PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

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PACIFIC LEADERS GENDER EQUALITY DECLARATION INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Final Report

31 October 2021

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Disclaimer

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CROP	Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
EVAWG	Elimination of violence against women and girls
FEMM	Forum Economic Ministers Meeting
FFMM	Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting
FIC	Forum Island Countries
FOC	Forum Officials Committee
FPR	Framework for Pacific Regionalism
FRDP	The Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
FEMM	Forum Economic Ministers Meeting
FFA	Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
GPI	Gender Participation Indices
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LGBTQI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer & Intersex
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OPOC	Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
PIDP	Pacific Island Development Programme
PGEP	Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific
PLGED	Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
PICTs	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
PIF	Pacific Island Forum
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PPA	Pacific Platform for Action
PRSD	Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development
PWSPD	Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SPC	Pacific Community

TWG	Technical Working Groups
USP	University of the South Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WEE	Women's economic empowerment
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Executive summary

The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) was announced at the *43rd Pacific Islands Forum* in August 2012 in Rarotonga, as a result of concerns of Pacific Leaders that overall progress in the region towards achieving gender equality was slow. The PLGED renewed commitment to lifting the status of women in the Pacific and empowering them to be active participants in economic, political and social life.

The purpose of this review is to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the PLGED for Pacific Islands Forum Members to progress gender equality in our region. The review seeks to support the Pacific to take stronger action and accelerate efforts to address gender inequalities, to strengthen regional consensus in support of national efforts to address gender inequality and to provide a platform for prioritising regional cooperation efforts.

The review examined the PLGED ownership and political will to follow through on commitments, including: responding to new and emerging regional gender equality issues; assessing progress in implementing recommendations from the PLGED reports; and, guiding actions going forward, such as strengthened coordination and harmonised approaches to enhance progress and reporting. The scope of the review did not include development of the next iteration of the PLGED.

Overall conclusions

The PLGED is an important tool for advocacy and can potentially be used to hold decision makers to account at the highest level despite current weaknesses in ownership, political will and low levels of visibility and utility at both regional and national level.

Progress on gender equality in the Pacific over the past 10 years has been built on efforts which began several decades ago. This work was driven by civil society, and started well before the Beijing Conference. While there are examples of the PLGED contributing to the momentum since 2012, specific attribution of progress to the PLGED is not possible.

While progress on addressing gender inequalities remains uneven across the Pacific, there has been progress in some areas such as in eliminating violence against women and girls, introduction of gender responsive programmes, policies, legislation and gender statistics. However, progress is not shared or consistent across all aspects of gender equality for all countries and is largely funded by development partners. The absence of an implementation framework that has measurable targets and indicators and which outlines mechanisms and processes for accountability, reporting and collaboration at Leaders level has been a missed opportunity to enhance leadership and ownership at regional and national levels.

As one of a plethora of competing and potentially duplicative regional development frameworks endorsed by Pacific Island Countries and Territories, Leaders, revision and repositioning of the PLGED should ensure it is a critical part of the continuum of priority frameworks in a coherent and transparent way. This will bring both focus and clarity to the regional gender equality agenda while reducing the burden of reporting on countries. It will also help to strengthen the other priority frameworks by improving development effectiveness and supporting Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) and government agencies to meet their human rights commitments according to their mandates.

Systematic mechanisms and processes for addressing gender inequalities across priority regional development frameworks at regional level are unclear. This includes within CROP agencies where overall commitment to gender mainstreaming is weak and technical gender expertise is under resourced. While there have been efforts in the past to promote and support action in some areas, for example, through the CROP Gender Working Group (1998); the High-Level Reference Group on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) (2009); and the Regional Working Group on Women, Peace

and Security (2011) these have been inactive. What is clear is that since 2012, there have been many missed opportunities at the regional level to flag, promote and use the PLGED at Ministerial and Leaders meetings to advance gender equality in the region in a more systematic, measured and visible way.

Collaboration at both national and regional levels is ad hoc, sporadic and mostly led by development partners. While the PLGED specifically calls on development partners to support country efforts to realise commitments to the PLGED through increased technical and financial support, Forum Dialogue Partners discussions do not discuss the PLGED priorities and this aspect of the declaration is not reported on.

Moving forward, the PLGED is unique in its potential to be a bold high-level commitment by Pacific Forum Leaders to enhance the status of women in the region. It should be retained and revised to reflect current regional developments and priorities.

The PLGED is a strong step forward for the region. It can facilitate ongoing work by CROP agencies, be used as an advocacy tool by civil society, and serve as a mechanism to track progress through regionally relevant, measurable targets and indicators. Renewed commitment to an updated PLGED, and further integration with other regional frameworks, will enhance its usefulness and promote a more equal and sustainable Pacific region.

Summary of key findings

The review was organised around five themes of i) governance ii) relevance iii) impact and effectiveness iv) collaboration and v) sustainability. They are explored in Chapter 3 of the document, with key findings for each theme summarised below. Several of the findings intersect and are similar, demonstrating both the importance and the inter-connectedness of these issues.

Governance

- **Weak ownership and low visibility are problematic.** Ownership of the PLGED by Leaders, Governments, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector is weak despite these stakeholders indicating they value the PLGED as a regional political commitment.
- **The PLGED is being successfully used as a policy lever.** There are isolated examples of the value of the PLGED as a regional instrument. For example, DFAT used it to launch the gender equality initiative in 2012.[1] The Declaration was also used by civil society organisations to get the attention of Leaders on the issues of SGBV and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in (2012) resulting in their firm placement on the regional development agenda. Subsequently, many countries developed legislative reforms, policies and national plans on ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) and WPS.
- **The PLGED is not used to track gender equality commitments** on a regular basis at either national or regional level. Reports reflecting country-level data were produced in 2013 and 2014. Since 2018 reporting on the PLGED is included in biennial Pacific sustainable development reports. There is little evidence that these reports are used by countries to have meaningful discussion on the progress of gender equality at national level.
- **Little influence on national decision making.** All PICTs have gender equality policies, which align with international and regional frameworks for gender equality[2]. However, the PLGED appears to have had little to no impact on national decision making, with PICTs that participated in the review not crediting the PLGED with influencing national policies on gender equality, except in the area of EVAWG.

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[1] This was a pledge for AUD320m over 10 years through the *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* program which provided support for addressing gender equality at bilateral and regional level.
[2] Such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Pacific Platform for Action.

- **Limited influence on budgets.** The review team notes the lack of data on budget allocations by PICTs governments for gender related activities; and is not aware of any plans to collect this data for Pacific sustainable development goals (SDGs) reporting. Without disaggregated data to show who receives the services of line ministries or departments it is difficult to gauge whether men and women are being treated equally. It is worth noting that climate and disaster budget tracking of funding flows and investments is underway in some countries. Lessons from this experience may be useful for PLGED.
- **Uncertain accountability.** In comparison with international gender equality commitments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), which have clear accountability frameworks, stakeholders reported confusion about who was responsible for coordinating implementation and monitoring of the PLGED. In addition, they did not seem to connect the PLGED with other gender equality frameworks.
- **Lack of a clear leadership framework.** At present, there is limited articulation of what a PLGED governance mechanism would look like including its role, composition and how it would operate. The review explored this in detail with stakeholders during the consultations, including in a focus group discussion. The firm view is that a governance mechanism for the PLGED is best established within the existing Forum regional architecture. It should take the form of a sub-committee or taskforce of the Forum Officials Committee (FOC) made up of country, development partner and other stakeholder representatives. This would mean that it has direct links with Ministerial and Leaders Meeting agenda setting, discussion and decision-making processes. This would also enable connections with the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, the Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting and the planned annual Pacific Women Leaders Meeting.
- **Models exist for improved PLGED governance.** The CROP Gender Working Group (1998); the High-Level Reference Group on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (2009) and the Pacific Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (2011) are examples of mechanisms that were established in the past to improve governance and accountability for gender equality commitments. However, all of these mechanisms, which were established through PIFS, are inactive. It is unclear whether this is due to gaps in resourcing, changing mandates, changing PIF architecture and unclear roles and responsibilities. The establishment of a high-level position (similar to that of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner) and office resourced for the long term would greatly assist the efforts needed to build back high-level commitment, ownership, action and accountability to progress gender equality in the region. This would also serve to ensure that the PLGED issues remain on Leaders' meeting agendas as well as be regularly discussed as part of other regional priorities.
- **Need for coordination.** Any future governance mechanism for the PLGED should take into account three planned developments in the area of gender equality in the region: (i) the planned annual Pacific Women Leaders' meeting; (ii) the establishment of an Eminent Pacific Woman position within the senior management team at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); and (iii) the upcoming coming review of the regional architecture as part of the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Relevance

- **PLGED commitments remain relevant**. National policy actions which Leaders committed to in order to progress gender equality as stated in the PLGED remain relevant.
- **EVAWG progressed more than other areas.** Most advances have been in the area of ending violence against women and girls, with numerous countries enacting legislation and developing services such as crisis centres, counselling, and referral pathways. While continued advancement of EVAWG is critical, a concern raised is that the focus on EVAWG may have side-lined other issues, for example, women in decision-making and economic

empowerment. However, this may be due to inadequate financial and technical resources to address all areas covered in PLGED; and the prioritising of EVAWG in response to global and regional data to support action in this area.

- **National development plans most influential.** National women's machineries expressed mixed views on the influence of the PLGED in their efforts to develop and implement gender responsive programmes and policies. They overwhelmingly referenced national development strategies and plans as well as CEDAW as being most influential. The lack of a PLGED implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation framework may also have contributed to this lack of influence.

- **Weak alignment with regional sectoral frameworks.** The PLGED commitments align with some sectoral regional development frameworks such as the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP)[3]. However, this alignment is not directly attributed to the PLGED. This may be due to a historical legacy, as in 2012 the regional strategies were not activity linked or considered in totality. Further work is needed to examine these sectoral frameworks to gauge how gender equality is substantively addressed.

  Limited understanding of the PLGED and gender equality. Knowledge and understanding of the PLGED by Leaders, Governments, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector is limited. The majority of stakeholders consulted were not familiar with the PLGED commitments. This raises several issues, including: (i) the plethora of regional declarations, commitments and frameworks that have been developed since 2012 without adequate implementation resources; (ii) bureaucracy including lengthy processes of prioritisation, follow up, reporting and roles and responsibilities for undertaking these tasks at both regional and national level; (iii) gender imbalance in the decision-making spaces of these processes; (iv) limited understanding of gender equality and its underlying importance and relevance to achieving sustainable development, resulting it being downplayed as a regional development priority; and (v) the discomfort caused by discussing gender equality as it is seen by decision-makers as challenging patriarchy.

Effectiveness and impact

- **EVAWG progressed more than other areas**. There was most traction in the area of ending violence against women, with numerous countries enacting legislation and developing services such as crisis centres, counselling, and referral pathways. However, a concern raised with the review team was whether the focus on EVAWG has side-lined other issues, for example, economic empowerment of women and leadership. As mentioned earlier (Refer 3.2.1), this raises the issue of a lack of financial and technical resources to address all of the areas under the PLGED combined with the need for more data to rationalise action. Clearly more work needs to be done in these areas in line with recommendations from Triennial meetings of Pacific Women, Women's Ministerial meetings and recent PLEGD reports.

- **National development plans most influential**. National women's machineries expressed mixed views on the influence of the PLGED on their efforts to develop and implement gender responsive programmes and policies. They overwhelmingly referenced national development strategies and plans as well as CEDAW as their main influence.

- **Under representation of women is still the biggest challenge**. Less and uneven progress was reported in the area of decision making. A major challenge is the continued under-representation of women in decision making and politics at national and sub-national level, and across different sectors. A Women of the Wave Network proposed by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), SPC and the Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP) and now endorsed by CROP Heads aims to address this issue in CROP. The network will support women employees of the nine CROP agencies in their work roles and leadership aspirations and

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[3] http://gsd.spc.int/frdp/

expand their connections and career opportunities across CROP agencies. The review team understands that this is also a role that SPC's planned Pacific Eminent Woman position will have within the organisation. As they are both new initiatives, it will be important that they connect and together contribute to building women's leadership in the region.

- **Women's economic empowerment is a complex and ongoing area of work in the region.** It must be supported by all sectors and at all levels of government and the private sector. Recent efforts to engage rural women more actively in different levels of agricultural, aquacultural and handicraft value chains are showing positive results. The Pacific sees continuing challenges linked to access to collateral and credit and other financial services, however a number of collaborative development initiatives are improving financial literacy and inclusion.[4]

- **Improve gender outcomes in education and health.** The review team had difficulty assessing the effectiveness of the PLGED health and education commitments, due to information and time constraints. A close examination of regional and bilateral investments in these sectors by development partners is necessary to more accurately consider this issue.

- **Australia has been the largest contributor to implementation of PLGED priority areas**. The PLGED provided a launchpad for the Australian Government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (PWSPD) programme. Its investment of AUD320 million over ten years is the largest development partner investment in support of gender equality in the region. PWSPD is largely aligned to the PLGED although very few implementing partners understand or are aware of this connection. While some funding from PWSPD was provided at regional level to United Nations (UN) agencies working in support of sexual and reproductive health and rights, the programme did not have a strong focus on health and education due to the Australian Government's stand-alone health and education investments.

- **Resourcing remains a key challenge**. While the Australian Government's lead seems to have laid the foundation for other development partners to scale up gender equality commitments to the region, resourcing for the PLGED priority areas remains a key challenge to implementation. Furthermore, development partners do not necessarily connect support for gender equality to the PLGED but rather to their own organisational policies and commitments.

- **Donors are driving change**. In general, the policy environment for gender equality in the region is thought to have improved since 2012, with increased awareness of gender equality issues. However, gender issues are largely assumed to concern only women and the driver of change is often donors, who set specific requirements for the inclusion of gender equality in project concepts, design and reporting in order for funding to be approved.

- **Engage men in gender analysis and planning gender responsive initiatives.** There is a need to invest in capacity-building of all stakeholders, including men in decision-making roles, to better understand gender equality, to undertake gender analysis, and to implement gender mainstreaming. This would enable the provision of substantive gender technical advice and planning of gender responsive initiatives in whatever context needed.

- **More use of data and research needed in the policy area**. Better data and research are needed. Multiple stakeholders discussed the lack of a useful mechanism for reporting on progress in the PLGED priority areas. Issues raised included the need to address data gaps as well as packaging of data to support policy processes, for example, by identifying elements of good practice or gaps in action. Existing data is not being used in an analytical way and the production and availability of disaggregated data is an ongoing challenge[5]. There is a critical need for evidence-based research on barriers to women's economic empowerment and the impact of GBV on the private sector and the economy, among other issues. This will fill gaps

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[4] Refer Pacific Beijing +25 report.
[5] Inadequate data is cited as an ongoing challenge in regional PLGED reports.

in understanding and knowledge needed to address gender inequality. Family health and safety studies and GBV assessments conducted in PICTs were cited as examples of how Pacific led research using international standards and good practice has been used as a strong evidence-based platform for advocacy, policy development and legal reforms in support of EVAWG. Efforts should be made to connect with Pacific research initiatives at national and regional level being implemented through civil society organisations, academic institutions, and other partners as well as initiatives such as the TOKSAVE Pacific Gender Resource[6] which is an online portal that aims to make quality research on gender in the Pacific accessible.

- **Factors that hinder the PLGED**. Effective implementation and impact are compromised by a number of key challenges, some of which are outside of the PLGED such as: i) restrictive bureaucratic processes; ii) international and regional commitments not being embedded at national level[7]; iii) a lack of political will resulting in gender equality not being prioritised; iv) a lack of accountability without a clear mechanism or process for reporting progress; and as highlighted earlier; vi) a lack of data, analysis and research and their use as a policy tool; vii) inadequate technical capacity, and viii) a lack of resources for gender mainstreaming. Inadequate technical and financial capacity is an issue both for small national women's machineries and gender units within organisations where it is exacerbated by staff's lack of authority to make decisions and affect change across organisational mandates.

- **National level models to support mainstreaming exist.** At regional level, the SPC through the Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific project (PGEP) funded by PWSPD is supporting gender mainstreaming and gender statistics work across PICTs. Stocktakes of the capacity of governments to mainstream gender across policies, programmes and services in 15 PICTs provide a solid base for strengthening the national gender machinery, as do placements of gender advisers in some countries. Despite these key efforts to progress gender responsive programmes and policies, much remains to be done across all the PLGED priority areas. This requires increased resources with central agencies of government taking the lead.

- **Gender mainstreaming across CROP is limited.** While CROP agencies such as SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) are institutionalising efforts to mainstream gender equality through their policies and programmes, other agencies have yet to follow suit. There is serious and urgent need to mainstream gender equality through other regional frameworks to ensure that the PLGED is not simply a document that gets referenced without further action. The Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake of CROP agencies conducted in 2007 provides firm guidance on how this can be done and continues to be relevant.[8] A summary of recommendations from the Stocktake report is included at Annex 9.

Collaboration

- **Collaboration is weak.** Collaboration at both national and regional level, as demonstrated by coordination mechanisms, harmonised approaches and processes which bring together governments, development partners and civil society around the PLGED priority areas has been ad hoc, patchy and have occurred around specific events such as regional preparations for international and regional forums.

- **Ineffective regional mechanisms for coordination**. Overall, gender coordination mechanisms at regional level have not been effective in strengthening coordination and harmonised approaches linked to the PLGED. Although, recently there has been good coordination through the Gender Coordination Group in relation to preparation for international commitments such as for the Beijing +25 process and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This kind of mobilising and coordination could be applied to regional and national level gender equality commitments.

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[6] http://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/news-events/stories/7994/toksave-pacific-gender-resource-now-live
[7] This issue is highlighted as an ongoing challenge in regional reports on the PLGED.
[8] PIFS, (2007). CROP Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake, Nagada Consultants.

- **Weak national level coordination.** There are no indications that the PLGED has been used to identify areas for technical and funding support or to monitor progress on gender equality at national levels.
- **Collaboration missing from the PLGED reports.** It is difficult to assess the extent of collaboration as a result of the PLGED more generally as this has not been specifically reported on nor has there been a formal oversight or governance mechanism for the PLGED to convene development partner discussions around the PLGED at regional level. A future iteration of the PLGED should capture this important aspect.
- **CSOs inclusion and partnership is critical.** As major drivers of gender equality and social inclusion across the region, civil society organisations are necessary partners in meaningful engagement and collaboration. The Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls is a good example of coordination bringing together governments, civil society organisations and communities in an implementation partnership coordinated by SPC, PIFS and UN Women.

Sustainability

- **The PLGED has potential to be an important accountability instrument.** The PLGED is considered by all stakeholders, especially civil society organisations, to be an important instrument that could hold Leaders, decision-makers and development partners to account for progressing gender equality at both national and regional level.
- **Revise and retain the PLGED.** Consequently, the majority of stakeholders considered it necessary to uphold the Declaration as a stand-alone high level regional gender equality commitment with prominence in the regional strategy architecture. There needs to be renewed commitment to an updated Declaration that reflects current developments and realities of the region while being connected to other regional priorities and commitments.
- **The current outlook for sustainability is not good**. Despite the recognition of the important role that the PLGED can play in progressing gender equality in the region, the outlook for sustainability is discouraging. Actions to progress commitments in the PLGED are not sufficiently embedded in regional mechanisms of influence such as the Forum Economic Ministers meetings and Forum Leaders Meetings, actions, reporting and follow through by governments, CROP and development partners.

Recommendations

The recommendations under each theme are summarised below. Like the findings, several of the recommendations intersect and are similar, demonstrating both the importance and the inter-connectedness of these issues.

Governance recommendations

1. Establish a governance mechanism for the PLGED, through FOC, comprising PIF members, development partners and other stakeholder representatives. The governance mechanism should ensure that the PLGED is firmly on the Leaders agenda and is regularly discussed and reported on in connection with other regional priorities, including gender equality priorities.
2. Develop a PLGED communications strategy to improve visibility, knowledge and understanding of PLGED commitments in connection with other gender equality commitments such as the SDGs, BPA, PPA and CEDAW; and their relevance and potential contribution to sustainable development in the region.
3. Embed PLGED commitments at the national level, including at all levels of government budget processes, in order to support ownership and progress action on gender equality.
4. Establish the position and office of a Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner at PIFS to progress actions and accountability on the PLGED commitments at regional and national levels, in

coordination with emerging initiatives being led by SPC and the planned Pacific Women Leaders Meeting

Relevance recommendations

5. PIF Leaders renew their commitment to the PLGED so that it remains a relevant, high-level commitment to gender equality which:

- reflects the current situation of the Pacific in 2021, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and regional strategies and frameworks that have been developed since 2012;[9]
- has a clear purpose and governance mechanism, and clear implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting processes and responsibilities;
- recognises the diversity of women's lived realities as reflected by age, disability, sexual orientation and where they reside, for example, women living in remote, rural and outer island areas, persons of diverse SOGIESC[10] and young women and girls, as well as the intersectionality of these identities.
- recognises the critical role of civil society and the women's movement in progressing gender equality and includes them in all aspects of the PLGED.
- uses language around gender transformative approaches to actively challenge harmful social norms; and recognises intersectionality as critical for the relevance and effectiveness of these approaches.
- reflects emerging priorities such as pandemics (COVID-19), climate change and environmental justice, disaster risk response and resilient development, poverty and hardship, digital technology and literacy while, also ensuring that the PLGED is reflected in the regional frameworks that govern these areas
- in addition to retaining commitments to national policy actions, includes the issue of gender responsive budgeting in relation to gender responsive policies and programmes; unpaid care work, paid maternity leave, family leave and accessible and affordable child care to redress care imbalance and social protection in the area of women's economic empowerment; addresses sexual harassment in all forms, for example, cyber stalking and bullying etc.; strengthens language on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and includes mental health and disability in the area of women's health.

6. Ensure the governance mechanism (Refer Recommendation 1) strengthens ownership and increases visibility and accountability for the PLGED at both national and regional level in connection with other regional gender equality commitments and accountability processes.

7. Examine ways to build and supplement gender technical capacity in the region to support governments and regional organisations to ensure that gender equality issues are analysed and addressed at all levels, nationally, and in CROP operations and programmes. This could include regionally owned South-South cooperation modalities as well targeted support to address gender mainstreaming in sectoral frameworks. (Refer Recommendation 5.)

Effectiveness and impact recommendations

8. Strengthen and improve efforts to progress women's economic empowerment and women in decision-making in line with recommendations from Triennial meetings of Pacific Women, Women's Ministerial meetings and recent PLEGD reports.

9. Support ongoing efforts in EVAWG, with additional emphasis on prevention and working with men and boys.

10. Examine regional frameworks in education and health to ensure specific gender equality outcomes, targets and indicators are in line with the PPA and the PLGED.

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[9] The SDGs, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, 2014, Pacific Platform for Actin for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (2018-2030), Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

[10] Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression and Sexual Characteristics is now the preferred term when referring to the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI).

11. Develop a PLGED Report Card to enable stakeholders and political leaders to monitor progress in priority areas. A PLGED report card could be modelled on the SPC/FFA fisheries report cards that provide annual high-level reporting on the status of Pacific fisheries in relation to goals, indicators and strategies adopted in the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries.

12. Clarify the opportunity costs of not implementing the PLGED as well as the importance of having male and female leaders fully engaged in gender equality work (as gender inequality reduces the ability of CROP and other government agencies to produce sustainable outcomes in accordance with their mandates).

13. In order to build and supplement gender technical capacity in the region:

- Support countries to implement the SPC stocktakes of the capacity of the governments to mainstream gender across policies, programmes and services.

