these examples link back to the central questions of: Who are we listening to? Who are we being guided by? Whose voices do we give value to?**

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Noelene thanked Ofa and introduced the next speaker.

## Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls


**Noelene introduced Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls.** Noelene stated that we know the crucial roles of women-led, autonomous social movements in all areas of human rights, justice, and ecologically sound and sustainable development. She acknowledged that Sharon had been working on these issues for decades and have been aware of the dangers of not achieving the 17 SDGs, global feminist concerns about the climate emergency, gender justice and human rights overall. Cutting through all these dense discussions, what are the 3-4 transformative shifts, we need to make here at APMCDRR on gender and DRR, and especially related to community-led leadership and resilience. What must we see reflected in the Brisbane Declaration to reflect the urgency of this shared work?

**Sharon thanked Noelene and stated that even before COVID-19 we were living with the climate crises, and incredibly low women's representation at parliamentary level.** So collectively we have been working together to redesign disaster management systems, including the very technical early warning systems, because at its core, it is about addressing the risk of violence, food and water insecurities, and addressing the specific communication, information and protection needs of women with disabilities and the LGBTQI+ community.

**She acknowledged as well that part of the problem is that the language in policy documents see us as marginalised and vulnerable which we are not.** When we have limited access to decision-making, we are excluded. The baseline is that quite often, the discussions around disaster risk reduction and disaster management are quite technical. And so it is not looking at the realities of climate change and disasters that we bear on our bodies. In that light, it is critical that we are not seen as vulnerable but as drivers of solutions. We need to understand what is a Pacific feminist Climate Justice and how do we demonstrate what Pacific island women can do in decision-making around resource-mobilisation as well as in Climate-Justice action.

**Sharon then discussed some of the innovations of Pacific Island women in terms of increasing access to climate services and information.** We are working to drive an understanding of women-led information and communication early warning systems. We are looking at the different technical agencies that provide early warning systems and to show that women-led innovation can be this accelerator of change and gender-transformative action.

**Drawing on the body of work of Pacific Island women, she also discussed the way in which the Brisbane declaration can connect what women are saying and doing** on the ground and the kinds of inclusive, appropriate, accessible, information communication systems that can work and the way in which they can work.



**She then discussed the 4 key commitments that came out of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction in Bali.** All our governments have gender equality commitments, national gender action plans - but there needs to be convergence and coherence. Whether it is the Sendai Framework or national policies, we need to ensure that policies and programmes are supported by an understanding of gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction, as well as greater investment in and resource-flows to women-led civil society organisations and networks.

**Sharon then discussed that we need to move away from conversations around “what” to conversations on “how” to deliver on gender-transformative action.** There are four key areas around this. The first is **resourcing**. We need to ensure that when we are looking at resources, we are looking at equitable financing models and this is where our governments have the opportunity to build on the kinds of feminist funding models that we have - whether that’s through the coalition or through the Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice. The second one **is addressing the gender gaps for young women**. Pacific island young women should not only be homogenised into youth spaces. We need to examine the different ways that we support, resource and mentor young women so that they are able to deal with the drivers of inequality that they have to face, community spaces, online spaces but also at the same time, give them the opportunity to learn about disaster management systems and climate action in a way that really results in transformative and just actions. She also talked about the principle of **“nothing about us without us”** and the need for **women with disabilities also not to be homogenised** so that we are looking at broader gender and psychosocial health issues.

**Coming back to the partners, through the Women’s Resilience to Disaster Programmes**, and the WIN-DRR format - the UN agencies and their programmes are that link between women civil society and governments. They need to help co-create the space so that women are sitting together with government officials - whether it’s on mats in village communities or at national forums, because that is the only way that we can amplify women’s voices, bring our solutions to the table, and really achieve gender-transformative action.

Noelene thanked Sharon and introduced the next speaker.

## **Rahel Steinbach**

**Noelene then introduced Rahel Steinbach.** She acknowledged her role as the [Women’s Resilience to Disasters Global Programme](#) Coordinator at UN Women, asking - as we move towards this important meeting in Brisbane, what are her thoughts on how 2022 has been a game changer so far for gender-responsive and inclusive disaster risk reduction and resilience. How can this progress be leveraged at the APMCDRR and what should be in the APMCDRR Brisbane Declaration to ensure that the last years of the Sendai Framework are a game changer for gender-just disaster risks reduction and climate justice?



