



LISTENING TO THE PACIFIC

FRAMEWORK FOR PACIFIC REGIONALISM REGIONAL INITIATIVE SUBMISSION TEMPLATE 2016

The Framework for Pacific Regionalism

The Framework for Pacific Regionalism represents a high-level commitment to pursuing deeper regionalism and establishes a process for developing and prioritising regional public policy. It articulates the vision, values and objectives of an enhanced Pacific regionalism. It also sets out an inclusive process by which anyone can propose ideas for regional initiatives to address key challenges facing the Pacific. For more information, [click here](#).

Regional Issues and Guidance

When preparing your submission, think carefully about why this is an issue of regional significance and why it should be placed before the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum. For further information on the process and types of submissions being sought, please refer to the guideline below.

To Submit a Regional Initiative

1. Complete the below regional initiative template below.
2. Submit initiative to the Forum Secretariat by deadline: **5pm, Fiji time, Sunday 10 April 2016.**
3. Initiatives should be submitted to the Forum Secretariat, through one of the following ways:



FRAMEWORK FOR PACIFIC REGIONALISM – REGIONAL INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

Please complete each section below.

1. Contact Details

Please provide the following contact details:

Name of individual or group submitting initiative

Ms Sala Karuru

Name and position of primary contact

Ms Sala Karuru, Corporate Attorney & Freelance Consultant & Founder of Lifelong Learning Foundation, Fiji - <http://lifelonglearningfiji.org>

Email address

Phone number

Fax number

Mailing address

2. Name of Initiative

Why Should PICs Join the Internet-Based Economy?

We can't afford to ignore the exponential growth of the Internet economy and its ability to create jobs and the lifetime opportunity to start & grow a home-based business on a shoestring budget.



3. What is the common regional issue or challenge that this regional initiative aims to address?

You may also want to address the following: What are the causes of this issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

Youth Unemployment & Gender Inequality that Currently Characterises the Slow GDP Growth Across the Pacific Island Countries.

Almost our entire Pacific island countries are still struggling with slow GDP growth when compared to developing countries in other parts of the world. There has been a large body of literature that essentially tells us that further integration with the global economy will strengthen our currently low economic performance - no country is an island. This has been a major social-economic issue across the region thus making it more challenging to reduce gender inequality¹ and youth unemployment.

The predominant subordinate status of women across the region is largely the result of our social norms, values and practices that perpetuate the traditional perceptions of the roles of men and women that are based on unequal power relationships. Also, in Fiji for instance, our economy can only cater for 10,000 jobs for those 18,000-20,000 school leavers every year thus the existence of untapped resources - youth unemployment.

Fiji's Constitution enacted in 2013 prohibits intersecting forms of discrimination and their negative impact such as sex, race, ethnicity, religion or belief system, health status, disability, age and so forth. In effect, our Constitution addresses gender stereotypes that perpetuate the traditional perceptions of the roles of men and women that are based on unequal power relationships and lie at the core of gender inequality and gender-based violence.

Whilst this is a remarkable step in the right direction, however, it has been universally accepted and emphasized in the Beijing Plan of Action that the pursuit of *de jure* (legislative) compliance on its own will not guarantee gender equality. Very often, the written laws do not always translate into substantive equality and justice for many women.

Far too long, policymakers in the region are yet to put in place policies and programmes that will remove our geographical related disadvantages so as to allow for further integration within the global economy as well as reduce youth unemployment and gender inequality. It is for this purpose that this proposal is an attempt to address them as critical development issues across the region and hope for more innovative & creative thinking and the excellent term to describe the stretch is to "think outside the box."

¹ Gender inequality remains significant across the Pacific, given that women hardly participate in decision-making, the high prevalence of VAW, significant barriers in economic opportunities for women and so forth (12th Triennial of Pacific Women & 5th Pacific Women Ministerial Meeting in the Cook Islands in October, 2013).