- Support CROP agencies to strengthen and establish mechanisms and processes to ensure that gender equality issues are analysed and addressed in all aspects of their operations and programmes. Refer to recommendations in the 2007 PIFS CROP Gender Stocktake report which are still relevant today.[11]

- Establish a regional roster of technical experts that can be made available to countries, regional organisations and other stakeholders to support efforts to mainstream and progress gender equality.

14. Integrate gender equality outcomes, targets and indicators into all regional development frameworks and initiatives that are prioritised by Leaders.

15. Implement the Pacific Roadmap on Gender Statistics for better production and use of gender statistics in the Pacific.[12] The roadmap aims to ensure quality, relevant and timely gender data that responds to users' needs is produced, available, disseminated and effectively used to advance gender equality.[13]

16. Support efforts to increase Pacific-led research on the causes and impacts of gender inequality to inform policy and programmes aimed at empowering women.

Collaboration recommendations

17. Ensure that the governance mechanism (Refer recommendation 1 in the Governance section) supports improved coordination of efforts to progress a common, coherent, focused Pacific Gender Equality agenda. This single agenda should not duplicate, but rather build on existing gender equality commitments, with a common goal and measurable targets and indicators over a short-, medium- and long-term period based on respectful and agreed principles of development cooperation.[14]

Efforts to improve coordination and collaboration should focus on:

- better targeting and use of resources;
- sharing experiences, good practice and lessons in implementation at both national and regional level;
- identifying specific actions needed to address gender equality at regional level

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Developed in 2019 by development partners, representatives of National Statistics Offices and civil society.

[13] UN Women, 2019. Gender Statistics in the Pacific: Establishing a Roadmap for better production and use of Gender Statistics to monitor the SDGs in the Pacific Workshop Report. https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Pacific-Roadmap-Gender-Statistics.pdf Partners included: UN Women, SPC, UNESCAP, UNFPA, ADB and NSO reps from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

[14] Noting that in the PLGED Leaders called on Development Partners to work in a coordinated, consultative and harmonised way to support national led efforts to address gender inequality across the region in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific.

- harmonising indicators and reporting requirements with other guiding frameworks so as not to overload national agencies;
- improving coordination between regional and national partners; while ensuring complementarity of actions at national level; and
- building political will to progress gender equality at all levels.

18. Adapt the PLGED reporting process to Leaders so that it contributes to useful discussion of progress, and identifies areas for action but also addresses the issue of improved collaboration and coordination amongst development partners.
19. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of CROP agencies, development partners and other stakeholders in implementing the PLGED.
20. Mandate all CROP agencies to adopt gender responsive programming in order to help reinforce member governments' efforts towards achieving gender equality and provide them with guidance and technical support.
21. Ensure all PIF members are made accountable to report on progress made under the PLGED so that lessons may be shared with and learned by other countries. (Refer recommendation 11)

Sustainability recommendations

In consultation with Leaders and all key stakeholders, including development partners, CSOs and the private sector:

22. Reaffirm the commitment of Leaders to the PLGED.
23. Update and raise the profile, visibility and utility of the PLGED as a high-level gender equality commitment in the Pacific region.
24. Embed the PLGED commitments in national planning, budget, public expenditure and financial accountability processes in support of increased national budget allocations for gender equality.
25. Agree on and develop an appropriate implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting mechanism for the PLGED with dedicated technical and financial resources at both regional and national level.
26. Identify, mobilise and promote specific gender technical expertise to support the above processes.
27. Ensure that all efforts to improve the sustainability of the PLGED are fully integrated into development of the Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and related plans to review the regional architecture.

Areas for action

The review team found four common areas for action across the findings and recommendations. These areas for action provide practical and immediate steps for implementation. They also take into account the need to not reinvent the wheel or create parallel systems or processes. Hence the focus on using existing regional architecture and strengthened national mechanisms, alongside potential future changes mentioned during the review, where possible and appropriate.

The four areas for suggested action are: 1. Regional architecture; 2. Accountability and Reporting 3. Capacity and 4. A Revitalised Declaration. The areas for action are summarised below, with further detail in Annex 7 for the details.

Table 1   Areas for Action

Regional Architecture	Establish a governance mechanism for the PLGED through the Forum Officials Committee process for endorsement by Leaders.

	Appoint a Gender Equality Commissioner for the Pacific and establish an office to support this role and its functions.
Accountability and Reporting	Establish gender equality as a standing item on the Leaders' Meeting Agenda.
	Develop a PLGED Report Card to enable stakeholders and political leaders to monitor progress in priority areas.
	Implement the Pacific Roadmap for Gender Statistics for better production and use of gender statistics in the Pacific.
	Increase support for Pacific led research on the causes and impacts of gender inequality to inform policy and programmes aimed at empowering women.
Capacity	Extend the work of the Gender Coordination Group to map needs and gaps in gender technical expertise in the region.
	Build on existing efforts to strengthen gender technical expertise working with governments, CROP agencies, development partners, civil society, academic and training institutes.
	Develop a Pacific Gender Network of experts to provide Pacific led intelligence, learning and solutions to addressing gender equality and use this network to support the role and office of the Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner and to inform regional and national discussions and policy decisions on progressing gender equality.
A revitalised Declaration	The decision to update and revise the PLGED should be undertaken through a process of wide consultation with countries and other regional stakeholders.
	The revisions should address the changes to the PLGED recommended as a result of this review.

For the PLGED to be effective individuals and organisations must value and see the importance of gender equality in the region's quest for sustainable development, and be willing to share and demonstrate that value through their policies, decision-making, activities, attitudes and behaviour. In conclusion, gender equality and the PLGED will help to determine the kind of future that we leave for the next generation.

1. Introduction

Chapter 1 (Introduction) provides background information on the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration and the context in which it operates. Chapter 2 (Methodology) details the key review questions and approach which guided the review. Chapter 3 (Findings) examines each of the review themes in line with the Terms of Reference, in turn providing an overview of the theme, presenting findings and proposing recommendations. Chapter 4 (Conclusions) contains concluding remarks.

1.1. Background

The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) was announced at the *43rd Pacific Islands Forum* in August 2012 in Rarotonga, as a result of concerns Pacific Leaders had that overall progress in the region towards achieving gender equality was slow. The PLGED (refer Annex 1) renewed commitment to lifting the status of women in the Pacific and empowering them to be active participants in economic, political and social life.

To progress these commitments, Leaders committed to implement specific national policy actions to progress gender equality in the areas of *gender responsive government programs and policies, decision making, economic empowerment, ending violence against women* and *health and education*.

Progress on the PLGED is currently reported under the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development reporting mechanism. The 2018 Pacific Sustainable Development and 2020 Biennial Reports provide extensive updates on PLGED implementation and recommendations to progress actions. The *Beijing +25: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Islands countries and territories* report[15] also outlines progress on gender equality in the region. These reports highlight that all countries have adopted gender policies and strategies and while many are engaged in regional and global reporting processes, implementation continues to be limited and resources inadequate.

Box 1	What do we mean by gender equality?

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development (OSAGI 2001).

Gender equality means that women and men of all ages, in all their diversity, have equal rights in all areas of life:

- the right to be safe;

- the right to be respected;

- the right to earn incomes;

- the right to express their views and be heard;

- the right to express their gender identity;

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[15] The 2020 Biennial Report used this report as the key reference for reporting on the PLGED.

- the right to choose how many children they have;

- the right to choose their partner;

- the right to have safe and accessible services and infrastructure for women and men differently abled;

- the right to participate in decision-making and occupy leadership positions;

- the right to decide for themselves the future they want.

<div align="right">Pacific Platform for Action, 2018</div>

1.2. Context

There is great diversity across countries in the Pacific Islands region, from Papua New Guinea (PNG) which is the largest country in the group with a population of 9 million, to Tuvalu and Nauru, with estimated populations of approximately 11,000 each and Niue with less than 2000 people. Kiribati is one of the most remote and geographically-dispersed countries in the world, consisting of 33 coral atolls spread over 3.5 million square kilometres of ocean. High population growth is driving a rapid increase in the proportion of young people in the region, with half the population under 23. This 'youth bulge' will have a major impact on every area of development in the region in the coming decades.

As remote island economies, Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs), with the exception of PNG, share similar challenges and opportunities. They are small in size with limited natural resources, narrow-based economies, large distances from major markets, and vulnerable to external shocks, such as COVID-19, all of which can affect economic growth, increase poverty and have often led to a high degree of economic volatility.

The remoteness of many of the PICTs has provided some initial protection from the global COVID-19 pandemic. Most were quick to limit international arrivals and quarantine local cases. However, heavy reliance on tourism and imports in several countries, means that the economic impacts are severe and expected to increase.

PICTs are now considering ways to revive economic activity and production, with many facing the grim prospect of recession and the flow on effects this has on their capacity to address the wellbeing and resilience of their populations.

To support these efforts regionally, Forum Economic Ministers called for a socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 in the Pacific in 2020. The assessment[16] seeks to better understand the social dimensions of its impacts on the region; address vulnerability, inequality and social exclusion; ensure human rights, social inclusion, social support and resilience are included in any response; build resilience to external shocks that account for diverse cultural contexts and needs; and strengthen regional coordination to achieve sustainable recovery. The assessment brings together data and information illustrating the impact of the pandemic under five themes: Health and wellbeing; Integrated pathways for economic recovery; Adaptive learning and employment pathways; Inclusive social protection systems; and Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Systems for the region.

In recognising the severe and disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls, the assessment highlights issues of increasing economic insecurity for women both in the formal and informal economy due to lost or reduced employment, including for those women who are already in low paid or insecure employment, market closures, and the down turn in tourism affecting those in the hospitality sector and private income generating activities connected to this sector. It also highlights the impact on women who do not have access to unemployment benefits or cannot receive assistance through formal social protections systems, rising levels of gender-based violence and the

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[16] PIFS, (2021). Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in the Pacific region, CROP Taskforce.

continued inability to access health, education, justice, police and other social services.[17] It recognizes the role of women as the majority of front-line workers in health systems in the region and their double burden of unpaid care work. The assessment acknowledges the need for including women as participants and leaders in all aspects of the COVID-19 recovery and response. While making policy recommendations for each of the thematic focus areas of the assessment, a more thorough gender analysis of the issues identified across all of the areas is needed to ensure a substantive gender responsive COVID-19 response in the region. (Refer Annex 8).

In addition to the impacts of COVID-19, the region experiences high vulnerability to climate change and disasters triggered by natural hazards – such as cyclones affecting Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Vanuatu; droughts in PNG; occasional earthquakes particularly in the Solomon Islands and PNG; and water shortages facing the coral atolls. The region has the highest median of all continents in the World Risk Index,[18] with five Pacific countries in the top 15 ranked for disaster risk.[19]

1.2.1. Poverty, hardship and inequality

In many Pacific Island contexts, hardship and vulnerability are more commonly discussed than poverty. Hardship accounts for the multidimensional nature of poverty by incorporating notions of access to basic services; lack of opportunity to fully be part of socio-economic community life; and not meeting customary obligations due to a lack of resources.[20] Pacific Island populations and governments tend not to self-identify as poor, particularly because of the richness of the culture, natural environment and widely held beliefs in the strength of kinship-based systems that provide a mesh of support. Nevertheless, around a quarter of the population in PNG and Solomon Islands, and 14 per cent of the population in Vanuatu, lived in extreme poverty prior to the COVID-19 crisis (measured as the number of people living below USD1.90 level identified in the 2011 purchasing power parity formula).[21] The challenge of successive covariate shocks, and in some cases the social exclusion and disadvantage of particular groups, means that increasingly specific language on poverty is included in national and regional agendas. These include persons living with disabilities, the elderly, female-headed households, persons living in informal settlements and/or in remote areas and in some countries, specific indigenous groups and people with diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC). The region's first quadrennial report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) estimates that one in four Pacific Islanders are likely to be living below their respective national basic-needs poverty lines.[22] The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*[23] identifies 'stubborn levels of poverty and rising inequalities' as key challenges. Information and data on gender and poverty, and gender and inequality are patchy with no figures on the number of women living in poverty in the Pacific.[24]

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[17] Ibid. p. 28

[18] This is a composite index based on an assessment of exposure, vulnerability, susceptibility, lacking of coping capacities and lack of adaptive capacities. World Risk Report (2020), Bundnis Entwicklung Hilft, The Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict.

[19] Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

[20] Abbott D and Pollard S (2004) Hardship and Poverty in the Pacific: Strengthening Poverty Analysis and Strategies in the Pacific. Manila: ADB.

[21]Hoy C (2020). Poverty and the pandemic in the Pacific. DevPolicy Blog, 12 June.

[22] PIFS, (2018). First Quadrennial 2018 Pacific Sustainable Development Report, PIFS.

[23] PIFS. (2020). 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. PIF (webpage).

[24] SPC, (2021). Beijing +25: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in the Pacific Islands countries and territories, SPC.

Inequality is high, is increasing in the region as a whole (particularly in the more populous countries), and has been further exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19.[25] Inequality is driven by rural - urban differences, impacts of climate change, and increasing dependence on the cash economy. Corruption and the ineffectiveness of government systems are among other interconnected challenges that contribute to inequality.[26] Unemployment, particularly among women and young people, is a major concern. Pacific island countries have committed to reducing inequalities focusing on excluded groups as part of the SDG Agenda 2030 'that no one will be left behind'.[27] High and persistent income and wealth inequalities stifle economic growth and hinder progress towards further reductions in poverty. The economic cost of ignoring income inequality is large and significant as is the cost of ignoring gender inequality. A growing number of studies suggests that countries with high income inequality experience both lower economic growth and a reduced effectiveness of economic growth lifting people out of poverty.[28]

1.2.2. Progressing gender equality leading up to and beyond the PLGED

Two years before Forum Leaders committed to the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, the world celebrated the 15th anniversary of the ground-breaking Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA) adopted at the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.[29] The BPA's 12 Critical Areas of Concern (Box 2) were recognised by the world as crucial for governments, civil society, development partners and other stakeholders to focus on in order to eliminate discrimination against women and achieve gender equality. In each Critical Area, the problem was diagnosed, strategic objectives proposed and concrete actions agreed for implementation by various actors. Several Pacific governments participated in intergovernmental Ministerial processes to discuss regional progress in implementing the BPA convened by the United Nations in Bangkok, Thailand in 2009 and later in New York at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010.

Box 2   Beijing Platform for Action 12 Critical Areas of Concern
A   The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
B   Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training
C   Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services
D   Violence against women
E   The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
F   Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
G   Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
H   Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
I   Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women

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[25] Furman J (2020). 'Protecting people now, helping the economy rebound later' and Odendahl C (2020). 'Bold policies needed to counter the coronavirus recession' in R Baldwin (ed.), *Mitigating the COVID Economic Crisis: Act Fast and Do Whatever It Takes*. London: Centre for Economic Policy Research.

[26] UNDP (2019) *Desk Review on Social Protection.*

[27] Samman E, Roche J, and Sarwar M (2021). 'Leave no one behind' – five years into Agenda 2030: guidelines for turning the concept into action.

[28] UNESCAP (2018) *Inequality in Asia and the Pacific in the Era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

[29] The BPA is a comprehensive and transformative framework for action to move humanity forward through the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls who, despite making up half of the world's population and being key to our collective political, social, economic, environmental and cultural security and prosperity, still suffer countless destructive forms of discrimination the world over.

Guided by the BPA review instrument and other relevant regional and international frameworks such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Revised Pacific Platform for Action 2005-2015[30], the *Beijing +15: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Pacific Island countries and territories[31]* provides a Pacific picture of the status of implementation of the BPA at national and regional levels just over a decade ago, prior to PLGED endorsement. The report aimed to increase understanding at regional and national level of what is needed to move gender equality forward through key areas of action as well as being a resource for governments., civil society, development partners and Pacific Island women and men to better understand and navigate the journey ahead in achieving gender equality in the Pacific.

The report identified high rates of gender-based violence, low proportions of women at all levels of decision making, especially at high levels of policy and decision-making, significant under-representation of women in the formal economy, unaddressed gender dimensions of climate change, natural disasters, food security and renewable energy, inequitable access to clean water and sanitation and the increasing feminisation of poverty, as major and persistent gender issues in the Pacific Island region. In some countries and territories, there were extremely high rates of teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality and low rates of access to modern forms of contraception and sexual and reproductive health services and information, whereas in others, significant gains had been made in these areas. In relation to education, women's roles remained highly stereotyped. At the same time, with a few key exceptions, little sex discrimination remained in the region overall in terms of access to primary and secondary education, although women were under represented in tertiary education. The quality and content of education were identified as areas that needed more analysis. Most national legal systems remained highly discriminatory against women, with few employment protections in place for women, very little legislation on violence against women, differing minimum ages of marriage for males and females, and constitutionally protected customary laws and practices that often disadvantage women in areas such as land and housing rights, family law and political and community leadership.

Prior to 2012, Pacific Forum Leaders made several statements that reflected a growing recognition of gender issues and which show the influence of feminist activists:

- in 2007, that good governance could be strengthened with wider participation, particularly by women, in decision-making processes and institutions, and in particular parliamentary processes;
- in 2009, that gender based-violence was pervasive across the Pacific and demanded attention at all levels, national and regional; and
- in 2011, the recognition of the importance of gender equality and agreement by Leaders to intensity efforts to promote women's equal role in decision-making at all levels, to continue to advocate for women's leadership and empowerment of women as leaders.

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[30] In the lead up to the Beijing Conference, the Pacific Islands region adopted the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA, 1994). Its purpose was to identify regional issues and priorities within the BPA Critical Areas and to put them into a local context. The framework was subsequently reviewed and a Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005-2015 was endorsed in 2004.

[31]SPC, (2010). *Beijing +15: Review of the progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories,* SPC.

Alongside these developments was the discernible growth in Pacific women's understanding of their human rights and in building advocacy and movements around these rights, networking and the use of electronic networks to link Pacific women into the regional and global women's movement.

In summary, 10 years after Beijing, the Pacific had made progress in some thematic and technical areas and there were some good examples for the region to learn from and emulate. However, the main message at the time was *that gender equality needs to be deeply rooted in the Pacific, particularly through fundamental structural and institutional changes, which allow for accelerated pace of change and sustainable results. The changes must transcend sectors, and gender-integrated systems and architecture must be in place both nationally and at regional level – to ensure a multi-sectoral approach.*[32]

A decade later, little has changed. The Pacific region has seen minimal progress in reducing women's poverty and achieving greater gender equality.[33] The most gains have been in the areas of ending violence against women and in development of gender responsive policies and programmes supported by some improvements in research, data and statistics on gender equality. All Pacific governments have established national machineries to promote gender equality and are making commitments to integrate gender across sectors through institutional mechanisms.   These commitments are linked to changes in legislation and policy that require central and line ministries to implement gender responsive development. However, gaps in accountability mechanisms, and limited technical capacity to do gender analysis and prepare gender responsive budgets continue to slow progress. While the region still has the highest 12-month prevalence rate of intimate partner violence (IPV) globally,[34] there is growing awareness of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as both a symptom and a driver of gender inequality. This is reflected in policies, legislation, increasing regional coordination and development of integrated service protocols which are gradually improving services for survivors. There is also recognition by governments and development partners that eliminating violence against women and girls (EVAWG) requires changing social norms and entrenched gender power dynamics. This is starting to be addressed through a focus on prevention working with and through community, faith-based, civil society, private sector and government initiatives that involve both men, women, their families, and business coalitions and employers.

With a regional average of just 7% women parliamentarians, the voice of women in the parliaments of the Pacific is the lowest globally. As at October 2021, three of the four countries (out of 192 countries) that have no women in national parliament, are in the Pacific—the Federated States of Micronesia, PNG and Vanuatu.[35]

At all levels and across all countries gender power dynamics disadvantage women as decision-makers. This is tempered by individual relations and competencies, and while there are exceptions, socio-cultural norms see men in the Pacific as the 'natural spokespeople' for families, communities and governments. Increasing women's participation in decision-making is progressing at community and local government levels, in the public service and in civil society organisations. But at the national political level women still hold few seats and the use of temporary special measures is limited.

Women in the region are over-represented in informal, intermittent home-based income generation, subsistence food production and low wage and low skilled employment. As such they are negatively affected by high food prices, inflation and environmental degradation. They are often subject to economic deprivation or neglect by their partners, including having limited access to their own and

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[32] Ibid. p. 5.
[33] SPC (2021). *Pacific Beijing +25: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories. Summary Report,* SPC.
[34] Up to 40 percent of women aged 15-49 reporting having experienced IPV (based on data from six countries, 11 percent population coverage). UN Women (2018) *Turning promises into action- Gender equality in the 2030 agenda - Oceania Fact Sheet*.
[35] Retrieved from https://data.ipu.org on 31 October 2021.

family incomes. Men's control of assets, with the exclusion of women, also undermines women's equal economic participation.[36] These factors also make women in the region particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19, which has exacerbated the inequity of their disproportionate predominance in the care economy.

In summarising progress and challenges to implementation 25 years after Beijing, and eight years after Pacific Leaders endorsed the PLGED, SPC[37] states *"The picture that emerges is that despite the raft of commitments and evident advances in some areas and by some Pacific Island Forum Member States, progress in achieving gender equality in the region has been slowed by structural and underlying social, cultural and economic barriers. These include harmful social norms and exclusionary and discriminatory practices; pursuit of an economic growth model that undermines ordinary people's livelihoods; gender equality not being systematically integrated into legal and policy frameworks; limited resources for addressing gender inequality issues combined with limited capacity within governments to develop and implement gender-responsive policies and programmes; and finally weak leadership in terms of mercurial political will to address gender equality beyond rhetoric: <u>actions do not necessarily follow from words</u>*.

1.2.3. Regional commitments, architecture and connections with progressing gender equality

PICTs have committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs which include a specific focus on gender equality. Goal 5, *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,* and its targets are consistent with the CEDAW[38], the BPA and the current version of the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA). [39]

In 2017 the Pacific Island Forum endorsed the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development (PRSD), including regional targets and indicators for monitoring progress against the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs within the context of national plans and priorities, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (2014), and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (2014). It was developed by the Pacific SDG Taskforce through an open, consultative and country-driven process, and is premised on the underlying principle of *leaving no one behind*. These are the three policy platforms that currently shape Pacific conversations, prioritisation and accountability for sustainable development. The PRSD integrates other regional commitments to actions including the Boe Declaration on Regional Security,[40] Kainaki II Declaration on Climate Change, Pacific Framework for Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016), and Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (2012).

Transboundary issues identified for regional monitoring in the PRSD include: climate change including disaster risk management; oceans including integrated ocean management; non-communicable diseases and cervical cancer; improving connectivity; empowering women and girls and persons living with disabilities; poverty reduction and reducing inequality; and improving the quality of education.[41] Some of these issues are monitored and reported on through regional sectoral frameworks and ministerial meetings. They include, the Forum Education Ministers on the Pacific Regional Education

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[36] World Bank (2016) *Systematic Country Diagnostic for Eight Small Pacific Island Countries: Priorities for Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity*. Report No. 102803-EAP. Washington DC: World Bank.

[37] SPC, (2021). *Beijing +25: Review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in the Pacific Islands countries and territories, SPC.*

[38] IPPF, (2016.) Sustainable Development Goals and human rights – An introduction to SRHR advocates, IPPF, UK. https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/2016-11/SDG%2BHR_facts.pdf

[39] SPC, (2017). Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018-2030.

[40] The Boe Declaration on Regional Security was adopted by PIF members in Nauru in September 2018, and recognises an expanded concept of security including human, cyber and environmental security, and frames regional responses to emerging security issues.

[41] PIFS, (2017). Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable, Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Taskforce, PIFS.