**Rahel thanked Noelene and began by reflecting on CSW66.** She discussed the critical normative gains from CSW66:

- **Raising awareness on the disproportionate impacts** of disasters on women and girls;
- **The full, equal and meaningful participation, representation, and leadership of women** in all levels of DRR decision-making;
- **The integration of gender perspectives** into policies, plans, processes and programmes;
- **Expanding gender-responsive finance** and critically;
- **The creation of a gender action plan** under the Sendai framework.


**Rahel then discussed the Global Platform, the World Reconstruction Conference, and the Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems conference.** These conferences [highlighted](#) the gender dimensions of disasters, including the root causes of unequal risks and the structural barriers to women’s meaningful participation and leadership. They also confirmed the importance of gender equality and empowerment for community resilience, called for commitment to address gender gaps, and promoted gender-responsive and inclusive governance, mechanisms and processes.

**She then discussed how the Global Platform and CSW66 also called for the creation of a gender-action plan under the Sendai Framework.** This gender-action plan would need to be aligned to the gender action plan under the Rio convention, and support integrated, inclusive, and gender-responsive climate disaster action. Ideally, as of 2030 we would see one action plan cutting across the silos that exist across disaster risk reduction, environmental degradation, climate change and so on. Finally, it is essential that we harness the critical opportunity that the mid-term review of the Sendai Framework provides to strengthen women’s and girl’s resilience to disaster.

**She also shared reflections on how the UN Women’s Disaster risk reduction work especially in the context of the [Women’s Resilience to Disaster programme](#) has contributed to this meaningful normative gains** alluded to in prior slides. The programme allowed for collective advocacy and technical assistance such as the CSW technical expert group meetings. We also have been advocating for a gender-responsive mid-term review process, they have prepared gender guidance and have been working with many partners in this process. UN Women has also contributed to positioning women’s leadership and gender equality as a central topic on the global platform for disaster risk reduction. Moving forward, it is important that we ensure a strong and unified voice for our Pacific island women and their organisations. The WRD has contributed to this by financially and technically supporting women leaders and gender experts at the upcoming conference. We also want to see a common position in support of the creation of a Gender Action Plan.

## Q&A Forum:

Q: When do we receive confirmation of attendance at the APMCDRR meeting next week



A: It might be taking longer than usual because of visa processes and other practical components, however, many have already received theirs.

Q: Is there an opportunity to join online?

A: It is a hybrid event so there is an opportunity for people to join online. All 24 sessions including the opening and closing ceremony will be available online.

General comment 1: It is important given that this is a Ministerial meeting, that we examine such things as how our governments could have been encouraged and supported to engage in national preparation. This might have been a missed opportunity for our Ministers to drive gender-transformative discussions.

General comment 2: PIFS is convening a preparatory meeting this week for Pacific Ministers whose portfolio includes disaster

Q: How to encourage the uptake of gender-transformative DRR and Gender Mainstreaming described by Ms Rakuita earlier on?

A: We have a number of frameworks such as the Framework of Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) and some fantastic outcomes from the Triennial and CSW66. Sometimes there is a disconnect between those agreements and conclusions and what's happening at the country level. We end up having these amazing regional and global conversations but they are not transformative at the national level. We have the "what" but we need to be clear about the "how" and we need to ensure that the "how" is well-resourced.

A: We are often not aware of the extent to which those who are not working in gender sometimes do not understand the interlinkages which would otherwise be obvious to gender practitioners. So there is a need to build that capacity. Breaking down what we mean by gender-responsive and disability-inclusive into practical areas could increase buy-in by governments.

Question to Ofa: You've outlined some of the challenges in autonomous women organising. What do you think about how we get governments to work better with women's autonomous groups?

