IWDA INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
PACIFIC FEMINIST FUND
URGENT ACTION FUND FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS ASIA & PACIFIC

Resourcefull Collective



Change Calls Us to the Frontlines of Oceania

GENDER, CLIMATE RESILIENCE, AND PACIFIC LEADERSHIP

About this research

These stories have been compiled through in-depth interviews, drawing on research surveys, organisational reports and media, and have been approved by the profiled organisations. The primary research and drafting of this publication were led by the incredible research team at Island Minds Ltd.

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About the ResourceFULL Collective

The ResourceFULL Collective is a collaboration between three feminist organisations – the International Women's Development Agency, Pacific Feminist Fund, and Urgent Action Fund - Asia and Pacific. The ResourceFULL Collective works together to expand the community of philanthropists practising gender-transformative giving, and to grow and diversify the financial resources reaching feminist movements in our region. Harnessing complementary strengths, networks, and perspectives to meet diverse needs, the Collective moves approximately AUD 11.1 million to feminist actors in the region annually.

International Women's Development Agency

The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) is a feminist organisation based in Melbourne, Australia. IWDA resources diverse women's rights organisations primarily in Asia and the Pacific and contributes to global feminist movements to advance its vision of gender equality for all.

Pacific Feminist Fund

The Pacific Feminist Fund (PFF) is for and by Pacific feminists and the Pacific feminist movement, responding to needs as defined by them.

Urgent Action Fund - Asia and Pacific

Urgent Action Fund - Asia and Pacific is a feminist fund supporting the safety and wellbeing of women, trans, and non-binary human rights defenders and activists taking bold risks. UAF A&P provides rapid-response rapid-response grants, and co-creates and supports solidarity networks in the region.

This report was conceptualised and managed by the **ResourceFULL Collective**, and researched and developed by **Island Minds Ltd**.

Designed by Veshalini Naidu. You can learn more about their work on their website, veshalininaidu.com

Introduction

Change calls us to the Pacific Islands frontlines.

Every day across the Pacific, feminist movements are driving transformative change. They are strengthening gender equality and climate resilience, shifting harmful social norms, supporting communities through crises, and influencing laws and policies that shape people's lives.

Through our work at the ResourceFULL Collective, we encounter these stories of impact daily. Our members are embedded in the movements they support across the region, working alongside grassroots organisers, community leaders, funders, policy and decision-makers at community, national, regional, and global levels. Through these relationships we see firsthand the depth and diversity of work led by Pacific feminist movements. Yet we noticed a gap: while the evidence of impact is abundant, it is rarely gathered in one place or shared in ways that are accessible to those seeking to support this work.

We undertook this research to help bridge that gap. Funders and allies often ask us what Pacific feminist movement actors are doing, how they are achieving change, and what kinds of funding and support most enables their work to thrive. The answers exist in the daily practice of the movements themselves. This publication brings together those insights – capturing both the evidence of impact and the lived realities behind it.

From our vantage point as a regional collective, we can see both the extraordinary work already underway and the persistent gaps in how resources reach those leading changes. We also see the potential for stronger bridges between those with resources and those whose knowledge, relationships, and leadership drive real transformation.

With this research, and drawing on our reach and relationships as a Collective, we hope to help close these gaps and grow the kind of funding that goes further for Pacific feminist movements driving transformative, sustainable change on the frontlines of the climate and gender crises.



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Executive Summary

A grandmother on a remote Fijian island weaves pandanus leaves into a mat she will sell for the first independent income she has seen in her life. In Samoa, a teenage girl steps onto a stage and performs spoken-word poetry about violence at home – her aunties are in the audience. Across Solomon Islands, young women are walking into meeting halls in all nine provinces, sitting down with men, and talking about what it would mean if women held seats in parliament. In the Federated States of Micronesia, a health worker takes an eighteen-hour boat crossing to deliver HIV testing to an island with no clinic. None of these women would call themselves extraordinary. All of them are changing their region.

They are also drastically underfunded. The typical Pacific feminist organisation runs on less money per year than most Australian households spend on groceries. Of the billions in aid that flows into the region, an infinitesimally small fraction – fractions of a single percent – lands with the women-led groups doing frontline work on gender justice, climate adaptation, and peace. Most of what does arrive comes in short bursts with heavy reporting strings attached, locking organisations into cycles of survival rather than strategy. And the specialist feminist funds that have stepped into this gap are themselves now facing deep cuts.

Yet the results these organisations produce are remarkable. Provincial consultations that shift national policy. Weaving cooperatives that reshape household power dynamics. Funding models designed by Pacific women themselves, where a single flexible grant ripples across climate training, conflict mediation, disaster response, and community organising – without duplication, and without layers of international overhead. The common thread is not scale or sophistication - it is trust: organisations embedded in their communities, supported by their communities, and backed by funders willing to let them lead.