Framework 2018-2030: Moving Towards Education 2030; and Pacific Regional Fisheries Ministers Meetings on the fisheries and the marine sector where the Coastal Fisheries Report Card is presented to Ministers.

The equivalent meeting for gender equality is the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, followed by the Pacific Ministers for Women meeting to discuss progress on issues in the PPA. Over the years, neither the outcomes of these meetings nor the outcomes of international intergovernmental processes such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) have had visibility at Pacific Leaders or other Ministerial meetings (such as the Forum Economic Ministers (FEMM) and Forum Foreign Ministers Meetings (FFMM)). A planned Pacific Women Leaders meeting (set to commence in 2022) should help get these issues discussed and actioned at the level of Pacific Leaders and senior ministers.

Commencing in 2018, and led by the PIFS, the region is tasked with producing a four-yearly (quadrennial) report on sustainable development which consolidates reporting against these three main regional policy platforms. This report is presented to Forum Leaders for consideration and endorsement. PLGED reporting is included as a separate chapter in this report. When the PRSD was endorsed, it was agreed that an implementation strategy would be developed and updated in 2019. This agreement seems to have been overshadowed by the focus on the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent - yet another renewed commitment made by Leaders to work together to develop long-term approaches to critical challenges such as climate change, sustainable development and security in the Pacific.[42] Efforts to address gender inequality must be at the centre of this new strategy.

There are nine Pacific regional institutions that come together under the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP).[43] They have diverse mandates ranging from social to economic and political to environmental issues spanning levels of service provision from grass roots education to legislative support international policy commitments. CROP agencies work with a broad range of people from men, women, youth and children in rural communities, local governments, government and non-government institutions right up to Pacific Islands heads of state. These realities place the CROP in an excellent position to recognise gender inequality as a critical development constraint and demonstrate leadership in the area of gender mainstreaming. CROP as a council with broad disciplinary, geographic and political reach is ideally placed to model change, build capacity and influence member governments to address this issue in a more holistic manner using multi-disciplinary and integrated approaches. At the present time, leadership, commitment and capacity of CROP agencies to addressing gender inequality across all aspects of their work is limited with PIFS, SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) leading these efforts. Just as governments are called on to demonstrate political will, gender fair and responsive organisational culture and policies, accountability and responsibility, technical capacity and adequate human and financial resources to address gender mainstreaming, so too must CROP agencies. PIFS role in respect of policy advice, coordination and ensuring implementation of Forum leaders' commitments and decisions, including the PLGED, in close partnership with the other regional organisations, is essential.

1.2.4. The centrality of gender equality as a regional development outcome

It is critical to understand that the costs of not mainstreaming gender into development are deceptively high. Gender inequality perpetuates poverty and inequality, environmental degradation and disaster risk, weak governance, slow economic growth and investment climate, sexual and gender-based violence, the prevalence of non-communicable diseases and reduced economic activity. In short, gender inequality is ignored at a very real cost to the region. Global evidence confirms that investing in women will improve livelihoods and create more open and productive economies.[44] It also shows that gender inequality slows economic progress and is linked to higher levels of poverty and

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[42] https://www.forumsec.org/2050strategy/. PIFS website.
[43] https://www.forumsec.org/council-of-regional-organisations-of-the-pacific/ PIFS website.
[44] IMF (2018). Pursuing Women's Economic Empowerment, Policy Paper.

hardship. More recently, studies project substantial economic losses both globally and to individual countries that have been caused by the fact that women and other socially disadvantaged sections of society have suffered the most during the COVID-19 pandemic.[45] The status of the region going back to 2012 and as portrayed in the 2018 and 2020 reports on sustainable development in the Pacific is one of growing economic, ecological, social and political challenges. Recognising the centrality of gender equality to overcoming these challenges and taking the necessary action to achieve this will be critical in realizing the commitments of Leaders as expressed in the PLGED, in Agenda 2030, and also in the achieving the emerging vision of a Blue Pacific Continent.

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[45] UNOCHA (2021). Global Humanitarian Overview 2021; ILO (2021). ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. 7th edition. Update estimates and analysis.; World Bank Blogs (2021). How is COVID-19 affecting women's employment? Evidence from World Bank's Gender Innovation Labs; McKinsey Global Institute (2020). COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects.

2. Review Methodology

2.1. Purpose of the review

The purpose of this review is to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the PLGED for Members to progress gender equality in our region.

In announcing the review in February 2021, the former Pacific Island Forum Secretariat Secretary General, Dame Meg Taylor, referred to the review as an opportunity to take stock of commitments, determine what has worked and what has not worked well, in order to refocus national and regional efforts and programmes.

The review seeks to support the Pacific to take stronger action and accelerate efforts to address gender inequalities, explore options to strengthen regional consensus in support of national efforts to address gender inequality and provide a platform for prioritising regional cooperation efforts.

The review was asked to consider the following three themes through the review process:

> *Theme 1: Assess coordination efforts by Members and partners to implement the PLGED*
>
> *Theme 2: Assess action undertaken under the PLGED including progressing the recommendations made in reporting*
>
> *Theme 3: Identify ways in which regional gender policy frameworks can better complement each other through coordination and harmonisation approaches.*

The review examined issues of PLGED ownership and political will to follow through on commitments, including responding to new and emerging regional gender equality issues, assessing progress in implementing recommendations from PLGED reports, and guiding actions going forward including identifying opportunities for strengthened coordination and harmonised approaches to both enhancing progress and reporting. The scope of the review did not include development of the next iteration of the PLGED.

2.2. Audience

The review has a broad intended audience, including Leaders, Ministers, the Forum Officials Committee (FOC) sub-committee on SDGs, senior decision makers within CROP agencies and development partners and civil society. The review will be used to inform the 2022 Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report and decision-making on the next iteration of the PLGED.

2.3. Review questions

The abovementioned three review themes were examined with a focus on: governance, relevance, effectiveness and impact, and sustainability. Ten review questions guided the review process. The review framework in Annex 3 provides the detail around the line of questioning and illustrates how these areas can address multiple themes.

Review Questions and Guiding Questions
Governance

1. Is there political will to progress the priorities of the PLGED at regional and national level?
    • To what extent does the PLGED influence strategic direction setting and budgeting at regional and national level as well as CROP agencies?
    • Given that the PLGED does not have a direct governance mechanism, what are possible options for oversight and how can they be strengthened?
    • How has the PLGED impacted national decision-making to support gender equality?

Relevance

Review Questions and Guiding Questions
2. Do the priority areas of the PLGED remain relevant to the region?
3. Is there alignment to other regional gender frameworks and policies? • What is the extent of ownership of the PLGED by Members, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector?
Effectiveness and Impact
4. What actions have been taken to implement PLGED priority areas and recommendations?
5. What has been the impact from implementing PLGED priority areas?
6. What are some of the challenges that hinder effective implementation and impact?
7. What is the extent to which the PLGED has influenced programming decisions by development partners and supported more effective and targeted funding to the region?
8. To what extent has PLGED strengthened coordination, consultation and harmonised approaches to supporting gender equality in the region? • What progress has been made under each of the six priority areas? • How is research data and analysis shared and used as a policy tool? • Do current reporting mechanisms adequately reflect PLGED progress? • Are resources adequate to ensure effective implementation? • Is there sufficient collaboration at regional and national levels to ensure complementary gender equality efforts, and reduce any duplication?
Sustainability
9. What is needed for sustainability of actions and gains under PLGED priority areas? • Are sustainable funding sources available to ensure long-term implementation of the PLGED? • Are actions embedded into regional and national mechanisms and processes? • What is the level of ownership - at national level, within CROP agencies, other key stakeholders including CSOs? • How can coordination and consultation approaches be improved?
COVID-19: Secondary Review Question
10. What effect has COVID-19 had on the relevance and effectiveness of the PLGED? • What is the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls and how can this, and similar events in the future, influence the implementation of the PLGED?

2.4. Approach

The review used a mixed methods methodology, with qualitative data collected during consultations supplemented with qualitative and quantitative data from existing sources (see list of documents in Annex 6).

The review process included: review planning with PIFS, culminating in a review plan; a document review; data collection, including online individual and group consultations, and an online survey to gather responses from key stakeholders; analysis of qualitative data collected during consultations, and quantitative data from existing sources; presentation of a briefing note to the PLGED Review Technical Reference Group; testing out recommendations (via focus group discussions) the PLGED Review Technical Reference Group and selected stakeholders; and reporting writing. Annex 3 further details the review methodology. A list of stakeholders consulted is at Annex 4.

2.5. Limitations

In person interviews were not possible due to travel restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. As such, interviews were conducted by distance (phone or video conferencing and/or email exchanges). To mitigate challenges with collecting data by distance, the review team offered multiple platform options for stakeholders to participated in discussions, including online and mobile phone options.

The review team was constrained by the availability of PIF Members to participate in the review. At the time of writing this report, the review team had not been able to consult with the majority of Pacific Island Forum members nor any Pacific Island Forum Leaders.

3. Key findings, supporting evidence and recommendations

This section outlines the key findings, supporting evidence and recommendations under each of the review themes: governance, relevance, effectiveness and impact, collaboration and sustainability. Several of the findings and recommendations intersect and are similar, demonstrating both the importance and the inter-connectedness of these issues.

3.1. Governance

In examining governance in relation to the PLGED, the review team considered: i) political will to progress the priorities of the PLGED at both national and regional level; ii) the extent to which the PLGED has influenced strategic direction setting and budgeting at regional and national level, including how it has impacted national decision making to support gender equality; and iii) what regional systems and processes are in place to ensure improved ownership and governance of the PLGED.

3.1.1. Governance findings

- **Weak ownership and low visibility are problematic.** Ownership of the PLGED by Leaders, Governments, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector is weak despite these stakeholders indicating they value the PLGED as a regional political commitment.
- **The PLGED is being successfully used as a policy lever.** There are isolated examples of the value of the PLGED as a regional instrument. For example, DFAT used it to launch the gender equality initiative in 2012.[46] The Declaration was also used by civil society organisations to get the attention of Leaders on the issues of SGBV and Women, Peace and Security in (2012) resulting in their firm placement on the regional development agenda. Subsequently, many countries developed legislative reforms, policies and national plans on EVAWG.

> Governance can be defined as the system by which entities are directed and controlled. It is concerned with structure and processes for decision-making, accountability, control and behaviour at the highest level of an entity. Governance influences how an organization's objectives are set and achieved, how risk is monitored and addressed and how performance is optimised. It is a system and a process, not a single activity and therefore successful implementation of a good governance strategy requires a systematic approach that incorporates strategic planning, risk management and performance management. Like culture, governance is a core component of the unique characteristics of a successful organization. Governance also provides a legitimate approach to managing the distribution and use of power in any organization.
>
> *Source: Governance Today*

- **The PLGED is not used to track gender equality commitments** on a regular basis at either national or regional level. Reports reflecting country-level data were produced in 2013 and 2014. Since 2018 reporting on the PLGED is included in biennial Pacific sustainable development reports. There is little evidence that these reports are used by countries to have meaningful discussion on the progress of gender equality at national level.
- **Little influence on national decision making.** All PICTs have gender equality policies, which align with international and regional frameworks for gender equality (such as CEDAW, the BPA and the PPA). However, the PLGED appears to have had little to no impact on national decision making, with PICTs that participated in the review not crediting the PLGED with influencing national policies on gender equality, except in the area of EVAWG.
- **Limited influence on budgets.** The review team notes the lack of data on budget allocations by PICTs governments for gender related activities; and is not aware of any plans to collect

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[46] This was a pledge for AUD320m over 10 years through the *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* program which provided support for addressing gender equality at bilateral and regional level.

this data for Pacific SDG reporting. Without disaggregated data to show who receives the services of line ministries or departments it is difficult to gauge whether men and women are being treated equally. It is worth noting that climate and disaster budget tracking of funding flows and investments is underway in some countries. Lessons from this experience may be useful for PLGED.

- **Uncertain accountability.** In comparison with international gender equality commitments such as CEDAW and the BPA, which have clear accountability frameworks, stakeholders reported confusion about who was responsible for coordinating implementation and monitoring of the PLGED. In addition, they did not seem to connect the PLGED with other gender equality frameworks.

- **Lack of a clear leadership framework.** At present, there is limited articulation of what a PLGED governance mechanism would look like including its role, composition and how it would operate. The review explored this in detail with stakeholders during the consultations, including in a focus group discussion. The firm view is that a governance mechanism for the PLGED is best established within the existing Forum regional architecture. It should take the form of a sub-committee or taskforce of the Forum Officials Committee (FOC) made up of country, development partner and other stakeholder representatives. This would mean that it has direct links with Ministerial and Leaders Meeting agenda setting, discussion and decision-making processes. This would also enable connections with the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, the Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting and the planned annual Pacific Women Leaders Meeting.

- **Models exist for improved PLGED governance.** The CROP Gender Working Group (1998); the High-Level Reference Group on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (2009) and the Pacific Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (2011) are examples of mechanisms that were established in the past to improve governance and accountability for gender equality commitments. However, all of these mechanisms, which were established through PIFS, are inactive. It is unclear whether this is due to gaps in resourcing, changing mandates, changing PIF architecture and unclear roles and responsibilities. The establishment of a high-level position (similar to that of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner) and office resourced for the long term would greatly assist the efforts needed to build back high-level commitment, ownership, action and accountability for gender equality in the region. This would also serve to ensure that the PLGED issues remain on Leaders' meeting agendas as well as be regularly discussed as part of other regional priorities.

- **Need for coordination.** Any future governance mechanism for the PLGED should take into account three planned developments in the area of gender equality in the region: (i) the planned annual Pacific Women Leaders' meeting; (ii) the establishment of an Eminent Pacific Woman position within the senior management team at SPC; and (iii) the upcoming coming review of the regional architecture as part of the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

3.1.2. Governance supporting evidence

Familiarity with and influence of the PLGED

The review consultations and survey responses found the highest levels of familiarity with the PLGED were among development partners, CROP agencies and civil society. However, within these stakeholder groups there was still considerable variability in awareness and understanding of the PLGED.

The majority of survey respondents noted the PLGED as being either extremely useful or very useful for advocating for donor funding (Figure 1). This is not surprising given the link between the PLGED and Australia's *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* program. Survey respondents also rated

the PLGED as being useful in raising the profile of gender equality as well as increasing collaboration and coordination. However, interviews with key stakeholders did not support these survey ratings, with most interviewees noting lack of coordination and collaboration as an issue.

The PLGED has proved less useful in influencing direction setting, and holding Pacific Leaders accountable for gender equality. The least use of the PLGED was in influencing national or sub-national budgets.

Figure 1   Usefulness of the PLGED
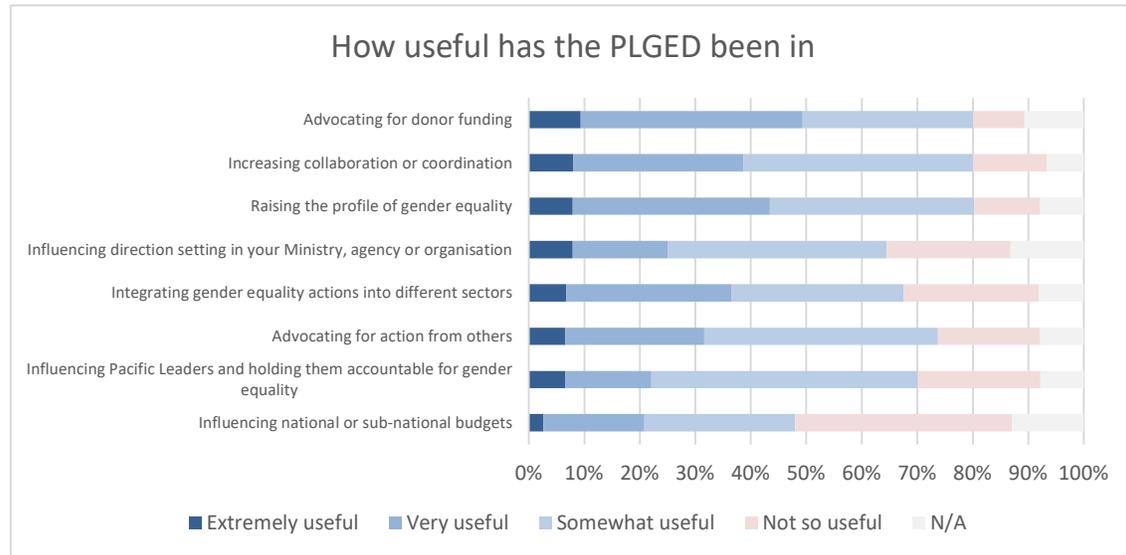
The review heard that in order to increase the usefulness of the PLGED, it needs to have: i) more visibility(embedded in national policy, disseminated within countries and referred to by Leaders); ii) increased technical capacity and resources mobilised (within and across countries); iii) coalitions supported to improve awareness and understanding of why gender equality is important; and, iv) accountability mechanisms that enable Leaders to showcase or demonstrate evidence of changes as a result in investing in gender equality. The review team has included consideration of these suggestions throughout the findings and recommendations in this report.

> *The government of a nation cannot be held accountable if the women of the country do not know or understand what their government leaders had committed themselves to, nor the nature of that commitment*

> Quote from survey respondent working for a regional non-state actor.

Survey respondents ranked CEDAW as the most influential regional or international commitment, followed closely by the SDGs. The PLGED was ranked as the least influential (Table 2). This data is indicative of the value and need for the PLGED to commit its signatories to report periodically to an agreed set of achievable targets, similar to the reporting and performance measures that are in place for CEDAW.

Table 2   Influence of the PLGED compared with other regional or international commitments

1 (Most influential)	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
2	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
3	Beijing Platform for Action

| 4 | Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (PPA) |
| 5 (Least influential) | Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) |

Budget allocations for gender equality

Most of the Beijing +25 national reports provided no information on budgets allocations for gender equality. The Pacific Beijing +25 review[47] notes that none of the national machineries for gender equality and women's empowerment have been engaged in tracking national or line ministry level allocations for gender equality initiatives. Further, budget allocations to national machineries were limited to support staff emoluments and operating costs. Programme work was most often dependent on donor funding. The 2018 (1st) Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report notes that budgets for national women's offices are less than 1 percent of national appropriations and most ministries do not make budget allocations to address gender issues. Similar findings are included in Pacific reviews of the BPA conducted in 2015 and 2010, as well as the review of the PPA conducted in 2017.[48] The report notes that the departments responsible for coordinating efforts on gender equality are critically under-resourced, receiving less than 0.5% of the total government budget. Not much has changed as despite recognition of the contribution of women-led organisations to advancing gender equality and women's human rights, they receive little financial support from their governments.

Ownership and governance of the PLGED

Through the PLGED, Leaders agreed that progress on the economic, political and social positions of women should be reported on at each Forum Leaders meeting. However, this has not occurred. The review explored the idea of the PLGED governance mechanism being supported by a Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner, much like the Pacific Ocean Commissioner established in 2010 under the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape (FPO). The FPO, endorsed by Leaders in 2010, called for the appointment of a Pacific Ocean Commissioner to act as a champion for the region providing necessary high-level representation and commitment urgently required to ensure dedicated advocacy and attention to ocean priorities, decisions and processes at national, regional and international levels. In 2011, the Secretary General of the PIFS was appointed as the first Pacific Ocean Commissioner. Technical and scientific support is also provided by the CEOs of relevant Pacific regional organisations, in particular SPC, the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC) was later established within PIFS to provide dedicated professional and technical support to the Commissioner. [49]

Other example mechanisms include UN Special Rapporteurs who work on behalf of regional and international organisations with specific mandates to investigate, monitor and recommend solutions to specific human rights problems. For example, the UN Human Rights Council appointed a Special Rapporteur on VAW, its causes and consequences[50]. Another example, is the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector in Victoria, Australia requiring defined entities to meet their obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020[51]. These roles are clearly defined and mandated in relation to legal agreements, require a specific level of expertise, in the case of the Special rapporteurs

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[47] SPC, (2021). Beijing+25: Review of the progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island countries and territories, SPC.

[48] SPC, (2017). Review of the Pacific Platform for Action for Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women.

[49] PIFS, (2015). Working Paper 12. Ocean issues and the office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, 9th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting, March 2015, Noumea, New Caledonia.

[50] https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/Mandate.aspx

[51] https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/

are unpaid, and have technical and organisational support mechanisms, drawn on from external sources or from within regional and international agencies.

The proposed office of the Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner should draw from these examples to develop a role that is fit for purpose for the Pacific. Ideally, it should be located within PIFS in order to garner political will and member buy-in. Suggestions that the position be outsourced by PIFS may be considered. However, the review team feels that outsourcing would continue the trend of downplaying or side-lining gender equality in the region's development pathways.

Three planned developments that may influence the governance mechanism for the PLGED in the future include:

i.   the PIF Women Leaders meeting which was endorsed by Forum Foreign Ministers in 2020 and by Leaders in 2021. The inaugural meeting is scheduled for 2022 and will take place on annual basis prior to the Forum Leaders Meeting. It is seen as a conduit for raising gender equality issues to the level of Leaders and an excellent mechanism for considering and following through on issues raised by Ministers for Women through the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women;

ii.   the establishment of an Eminent Pacific Woman position within the Senior Management Team of the SPC who will lead the organisation's internal gender program as well be the face of SPC's external gender related activities. A strengthened governance mechanism for the PLGED should align with these developments; and,

iii. the upcoming coming review of the regional architecture as part of the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

3.1.3. Governance recommendations

1.   Establish a governance mechanism for the PLGED, through FOC, comprising PIF members, development partners and other stakeholder representatives. The governance mechanism should ensure that the PLGED is firmly on the Leaders agenda and is regularly discussed and reported on in connection with other regional priorities, including gender equality priorities.

2.   Develop a PLGED communications strategy to improve visibility, knowledge and understanding of PLGED commitments in connection with other gender equality commitments such as the SDGs, BPA, PPA and CEDAW; and their relevance and potential contribution to sustainable development in the region.

3.   Embed PLGED commitments at the national level, including at all levels of government budget processes, in order to support ownership and progress action on gender equality.

4.   Establish the position and office of a Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner at PIFS to progress actions and accountability on the PLGED commitments at regional and national levels, in coordination with emerging initiatives being led by SPC and the planned Pacific Women Leaders Meeting

3.2. Relevance

The PLGED is one of a few regional policy frameworks on gender equality. Almost all PICTs have ratified CEDAW and are committed to the BPA and PPA. These frameworks highlight key areas for action to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women, men, girls and boys. While these frameworks complement each other, the PLGED is unique in its potential to be a bold, high level political commitment by Pacific Leaders to enhance the status of women in the region.

In addition to the PLGED there are many other regional frameworks on issues such as climate change, disaster risk and resilience, fisheries and ocean management, health and non-communicable diseases,

persons living with disability and education.[52] PICTs have also endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The PRSD is the region's plan to achieve these goals. The PLGED, is in effect, a commitment to ensure that all of these other regional development frameworks also include actions, targets and indicators to ensure underlying and related issues of gender inequality are addressed. Although, gender equality in itself may be a clear goal with clear, intrinsic value as demonstrated in SDG 5, a substantial body of research suggests that gender equality and the achievement of other development goals are inseparable.

In examining the issue of relevance, the review team discussed: i) whether the priority areas of the PLGED remain relevant to the region; ii) their alignment to other regional gender frameworks and policies; and as a result, iii) whether there was ownership of the PLGED by Members, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector.