As a Corporate Attorney & Freelance Consultant, I have visited various income generating projects (IGPs) throughout Fiji that are funded by the Fiji Government or foreign funding through NGOs, DFAT programmes, EU funded FRIENDS (an NGO) programmes and so forth. I found that whilst these projects² help improve living standards in terms of trainings and health but their main goal is to reduce poverty.

For instance, as a CEDAW³ Consultant for the Ministry for Women through a short-term contract, I held consultation meetings with rural women throughout Fiji's 4 divisions for 5 weeks. I met with a group of women in the northern division who don't have a clue about CEDAW but were praising advocacy trainings by a particular NGO that have enabled them to speak in English and the confidence to attend meetings.

A Woman's Personal Story

At a meeting with women from a certain NGO in the North shared with us her personal story. She is a single mother with 8 children and comes from a rural community in Labasa. This rural community's only source of income comes from seasonal labour work of cutting sugarcane from dawn to dusk. During the cutting season, children don't go to school since everyone must go to the sugarcane field, as this is the only time during the year to make money for the family.

Also, I was the local consultant for DFAT's feasibility study: "Increasing Opportunity for the Economic Empowerment of Women in Fiji". During our first consultation workshop with women, there was a consensus within the forum that whilst they appreciate the Australian Government's commitment up to \$320 million to fund the Pacific Women Initiative over 10 years in the 14 Pacific Islands Forum member countries, these women complained about training and consultation fatigue. According to them, DFAT has taken extremely long time on stakeholders' consultations; round the table meetings, feasibility study and they have yet to see the actual development of programmes/initiatives for women in Fiji getting off the ground.

Furthermore, the feasibility study reveals that there is a middle-hollow in terms of women's businesses in Fiji, with just a very few top women businesses and the majority of them falls within the cottage industry- absence of women SMEs.

²Such as poultry, piggery, canteen and fire-oven bakery

³Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women- CEDAW

⁴ Inform the selection of programmes that are viable, sustainable, culturally appropriate and safe opportunities to increase women's economic opportunities in Fiji that DFAT can support.

⁵These cottage businesses include selling cakes, canteen business, tailoring, selling Fijian handicrafts, virgin coconut oil production, catering services and so forth.



At its simplest, the absence of existing women SMEs in effect limits the terms of reference of DFAT's commissioned study⁴ to women IGPs and businesses in the traditional cottage industry.⁵ Cottage businesses have remained significantly small with very limited potential to grow for a variety of reasons. This is because of the labour-intensive method of production, extremely small market (within the vicinity of the business location), poor business literacy skills, cash-flow problems, no business planning, inability to access loan for working capital and regulations cited as impediments.

Therefore, in my view, these funding assistance in cash grant or by way of technical support will highly unlikely have a major positive impact on the member countries' economic growth as it will not encourage development of new innovative business models outside of existing traditional businesses, let alone create more women owned SMEs and address the prevailing youth unemployment, majority of which are young women, at least in the short to medium term.

4. Briefly describe this regional initiative

You may also want to address the following in this section:

How would this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region?

Who are the main beneficiaries?

How would the initiative contribute to the vision, values and objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism?

Has the initiative been carried out previously?

What are the key risks in implementing this initiative?

Are there any complementary projects and programmes that are currently active?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.



Given SME's⁶ Track Record For Job Creation And The Importance Of Policies And Programmes That Encourage Entrepreneurs Assist In Addressing Youth Unemployment & Gender Inequality Across The Pacific Island Countries (PIC), Starting In Fiji.

No individual, government or business can afford to ignore the exponential growth of the Internet-based economy and its ability to create employment, especially for youth and in Fiji for people retiring early at the age of 55 years due to a government policy. In this information and high technology era, there is no need to reinvent the wheel and so the policymakers must be encouraged to use extensive secondary research and qualitative and quantitative analysis so to capture the potential of the Internet for social and economic development and its ability to remove our geographical smallness and isolation from developed countries.