Ofa: This is the same issue that we've been hearing about for years and we keep hearing that we feel that our leaders are not adhering to our gender policies. I think we need to look at this issue in a different way. Maybe we need to be looking at alternative ways of getting our leaders' attention because it seems that leaders are not reading our policies. She says that upwards of 80% of government leaders have no idea about Tonga's gender women empowerment policy that has been in place since 2001. One approach that gets leaders' attention is when they tell women's stories. We need stories to be told - that's what will make our leaders listen because leaders aren't reading our policies and women need



to be supported in that regard.

Q: How do we weave back the outcomes of APMCDRR to our gender constituencies at all levels?

A: The FRDP has the climate and DRR agenda, and it has a multistakeholder process that is supposed to be localised at the national level. So we need to look at ways that women's civil society networks can be part of sharing information more broadly across the region. It also comes back to the accountability loop. It is really important to ensure that those commitments are connected to local community plans. We need to be uplifting stories of how women have been showing their resilience to and their leadership during disasters. How do we get the information out there in more accessible formats and how do we also share the experiences and amplify stories in a way that highlights the transformative actions by women at the national level. Connected to this is the point that when we are able to connect women to their government officials - that's when the transformative action happens.

A: It is really important that we continue to make our position clear that going to these conferences is really important because our interventions are based on the voices and opinions of women on the ground.

Q: Can you give concrete examples of how diverse women are participating and connecting?

A: Shifting the Power coalition is an example of how Pacific island women across 6 Pacific countries came together as a result of their experience with disaster and climate change. The Pacific Island Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice (PIFA4CJ) has been really important in terms of recognising and reaffirming the waves of women who have been collectively organising around climate change, sustainable development and other issues that they have been discussing as Pacific island women but are often unable to actualise because of the lack of resources available to reach women on the ground. PIFA4CJ is about to put out a new call to support movement building, and to respond to the climate crises.


Q: How is the work of young people, young women, young gender-diverse Pacific people are taken into these key Ministerial engagements and particularly to participate in the formulation of the shared outcomes?

A: There were very few Pacific Island young women in the Bali conference and many others. We need to discuss how these multilateral spaces connect with young people.

A: There is a difference between the inclusion of young people and young-people led work and we need to get into this discussion of power and negotiation. Noelene also added that women and young people are always at the frontlines of disaster responses, but are they there in the systemic shifts?

## Closing Remarks:

Caitlin: There are a number of ways for different representative groups to both prepare and participate



so while there might not have been good visibility for the Pacific Disasters Risk Reduction Ministers Meeting, this is a really important contribution to share. She highlighted gender mainstreaming and not just having a gender expert, the importance of gender advocacy, how we support the connection between community voices and what is happening at the national level, and impacts of disaster in the recovery phase and those that are protracted in nature.

Rahel: Appreciated the side event by DIVA for Equality and Shifting The Power Coalition at CSW66. UN Women wants to work hand in hand with Pacific governments and civil society to support Pacific island women's agency, leadership voice and needs. It is really evident that Pacific island women and gender non-binary people's wisdom, knowledge and experience will be absolutely essential in providing critical solutions to the sustainable, equal and just world we want to build.

Sharon: Really pleased about the support from women in disability and young women. This conference will be an opportunity to train young Pacific islanders working in this space to understand how to deal with their ministers and promote the intergenerational dialogue that discussions like this are calling for.

Ofa: Finds herself sometimes on the other side where she assumes she knows what women need but her experience is that it is better to hear directly from women and to understand what they need. That is women's resilience. Resilience of being ignored and yet they still get up every day to make things better for their families.



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

Pacific Approaches to Gender, Disaster Response and Supporting Resilient Communities

Date: 13 September 2022

Time: 11am - 1pm (Fiji)



Moderated by  
Noelene Nabulivou  
DIVA for Equality



Ms. Caitlin Wilson,  
Assistant Secretary of the  
Humanitarian and Refugee  
Branch, Government of  
Australia



Ms. Mereseini Rakuira,  
Principal Strategic Lead,  
Pacific Women, The Pacific  
Community (SPC)



Ms. Ofa-Ki-Levuka  
Guttenbeil-Likiliki,  
Tonga Women and  
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Ms. Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls,  
Shifting the Power  
Coalition, Pacific Islands  
Feminist Action Coalition



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