3.2.1. Relevance findings

- **PLGED commitments remain relevant**. National policy actions which Leaders committed to in order to progress gender equality as stated in the PLGED remain relevant.
- **EVAWG progressed more than other areas.** Most advances have been in the area of ending violence against women and girls, with numerous countries enacting legislation and developing services such as crisis centres, counselling, and referral pathways. While continued advancement of EVAWG is critical, a concern raised is that the focus on EVAWG may have side-lined other issues, for example, women in decision-making and economic empowerment. However, this may be due to inadequate financial and technical resources to address all areas covered in PLGED; and the prioritising of EVAWG due to more global and regional data to support action in this area.
- **National development plans most influential.** National women's machineries expressed mixed views on the influence of the PLGED on their efforts to develop and implement gender responsive programmes and policies. They overwhelmingly referenced national development strategies and plans as well as CEDAW as being most influential. The lack of a PLGED implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation framework may also have contributed to this lack of influence.
- **Weak alignment with regional sectoral frameworks.** The PLGED commitments align with some sectoral regional development frameworks such as the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP)[53]. However, this alignment is not directly attributed to the PLGED. This may be due to a historical legacy as in 2012 the regional strategies were not activity linked or considered in totality. Further work is needed to examine these sectoral frameworks to gauge how gender equality is substantively addressed.
- **Limited understanding of the PLGED and gender equality.** Knowledge and understanding of the PLGED by Leaders, Governments, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector is limited. The majority of stakeholders consulted were not familiar with the PLGED commitments. This raises several issues, including: (i) the plethora of regional declarations, commitments and frameworks that have been developed since 2012 without adequate implementation resources; (ii) bureaucracy including lengthy processes of prioritisation, follow up, reporting and roles and responsibilities for undertaking these tasks at both regional and national level; (iii) gender balance in the decision-making spaces of these processes; (iv) limited understanding of gender equality and its underlying importance and relevance to

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[52] Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (2016), Pacific Regional Education Framework 2018-2030: Moving Towards Education 2030 (2018), The Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development (2018), The Pacific Framework for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (2007), Pacific Youth Development Framework (2015), Framework for Pacific Regionalism (2014).
[53] http://gsd.spc.int/frdp/

achieving sustainable development resulting it being downplayed as a regional development priority; and (v) the discomfort caused by discussing gender equality as it is seen by decision-makers as challenging patriarchy.

3.2.2. Relevance supporting evidence

Relevance of the PLGED priority areas

The majority of survey respondents rated the PLGED priority areas as remaining extremely relevant or very relevant (Figure 2). These ratings are confirmed by the individual and group consultations, with stakeholders readily agreeing the priority areas remain relevant.

Figure 2   Relevance of the PLGED priority areas
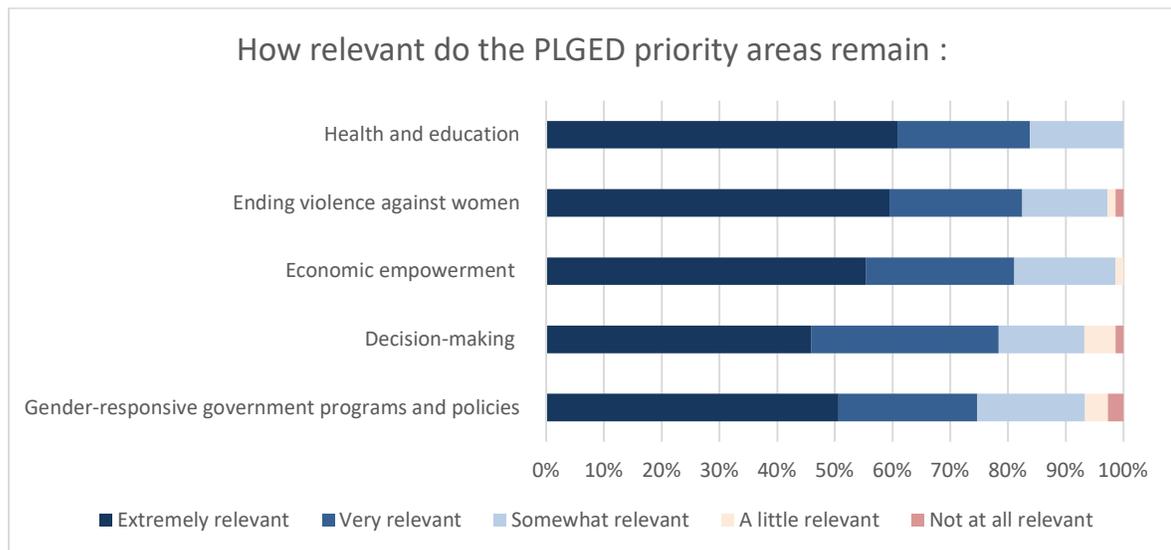
However, stakeholders pointed to notable absences and emerging areas that could be included in a future Declaration, including pandemics (especially COVID-19), climate change and environmental justice, intersectionality of people's overlapping identities and experiences, disaster risk response and resilient development, poverty and hardship, digital technology and literacy. The majority of stakeholders identified sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as being critical issues in relation to gender equality and health with growing interest in mental health.

Connection with regional gender and sectoral frameworks

Survey respondents noted little practical or visible demonstration of connections between the PLGED and other sectoral frameworks. This is despite a clear consensus among those consulted that mainstreaming gender equality within regional and national sectoral frameworks is imperative. In addition, the majority of respondents identified gender equality as being an equal (and sometimes higher) priority in comparison with other regional priorities. FRDP presents two opportunities for strengthened gender mainstreaming: (i) the midterm review scheduled in 2023; and (ii) through the Pacific Resilience Standards which stem from FRDP. It would be useful to pursue these opportunities, plan and resource activities to support gender mainstreaming across this framework and the relevant sectors.

Figure 3   Gender equality compared with other regional priorities

Gender equality compared with other regional priorities

Governance and Leadership
Health
Economic Development
Climate change and natural disasters
Regional security
COVID-19 response and economic recovery
Food security
Education
Ocean management and fisheries
Environmental conservation and management

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Gender equality is less of a priority   ■ Gender equality is an equal priority   ■ Gender equality is a higher priority

3.2.3. Relevance recommendations

5.   PIF Leaders renew their commitment to the PLGED so that it remains a relevant, high-level commitment to gender equality which:

-       reflects the current situation of the Pacific in 2021, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and regional strategies and frameworks that have been developed since 2012;[54]

-       has a clear purpose and governance mechanism, and clear implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting processes and responsibilities;

-       recognises the diversity of women's lived realities as reflected by age, disability, sexual orientation and where they reside, for example, women living in remote, rural and outer island areas, persons of diverse SOGIESC[55] and young women and girls, as well as the intersectionality of these identities.

-       recognises the critical role of civil society and the women's movement in progressing gender equality and includes them in all aspects of the PLGED.

-       uses language around gender transformative approaches to actively challenge harmful social norms; and recognises intersectionality as critical for the relevance and effectiveness of these approaches.

-       reflects emerging priorities such as pandemics (COVID-19), economic climate change and environmental justice, disaster risk response and resilient development, poverty and hardship,

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[54] The SDGs, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, 2014, Pacific Platform for Actin for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (2018-2030), Framework for Pacific Regionalism.
[55] Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression and Sexual Characteristics is now the preferred term when referring to the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI).

digital technology and literacy while, also ensuring that the PLGED is reflected in the regional frameworks that govern these areas

- in addition to retaining commitments to national policy actions, includes the issue of gender responsive budgeting in relation to gender responsive policies and programmes; unpaid care work, paid maternity leave, family leave and accessible and affordable child care to redress care imbalance and social protection in the area of women's economic empowerment; addresses sexual harassment in all forms, for example, cyber stalking and bullying etc.; strengthens language on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and includes mental health and disability in the area of women's health.

6. Ensure the governance mechanism (Refer Recommendation 1) strengthens ownership and increases visibility and accountability for the PLGED at both national and regional level in connection with other regional gender equality commitments and accountability processes.

7. Examine ways to build and supplement gender technical capacity in the region to support governments and regional organisations to ensure that gender equality issues are analysed and addressed at all levels, nationally, and in CROP operations and programmes. This could include regionally owned South-South cooperation modalities as well targeted support to address gender mainstreaming in sectoral frameworks. (Refer Recommendation 5.)

3.3. Effectiveness and impact

The PLGED was intended to bring new determination and invigorate commitment to lift the status of women in the Pacific and empower them to be active participants in economic, political and social life. Leaders committed to implementing specific national policy actions to progress gender equality in the areas of gender responsive government programmes and policies, decision making, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and health and education.

In examining the issues of effectiveness and impact of the PLGED, the review team discussed i) actions taken to implement the PLGED priority areas, ii) the progress made under each area, and the impacts, iii) challenges that hinder effective implementation and impact, iv) how research data and analysis was used as a policy tool, and v) whether current reporting mechanisms adequately reflect the PLGED progress.

3.3.1. Effectiveness and impact findings

Progress has occurred in some of the PLGED priority areas. However, as some of this progress was occurring prior to 2012, attribution to the PLGED is unclear. PICTs adopted the PPA, the first regional instrument to promote gender equality, in 1994 and many PICTs had ratified CEDAW before 2012.

Effectiveness is defined by the OECD-DAC as the extent to which an intervention achieved its objectives. In order to determine effectiveness, measurement and documentation of change is needed over time. Accountability, the obligation to take responsibility for one's commitments, is also key to effectiveness, as is the need to address the challenges that can compromise effectiveness. Impact is defined as the extent to which an intervention has generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under effectiveness.

Source: OECD-DAC

- **EVAWG progressed more than other areas**.
  There was most traction in the area of ending violence against women, with numerous countries enacting legislation and developing services such as crisis centres, counselling, and referral pathways. However, a concern raised with the review team was whether the focus on EVAWG has side-lined other issues, for example, economic empowerment of women and leadership. As mentioned earlier (Refer 3.2.1), this raises the issue of a lack of financial and

technical resources to address all of the areas under the PLGED combined with the need for more data to rationalise action. Clearly more work needs to be done in these areas in line with recommendations from Triennial meetings of Pacific Women, Women's Ministerial meetings and recent PLEGD reports.

- **National development plans most influential**. National women's machineries expressed mixed views on the influence of the PLGED on their efforts to develop and implement gender responsive programmes and policies. They overwhelmingly referenced national development strategies and plans as well as CEDAW as their main influence.

- **Under representation of women is still the biggest challenge**. Less and uneven progress was reported in the area of decision making. A major challenge is the continued under-representation of women in decision making and politics at national and sub-national level, and across different sectors. A Women of the Wave Network proposed by PIFS, SPC and PIDP and now endorsed by CROP Heads aims to address this issue in CROP. The network will support women employees of the nine CROP agencies in their work roles and leadership aspirations and expand their connections and career opportunities across CROP agencies. The review team understands that this is also a role that SPC's planned Pacific Eminent Woman position will have within the organisation. As they are both new initiatives, it will be important to see how they connect and together contribute to building women's leadership in the region.

- **Women's economic empowerment is a complex and ongoing area of work in the region.** It must be supported by all sectors and at all levels of government and the private sector. Recent efforts to engage rural women more actively in different levels of agricultural, aquacultural and handicraft value chains are showing positive results. The Pacific sees continuing challenges linked to access to collateral and credit and other financial services, however a number of collaborative development initiatives are improving financial literacy and inclusion.[56]

- **Improve gender outcomes in education and health.** The review team had difficulty assessing the effectiveness of the PLGED health and education commitments, due to information and time constraints. A close examination of regional and bilateral investments in these sectors by development partners is necessary to more accurately consider this issue.

- **Australia has been the largest contributor to implementation of PLGED priority areas**. The PLGED provided a launchpad for the Australian Government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (PWSPD) programme. Its investment of AUD320 million over ten years is the largest development partner investment in support of gender equality in the region. PWSPD is largely aligned to the PLGED although very few implementing partners understand or are aware of this connection. While some funding from PWSPD was provided at regional level to UN agencies working in support of sexual and reproductive health and rights, the programme did not have a strong focus on health and education due to the Australian Government's stand-alone health and education investments.

- **Resourcing remains a key challenge**. While the Australian Government's lead seems to have laid the foundation for other development partners to scale up gender equality commitments to the region, resourcing for the PLGED priority areas remains a key challenge to implementation. Furthermore, development partners do not necessarily connect support for gender equality to the PLGED but rather to their own organisational policies and commitments.

- **Donors are driving change**. In general, the policy environment for gender equality in the region is thought to have improved since 2012, with increased awareness of gender equality issues. However, gender issues are largely assumed to concern only women and the driver of

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[56] Refer Pacific Beijing +25 report.

change is often donors, who set specific requirements for the inclusion of gender equality in project concepts, design and reporting in order for funding to be approved.

- **Engage men in gender analysis and planning gender responsive initiatives.** There is a need to invest in capacity-building of all stakeholders, including men in decision-making roles, to better understand gender equality, to undertake gender analysis, and to implement gender mainstreaming. This would enable the provision of substantive gender technical advice and planning of gender responsive initiatives in whatever context needed.

- **More use of data and research needed in the policy area**. Better data and research are needed. Multiple stakeholders discussed the lack of a useful mechanism for reporting on progress in the PLGED priority areas. Issues raised included the need to address data gaps as well as packaging of data to support policy processes, for example, by identifying elements of good practice or gaps in action. Existing data is not being used in an analytical way and the production and availability of disaggregated data is an ongoing challenge[57]. There is a critical need for evidence-based research on barriers to women's economic empowerment and the impact of GBV on the private sector and the economy, among other issues. This will fill gaps in understanding and knowledge needed to address gender inequality. Family health and safety studies and GBV assessments conducted in PICTs were cited as examples of how Pacific led research using international standards and good practice has been used as a strong evidence-based platform for advocacy, policy development and legal reforms in support of EVAWG. Efforts should be made to connect with Pacific research initiatives at national and regional level being implemented through civil society organisations, academic institutions, and other partners as well as initiatives such as the TOKSAVE Pacific Gender Resource[58] which is an online portal that aims to make quality research on gender in the Pacific discoverable and accessible.

- **Factors that hinder the PLGED**. Effective implementation and impact are compromised by a number of key challenges, some of which are outside of the PLGED such as: i) restrictive bureaucratic processes; ii) international and regional commitments not being embedded at national level[59]; iii) a lack of political will resulting in gender equality not being prioritised; iv) a lack of accountability without a clear mechanism or process for reporting progress; and as highlighted earlier; vi) a lack of data, analysis and research and their use as a policy tool; vii) inadequate technical capacity, and viii) a lack of resources for gender mainstreaming. Inadequate technical and financial capacity is an issue both for small national women's machineries and gender units within organisations where it is exacerbated by staff's lack of authority to make decisions and affect change across organisational mandates.

- **National level models to support mainstreaming exist.** At regional level, the SPC through the Progressing Gender Equality in the Pacific project (PGEP) funded by PWSPD is supporting gender mainstreaming and gender statistics work across PICTs. Stocktakes of the capacity of governments to mainstream gender across policies, programmes and services in 15 PICTs provide a solid base for strengthening the national gender machinery, as do placements of gender advisers in some countries. Despite these key efforts to progress gender responsive programmes and policies, much remains to be done across all the PLGED priority areas. This requires increased resources with central agencies of government taking the lead.

- **Gender mainstreaming across CROP is limited.** While CROP agencies such as SPC and FFA are institutionalising efforts to mainstream gender equality through their policies and programmes, other agencies have yet to follow suit. There is serious and urgent need to mainstream gender equality through other regional frameworks to ensure that the PLGED is not simply a document that gets referenced without further action. The Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake of CROP agencies conducted in 2007 provides firm guidance on how

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[57] Inadequate data is cited as an ongoing challenge in regional PLGED reports.
[58] http://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/news-events/stories/7994/toksave-pacific-gender-resource-now-live
[59] This issue is highlighted as an ongoing challenge in regional reports on the PLGED.

this can be done and continues to be relevant.[60] A summary of recommendations from the Stocktake report is included at Annex 9.

3.3.2. Effectiveness and impact supporting evidence

Survey respondents gave examples of changes they have seen in their countries related to each of the priority action areas in the PLGED. They also rated the influence of the PLGED in contributing to these examples of change. These small number of responses confirm the feedback from the wider consultations that PLGED's *biggest contribution has been in the area of EVAWG.*

Figure 4   Influence of the PLGED in contributing to changes

Influence of the PLGED in contributing to changes in:
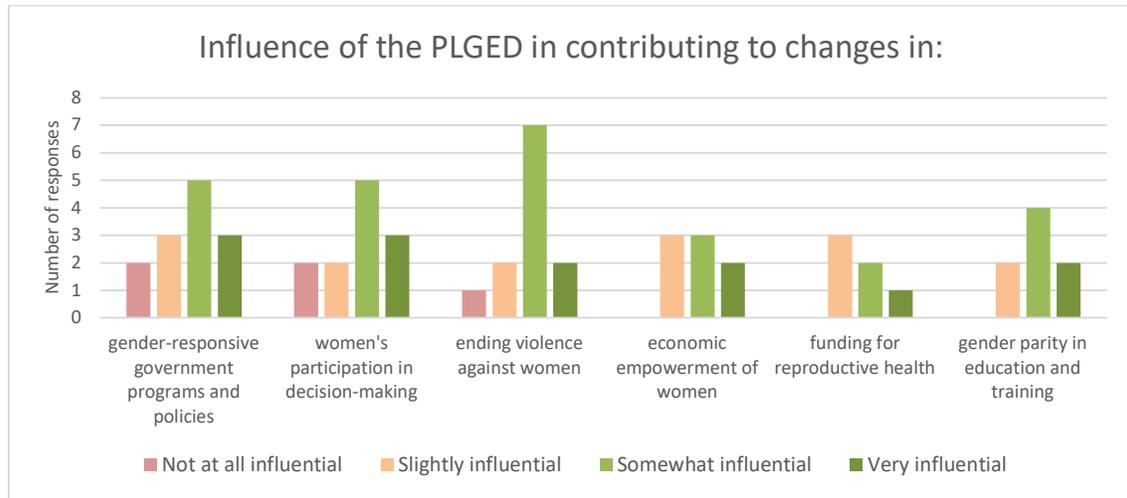
Findings of the review are supported by the BPA+25 report which reflects on progress and challenges in fulfilling commitments to achieving gender equality in the Pacific in 12 critical areas of concern that include the PLGED priority areas.

Stakeholders reflected on the technical capacity needed at both needed regional and national levels to ensure connections between gender equality and climate change, resilience, trade, infrastructure, violence, NCDs, poverty, security, sustainable development, etc. This is also related to the importance of communications to share information and build understanding of decision-makers regarding these links as well as the opportunity cost of failing to address gender inequality. CROP agencies and government services are meant to contribute equally to the well-being and opportunity of all citizens – men, women, girls and boys in all their diversity. Not addressing gender inequality therefore reduces their ability to produce quality results according to their mandates.

Capacity gaps were noted in CROP agencies and governments' efforts to move beyond acknowledging cross cutting issues to actually integrating them into all areas of work, not just in silos of single departments or projects. A Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake of CROP agencies[61] found that having skilled, in-house full time or contracted specialists who can act as catalysts, coaches and technical support providers is critical. These individuals can support staff and partner capacity building to understand the relevance of gender issues and the tools and techniques that can be used to integrate effective responses into specific areas of work. The stocktake found it unrealistic to assume that professional staff will be able to undertake a focal point role or apply gender mainstreaming principles to their work just because gender equality is a commitment of their organisation.

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[60] PIFS, (2007). CROP Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake, Nagada Consultants.
[61] *Ibid*.

The review team acknowledges that CROP agencies have different mandates and roles and therefore their contribution to gender equality and implementation of the Declaration will be different. For example, creating a course in gender studies, ensuring that that there are no barriers to student entry or staff recruitment based on sex and conducting research which is gender neutral at the University of the South Pacific (USP). This is different from the kind of support that SPC would provide to countries and territories. Overall, these differences will influence the level of gender technical expertise needed by CROP agencies. PIFS oversight role of policy to support to Leaders' priorities is critical here and similarly, requires a specific level of gender technical expertise.

Addressing capacity gaps would help create the enabling environment needed for the PLGED to be effective and progress gender equality in all its priority areas. These include gender responsive government programmes and policies, increasing women's participation in decision making, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and health and education services.

3.3.3. Effectiveness and impact recommendations

8.   Strengthen and improve efforts to progress women's economic empowerment and women in decision-making in line with recommendations from Triennial meetings of Pacific Women, Women's Ministerial meetings and recent PLEGD reports.

9.   Support ongoing efforts in EVAWG, with additional emphasis on prevention and working with men and boys.

10.   Examine regional frameworks in education and health to ensure specific gender equality outcomes, targets and indicators are in line with the PPA and the PLGED.

11.   Develop a PLGED Report Card to enable stakeholders and political leaders to monitor progress in priority areas. A PLGED report card could be modelled on the SPC/FFA fisheries report cards that provide annual high-level reporting on the status of Pacific fisheries in relation to goals, indicators and strategies adopted in the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries.

12.   Clarify the opportunity costs of not implementing the PLGED as well as the importance of having male and female leaders fully engaged in gender equality work (as gender inequality reduces the ability of CROP and other government agencies to produce sustainable outcomes in accordance with their mandates).

13.   In order to build and supplement gender technical capacity in the region:

-       Support countries to implement the SPC stocktakes of the capacity of the governments to mainstream gender across policies, programmes and services.

-       Support CROP agencies to strengthen and establish mechanisms and processes to ensure that gender equality issues are analysed and addressed in all aspects of their operations and programmes. Refer to recommendations in the 2007 PIFS CROP Gender Stocktake report which are still relevant today.[62]

-       Establish a regional roster of technical experts that can be made available to countries, regional organisations and other stakeholders to support efforts to mainstream and progress gender equality.

14.   Integrate gender equality outcomes, targets and indicators into all regional development frameworks and initiatives that are prioritised by Leaders.

15.   Implement the Pacific Roadmap on Gender Statistics for better production and use of gender statistics in the Pacific.[63] The roadmap aims to ensure quality, relevant and timely gender data that

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Developed in 2019 by development partners, representatives of National Statistics Offices and civil society.

responds to users' needs is produced, available, disseminated and effectively used to advance gender equality.[64]

16.   Support efforts to increase Pacific-led research on the causes and impacts of gender inequality to inform policy and programmes aimed at empowering women.

3.4. Collaboration

In signing up to the PLGED, Leaders were very clear in calling on development partners to work in a coordinated, consultative and harmonised way to support nationally led efforts to address gender inequality across the region in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness[65] and the Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific[66]. The SAMOA Pathway reaffirms commitment to progress sustainable development through genuine and durable partnerships. Leaders also requested development partners to increase financial and technical support to gender equality and women's empowerment programs, and to adopt strategies within their programs to provide employment and consultation opportunities for women in the planning and delivery of development assistance to the region. Leaders assigned PIFS and SPC, working with development partners, the role of developing a performance monitoring framework and annual report to Leaders on country progress in implementing the Declaration.

On the issue of collaboration, the review team considered: i) the extent to which the PLGED has strengthened coordination, consultation and harmonised approaches to addressing gender inequalities in the Pacific; as well as ii) the extent to which the PLGED has influenced programming decisions by development partners; and, iii) supported more effective and targeted funding to the region. Both regional and national mechanisms and processes for aid coordination were taken into account where information was available. At national level this includes through reporting processes for CEDAW, the PPA, the BPA and the PLGED or through the Voluntary National Review process or existing aid coordination mechanisms. At regional level this includes through mechanisms such as the CROP Gender Working Group, Reference Group on Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Pacific Regional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, the UN/SPC led Gender Coordination Group, Forum Dialogue partner discussions and regional programmes such as Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development and Pacific Partnerships for the EVAWG.