For the first time in history, Fiji's current Constitution guarantees equal rights to both men & women the full and free participation in the economic life of the nation (section 32). It clearly reflects a simple fact that achieving equality of women and young people in Fiji is a fundamental right and social and economic imperative. This also highlights how essential is a paradigm shift to seeing women as far more than victims of discrimination and violence, but as agents of change.

In other words, a prerequisite for the sustainability and development of communities across the region is the equal and meaningful inclusion and participation of women and young people in all aspects of our social and economic development initiatives, without fear of violence. We have seen that the Internet is without walls; the world is the market, created a level playing field for SMEs to grow their business on shoe-string budgets and therefore a tremendous, undisputed force for economic growth and social change. The countries that are already reaping the exponential growth of the world's Internet based economy continue to invest in infrastructure and an enabling environment for innovation. The key is to provide the basis for a well-functioning Internet economy: "core infrastructure"⁷ and "conditions for usage."⁸

So, the suggestion here is for policymakers to commission a feasibility study in Fiji as a pilot project so as to clearly understand - how people in Fiji are already using the Internet, where the opportunities lie, what future potential for social and economic impact the Internet offers, major risks and what Fiji needs to get there. It is further suggested that policies and programmes are to be introduced so as support Internet entrepreneurship and foster partnerships and collaborative initiatives with NGOs such as Lifelong Learning Foundation Fiji (Foundation), <http://lifelonglearningfiji.org/> and repeat the success in the other countries in the region.

⁶ Small & Micro Enterprises -SME

⁷ Core infrastructure includes both physical infrastructure and characteristics of the business environment, such as mobile and Internet coverage, electricity, availability of skills, education levels, and perceptions of corruption.

⁸ These include for instance access, availability and attractiveness such as the cost of devices and factors affecting citizen awareness, such as education levels, usage and relevance of services.



The author of this proposal and the Founder of the Foundation that she established under Fiji's Charitable Trust Act in 2013. The idea is for the Foundation to provide the legal platform for innovative style of training delivered by top notch, Internet business experts from around the world that addresses business opportunities available in the fast growing and yet very volatile Internet economy.⁹ This is to allow participants targeting tertiary students, unemployed youth and people retiring at 55 years to start and build an online business fast & easy and earning not just bread & butter money but a lucrative income each and every month.

Sofar, the Foundation has just conducted only one course called "How to Start Your Online Writing Business from Nothing" - <http://lifelonglearningfiji.org/classes/> This was a 5 days intensive course that the Founder fully funded to hire an experienced freelancer writer from USA to teach the course from Monday, 30 June to Friday, 4 July 2014. I believe that there are a whole lot of learning lessons from this course:

- What is actually selling online is the American style of writing and Fiji writers would not be able to learn it overnight but such writing skills could be developed over a period of time;
- The lack of web presence of businesses, corporate organization in Fiji or any other countries in the region also means the lack of enabling environment for Fiji writers to quickly start an online writing business;
- There is a need for development of a business model that will incorporate Affiliate Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Social Media Marketing, Website Design & Development & Website content writing;
- Availability of infrastructure, online tools, technology, step-by step trainings and a strong back-office support at the platform that will allow individuals to start an Affiliate marketing business after 8-12 weeks of training.

How Does Affiliate Marketing Works?



⁹ I took a break from my legal career in 2007 to visit my daughter who at the time was living in America. I was particularly concerned with the many educated Fiji women staying away from their loved ones in Fiji and earning very good money working as caregivers for senior citizens in America, simply because of the lack opportunity back home. This drove me to study Internet entrepreneurship, \$multi-billion home-based business industry in America and how to start and build an online business at the fraction of the cost for start-ups.



5. Why does this initiative require the attention of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum?

Please consider whether this initiative requires the attention and consideration of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in order to be implemented and outline why this is the case. Could it not be overseen or implemented at the level of Ministers, officials or by a regional agency?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

Ultimate Desired Internet Impact in the Region: The Web is Working For Businesses & Where the Jobs Are Created.