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[64] UN Women, 2019. Gender Statistics in the Pacific: Establishing a Roadmap for better production and use of Gender Statistics to monitor the SDGs in the Pacific Workshop Report. https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Pacific-Roadmap-Gender-Statistics.pdf Partners included: UN Women, SPC, UNESCAP, UNFPA, ADB and NSO reps from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.
[65] The Paris Declaration (PD) on Aid Effectiveness was endorsed in March 2005 with the overall aim of improving the quality of aid and its impact on development. It is organized around 5 principles of aid effectiveness: Ownership - partner countries set their own development strategies, improve their institutions and tackle corruption; Alignment – donor countries and organisations bring their support in line with these strategies and use local systems; Harmonisation – donors countries and organisations co-ordinate their actions, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication; Managing for results – both partner and donor countries focus on producing and measuring results; and Mutual accountability - both partner and donor countries are accountable to each other for development results. https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/45827300.pdf These principles have been reviewed and updated in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.
[66] The Cairns Compact on strengthening development in the Pacific was endorsed by Forum Leaders in 2009 and aims to drive more effective coordination of available development resources from both FICs and all development partners, centred on the aim of achieving the MDGs. It also calls on international financing institutions to support PICs through better coordinating mechanisms.

3.4.1. Collaboration findings

- **Collaboration is weak.** Collaboration at both national and regional level, as demonstrated by coordination mechanisms, harmonised approaches and processes which bring together governments, development partners and civil society around the PLGED priority areas has been ad hoc, patchy and have occurred around specific events such as regional preparations for international and regional forums.
- **Ineffective regional mechanisms for coordination**. Overall, gender coordination mechanisms at regional level have not been effective in strengthening coordination and harmonised approaches linked to the PLGED. Although, recently there has been good coordination through the Gender Coordination Group in relation to preparation for international commitments such as for the Beijing +25 process and CSW. This kind of mobilising and coordination could be applied to regional and national level gender equality commitments.
- **Weak national level coordination.** There are no indications that the PLGED has been used to identify areas for technical and funding support or to monitor progress on gender equality at national levels.
- **Collaboration missing from the PLGED reports.** It is difficult to assess the extent of collaboration as a result of the PLGED more generally as this has not been specifically reported on nor has there been a formal oversight or governance mechanism for the PLGED to convene development partner discussions around the PLGED at regional level. A future iteration of the PLGED should capture this important aspect.
- **CSOs inclusion and partnership is critical.** As major drivers of gender equality and social inclusion across the region, civil society organisations are necessary partners in meaningful engagement and collaboration. The Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls is a good example of coordination bringing together governments, civil society organisations and communities in an implementation partnership coordinated by SPC, PIFS and UN Women.

3.4.2. Collaboration supporting evidence

PLGED influence on regional coordination, consultation and enabling environment

Despite the PLGED assigning PIFS and SPC the role of developing a monitoring and evaluation framework, and annual report to Leaders on country progress in implementing the PLGED, this did not come to fruition. The review team notes work started to fulfil this monitoring and reporting commitment but was not completed. Some respondents referred to PIFS and SPC having competing priorities, i.e., the PPA versus the PLGED. With no leadership, no governance mechanism, unclear roles and responsibilities, and limited capacity within PIFS to take this forward, tensions led to delays and a lack of action. However, the review team notes that the most recent version of the PPA connects the PLGED priority areas with the SDGs and PPA outcome areas. This is already a step in the right direction for connecting the PLGED, the PPA and the SDGs in a refreshed Declaration.

On the above issue, the review team heard that if the PLGED is a commitment made by Leaders then it is the responsibility of governments and not regional organisations or development partners to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework. Some stakeholders felt this needs to be designed using national systems and be aligned with their national reporting processes to Cabinet and to Parliament. Countries may need support for this process. The role at regional level should then be to collect national reports, identify common themes and issues and provide recommendations for Leaders including for collective action if appropriate or the potential to replicate successes in one country in others. The report should also include a commentary on development partner behaviour and funding. This report could then be discussed among the Leaders.

Coordination and coherence of approaches is a key challenge due to the number of actors at regional and national level, competition for resources, continued work in siloes, competing priorities and the need for recognition. The issue of bilateral development partners being obliged by their governments to control their own funding was also raised as a challenge to consultation and coordination.

The view was expressed that improved coordination is primarily the responsibility of national governments who need to need to be firmer with development partners to ensure alignment with aid effectiveness principles. Activities must be agreed in accordance with national policies and processes. At the regional level, coordination of development partners should be in line with the priorities of the region reflecting areas for collective action to complement actions at national level, i.e., the regional role should not override the role at national level but reinforce the importance of aid effectiveness principles.

Some stakeholders noted that where development partners, such as Australia and New Zealand, have the dual of role being members and extra-budget funders of activities of regional organisations, there is a need for them to be just as accountable to the PLGED as PICT members are expected to be, and to contribute to efforts to improve coordination and collaboration through sharing developments and experiences in progressing gender equality in their own countries.

The role of PIFS and other CROP members, in relation to the PLGED, needs to be clearly articulated. PIFS, as a political and policy organisation, needs to focus its attention on building political will and commitment to gender equality and seek to raise commitment for those aspects of the declaration that are linked to governance, leadership and decision-making. The rest of CROP should be mandated to address gender equality in the context of their specialised areas. SPC's role in mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation and data should remain.

While the CROP Gender Working Group has been inactive, an expanded Pacific Gender Coordination Group is a positive initiative bringing together civil society, development partners and other stakeholders working to progress gender equality in the region. The group will soon embark on a stakeholder mapping exercise aimed at improving collaboration and synergies. Members of this group could potentially be part of the governance mechanism for PLGED recommended earlier (Refer Recommendation 1 under Governance). PIFS will need to examine the value of reinstating the CROP Gender Working Group in the context of establishing an effective governance mechanism for PLGED. The review team understand that this is subject to ongoing reforms as part of the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

The Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls is a good example of coordination bringing together governments, civil society organisations and communities in an implementation partnership coordinated by SPC, PIFS and UN Women.

The review team is not aware of any discussions on support for the PLGED implementation at post-Forum Dialogue partner meetings or at CROP meetings.

Influence of the PLGED on national coordination, consultation and harmonised approaches

All stakeholders recognised the challenges in translating regional commitments to the national level and the flow on effect this has on coordination, at both regional and national level. This included amongst CROP agencies and development partners. They also recognised that there was room for improvement at both levels.

> *Coordination should be strengthened at national level since that is where the impact is. CROP agencies should identify innovative ways to ensure national government takes ownership to strengthen coordination and consultation on PLGED. The regional level should focus on ways to strengthen the national level.*

Enabling Environment: Learning from the Fisheries Sector

Multiple elements are needed to create the enabling environment needed for a harmonised approach to addressing key issues. The fisheries sector provides an excellent case study of the enabling environment for fisheries and details are provided as Annex 10.

Figure 5   Enabling environment for regional fisheries
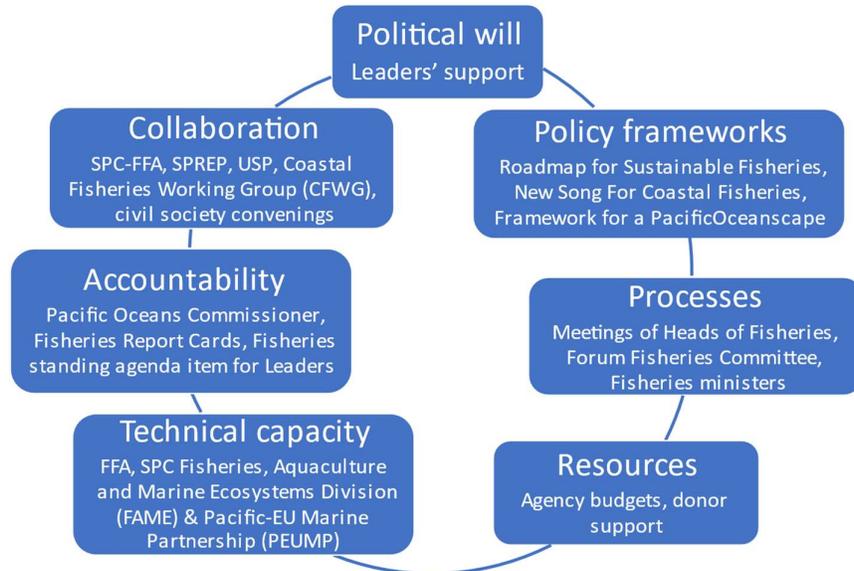
For gender mainstreaming, SPC has described the enabling environment requirements as: political will, organisational culture, legal and policy framework, technical capacity, adequate resources, and accountability and responsibility.[67] This demonstrates the potential contribution of including CSOs and the private sector in collaboration and consultation processes; the role of the proposed Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner; the need to align meetings of key decision makers, for example, Pacific Leaders, including Pacific Women Leaders, Pacific Ministers for Women, the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women etc,: and to ensure that these processes are consulted on and agreed within the FOC. It also acknowledges the need for technical capacity, resourcing and improving practical accountability mechanisms to create the enabling environment needed for implementation of the PLGED.

Influence of the PLGED on development partners funding and technical assistance

DFAT stands out as the development partner that has used the PLGED to frame its commitment to gender equality in the region through its PWSPD investment. DFAT funding distributed through PWSPD has involved 100 partners across PICT governments, international and Pacific non-government networks and organisations, the private sector, regional and multi-lateral organisations and programmes, and with research and academic institutions in the promotion of gender equality. However, aside from an annual learning gathering of PWSPD partners and initiatives in Papua Guinea,

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[67]

https://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/HDP/Gender/Stocktake_of_the_gender_mainstreaming_capacity_of_Pacific_Island_governments_Niue.pdf

it is difficult to assess how much collaboration has occurred between partners and programmes at either regional or national level, as they operate as separately funded entities.

Other development partners indicated that the PLGED had little or no influence on their support for gender equality in the region as they work to organisational priorities, policies and plans. While these policies and plans may contain aspirations and objectives similar to those in the PLGED, this is not necessarily as a result of the PLGED.

In terms of the extent to which the PLGED has influenced programming decisions by development partners and supported more effective and targeted funding to the region, PIFS and SPC survey respondents reported the PLGED has had only a moderate influence on budgeting decisions within their agencies.

The link between the signing of the PLGED and Australia's funding for gender equality was unique to Australia and has not been replicated across other development partners. Some donor agency respondents noted financial and/or technical support has been consolidated to better target gender equality and women's empowerment programs as a result of the PLGED. However, interviews and survey responses confirm that apart from Australia and New Zealand, there have been little or no changes in financial and/or technical support for gender equality and women's empowerment programs as a result of the PLGED.

This is not to discount additional funding, technical assistance, policy focus, and advocacy of development partners in advancing gender equality in the region. It simply notes that the influence of the PLGED appears to be limited, with no indication that it is being widely used to identify areas for technical and funding support. CSOs and private sector stakeholders consulted expressed strong interest to support PLGED implementation and the need to be included in coordination and consultation processes including with donors and funders. Some said that they were often considered as an afterthought.

3.4.3. Collaboration recommendations

17.   Ensure that the governance mechanism (Refer recommendation 1 in the Governance section) supports improved coordination of efforts to progress a common, coherent, focused Pacific Gender Equality agenda. This single agenda should not duplicate, but rather build on existing gender equality commitments, with a common goal and measurable targets and indicators over a short-, medium- and long-term period based on respectful and agreed principles of development cooperation.[68]

Efforts to improve coordination and collaboration should focus on:

-    better targeting and use of resources;

-    sharing experiences, good practice and lessons in implementation at both national and regional level;

-    identifying specific actions needed to address gender equality at regional level

-    harmonising indicators and reporting requirements with other guiding frameworks so as not to overload national agencies;

-    improving coordination between regional and national partners; while ensuring complementarity of actions at national level; and

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[68] Noting that in the PLGED Leaders called on Development Partners to work in a coordinated, consultative and harmonised way to support national led efforts to address gender inequality across the region in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific.

- building political will to progress gender equality at all levels.

18.   Adapt the PLGED reporting process to Leaders so that it contributes to useful discussion of progress, and identifies areas for action but also addresses the issue of improved collaboration and coordination amongst development partners.

19.   Clarify the roles and responsibilities of CROP agencies, development partners and other stakeholders in implementing the PLGED.

20.   Mandate all CROP agencies to adopt gender responsive programming in order to help reinforce member governments' efforts towards achieving gender equality and provide them with guidance and technical support.

21.   Ensure all PIF members are made accountable to report on progress made under the PLGED so that lessons may be shared with and learned by other countries. (Refer recommendation 11)

3.5. Sustainability

Sustainability of the PLGED is intricately connected with commitments that Pacific Island governments have made to sustainable development globally as reflected in Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, the SAMOA Pathway and the Pacific Framework for Sustainable Development. The PLGED commitments align with the gender equality commitments in all these frameworks. Given the centrality of gender equality to the achievement of the SDGs, it is critical that the PLGED continues to be upheld and supported to fast-track efforts to achieve gender equality in the Pacific. Figure 6 shows how these commitments are aligned and consistent with the PLGED.

Figure 6   Alignment of international and regional gender equality commitments with the PLGED
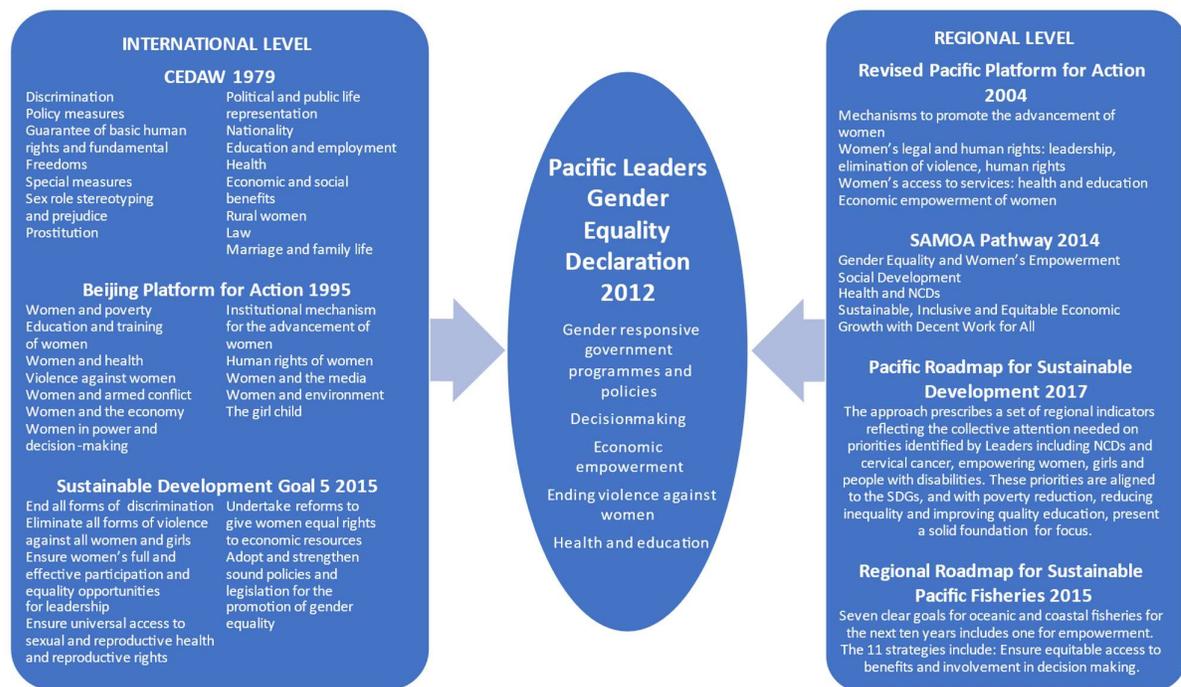
The review team examined sustainability from the perspective of what is needed to sustain actions and gains under the PLGED priority areas. In doing so the team considered: i) whether sustainable funding sources were available to ensure long-term implementation of the PLGED; ii) whether actions were embedded into regional and national mechanisms and processes; iii) the level of ownership of the PLGED at national level, within CROP agencies among development partners and stakeholders

including civil society organisations; and iv) collaboration and consultation mechanisms being used to progress commitments in the declaration.

The key findings under this theme of the review are cross-cutting. Sustainability is dependent on how much individuals and organisations value and see the importance of gender equality in the region's quest for sustainable development and their willingness to share and demonstrate that value through their policies, decision-making, activities, attitudes and behaviour. In the final analysis, sustainability is about the kind of future we are leaving for the next generation.

3.5.1. Sustainability findings

- **The PLGED has potential to be an important accountability instrument.** The PLGED is considered by all stakeholders, especially civil society organisations, to be an important instrument that could hold Leaders, decision-makers and development partners to account for progressing gender equality at both national and regional level.
- **Revise and retain the PLGED.** Consequently, the majority of stakeholders considered it necessary to uphold the Declaration as a stand-alone high level regional gender equality commitment with prominence in the regional strategy architecture. There needs to be renewed commitment to an updated Declaration that reflects current developments and realities of the region while being connected to other regional priorities and commitments.
- **The current outlook for sustainability is not good**. Despite the recognition of the important role that the PLGED can play in progressing gender equality in the region, the outlook for sustainability is discouraging. Actions to progress commitments in the PLGED are not sufficiently embedded in regional mechanisms of influence such as the Forum Economic Ministers meetings and Forum Leaders Meetings, actions, reporting and follow through by governments, CROP and development partners.

3.5.2. Sustainability supporting evidence

Stakeholders had different views as to what a renewed high-level commitment to gender equality could look like, that is, whether it would be narrowly focused or include a broader range of priority areas.

Sustaining actions and gains under the PLGED priority areas

Views from interviewees and survey respondents on what is needed to sustain the actions and gains under the PGLED priority areas fit into six broad categories:

1. Sufficient technical resources and national budget allocations to continue and expand investment in gender mainstreaming and inclusive programming. While actions to progress the PLGED in some of the priority areas are embedded at national level through policy and legislative reforms and programmes, there is limited demonstration of commitment and support through increased national budget allocations for gender equality (refer Section 4.1.2). The PLGED is regarded as a platform that could be useful for aligning financing and providing technical support for gender equality at both regional and national levels.
2. An implementation framework with agreed targets and progress indicators. The framework needs to be connected to existing regional gender equality frameworks such as the PPA and be embedded in priority regional development frameworks such as the Framework for Sustainable Development. In addition, it should not add to but instead, ease the burden of reporting.
3. Formal and regular engagement processes at national and regional levels.
4. Networking and collaboration (refer 4.4.2)

5. Stronger leadership and ownership of the PLGED at the level of Leaders, senior decision-makers and across CROP is necessary for it to have impact and effect change. Refer Section 4.1.1. Gender mainstreaming is critical in supporting the above processes (refer 4.3.2.) at both regional and national level. There is greater likelihood of getting financial support if gender targets and indicators are included in sectoral priorities and policies.
6. Increased visibility of the PLGED (refer 4.1.2). The PLGED is an important advocacy tool for addressing gender inequalities, discrimination against women and ensuring gender responsive development. However, its visibility is low and needs to be raised at all levels of government including at Leaders level, the private sector and in civil society. As one interviewee commented, *if it's not visible, then what is it influencing?*

3.5.3. Sustainability recommendations

In consultation with Leaders and all key stakeholders, including development partners, CSOs and the private sector:

22.   Reaffirm the commitment of Leaders to the PLGED.

23.   Update and raise the profile, visibility and utility of the PLGED as a high-level gender equality commitment in the Pacific region.

24.   Embed the PLGED commitments in national planning, budget, public expenditure and financial accountability processes in support of increased national budget allocations for gender equality.

25.   Agree on and develop an appropriate implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting mechanism for the PLGED with dedicated technical and financial resources at both regional and national level.

26.   Identify, mobilise and promote specific gender technical expertise to support the above processes.

27.   Ensure that all efforts to improve the sustainability of the PLGED are fully integrated into development of the Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and related plans to review the regional architecture.

4. Conclusions

The PLGED is an important tool for advocacy and can potentially be used to hold decision makers to account at the highest level despite current weaknesses in ownership, political will and low levels of visibility and utility at both regional and national level.

Progress on gender equality in the Pacific over the past 10 years has been built on efforts which began several decades ago. This work was driven by civil society, and started well before the Beijing Conference. While there are examples of the PLGED contributing to the momentum since 2012, specific attribution of progress to the PLGED is not possible.

While progress on addressing gender inequalities remains uneven across the Pacific, there has been progress in some areas such as in eliminating violence against women and girls, introduction of gender responsive programmes, policies, legislation and gender statistics. However, progress is not shared or consistent across all aspects of gender equality for all countries and is largely funded by development partners. The absence of an implementation framework that has measurable targets and indicators and which outlines mechanisms and processes for accountability, reporting and collaboration at Leaders level has been a missed opportunity to enhance leadership and ownership at regional and national levels.

As one of a plethora of competing and potentially duplicative regional development frameworks endorsed by PICT Leaders and governments, revision and repositioning of the PLGED should ensure it is a critical part of the continuum of priority frameworks in a coherent and transparent way. This will bring both focus and clarity to the regional gender equality agenda while reducing the burden of reporting on countries. It will also help to strengthen the other priority frameworks by improving development effectiveness and supporting CROP and government agencies to meet their human rights commitments according to their mandates.

Systematic mechanisms and processes for addressing gender inequalities across priority regional development frameworks at regional level are unclear. This includes within CROP agencies where overall commitment to gender mainstreaming is weak and technical gender expertise is under resourced. While there have been efforts in the past to promote and support action in some areas, for example, through the CROP Gender Working Group (1998); the High-Level Reference Group on SGBV (2009); and the Regional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (2011) these have been inactive. What is clear is that since 2012 there have been many missed opportunities at the regional level to flag, promote and use the PLGED at Ministerial and Leaders meetings to advance gender equality in the region in a more systematic, measured and visible way.

Collaboration at both national and regional levels is ad hoc, sporadic and mostly led by development partners. While the PLGED specifically calls on development partners to support country efforts to realise commitments to the PLGED through increased technical and financial support, Forum Dialogue Partners discussions do not discuss the PLGED priorities and this aspect of the declaration is not reported on.

Moving forward, the PLGED is unique in its potential to be a bold high-level commitment by Pacific Forum Leaders to enhance the status of women in the region. It should be retained and revised to reflect current regional developments and priorities.

The PLGED is a strong step forward for the region. It can facilitate ongoing work by CROP agencies, be used as an advocacy tool by civil society, and serve as a mechanism to track progress through regionally relevant, measurable targets and indicators. Renewed commitment to an updated PLGED, and further integration with other regional frameworks, will enhance its usefulness and promote a more equal and sustainable Pacific region.

Annex 1: Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration

30 August 2012, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

The Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum met from 27 to 30 August 2012 in Rarotonga and brought new determination and invigorated commitment to efforts to lift the status of women in the Pacific and empower them to be active participants in economic, political and social life. Leaders expressed their deep concern that despite gains in girls" education and some positive initiatives to address violence against women, overall progress in the region towards gender equality is slow. In particular Leaders are concerned that women's representation in Pacific legislature remains the lowest in the world; violence against women is unacceptably high; and that women's economic opportunities remain limited.

Leaders understand that gender inequality is imposing a high personal, social and economic cost on Pacific people and nations, and that improved gender equality will make a significant contribution to creating a prosperous, stable and secure Pacific for all current and future generations.

To realize this goal, Leaders commit with renewed energy to implement the gender equality actions of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (2005 to 2015); the Pacific Plan; the 42nd Pacific Island Forum commitment to increase the representation of women in legislatures and decision making; and the 40th Pacific Island Forum commitment to eradicate sexual and gender based violence.

To progress these commitments, Leaders commit to implement specific national policy actions to progress gender equality in the areas of gender responsive government programs and policies, decision making, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and health and education:

Gender Responsive Government Programs and Policies:

- **Incorporate** articles from the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) into legislative and statutory reforms and policy initiatives across government;
- **Support** the production and use of sex disaggregated data and gender analysis to inform government policies and programs;
- **Strengthen** consultative mechanisms with civil society groups, including women's advocacy groups, on key budget and policy issues of national and sub-national governments.
- Decision Making
- **Adopt** measures, including temporary special measures (such as legislation to establish reserved seats for women and political party reforms), to accelerate women's full and equal participation in governance reform at all levels and women's leadership in all decision making.
- **Advocate** for increased representation of women in private sector and local level governance boards and committees (for example school boards and produce market committees).

Economic empowerment

- **Remove** barriers to women's employment and participation in the formal and informal sectors, including in relation to legislation that directly or indirectly limits women's access to employment opportunities or contributes to discriminatory pay and conditions for women.
- **Implement** equal employment opportunity and gender equality measures in public sector employment, including State Owned Enterprises and statutory boards, to increase the proportion of women employed, including in senior positions, and **advocate** for a similar approach in private sector agencies;

- **Improve** the facilities and governance of local produce markets, including fair and transparent local regulation and taxation policies, so that market operations increase profitability and efficiency and encourage women's safe, fair and equal participation in local economies.
- **Target** support to women entrepreneurs in the formal and informal sectors, for example financial services, information and training, and review legislation that limits women's access to finance, assets, land and productive resources.

Ending violence against women

- **Implement** progressively a package of essential services (protection, health, counselling, legal) for women and girls who are survivors of violence.
- **Enact** and implement legislation regarding sexual and gender-based violence to protect women from violence and impose appropriate penalties for perpetrators of violence.
- Health and Education
- **Ensure** reproductive health (including family planning) education, awareness and service programs receive adequate funding support;
- **Encourage** gender parity in informal, primary, secondary and tertiary education and training opportunities.

Health and Education

- **Ensure** reproductive health (including family planning) education, awareness and service programs receive adequate funding support;
- **Encourage** gender parity in informal, primary, secondary and tertiary education and training opportunities.

Leaders called on Development Partners to work in a coordinated, consultative and harmonised way to support national led efforts to address gender inequality across the region in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific. Leaders also requested Development Partners to increase financial and technical support to gender equality and women's empowerment programs, and to adopt strategies within their programs to provide employment and consultation opportunities for women in the planning and delivery of development assistance to the region.

Leaders agreed that progress on the economic, political and social positions of women should be reported on at each Forum Leaders meeting. They directed the Forum Secretariat, with the support of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Development Partners, to develop, as part of the Pacific Plan performance monitoring framework and annual report to Leaders on country progress in implementing the above commitments and moving towards achieving greater gender equality.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Purpose

1.   The review of the PLGED is an opportunity for the Pacific to take stronger actions and efforts to address gender inequalities and explore options to strengthen regional consensus to support national efforts to address gender inequality and provide a platform for prioritizing regional cooperation efforts.

Background

2.   The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) was announced at the *43rd Pacific Islands Forum* in August 2012 in Rarotonga, as a result of the concerns Pacific Leaders had that overall progress in the region towards gender equality was slow. The PLGED renewed commitment to lifting the status of women in the Pacific and empowering them to be active participants in economic, political, and social life.

3.   To progress these commitments, Leaders committed to implement specific national policy actions to progress gender equality in the areas of *gender responsive government programs and policies*, *decision making*, *economic empowerment*, *ending violence against women*, and *health and education*.

4.   Progress on the PLGED is currently reported under the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development reporting mechanism. The 2018 Pacific Sustainable Development and 2020 Biennial Reports provide extensive updates on PLGED implementation and recommendations to progress actions. These reports highlighted that almost all countries have adopted gender policies and strategies, including disability policies and while many are engaged in global reporting processes, resources for integrating gender equality priorities and implementation are limited. The *Pacific Report on the Beijing +25 Review* also outlines progress on gender equality in the region. To ensure continued and relevant reporting, the findings of this review will inform the next Pacific Quadrennial report in 2022.

Policy Context

5.   The PLGED is one of a few regional policy frameworks on gender equality. Almost all Forum Island Countries (FICs) have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and committed to the Beijing Platform for Action which flagged 12 key areas in 1995 requiring urgent action to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys.

6.   The *Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights* (2018 – 2030) was developed by the Pacific Community (SPC) to accelerate the implementation of gender commitments at all levels in order to achieve gender equality and the promotion and protection of the human rights of all women and girls, in all their diversity. Whilst these frameworks complement each other, the PLGED stands apart as a bold, high-level political commitment by Pacific Leaders to enhance the status of women in the region.

Objective of the Review

7. The objective is to review the Declaration in order to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the PLGED for Members to progress gender equality in our region. In doing so, the review will focus on three key themes:

> i) Assess effectiveness of the PLGED vis-à-vis coordination efforts by Members and partners
>
> ii) Assess actions undertaken under the   PLGED   including   progressing   the recommendations made in reporting
>
> iii) Identify ways in which regional gender policy frameworks can better complement each other through coordination and harmonized approaches.

Scope of the Review

8.　　The **independence** of the Review is important to adequately **assess** and **evaluate** the effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability of the PLGED as the regional political framework to advance the status of Pacific women and girls, ensuring that it continues to guide regional efforts on enhancing the status of women and girls. Also critical is the need to ensure that a revitalized PLGED is contextualized to new and emerging issues.

9.　　Guiding review questions:

	Key Question	Guiding sub-question
Governance	• Is there political will to progress the priorities of the PLGED at regional and national level?	• To what extent does the PLGED influence strategic direction setting and budgeting at regional and national level as well as CROP agencies? • Given that the PLGED does not have a direct governance mechanism, what are possible options for oversight and how can they be strengthened?
Relevance	• Do the priority areas of the PLGED remain relevant to the region? • Is there alignment to other regional gender frameworks and policies? • What effect has COVID19 had on the relevance and effectiveness of the PLGED?	• What is the extent of ownership of the PLGED by Members, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector?
Effectiveness and Impact	• How has the PLGED impacted national decision-making to support gender equality? • What is the extent to which the PLGED has influenced programming decisions by development partners and supported more effective and targeted funding to the region? • What are some of the challenges that hinder effective implementation and impact? • Is there alignment to other regional gender frameworks and policies?	• Do current reporting mechanisms adequately reflect PLGED progress? • How is research data and analysis shared and used as a policy tool? • Are resources adequate to ensure effective implementation?

	Are there links to other sectoral frameworks and can these be strengthened?	
Sustainability	• What is the level of ownership - at national level, within CROP agencies, other key stakeholders including CSOs?	• What is the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls and how can this, and similar events in the future, influence the implementation of the PLGED?
	• Are actions embedded into regional and national mechanisms and processes?	• Are sustainable funding sources available to ensure long-term implementation of the PLGED?

Approach and methodology

Approach

10. It is proposed that the review will follow a similar process to the review of the Biketawa Declaration which was undertaken by the Forum Secretariat as part of the development of the Boe Declaration on regional security and is reflected in the first phase of the review.

(i) Phase 1 – Commissioning conversations (May 2021) including a comprehensive desk review, and extensive, in-depth consultations with Members and stakeholders. The review team is expected to conduct a comprehensive desk review as a first step in the process. The team will also conduct consultations and focus groups to gain clear and open feedback from Members and stakeholders on the effectiveness of the PLGED and provide recommendations at the completion of the review.
(ii) Phase 2 – Analysis and Report Drafting (June-July 2021) (iii) Phase 3: Peer review & finalization (July - September 2021)

11. The review will subscribe to the following principles:

(i) This review will be a ***member-driven process***, facilitated by the Secretariat. It is critical that the review ensure that there is complete Member ownership via initial consultations and progress updates to allow a robust, consultative process that takes the current context into account including looking at progress and addressing the gaps. Members will also be able to drive this process during the validation phase of the review, including through engagement of the Pacific Steering Committee on Sustainable Development as well as providing feedback during the Forum processes such as the Forum Officials Committee (FOC) meeting and ministerial meetings.

(ii) The ***independence*** of the review is critical to ensure that the review is unbiased. The Biketawa Plus development process utilized an independent reference group to test the policy underpinnings of the development of a new security declaration, the Boe Declaration of 2018. **Similarly, it is imperative that this evaluation be independent to ensure an unbiased review.** The consultant(s) primary role will be to conduct an independent evaluation of the progress made on the PLGED through the coordination efforts of partners and stakeholders.

(iii) The review must be ***participatory and inclusive*** to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are taken into consideration.

(iv)   The review will *utilize existing mechanisms and data*. The Secretariat will work with Members and relevant key partners and stakeholders to identify achievements and gaps of the PLGED and consider potential regional responses to new and emerging gender issues.

13.   The review will also look at how the proposed Pacific Women Leaders meeting can be utilized as a governance mechanism for reporting on the PLGED as well as providing strategic oversight on gender equality efforts in the region.

Governance and reporting

14.   It is proposed that governance and strategic oversight of this review sit with the Pacific Steering Committee on Sustainable Development through which the PLGED reporting is currently channelled. Apart from its oversight role, the Steering Committee will be called upon to review the recommendations once the review has concluded and develop, as necessary, a new iteration of the PLGED for consideration by Leaders.

15.   The review will also look at how the new Pacific Women Leaders meeting can be utilized as a governance mechanism for reporting on the PLGED as well as providing strategic oversight on gender equality efforts in the region.

Review reference group

16.   The establishment of an independent review reference group is proposed to provide technical support throughout the process particularly with data analysis and verification. This group will include three gender and sustainable development experts from existing regional technical working groups including the CROP Working Groups.[69] This group will act as a sounding board and provide technical feedback during the review process.

17.   Whilst the reference group provides technical expertise to strengthen the outcomes of the review, the Pacific Steering Committee on Sustainable Development is the high-level conduit to ensure that the review addresses its objectives. The Pacific Steering Committee is the proposed mechanism through which the finalization of the revitalized PLGED will be done for final consideration by Leaders. Regular updates to the Steering Committee will ensure that it is informed and engaged throughout the whole process.

18.   The graph below outlines this process:

INDEPENDENT REVIEW: Review undertaken with support of review reference panel. Recommendations submitted to Pacific Steering Committee on Sustainable Development

NEXT ITERATION OF PLGED: Pacific Steering Committee on Sustainable Development review recommendations and develop next iteration of PLGED

ROAD TO LEADERS: Review report and PLGED new iteration submitted to FOC and FFMM prior to Leaders consideration

Engagement with stakeholders

19.   The team will undertake an extensive, in-depth consultation process with a wide range of key partners and stakeholders in Forum member countries to identify achievements and gaps of the PLGED and to consider potential regional responses to new and emerging gender issues. While the final approach will be subject to the Review team, it is expected that the team would consult with Member governments (including Ministerial level and senior officials), CROP agencies, gender focal points and the national women's machinery in FICs, Development Partners, Non-State Actors, civil society and academia.

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[69] Technical working groups include: CROP Gender Working Group, Pacific Gender Coordination Group.

Period of engagement

20.   The review period will commence in May 2021 to September 2021. The actual consultation period will be approximately 10 weeks.

Methodology

21.   The approach will include a combination of primary and secondary data collection.

(a)   Phase 1 – Commissioning conversations (May 2021)

    (i)   *Desk review*: A comprehensive desk-based review of relevant documentation will form a significant component of the methodology.[70]

    (ii) *Consultations and focus groups*: Robust consultations with a wide range of stakeholders at the national and regional level including survey questionnaires, consultations and focus group meetings. In seeking the views of stakeholders, the Review will need to ensure that it provides clear and open feedback to those contributors and demonstrate that their input is well considered and can make a difference. The reviewers will also utilize a survey for obtaining information from Members and stakeholders.

(b)   Phase 2 – Analysis and Report Drafting (June 2021)

    (i) Consolidation of consultation outcomes

    (ii) Draft review report based on comprehensive desk review and consultation outcomes

    (iii)   Update to Members and Pacific Steering Committee on Sustainable Development

(c)   Phase 3: Peer review & finalization (July-September 2021)

    (i) Finalization of Review report and recommendations

    (ii) Report to SDGs Steering Committee

    (iii)Report to FOC, with a view to consideration by Leaders

Deliverables

22.   The main output is the PLGED Review Report. A draft report and final draft report will precede the Final report to Leaders. The Report will form the basis of a revitalized PLGED.

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[70] Including National Development Plans, Universal Periodic Reports (UPRs) and Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) on SDGs where available.

Annex 3: Methodology

The approach and methodology are outlined in the PLGED Review Framework at the end of this Annex. The review consisted of four phases:

Phase I – Commissioning conversations

The review team held initial discussions with PIFS to confirm: the emphasis of the review questions in the framework to ensure the findings will best support the objectives of the review; key stakeholders to be consulted during the review; timing and logistical arrangements for the consultations; and, the interface between the consultants and the independent review reference group. The review planning phase culminating in a review plan submitted to PIFS on 14 July.

Phase 2 – Data collection

Document review: A comprehensive desk review of relevant documentation forms a significant component of the review. The desk review provides contextual information and content for the review framework and has helped inform the lines of enquiry in virtual consultations. Documents for review were sourced by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and supplemented with documentation sent to the review team by various stakeholders. Additional documents sourced by the Review team related to research and organisational examples of gender mainstreaming, past work on the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) gender equality initiatives including the CROP 2007 Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake. A list of documents reviewed at this point in the process can be found at Annex 5. The desk review will continue throughout the analysis and drafting stages of the review report.

Online individual and group consultations: Extensive online consultations occurred from 28 July through to 24 August. The review team met with representatives from Pacific Island Forum Member Governments, development partners, CROP agencies, civil society organisations, private sector representative bodies and individuals. The list of persons consulted is at Annes 3. Interviews were semi-structured and supported by interview guides which were sent to interviewees in advance. The interview guides consisted of open-ended questions, as well as prompts for encouraging people to speak freely and/or provide more detail.

At the time of writing the draft report, the review team had not been able to secure consultation times with the majority of Pacific Island Forum members or any Pacific Island Forum Leaders.

Online survey: An online survey was developed to gather responses from key stakeholders. The survey tool contained subsets of questions relevant to each stakeholder group and a set of general questions for all respondents to answer.

The review team is grateful to Fiona Hukula, Gina Houng Lee and Kim Robertson for their assistance in brainstorming the focus of the survey tool in early July. From 15-19 July the survey tool was tested by PIFS staff and a select group of gender specialists and consultants in the region[71].

The online survey was opened for responses the following week, with the link included in the PIFS Official Circular sent out on 21 July. On 27 July and 5 August PIFS posted announcements about the review and survey on Facebook; these posts were then shared by the review team and members of the Technical Reference Group through other networks (for example, as well as PacWin). The review team also included the link to the survey in email correspondence with stakeholders requesting interview times. Word versions of the online survey were made available on request. The survey closed on 8 September.

178 survey responses were received, of which:

- 75 responses where people answered none of their relevant questions.

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[71] Fiona Hukula, Melinia Nawadra, Talei Tuinamuana, Gina Houng Lee, Kim Robertson, Ethel Sigimanu, Garry Wiseman, Brigitte Leduc.

- 11 responses where people answered fewer than three of their relevant questions.
- 92 responses where people answered some/all of their relevant questions.

Responses were received across all stakeholder groups, with the most substantive responses coming from CROP agency personnel and NGOs. Further details on survey respondents are included in Annex 3 (Persons Consulted).

Of the 103 partial or full response, 76% were from women, 20% were from men, and 4% were responses from a transgender person and people who preferred not to say.

Phase 3 – Analysis, briefing of the PIFS Independent Review Reference Group and report writing
Analysis of the data occurred on an ongoing basis during the data collection phase, with the review team recording and tracking analytical insights. The review team took notes of all interviews which were then coded against the questions set out in the review framework, emerging themes and other insights. Results from the survey questionnaires were also coded in a similar way. The review team analysed the coded data to draw out findings against: (i) the key review questions; and, (ii) emerging themes.

Toward the end of the consultation phase the review team briefed PIFS and the PLGED Independent Review Reference Group (27 August). The review team presented a Briefing Note which summarised the review process up to that point, and presented preliminary findings and next steps. The review team provided a similar briefing to the PIFS Executive Management Team on 6 September. PIFS and the PLGED Independent Review Reference Group provided feedback on the early findings which was taken into account in the analysis and reporting writing phase of the review.

The review team held focus group discussions with the PLGED Independent Review Reference Group, and selected stakeholders on 22 September. The purpose of the focus group discussions was: to share thoughts on the coverage and clusters of recommendations at that point in the review process; to obtain feedback on their relevance and appropriateness; to seek guidance from the group in order to articulate recommendations clearly and pragmatically so that they have a good chance of being taken forward.

Phase 4 - Peer review and finalisation
The review team prepared this draft report for consideration by the Independent Review reference group. It is anticipated PIFS will circulate the draft report to member-countries for their feedback, with particular encouragement for those member-countries who are yet to engage with the review process to provide their feedback.

Following feedback from PIFS, the PLGED Independent Review Reference Group and key stakeholders, the review team will finalise the review report for submission to the Pacific Steering Committee on Sustainable Development. This committee will use the recommendations to inform their next iteration of the PGLED.

Table 3   Review Framework

Review theme	Question	Information required	Information source	Collection methods	Analysis
Governance					
Theme 1: Assess coordination efforts by Members and partners to implement the PLGED.	1. Is there political will to progress the priorities of the PLGED at regional and national level? • To what extent does the PLGED influence strategic direction setting and budgeting at regional and national level as well as CROP agencies? • Given that the PLGED does not have a direct governance mechanism, what are possible options for oversight and how can they be strengthened? • How has the PLGED impacted national decision-making to support gender equality?	Evidence of regional and national level commitment through national development plans, policy reforms, budget reform and budget allocations to gender equality policy implementation. Emphasis will be on national level information/evidence. Strategic plan/budget information of CROP agencies and development partners. Evidence of activities and budget allocations in programmes delivered by Government, CROP and donor funded programmes. Views of key government, CROP agency including relevant CROP task forces or sub-committees, for example, SDG Taskforce and development partner stakeholders.	PIF Member governments national development plans and strategies; sector plans and targets; parliamentary proceedings as relevant. Record and outcomes of PIF Leaders meetings; PIF Ministerial meetings, for example, FEMM, FEDMM, SPC Health Ministers Meetings, Triennial and Women's Ministerial meetings. Governing Council meeting records of CROP agencies – for example, SPC CRGA, FFA, SPREP etc. Programme monitoring reports for specific government and CROP and development partner programmes, for example, in Health, Education such as SPBEQ/SPC; DFAT Fiji Program Support Facility – Health Programme. Government personnel – Ministry for Women, Finance and Planning, selected sectoral ministries, for	PIFS to provide/guide team to key regional policy frameworks, high level political meeting records and reports including recently developed process for reporting on and the reports on PGLED. Team to source key national policy documents with PIFS support. Key stakeholders' online questionnaire. Individual and group interviews (face-to-face, telephone, virtual). Focus group discussions on the 3 themes of the review with a different group of stakeholders – Government, CROP agencies, academia and civil society.	Document review. Content analysis against the PLGED commitment sand options for an improved governance mechanism. Descriptive analysis. Statistical analysis to be determined based on availability and reliability of data sourced

Review theme	Question	Information required	Information source	Collection methods	Analysis
			example, health and education, trade and commerce. CROP agency heads/senior management or programme staff.		
Relevance					
Theme 3: Identify ways in which regional gender policy frameworks can better complement each other through coordinated and harmonised approaches. Theme 1: Assess coordination efforts by Members and partners to implement the PLGED	2. Do the priority areas of the PLGED remain relevant to the region? 3. Is there alignment to other regional gender frameworks and policies? • What is the extent of ownership of the PLGED by Members, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector?	FIC government, CROP agency and civil society view on relevance of PLGED. Evidence of complementarity of PLGED with other regional gender frameworks. Evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on the region and on FICs with particular emphasis on the impact on women and girls. Evidence of changes in regional context (economic, social, cultural) due to COVID-19. Evidence of knowledge, understanding and utility of PLGED to the mission and work of all stakeholders: Governments, CROP agencies and relevant Taskforces or sub-committees, civil society and others, for example,	Stakeholders: FIC government representatives responsible for setting national development priorities, for example, Planning, Finance, OPM; Ministries for Women and other relevant government ministries such as health, social welfare, poverty alleviation; CROP agency, development partner and civil society representatives and others including academia and the private sector.	Interviews with stakeholders listed earlier as information sources. Key documents to be provided by PIFS, i.e., Ministerial meeting records and reports; CROP Heads meeting records/reports and records/reports of SDG Taskforce and other relevant CROP sub-committee reports. Key documents to be sourced by team include: regional gender policy regional policy frameworks and various COVID-19 impact assessment reports with emphasis on its impacts on gender equality, women and girls.	Document review. Content analysis.

Review theme	Question	Information required	Information source	Collection methods	Analysis
		academia, the private sector.		Key stakeholders' online questionnaire.	
Effectiveness and Impact					
Theme 2: Assess actions undertaken under the PLGED including progressing the recommendations made in reporting Theme 1: Assess coordination efforts by Members and partners to implement the PLGED	4. What actions have been taken to implement PLGED priority areas and recommendations? 5. What has been the impact from implementing PLGED priority areas? 6. What are some of the challenges that hinder effective implementation and impact? 7. What is the extent to which the PLGED has influenced programming decisions by development partners and supported more effective and targeted funding to the region? 8. To what extent has PLGED strengthened coordination, consultation and harmonised approaches to supporting gender equality in the region?	Evidence of regional and national level commitment through national development plans, policy reforms, budget reform and budget allocations to gender equality policy implementation. Emphasis will be on national level information/evidence. Strategic plan/budget information of CROP agencies and development partners. Evidence of activities and budget allocations in programmes delivered by Government, CROP and donor funded programmes. Views of stakeholders on implementation and the challenges including resourcing of implementation. Views of stakeholders on PLGED reporting processes. Evidence of research data and analysis being used to	Key stakeholders: FIC governments; CROP agencies, development partners, especially DFAT, MFAT, UN agencies, UN Women, UNICEF, ILO and UNFPA in particular, ADB, World Bank and civil society. National development plans, policies and budget allocations. Development annual reports; donor funded programme reports. Regional and national reports that include references to PLGED progress, for example, 2018 1st Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report, 2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report, Voluntary National Review Reports, Beijing + 15 and +25 reports. Regional development frameworks – broad and sectoral.	PIFS and Team working together to compile and source key reports and documents. Key stakeholders' online questionnaire. Interviews with key stakeholders as listed earlier. Interviews with advisers, academics, researchers involved in data collection, research and analysis relevant to the PLGED. Focus Group Discussions on key issues, for example, challenges to implementation of PLGED; improving the reporting process and making better use of research and data.	Document review. Content analysis

Review theme	Question	Information required	Information source	Collection methods	Analysis
	• What progress has been made under each of the six priority areas? • How is research data and analysis shared and used as a policy tool? • Do current reporting mechanisms adequately reflect PLGED progress? • Are resources adequate to ensure effective implementation? • Is there sufficient collaboration at regional and national levels to ensure complementary gender equality efforts, and reduce any duplication?	inform gender equality policy. Views of stakeholders specifically involved in data collection, analysis and research.	Advisers, academics, researchers, organisations and programmes, for example, SPC/Data Hub, involved in data collection, research and analysis relevant to the PLGED.		
Sustainability					
Relevant to all three review themes	9. What is needed for sustainability of actions and gains under PLGED priority areas? • Are sustainable funding sources available to ensure	Views of key stakeholders: FIC government, CROP agencies, development partners and civil society.	Stakeholder interviews. Regional and national reports documenting mechanisms and processes for prioritising, implementing and resourcing PLGED.	Interviews with key stakeholders including FIC government representatives, CROP agencies and development partners.	Document review. Content analysis.