Whilst it makes perfect sense to join the Internet economy taking advantage of its ability to deliver more value and wealth to more people much more broadly than any other economic development initiative. But, our biggest hurdle right now is that we do not have the expertise or the know how to start a thriving Internet Business as there are tons of ways to create an income from the Internet.

The Founder believes that this Regional Initiative is an opportunity to bring her proposal to the attention of Pacific Forum leaders, national governments in the region, development partners and policymakers.

She has invested a lot of time and money in her heart desire to help individuals achieve their goals for personal and financial freedom and clearly knows that there is no way she would be able to do it alone if the project is to be successful. For workers, this simply means being able to find jobs regardless of where they happen to be, and getting paid for what they are worth in the global economy.



No doubt, it will require substantial investments, a team of experts, infrastructure development, high-technology systems and partnerships with governments, development partners, philanthropists, International Foundations and like-minded individuals.

This is inline with the vision of the Pacific Islands Forum - *“We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all.”*

Please visit our Lifelong Learning Foundation website- <http://lifelonglearningfiji.org/donate-2/>

**Want to Help Make A Difference?
Together & Now, We Help Families Live their Best Life Stories**

Help us create history in a small island country for out of our lifelong Internet business training programmes will be the emergence of a home-based business industry and a group of entrepreneurs driving the digital economy in Fiji.

We seek partnerships with governments, philanthropists, individuals, International Funding Agencies...as the Foundation relies solely on donations, grants, fundraisings, gifts and private funding.

**Thank You,
Ms Sala Karuru
Founder of Lifelong Learning Foundation Fiji**

6. Attachments

Please attach additional information in support of this initiative.

Please attach no more than 3 pages.



7. Uploading initiatives to the Forum Secretariat website

In line with the process outlined in the [Framework for Pacific Regionalism](#), all submitted initiatives, inclusive of all attachments, will be publicly available via the Forum Secretariat website.

8. Guidelines and Contact Details

For further information on completing this template, consult the submissions guideline below or contact Pacific Regionalism Adviser Joel Nilon at the Forum Secretariat:

Submission Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to assist those submitting regional initiatives through the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. For more information contact Pacific Regionalism Adviser Joel Nilon at the Forum Secretariat:

1. About the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

The Framework for Pacific Regionalism represents a high-level commitment to pursuing deeper regionalism and establishes a process for developing and prioritising regional public policy. It articulates the vision, values and objectives of an enhanced Pacific regionalism. It also sets out an inclusive process by which anyone can propose ideas for regional initiatives to address key challenges facing the Pacific. For more information, [click here](#).

2. How do I submit a regional initiative?

To submit a regional initiative, complete all sections of the submission template and submit to the Forum Secretariat by no later **5pm, Fiji time, Sunday 10 April 2016**.

Submissions must be made on this template. Submissions made directly via email, letter or other format will not be considered.



3. Who can submit an initiative?

Any interested stakeholder can submit a regional initiative. This may include individuals, or groups of individuals or organisations, including government, civil society (including church or religious organisations), the private sector, community groups, multilateral agencies and CROP agencies.

4. What information is required?

In completing the regional initiative template, you should:

- a. Identify and seek to respond to issues and challenges that are common to the Pacific region and that could be best addressed through a regional response.
- b. Demonstrate that a high level political decision needs to be made.

This is not a process for seeking endorsement of existing projects or activities. No standing fund exists in which to allocate funds to initiatives that are endorsed. Submissions that consist of projects or initiatives that may be ordinarily carried out under the governance arrangements or work-plan of the submitting organisation are unlikely to be successful.

- c. Demonstrate how the initiative would contribute to one or more of the objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

5. What assistance will the Forum Secretariat provide through this process

The Forum Secretariat will provide general advice and suggestions to those making submissions. This advice will include clarifying the information set out in this guideline, such as how initiatives can be completed and submitted; the type and level of information sought; the assessment process; and clarification of the overall process.

6. Assessment process

Step 1 The Forum Secretariat will collate all submitted initiatives and check them for completeness.