Review theme	Question	Information required	Information source	Collection methods	Analysis
	long-term implementation of the PLGED? • Are actions embedded into regional and national mechanisms and processes? • What is the level of ownership - at national level, within CROP agencies, other key stakeholders including CSOs? • How can coordination and consultation approaches be improved?	Evidence of national and regional mechanisms and processes.		Key stakeholders' online questionnaire. Team with the support of PIFS to compile documentation. Focus Group Discussion: Sustainability of PLGED.	
COVID-19: Secondary Review Question					
Theme 2: Assess actions undertaken under the PLGED including progressing the recommendations made in reporting Theme 3: Identify ways in which regional gender policy frameworks can better	10. What effect has COVID-19 had on the relevance and effectiveness of the PLGED? • What is the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls and how can this, and similar events in the future, influence the implementation of the PLGED?	Evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on the region and on FICs with particular emphasis on the impact on women and girls.	COVID-19 impact reports – both regional and national; relevant Ministerial meeting reports for example, FEMM meeting which have discussed COVID-19 impacts and leaders meeting outcomes.	Key documents to be provided by PIFS, i.e., Ministerial meeting records and reports; CROP Heads meeting records/reports and records/reports of SDG Taskforce and other relevant CROP sub-committee reports. Reports of any socio-economic impact studies undertaken on the	Document review. Content analysis.

Review theme	Question	Information required	Information source	Collection methods	Analysis
complement each other through coordinated and harmonised approaches.				effects of COVID-19 in the region.	

Assumptions
- PIFS will provide relevant stakeholder list, contact points and documentation to ensure the review process is robust, inclusive and includes the views of a wide range of stakeholders. They will also support the consultants with other needs where possible while the consultant team will need to make meeting/interview/consultation arrangements themselves. Members and stakeholders will be informed, via official PIFS circular, of the commencement of the Review and introduction of the team. Based on this advice from PIFS, we assume that we will have access to all the key reports and stakeholders that are essential to the consultation process noting that Zoom fatigue is building and that this may affect consultations.
- Reliable internet connectivity with key stakeholders is assumed.
- Provision is made for face-to-face consultation with Suva-based stakeholders, subject to COVID-19 restrictions.

Annex 4: List of persons consulted

<u>**Country**</u>

New Zealand
Anna Macdonald, Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry for Women
Rebecca Barnes-Clarke, Policy Director, Ministry for Women

Papua New Guinea
Adrian Winnie, Acting Policy Development Coordinator, Office of the Development of Women, Department for Community Development and Religion

Republic of the Marshall Islands
Rebecca Lorrenij, Assistant Secretary, Ministry for Culture and Internal Affairs
Joy Kawakami, Manager Child Rights Office, Ministry for Culture and Internal Affairs
Dora Heine Jekkar, Social Worker, Ministry for Culture and Internal Affairs
Molly Helkena, Early Childhood Development, National Advisor, Office of the President

Solomon Islands
Vaela Devesi, Director, Women's Division, Ministry of Women, Youth, Children & Family Affairs

Tuvalu
Sokotia Kulene, Director, Gender Affairs Department, Ministry of Health, Social Welfare & Gender Affairs

<u>**Development Partners**</u>

Asian Development Bank
Samantha Hung, Chief, Gender Equality
Mairi Macrae, Gender Specialist, Pacific Department/DMC
Erik Aelbers, Senior Economist, Fiji Country Office
Sarah Boxall, Women's Economic Empowerment Specialist, Private Sector Development Initiative
Madeleine Darcy, Women's Economic Empowerment Analyst, Private Sector Development Initiative

Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
Jane Bastin-Sikimeti, Director, Pacific Gender and Regional Development Section, Pacific Partnerships and Human Development Branch, Office of the Pacific
Corinne Tarnawsky, Assistant Director, Pacific Gender and Regional Development Section, Pacific Partnerships and Human Development Branch, Office of the Pacific
Geraldine Tyson, Assistant Director | Office of the Pacific, Pacific Gender Section
Angeline Fatiaki, Program Manager, Regional Gender Equality and Child Protection, Suva Post

Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand
Tara D'Sousa, Senior Adviser Inclusive Development - Gender
Georgia Grice, Policy Officer, Gender and Human Rights, Pacific Development Group

Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Support Unit
Lanita Waleanisia-Spillius, Gender Unit Manager

Laisenia Raloka, Senior Programmes Manager
Sala Tupou-Tamani, Programmes Unit Manager
Sian Rolls, Senior Communications Officer
Heather Brown, Adviser, Tonga
Brigitte Leduc, Gender Adviser, Tuvalu
Mirriam Dogimab, Country Manager, PNG
Tovi Amona, Senior Programme Officer, PNG

UN Women
Sandra Bernklau, Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office, Fiji
Anne Rehagen, Group Gender Coordinator, UN Women Multi-Country Office, Fiji

Regional organisations

Forum Fisheries Agency
Penny Matautia, Human Resources, Administration and Performance Management
Patricia Sachs-Cornish, Executive Officer

Pacific Island Development Programme
James Viernes, Regional Engagement and Development Officer

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Alisi Tuqa, Private Sector Development Programme
Beth Sergeant, Regional and International Partnerships
Isireli Vulaca, Private Sector Development Programme
Pritika Bijay, Engagement Officer, International and Regional
Teea Tira, Pacific Resilience Team
Karlos Lee Moresi, Programme Adviser - Resilient Development Finance, Pacific Resilience Team
Henry Cocker, Engagement Adviser Sustainable Development/SDGs
Nola Faasau, International Legal Adviser, Legal Team
Calvy Aonima, Legal Officer, Legal Team
Gayle Manueli, Research Officer
Ana Wainiveikoso, Research Officer
Lisa Williams-Lahari, Public Affairs Adviser
Romokoi Jone, Policy Writer, Legal compliance
Noah Patrick Kouback, Programme Adviser - Trade
Jill Juma, Trade Policy Adviser, Trade
Emele Tuilagivou, HR Project Officer
Kesaia Vilsoni, Information Management Coordinator, Library
Manaini Rokovuniei, Policy Adviser – Social Policy
Talei Tuinamuana, Social Policy Officer
Melinia C. Nawadra, Social Inclusion Adviser
Fiona Hukula, Gender Specialist
Filimon Mononi, Deputy Secretary General
Paki Ormsby, Director Policy
Apaitia Veiogo, Directors Operations, Corporate Service Directorate
Zarak Khan, Director Programmes & Initiatives

Sione Tekiteki, Director Governance & Engagement
Henry Pune, Secretary General

Secretariat of the Pacific Community
Paula Vivili, Deputy Director General, Suva
Emily Sharp, Director, Strategy, Performance and Learning
Connie Donato-Hunt, Team Leader, Strategy, Performance and Learning (M/E)
Kolianita Alfred, Strategy, Performance and Learning (M/E)
Neville Smith, Director, Division of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME)
Terry Opa, Team Leader – Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, FAME
Karen Mapusua, Director, Land Resources
Vuki Buadromo, Adviser, DDG Suva Office
Coral Pasisi, Adviser, DG Office, Noumea
Miles Young, Director, Human Rights and Social Development
Rose Martin, Team Leader, Human Rights and Social Development (Mainstreaming)
Joanne Lee Kunatuba, Gender and Human Rights Adviser, Human Rights and Social Development
Veena Singh, Officer, Human Rights and Social Development
Margaret Fox, Gender and Fisheries Adviser, Human Rights and Social Development
Josephine Kalsuak, Adviser, Human Rights and Social Development
Neomai Maravuakula, Adviser, Human Rights and Social Development
Berlin Kafoa, Public Health Division
William Nainima, Public Health Division
Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago – Elisara, Regional Director, Polynesia
Lara Studzinski, Micronesia, Regional Director, Micronesia
Mia Rimon, Melanesia, Regional Director, Melanesia
Kim Robertson, Adviser (Gender Data and Statistics), Human Rights and Social Development Division

University of the South Pacific
Domenica Gisella Calabro, Coordinator, Gender Studies
Avinash Kumar, Regional Programmes Coordinator

Civil Society Organisations

DIVA for Equality
Noelene Nabulivou, Executive Director
Viva Tatawaqa, Management Collective
Vika Kalokalo
Tima Tamoi, Management Collective
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Vanessa Lee-Ah Mat, Co-Convener

Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network

Isikeli Vulavou, Chief Executive Officer, PSGDN
Miki Wali, Director, Haus of Khameleon
Joey Joleen Mataele, Executive Director, Tonga Leitis Association
Tēvita Fa'uhiva, Tonga Leitis Association
Valentino Wichman, President, Te Tiare Association, Cook Islands
Parker Hou, Secretary, Kapul Champions, PNG
Elilai Ngirmang, Secretary, LAIIB Palau

Pacific Youth Council
Miliana Iga, Pacific Youth Council,
Krisneer Sen, Fiji Association of Deaf Youth
Eve Naqio, Fiji Association of Deaf Youth
Koleta, Fiji Association of Deaf Youth
Dagia Aka, Papua New Guinea Youth Council
Anasaini Ulakai, Tonga Youth Advisory Council
Ratu Neori, Marshall Islands
Jofiliti Veikoso, individual representative
Maryanne Lockington, individual representative
Adi Meiva Vuniwai, Free West Papua Coalition
Benjamin Patel, Haus of Khameleon
Maxine Tuwila, individual representative
Sagufta Salma Janif, Young Entrepreneurs Council (Fiji and Pacific)
Sefina Kurusiga, Rainbow Pride Foundation, Savusavu Hub
Nicholas Morgan, Rainbow Pride Foundation, Taveuni Hub
Tyler Rae Chung, Pacific Youth Council
Avikesh Kumar, US Embassy Pacific Youth

Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding
Florence Swamy, Executive Director

Shifting the Power Coalition, ActionAid Australia
Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, Regional Manager

Tonga Chamber of Commerce
Paula Taumoepeau, Executive Director

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Individuals
Dame Meg Taylor, former Secretary General, PIFS
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Yvonne Underhill-Sem, Pacific Feminist Development Geographer, Centre for Pacific Studies, University
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Imrana Jalal, Chair, Inspection Panel, World Bank (former Principal Social Development Specialist, ADB)
Cristelle Pratt, Assistant Secretary-General, Environment and Climate Action, Organisation of African,
_____Caribbean and Pacific States (former PIFS Deputy Secretary General)

Gayle Nelson, Gender Equality expert/consultant

Tracey Newbury, IWDA (former Programme Director, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development)

Partial or full survey responses were received from:

Member countries:

- Cook Islands (Office of Prime Minister);
- French Polynesia (Ministry of Family, Social Affairs, Women's Affairs);
- Marshall Islands (Office of Chief Secretary);
- Nauru (Department of Justice and Border Control);
- New Caledonia (Education and Gender Ministry);
- Palau (Ministry of State);
- Papua New Guinea (Electoral Commission);
- Solomon Islands (Ministry of Women Youth Children and Family Affairs); and,
- Tuvalu (Ministry of Health, Social Welfare & Gender Affairs).

Development Partners:

- Asia Development Bank
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
- Ministry for Women / Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
- TaiwanICDF
- United Nations agency
- USAID

National, regional or international non-government/civil society organisations:

- Belau Association of Non-Governmental Organization (BANGO)
- BirdLife International
- CREATIVE
- DAWN
- Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality
- Family Support Centre Solomon Islands
- FemLINKacific
- Fiji disabled people's federation
- ILGA Oceania
- Kokoda Track Foundation
- Living All Inclusive In Belau Organization
- Magna Carta PNG Inc
- Nauru island association of non-government organisations
- Oxfam Vanuatu, Pacific
- Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women
- Pacific Australian Women's Association
- PacWIN Pacific
- PIANGO
- PLAN International PNG
- Roselyne Akua MAMAS Foundation Inc

- Samoa Chamber of Commerce
- Shifting the Power Coalition & GPPAC
- The Voice Inc.
- Tonga Leitis Association
- Young Women Christian Association (YWCA)

Annex 5: Survey instruments (submitted separately)

Annex 6: Key documents

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Annex 7: Areas for action

In appraising the recommendations made to address each of the themes in Section 4, i.e., governance, relevance, effectiveness and impact, collaboration and sustainability, the review team found common areas for action in the findings and recommendations and grouped them accordingly. These areas for action, aim to provide pragmatic guidance and enable practical and immediate steps for implementation. They also take into account the need to not reinvent the wheel or create parallel systems or processes. Hence the focus on using existing and a potentially future changes in the regional architecture and strengthened national mechanisms, where possible and appropriate. This must be considered alongside resourcing and roles and responsibilities for following through on the actions that are taken forward as the result of this review process.

Regional architecture

The review team appreciates the volume of academic, political, journalistic and development commentary that describes and debates the rise, and ebbs and flows of regionalism in the Pacific and the various reviews of the Pacific regional architecture that have been a part of this story. There has been less but much needed commentary on the how this story has largely been gender blind.[72] Definitions of and discussions on development, stability and security and the ensuing agenda setting process for regional cooperation in the Pacific have only very recently begun to recognise the underlying importance of gender equality. However, the presence and voice of women in defining, driving and informing these discussions and decisions is minimal as leadership at national and regional level is dominated by men. It is understood that another review of the regional architecture is about to begin as part of the development of the 2050 Strategy for a Blue Pacific Continent. This time round rigorous measures must be taken to include women and prioritise gender equality as a regional development goal.

In this report, we understand regional architecture to be a set of regional institutions, mechanisms, and arrangements that together provide necessary functions for regional cooperation. It is a reasonably coherent network of regional organisations, institutions, bilateral and multilateral arrangements, dialogue forums and other relevant mechanisms and processes that work collectively for regional prosperity, peace and stability.

In the Pacific, the regional architecture includes nine region regional organisations[73]. Together, they make up the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) which is chaired by the PIFS Secretary General and operates under the CROP Charter of 2018. Its primary purpose is to improve cooperation, coordination and collaboration between Pacific inter-governmental organisations in providing high-level policy advice and support to the Pacific Island countries and territories. CROP meets annually with Leaders and reports to them on how they are coordinating on supporting the achievement of high-level objectives for regionalism including the achievement of the SDGs. The work of CROP is carried out through a CROP senior management group and various taskforces and sub-committees.[74] Only two CROP agencies are headed by women and women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions.[75]

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[72] Braun, T (2013). Stability, Security and Development in Oceania: Whose Definitions. Politics, Development and Security in Oceania, ANU Press.

[73] Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP), Pacific Power Association (PPA), The Pacific Community (SPC), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), the University of the South Pacific (USP), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

[74] PIFS (2018). Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific Charter 2018.

[75] PIFS (2021). Women of the Wave – CROP Network Joint Proposal, PIFS, SPC and PIDP.

The actions outlined below are aimed at addressing efforts to improve governance and sustainability of the PLGED going forward and imply improvements and changes to the workings of the Pacific regional architecture so that gender equality is prioritised.

Two actions are proposed. They are: *1. Establish a PLGED governance mechanism. 2. Appoint a Gender Equality Commissioner for the Pacific and establish and office to support this role and function*

1. Establish a governance mechanism for the PLGED

This is necessary and recommended to be established through the Forum Officials Committee process enabling Leaders' consideration and approval to proceed with implementation.

It is preferred that the governance mechanism be a Taskforce or Sub-Committee of CROP which would ensure the participation of countries, CROP, development partners and civil society while having the ability to ensure that gender equality issues are integrated and addressed in other priority development frameworks.

The PLGED governance mechanism would be responsible for:

- Positioning gender equality through the PLGED as a standard agenda item on the Leaders meeting agenda.
- Reviewing the PLGED reporting process to Leaders so that it contributes to useful discussion of progress, learning and identifies areas for action.
- Coordination of the PLGED implementation and partner support, and in this process make clear the roles and responsibilities of CROP agencies in implementing commitments in the declaration.
- Identifying ways in which to progress and embed commitments in the PLGED at national level and connect these processes to national efforts to improve planning, budget and public expenditure and financial accountability processes in support of increasing national budget allocations to gender equality.
- Managing the development of a communications strategy for the PLGED
- Managing the next iteration of the PLGED.
- Ensuring that all efforts to improve the sustainability of the PLGED are considered in the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and related plans to review the regional architecture.
- Identifying and mobilising specific gender technical gender expertise to support the above processes.

2. Appoint a Gender Equality Commissioner for the Pacific and establish and office to support this role and function

This is being proposed to support the work of the PLGED governance mechanism but is seen as operating as a separate high-level office to strengthen political will, leadership and ownership of the PLGED from national to international level working closely with CROP Heads, Heads of State and Ministers from the Pacific and in other regions, development partners, the private sector, academia and civil society.

A key role would be to bring the region together around a common gender equality agenda for the Pacific that builds on existing commitments and in this process build knowledge and understanding of the critical importance and contribution that addressing gender inequalities can make to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in our region.

Like the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, it is recommended that the Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner, be modelled on, established and resourced for the long term (up to 2030 and beyond), as an office in PIFS.

The office of the Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner would be responsible for:

- Raising the profile and commitment to the PLGED at national and regional level.
- Socialising the PLGED at the level of Leaders and Ministers in the at regional and national level to encourage PIF member buy-in and support for the Declaration so that they commit to it with leadership and authority.
- Strengthening intelligence and analysis on the opportunity costs for investing in gender equality.
- Engaging with the full range of stakeholder groups to seek direction and guidance on progressing gender equality in the region.
- Bringing together the various regional commitments on gender equality into one regional gender equality agenda.
- Evaluating progress in addressing gender equality against priority regional development frameworks and policy decisions.
- Acting as a spokesperson for the region on gender equality issues at international fora.
- Supporting efforts to ensure that the implementation of 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent prioritises gender equality in all its mechanisms and processes.

Accountability and reporting

1. **Develop a PLGED Report Card to enable stakeholders and political leaders to monitor progress in priority areas.**

As discussed earlier, survey respondents rated CEDAW as the most influential and the PLGED as the least influential of five regional and international commitments. This indicates the value and need for the PLGED signatories to commit to reporting periodically on an agreed set of achievable targets, similar to and in support of CEDAW reporting and performance measures.

The Report Card could be modelled on the SPC/FFA fisheries report cards that provide annual high-level reporting on the status of Pacific fisheries in relation to goals, indicators and strategies adopted in the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries.

It is acknowledged that the introduction of a new Report Card will take time, and a mindset of 'trial and error' will be helpful. The region has successful examples of using Report Cards that augur well for successful implementation of this recommendation.

In establishing a Report Card, consideration should be given to:
- Clear governance structures around the Report Card and adequate resourcing to ensure it can be implemented as a process for at least 5 years or more.
- How the story is told. The value of a Report Card will be in the ability for countries to track progress at a national level. It is anticipated that peer review missions and discussions (possibly led by the proposed Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner) will be helpful in unpacking the implications of the data and stories conveyed in the Report Card.
- Using a mix of indicators at the country level and selected targeted indicators at the regional level. The approach should be built on flexibility, rather than pushing standardisation and comparability. The value of the Report Card will be in not replicating a report of the SDG indicators. But rather, using qualitative statistics and indexes to tell a story.

- In implementing the Gender Statistics Roadmap, countries will develop (or update) gender statistics action plans. Dovetailing with this process to embed what might happen with a Report Card would ensure the contents of the Report Card is of most value to countries at the national level. Importantly it would also reduce the risk of duplicative efforts and additional reporting burdens.
- The process for bringing the Report Card before Leaders would work within existing mechanisms, i.e., passage through the FOC. In addition, consideration could be given to how the Report Card would be tabled at the future annual PIF women leaders' meeting and the triennial. Discussion of the Report Card at the triennial would allow for fulsome discussion with input across governments and non-state actors.

Support efforts to increase Pacific led research on the causes and impacts of gender inequality to inform policy and programmes aimed at empowering women.

Adapt the PLGED reporting process to Leaders so that it contributes to useful discussion of progress, learning and identifies areas for action as well as improved collaboration and coordination amongst development partners.

Capacity

Development in the Pacific region is hindered by development policies that undermine sustainable development and contribute to increasing levels of inequality by not taking gender equality into account. To address this, technical capacity is needed at both regional and national levels to ensure connections between gender equality and issues of climate change, resilience, trade, infrastructure, violence, NCDs, poverty, security, sustainable development, etc.

Technical capacity refers to the skills and abilities required to accomplish work in specific areas of responsibility. Gender mainstreaming cuts across disciplines and requires expertise in international development analysis, planning, design and evaluation as well as an understanding of capacity building. Also key are requirements for analysis of social organizing principles, power relationships, human rights issues and strategic advocacy techniques. In addition, as with work in any cross-cutting thematic area, gender mainstreaming requires communication and facilitation skills.[76]

Addressing capacity gaps would help create the enabling environment needed progressing gender equality in all PLGED priority areas. Three actions are proposed. They are:

1. *Extend the work of the Gender Coordination Group to map needs and gaps in gender technical expertise in the region.*
2. *Build on existing efforts to strengthen gender technical expertise working with governments, CROP, development partners, civil society, academic and training institutes.*
3. *Develop a Pacific Gender Network of experts to provide Pacific led intelligence, learning and solutions to addressing gender equality and use this network to support the role and office of the Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner and to inform regional and national discussions and decisions on progressing gender equality.*

1. **Extend the work of the Gender Coordination Group to map needs and gaps in gender technical expertise in the region.**

Efforts to build technical capacity have been implemented for a number of years by a variety of actors, many of which are members of the Pacific Gender Coordination Group. Current work that should be supported and extended includes the stakeholder mapping being developed. As this mapping will be

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[76] PIFS, (2007). CROP Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake, Nagada Consultants.

aligned with Triennial outcomes and the SDGs, it could be extended to address gaps in capacity in order to lead to a system that supports national governments to fulfil their commitments to gender equality.

2. **Build on existing efforts to strengthen gender technical expertise working with governments, CROP agencies, development partners, civil society, academic and training institutes.**

Multiple stakeholders including governments, CROP agencies, development partners, civil society, academic and training institutes already have considerable capacity to address gender equality. However, the threads of their efforts should be better brought together to share learnings and strengthen overall efforts.

In building technical capacity, the work of gender focal points and national women's machineries must also be supported as they often lack resources and are expected to handle multiple competing priorities. Gender focal points may not be technical specialists in gender analysis or mainstreaming and need specific training to learn about gender before they can effectively engage in their responsibilities. It is unrealistic to assume that staff will be able to undertake a focal point role or apply gender mainstreaming principles to their work just because gender equality is a commitment of their agency or government.

3. **Develop a Pacific Gender Network of experts to provide Pacific led intelligence, learning and solutions to addressing gender equality and use this network to support the role and office of the Pacific Gender Equality Commissioner and to inform regional and national discussions and decisions on progressing gender equality.**

A Pacific network of gender and development experts should be created to support regional efforts to better understand and address gender inequality from a Pacific perspective, based on Pacific knowledge and experiences of the issue across a range of development dimensions, themes and sectors at community, national and regional level and in line with evidence-based practice.

At a basic level this requires exposure to real situations of gender inequality drawn from national and community level experiences and understandings through sharing stories, experiences, research, discussion, analysis and debate and bringing this into both national and regional policy fora.

At the national level, it would consider national commitments and progress on gender equality and seek partnerships with government, private sector, civil society, community and academic institutions.

At the regional level, the network would be guided by regional policy discussions and outcomes being convened by PIFS as the premier Pacific regional policy setting institution in line with the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway, the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, Forum Leaders Communiques and Ministerial Agreements.

This Pacific gender network would not duplicate the efforts of the United Nations or other multi-lateral agencies, regional organisations and other development organisations/partners including NGOs and INGOs working in the Pacific but would provide Pacific-led thinking, understanding, knowledge and solutions, especially those of Pacific women, to address gender inequality and seek to work in partnership with all.

The work of this network would support the role of the Gender Equality Commissioner and inform regional and national discussions and decisions on progressing gender equality.

A revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration

The following suggestions are made to support a process for renewed commitment to an updated Declaration, should this be a decision taken by the Forum subcommittee responsible for reviewing and

taking action on the review. These suggestions should ensure that the PLGED remains a relevant, high-level commitment to gender equality by Pacific Forum Leaders while reflecting current gender equality commitments in a practical and measurable way.

A revitalised PLGED should:

- reflect the current situation of the Pacific in 2021 (for example, the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, the SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway[77], Pacific Platform for Action for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (2018-2030)), the Framework for Pacific Regionalism/2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.
- have a clear purpose and governance mechanism, and clear implementation and reporting processes and responsibilities.
- recognise the diversity of women's lived realities as reflected by age, disability, sexual orientation and where they reside, for example, women living in remote, rural and outer island areas, persons of diverse SOGIESC[78] and young women and girls, as well as the intersectionality of these identities.
- recognise the critical role of civil society and the women's movement in progressing gender equality and includes them in all aspects of the PLGED.
- use language around gender transformative approaches to actively challenge harmful social norms.
- reflect emerging priorities such as climate change and environmental justice, disaster risk response and resilient development, poverty and hardship, digital technology and literacy.
- retain commitments to national policy actions but include the issue of unpaid care work in the area of women's economic empowerment; strengthen language on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and include mental health in the area of women's health.
- Improve efforts to progress women's economic empowerment and women in decision-making in line with commitments in the PPA and the PLGED.
- Support ongoing efforts in EVAWG with emphasis on prevention and working with men and boys.

Refer to recommendations with regard to accountability and reporting in relation to the need for the PLGED to have an implementation framework with measurable targets and indicators.

Refer to recommendations with regard to alignment of the PLGED with other priority regional development frameworks and actions needed for doing this. This includes close examination of regional frameworks in education and health to ensure specific gender equality outcomes in line with the PPA and the PLGED.

The updating of the declaration, should this decision be taken, should be undertaken through a process of wide consultation with countries and other regional stakeholders.

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[77] SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, 2014.
[78] Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression and Sexual Characteristics is now the preferred term when referring to the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI).

Annex 8: Impact of COVID-19

In December 2019, an outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China escalated to become a global health and economic crisis. The pandemic has intensified at an alarming rate and has worsened social inequalities and development challenges in the Pacific region into its second year.[79] As of September 2021, 11 countries in the Pacific had reported cases and deaths.[80] Fiji has reported the highest numbers with over 48,000 cases reported and over 500 deaths with French Polynesia (43,000 cases/513 deaths), PNG (18,265 cases/192 deaths) and Guam (11,293 cases/151 deaths) being the other countries most affected. PICTs as a group have reported over 120 cases and close to 1500 deaths since March 2020. [81]

Timely border protection measures have for the most part protected the Pacific from the worst of COVID-19. While already dealing with pervasive inequality, sustainable development challenges and climate change, the pandemic is exposing fractures in weak healthcare systems and lack of essential services, decimating economies highly reliant on women's labour participation such as tourism and hospitality, and fuelling gender-based violence in a region where rates are already the highest in the world.[82] PICTs are now considering ways to revive economic activity and production, with many facing the grim prospect of recession and the flow on effects this has on their capacity to address the wellbeing and resilience of their populations.

To support these efforts regionally, Forum Economic Ministers called for a socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 in the Pacific in 2020. The assessment seeks to better understand the social dimensions of its impacts on the region; address vulnerability, inequality and social exclusion; ensure human rights, social inclusion, social support and resilience are included in any response; build resilience to external shocks that account for diverse cultural contexts and needs; and strengthen regional coordination to achieve sustainable recovery. The assessment was coordinated by PIFS and SPC and carried out by a taskforce made up of representatives of CROP, civil society and development partners. It is drawn from reviews of international, regional and national assessments. [83] The report brings together data and information illustrating the impact of the pandemic under 5 themes: Health and wellbeing; Integrated pathways for economic recovery; Adaptive learning and employment pathways; Inclusive social protection systems; and Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Systems for the region.

The report does recognize the severe and disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls. It highlights issues of increasing economic insecurity for women both in the formal and informal economy due to lost or reduced employment, including for those women who are already in low paid or insecure employment, market closures, and the down turn in tourism affecting those in the hospitality sector and private income generating activities connected to this sector. It also highlights the impact on women who do not have access to unemployment benefits or cannot receive assistance through formal social protections systems, rising levels of gender-based violence and the continued inability to access health, education, justice, police and other social services.[84]It recognizes the role of women as the majority of front-line workers in health systems in the region and their double burden of unpaid care work. The report

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[79] PIFS (2020). The 2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report, p. 3.

[80] Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI), Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, PNG, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.

[81] https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2021/09/covid-19-pacific-community-updates.

[82] Cliffe, Emma, (2020). *A Feminist Future for the Pacific: Envisioning an inclusive and transformative response to the COVID-19 pandemic.* Working Paper 009. Humanitarian Leader, Centre for Humanitarian Leadership.

[83] PIFS, (2021). Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in the Pacific region, CROP Taskforce.

[84] Ibid. p. 28

acknowledges the need for including women as participants and leaders in all aspects of the COVID-19 recovery and response process.

Policy recommendations are grouped under 5 priority areas over 18-36 months and beyond. They are: Health and well-being; Economic recovery and resilience; Adaptive learning and employment pathways; Inclusive social protection systems; and sustainable livelihoods and food systems. The recommendations are connected to existing regional frameworks and commitments with CROP, development partners and CSOs identified as partners in implementation. More thorough gender analysis is needed to ensure that issues identified in the report are adequately addressed through quality technical and policy advice, and programmes and initiatives that address gender inequality in all aspects of the COVID-19 response in the region.

Annex 9: CROP Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake Recommendations

The 2007 CROP Gender Mainstreaming Stocktake assessed CROP agencies against five enabling environment categories for gender mainstreaming. The report identified where constraints lie and pointed to recommendations for making gender mainstreaming work better for the benefit of CROP and member countries and territories.

This annex summarises those recommendations, which remain relevant today.

Prioritised Summary Recommendations

- A team of two CROP Heads should take responsibility to champion gender mainstreaming for a three-year period to raise awareness about gender issues with regional leaders and advocate for coordinated gender mainstreaming in all CROP agencies.
- Executives and senior management in CROP agencies must take an immediate and clearly defined leadership role in support of gender mainstreaming, including incorporation of clearly articulated and measurable, gender specific corporate objectives for short- and medium-term planning.
- CROP executives should immediately initiate development of gender mainstreaming action plans as supplements to corporate planning documents. The purpose of these action plans will be to improve the enabling environments for gender mainstreaming in each CROP agency. As corporate plans are revised, gender analysis should be an integral and explicit component of each corporate planning document.
- Executives and managers in all CROP agencies should work with Corporate Services Divisions to formalize their terms of reference and clarify senior level responsibilities, targets and reporting procedures for gender mainstreaming.
- Vacant gender specialist positions should be filled as a priority, and staffing should be supplemented in each agency through (at a minimum) semi-annual inputs of contracted gender expertise.
- CROP agencies and donors must engage in high-level policy dialogues that include gender as an analytical component in each agency's core mandate areas
- CROP organisations must work with donors to design and use accountability mechanisms that will reinforce and track gender mainstreaming results in programmes. This will improve transparency of resource use and rationalization of budget allocations for gender.
- Executive teams and individual mangers must be responsible for delivering on organisational gender commitments as measured through standardized indicators and evaluation mechanisms.
- Programme managers, working with Corporate Services Divisions, should integrate gender into the terms of reference of all staff and develop associated plans for a) technical capacity development, b) work programmes and performance appraisal.
- All CROP agencies need to develop strategies to maintain their merit-based hiring principles and increase diversity at executive and management levels of the organisation, working particularly to create more balance in numbers of men and women.
- CROP agencies should develop a system of incentives, recognition awards and opportunities for staff that demonstrate effectiveness and innovation in gender mainstreaming.

The above summary recommendations are listed in priority, and should be supplemented with the more detailed recommendations below on creation of enabling environments for gender mainstreaming. The recommendations are intended to be holistic and complementary, guiding corporate Action Plans for

gender mainstreaming. Each agency will need to develop its own Action Plan[85], but the CROP and regional governments will benefit from harmonized efforts to mainstream gender in the Council.

Detailed recommendations

Detailed recommendations are provided looking at issues of political will, strengthening organisational cultures to be supportive of gender mainstreaming, building accountability and capacity and transparently managing resources for gender in each agency.

Recommendations – Political Will

- The above findings indicate that a concerted effort is needed to generate and foster political will. Awareness needs to be raised about the benefits of supporting gender equality through mainstreaming and/or other approaches. Mindsets and ways of working need to be changed so that gender equality is recognized as a catalyst for development effectiveness. To move this forward, CROP governing bodies and CROP executives must acknowledge that their inaction, and the continuation of the status quo, is perpetuating harm to the women and communities of the Pacific and is having a negative impact on development effectiveness in general.
- Executives and senior management in CROP must take a clear leadership role in support of gender mainstreaming. Those who understand and can articulate and rationalize the connection between human rights, development effectiveness and gender mainstreaming in agency programmes need to be proactive and challenge their peers and PICT leaders to address this issue in a meaningful way – creating enabling environments in their own organisations and working to harmonize standards across agencies and governments. Practical actions will include incorporation of gender into job descriptions, organizational and work planning, programme design and implementation, and incorporation of gender mainstreaming indicators into performance appraisal systems
- Heads of CROP must take responsibility and advocate for greater awareness and action on gender from governing bodies, government leaders, ministers and officials. These decision makers need to clearly understand the opportunity costs of gender inequality and the importance of gender mainstreaming as a dual-purpose tool for development effectiveness and promotion of human rights. Short, clear, engaging media presentations can be useful mechanisms for this type of advocacy and SPC has the media production resources to create these.
- CROP agencies and donors must engage in high-level policy dialogues that include gender as an analytical component in each agency's core mandate areas.
- CROP must work with donors to design and use accountability mechanisms that will reinforce and track gender mainstreaming results in programmes.
- CROP must fulfil their responsibilities to assist member governments to meet their international commitments. This includes i) supporting PICTs to ensure international commitments on regional development, security, economics and environment address men and women's needs in a balanced and equal way – based on current roles and future aspirations, and ii) supporting PICT commitments to gender equality and equal treatment/opportunities for girls, boys, women and men as a human right.
- CROP Heads and their executive teams need to develop a collaborative analysis to ensure adequate staff and financial resources exist to facilitate gender mainstreaming within and across agencies, and in support of member countries' and territories' gender commitments as noted in the previous point.

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[85] Note that there are specific Agency by Agency findings and recommendations in Appendix 4

- In addition, and as discussed in more detail below, CROP executives need to systematically create an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming by establishing:

- Organisational awareness, attitudes and operating procedures linked to gender responsive policy and programming frameworks
- Systems of responsibility and accountability for gender mainstreaming
- Increased technical capacity across programme areas
- Planning and donor coordination priorities to ensure adequate human and financial resources

Recommendations – Organisational Culture

- CROP agencies should work as a group to endorse a regional definition of gender mainstreaming as it applies to the purpose and responsibilities of the CROP.
- CROP agencies should ensure that at least one Corporate Services manager has specific skills and experience in human resources and personnel management, and is responsible for integrating gender considerations into job descriptions, terms of reference, interview protocols and in the performance review process
- Corporate Services Divisions in collaboration with staff committees or associations should facilitate a review of the sample gender-fair workplace policies provided in Appendix 6 to assess how policy frameworks can be improved. Recommendations should be submitted to executive and gender focal points.
- Each CROP executive team should work with governing councils to identify appropriate mechanisms that will, on an ongoing basis, encourage selection of balanced numbers of women and men for participation in CROP trainings, workshops and other activities.
- Where executive/management teams do not have a balance of female representation, executive should appoint managers or senior advisors to participate in meetings on a regular basis to facilitate more gender balance in discussion of issues and decision making
- Senior executives should oversee appointment of managers or adviser level staff as Gender Focal Points. Focal points should be given release time from their regular responsibilities – in proportion to their gender mainstreaming work load.
- Gender Working Group leaders at SPC and PIFS need to engage CROP agencies in developing clear and strategic terms of reference for the working group and its respective members. Key elements of Gender Working Group ToRs will be to work with executive teams to facilitate enabling environments for mainstreaming within all CROP agencies and in line with the Regional Integration Framework strategic recommendations
- Executive teams and Gender Advisers from SPC and PIFS should work together to identify ways to raise awareness of, and profile zero tolerance for, workplace level discrimination against female staff. A priority action should be development of practices to more actively encourage women to apply for professional positions and review of interview questions to assess attitudes toward gender equality and equity. This is approach will mesh with and maintain principles of merit-based hiring.

Recommendations – Accountability and Responsibility

- Executive teams should identify gender mainstreaming as a core business component in corporate planning documents. CROP should coordinate and develop complementary Gender Action Plans comprised of statements of desired corporate results, indicators and feasible monitoring mechanism in support of gender equality and equity. All associated planning and

implementation mechanisms must be designed to support member governments' national and international level commitments to gender equality.

- Each CROP Head should be responsible for annual reporting on progress toward gender equality to his/her respective governing body against corporate statements of desired results.
- CROP executives should work with manager/adviser-level Gender Focal Points to ensure information is shared among all CROP agencies through CROP Gender Working Group Meetings.
- Executive teams should ensure that lines of responsibility and performance indicators are clarified for the executive, management and programming staff.
- Programme managers, with support from gender specialists (as required), should identify specific gender mainstreaming outcomes for at least 60% of newly funded activities in each programme each year. Associated indicators, monitoring reporting timeframes and mechanisms should be developed with advice from the assisting specialist. The 60% target should be assessed after five years in tandem with an evaluation of results.
- CROP agency executive teams should require all programme and project staff to i) disaggregate all data by sex as it is collected, ii) collate information so sex-disaggregated information is available to donors and other stakeholders, and iii) report on analysis of that data annually.
- A team of two CROP Heads should take responsibility to champion gender mainstreaming for a three-year period to raise awareness about gender issues with regional leaders and advocate for coordinated gender mainstreaming in all CROP agencies.
- Recognition awards for progress in gender mainstreaming should be used as incentives for CROP Agencies, agency programmes, or individuals. These awards could be delivered at regional meetings such as the Sectoral Ministers' Meetings, Governing Council meetings, and the SPC Women's Triennial meeting.


Recommendations – Technical Capacity

- Under the direction of agency Heads, CROP Corporate Services Divisions, with gender specialists from SPC and PIFS should arrange twice annual one-to-one coaching for executive and professional staff. To improve the capacity building environment, make efficient use of staff time, and ensure that training is tailored to individual and programme requirements, two-hour segments of individual technical support should be delivered to each programme staff person with the aim of developing a range of skills across the staff complement. These will include:

- Awareness of gender and development concepts and principles;
- Analyses of gender in the staff person's main area of work and in relation to international commitments of member countries;
- Ability to advocate and discuss gender in high level dialogues with member governments and development partners;
- Ability to integrate gender features into planning and programme design;
- Review of appropriate sector or disciplinary tools and checklists;
- Comprehensive feasible indicators and understand systems for reporting on gender related results.

- CROP agencies should explore existing online training resource for gender and require new staff to complete a short course of self-directed study on gender mainstreaming awareness and basic tools in the first 6 months of their tenure. Web-based learning opportunities may be available from development partners, OECD or similar organisations.
- Each CROP agency executive team should mandate semi-annual inputs of contracted gender expertise to cover their shortages of in-house gender mainstreaming technical capacity.

- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat executive should work to fill the vacant Gender Issues Adviser position as an immediate priority to maintain its commitment to provision of gender expertise to its member countries and CROP. Advertising for the position should be initiated immediately, concurrent with outreach to donors and reallocation of in-house resources to establish a secure environment for the position.
- Terms of reference for gender specialists at SPC and PIFS should continue to be coordinated to facilitate increased effectiveness and efficiency through joint work plans, collaborative implementation of initiatives and harmonisation of indicators and monitoring procedures.
- CROP Corporate Services Divisions should develop staff surveys to assess how and in what circumstances staff feel are integrating gender considerations into their work. This information should be collated and used to develop lessons learned and direction for iterative financial and technical support.
- SPC Media Centre should be engaged through the SPC Human Development Programme and the SPC Executive Team to produce short audio-visual presentations on i) how gender equality is instrumental in improving development effectiveness in: economic growth, environmental management, climate change adaptation, ensuring social stability and conflict reduction and ii) a media guide to specific actions and approaches that different audiences (government officials, NGOs, regional agencies) can use to promote gender mainstreaming in their areas of work.
- In line with the *USP Pacific Charter for Women Managers in Higher Education*, the Vice Chancellor University and Director of Finance should work with its Governing Council, CROP gender specialists and the USP internal women's networks (Women Managers and Fiji Association of Women Graduates) to articulate the relationship of gender equality to the USP corporate strategic objectives and rationalize development of an interdisciplinary Women's Studies Minor programme within the Social Sciences faculty.
- In line with recommendations to establish gender mainstreaming as a component of core business, CROP executive teams should ensure that financial and time inputs are allocated or reallocated for priority tasks. These inputs can be benchmarked and monitored over an initial test period to assess the adequacy of resource allocations for

- Development of integrated planning inputs;
- Ongoing technical capacity development across programmes;
- Information dissemination to member countries and development partners;
- Sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis; and
- Media productions to promote mainstreaming.

- Finance and planning staff should work with CROP gender specialists and donors to develop incentive schemes to encourage professional staff to demonstrate innovative planning and implementation approaches to gender mainstreaming. Incentives can include access to additional programming funds, professional recognition awards, participation in international fora to showcase good practice, etc.
- Corporate Services Divisions should be requested to allocate personnel management time to i) revise job descriptions/duty statements and terms of reference for all professional staff – to build time for gender mainstreaming into their work programmes; ii) develop performance indicators and monitoring mechanisms for gender in programmes; iii) work with CROP gender specialists to clarify capacity development priorities and an associated training plan.

Annex 10: Harmonised approach in regional fisheries

The regional fisheries sector provides an excellent case study of the elements needed for a harmonized approach while acknowledging that this is an ongoing process.
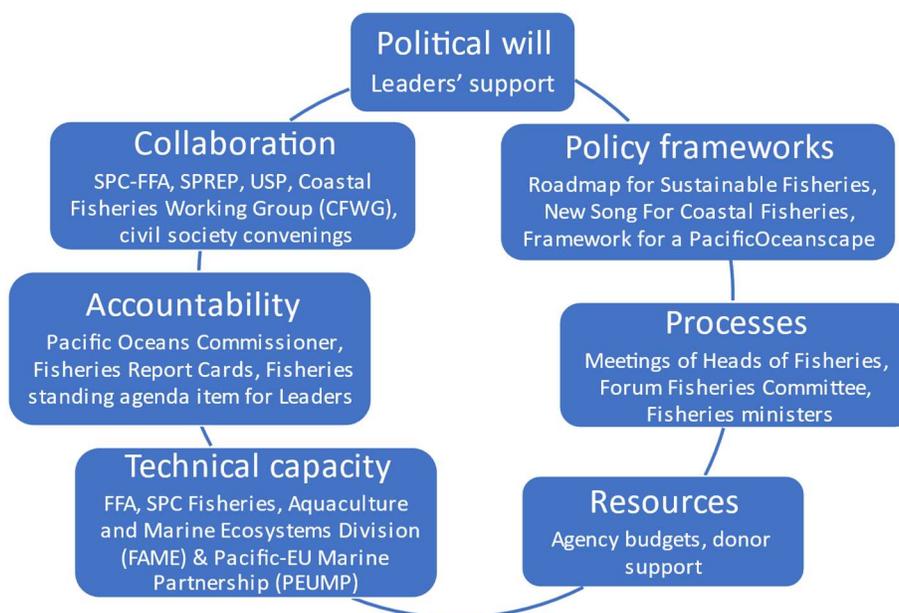
All 22 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) are characterised by vast areas of ocean that are much greater than their land area. The Pacific Ocean is 48% of the world's ocean, representing significant economic, social and cultural benefits from marine resources. However, while the populations of many PICTs are growing, marine resources are declining. The importance and challenges presented by coastal fisheries led to a **complex web of overlapping regional and international policies and frameworks in the Pacific**. Despite this long-standing policy landscape and reporting commitments, **regular regional reporting of progress towards policy outcomes was weak and almost non-existent.**

Since 2015, however, significant advancements have been made resulting in the development of a harmonised approach to regional fisheries largely due to **key enablers such as organisational alliances, formal commitments, political buy-in and timing.** The fisheries sector was able to leverage political interest due to the concern within the region that Pacific countries were not deriving maximum economic and employment benefits from the tuna fisheries.

In 2015, the *Future of Fisheries Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries*, was endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders. The *Roadmap* requires annual Report Cards to be provided to the annual meeting of the Ministerial Forum Fisheries Committee. The **Coastal Fishery Report Card provides annual high-level reporting** through a snapshot that enables fisheries stakeholders and political leaders to monitor progress in implementing the *Roadmap*. The Report Card for 2016 was the first to report against key indicators and therefore provides a baseline to track progress against the ten-year *Roadmap* timeframe.

Also during 2015 *A New Song for Coastal Fisheries - Pathways to Change: The Noumea Strategy* was developed, with similar reporting commitments. Further, in 2016, the first Results Report Card for the **Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape (FPO)**, another regional framework, was published. In recognition of the need for dedicated advocacy and attention at national, regional and international levels, the FPO also

made provision for a key role. The first **Pacific Ocean Commissioner** was appointed by Forum Leaders in 2011, ensuring the Pacific has a champion to provide the necessary high-level representation and commitment required. The Commissioner role is supported by an office, with **technical and scientific support** provided by the CEOs of relevant CROP agencies, particularly SPC, FFA, SPREP and USP.

The synergistic timing of the Roadmap, New Song and FPO Results Report created the opportunity for the Pacific region to align its efforts across multiple regional commitments as well as seven international and sub-regional instruments. This began with informal collaboration between organisational alliances which progressed to more formal processes involving representatives from 25 countries. Another key development was the 2017 Leaders' decision that **fisheries be a standing item on the Leaders agenda.**

In addition, the fisheries sector is supported by **significant technical capacity** in the form of an entire division at SPC - Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) – and a standalone CROP agency, the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). Both agencies have **been able to mobilise resources** to engage gender technical expertise in fisheries. Gender and fisheries officers and advisers in both full-time and part-time roles help integrate gender equity and social inclusion through national and regional fisheries policy action and reporting frameworks.

While CSOs are often excluded from intergovernmental decision-making processes, the region's fisheries system has made some progress by establishing and following a clear regional process that involves the Community-Based Fisheries Dialogue within the Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture, with reporting from there through Heads of Fisheries to the Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting that allows **CSO input on coastal fisheries issues to reach Pacific Island Forum Leaders**.

While challenges remain, efforts have led to a more harmonised approach to regional fisheries including the development of an integrated framework to assess collective progress for Pacific coastal fisheries with wide collaboration of a full range of stakeholders.