Step 2 The Forum Secretariat will, in collaboration with CROP agency officials and other experts as required, conduct a first round of assessment of all submitted initiatives using the tests for regional action (see Table 1 below).

Step 3 The Forum Secretariat will provide all assessed initiatives to the Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (SSCR), which will assess initiatives against the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework (see Table 2 below). Reports on current regional initiatives under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism that are in progress will also be considered by the SSCR when they assess initiatives.

Step 4 Based on its assessment of all submissions, the SSCR may recommend a limited number of initiatives to Forum Leaders. Those initiatives recommended to Leaders will be first sent to the Forum Officials Committee for commentary and incorporation on the Leaders' annual meeting agenda. Forum Leaders



will then receive the final recommendations of the SSCR and make decisions on these at the annual Forum Leaders Meeting. In 2016 this meeting will take place in the Federated States of Micronesia

Proponents whose initiatives have been selected for Leaders' consideration will be informed of this selection within two weeks of the SSCR's decision. All proponents will be informed in due course of the outcome of their submissions.

7. Leaders' decisions on initiatives

Forum Leaders' decisions on initiatives will be publicly announced through the Forum Leaders' Communique that is issued at the conclusion of the Leaders' meeting. As directed by Leaders, the Forum Secretariat will initiate implementation of the decisions in consultation with the proponent, the proposed implementing agencies, funding partners, and other relevant organisations or stakeholders.

8. Further help and feedback

For further information or guidance or to provide feedback on the process, contact Pacific Regionalism Adviser Joel Nilon at the Forum Secretariat:



Table 1 – Tests for Regionalism

TEST	CRITERIA FOR REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION
Market test	The initiative should not involve a service that markets can provide well.
Sovereignty test	The initiative should maintain the degree of effective sovereignty held by national governments (countries, not regional bodies, should decide priorities).
Regionalism test	<p>The initiative should meet one of the following criteria at a sub-regional or regional level, in support of national priorities and objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ establish a shared norm or standard▪ establish a common position on an issue▪ deliver a public or quasi-public good which is regional (or sub-regional) in its scope realise economies of scale▪ overcome national capacity constraints▪ complement national governments where they lack capacity to provide national public goods like security or the rule of law▪ facilitate economic or political integration▪ Where benefits accrue sub-regionally, the contribution to broader regionalism should be clear.
Benefit test	<p>The initiative should bring substantial net benefits, as demonstrated by a cost-benefit analysis. The distribution of benefits across countries and across stakeholders within the region should also be considered—particularly with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The relative costs and benefits for smaller island states (an “SIS test”)▪ How inclusive the proposal is of all stakeholders who might benefit from regionalism.
Political oversight test	The initiative should require the Leaders’ attention and input (as opposed to being within the mandate of Ministers or other governing bodies).
Risk and sustainability test	The initiative should demonstrate a robust risk and sustainability evaluation, be based on a sound implementation plan, be supported by some identified funding, and demonstrate available capacity and experience for successful implementation.
Duplication test	The initiative should not be currently under progress by another organisation or process, and there should be no duplication of effort.



Table 2 – Vision, Values and Objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

Vision:

Our Pacific Vision is for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives

Values:

- We value and depend upon the integrity of our vast ocean and our island resources.
- We treasure the diversity and heritage of the Pacific and seek an inclusive future in which cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed.
- We embrace good governance, the full observance of democratic values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies.
- We seek peaceful, safe, and stable communities and countries, ensuring full security and wellbeing for the peoples of the Pacific.
- We support full inclusivity, equity and equality for all people of the Pacific.
- We strive for effective, open and honest relationships and inclusive and enduring partnerships—based on mutual accountability and respect—with each other, within our sub-regions, within our region, and beyond.

These Pacific regional values will guide all our policy-making and implementation.

Principal Objectives:

- Sustainable development that combines economic social, and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods and well-being and use the environment sustainably;
- Economic growth that is inclusive and equitable;
- Strengthened governance, legal, financial, and administrative systems; and
- Security that ensures stable and safe human, environmental and political conditions for all.