What makes this possible is good giving. Money that arrives without a twelve-month expiry date. Core funding that keeps the lights on – and strategy building – between projects. Room to manoeuvre when a cyclone rewrites the plan. Resources for the invisible work – coordination, documentation, institutional learning – that holds a movement together. Pacific feminists have a name for this architecture: the woven mat, where every strand strengthens the whole.

The relationships are built. The expertise is proven. The results are real.

What's missing is not another pilot project – it is flexible, sustained funding in the hands of the women who have already built the infrastructure for change.

The opportunity is now.

Strengthening the Pacific frontlines

THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS, GENDER INEQUALITY, AND PACIFIC RESILIENCE

The climate crisis does not hit evenly. Global warming – driven largely by historic emissions from high-income countries – is fuelling more frequent and intense disasters that fall hardest on communities with the fewest resources.[1] International frameworks like the Paris Agreement recognise that effective climate action must advance gender equality and human rights. In practice, it rarely does. **Women and girls face greater risks of violence during and after disasters,** carry heavier unpaid workloads as food, water, and fuel grow scarce, and are often the last to receive the information and resources they need to prepare and recover.

This injustice is deeply felt in the region. Pacific Island countries contribute less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet face some of the sharpest impacts: rising seas, saltwater intrusion, intensifying cyclones and slow-onset loss and damage. These climate impacts land on top of existing gender inequalities. Around **two in three Pacific women experience violence in their lifetimes – twice the global average.** Disasters deepen this vulnerability by driving displacement, disrupting health services, increasing care burdens, and threatening food security, placing women with disabilities, young women, gender-diverse people, and those in rural and outer-island communities at heightened risk.

Regional frameworks and national legislation are in place. The Pacific Framework for Resilient Development, Fiji's Climate Change Act, and Solomon Island's Climate Change Policy all commit to gender equity and inclusion. But the organisations doing the most to translate these commitments into action – Pacific feminist and women-led movements – have spent decades organising for climate justice, peace, and women's rights while receiving **less than 1% of overall available grant funding.**

Pacific women and girls contribute least to climate change,



1 Information in this section has been sourced from: Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice (PIFA4CJ), *Pacific Island Feminist Climate Justice Landscape Survey* (Suva: PIFA4CJ, n.d.).

WOMEN'S LIVES IN THE PACIFIC

Across the Pacific, governments have endorsed strong commitments on gender equality, but everyday realities lag well behind.[2] In several countries, **more than 60% of ever-partnered women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence,** compared with a global average of around 35%. Women hold just 8.5% of parliamentary seats in the region, up from 2.7% in 2013 – but still the lowest of any region globally. There are bright spots, however: Niue has reached gender parity in Cabinet and its parliament has at least 30% women, demonstrating what is possible when political will is present. It is why there is considerable value in financing advocacy efforts aimed at strengthening political will for gender equality reforms.

Economically, **women are overrepresented in lower-paid, less secure work** and underrepresented in the formal labour force – with participation gaps of 13 percentage points in Southwestern Pacific states, 24 in Northern Pacific states and 19 in Eastern-Central Pacific. Women make up an estimated 70–90% of market vendors across the region, and their sales often form the main source of household income. These livelihoods are directly exposed to climate and environmental shocks, reinforcing the link between gender inequality and climate vulnerability.

Inequalities compound for women with disabilities, rural and outer-island women, young women and gender-diverse people. Women and girls with disabilities face higher rates of violence and significantly less access to paid work and services. Most Pacific governments have adopted gender-equality and disability-inclusion policies, but implementation is undermined by chronic under-resourcing: national women's offices typically receive less than 1% of budget allocations, and disability inclusion funding sits below 0.15% of average Gross Domestic Product.

Pacific women and girls:

yet face some of the greatest impacts.

Face increased violence during and after disasters

Lead effective responses while receiving <1% of grant funding

Are often **last to receive critical information and support**

Carry greater unpaid workloads as resources become scarce

y seats are held by
ific (the lowest globally)



2 in 3 Pacific women have already experienced violence (twice the global average)

2 Information in this section has been sourced from: Nikki Bartlett and Niketa Kulkarni (Clear Horizon), 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki, Michelle Reddy, and Virisila Buadromo, *Pacific Women Lead: Formative Situational Analysis* (Pacific Women Lead Programme, 2023), https://pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/PWL_Formative_Situational_Analysis.pdf

FUNDING FEMINIST MOVEMENTS: THE GLOBAL NUMBERS

Feminist and women's rights organisations worldwide operate on remarkably small budgets.[3] In 2023, the median annual budget of 1,174 such organisations surveyed globally was just USD 22,000 – this has barely changed from USD 20,000 in 2010. This means that with inflation and growing costs, organisational budgets are more stretched despite the marginal total budget increase. More than half of these organisations work with less than USD 30,000 a year. **Only 15% say their budgets are sufficient to meet strategic goals.**

Meanwhile, just 1.8% of tracked philanthropic giving goes to women's rights and feminist organisations (USD 223 million globally), with over half directed to groups in the Global North. For comparison, the combined income of just three major global anti-rights organisations exceeded USD 500 million in 2023 – more than double what all 1,174 feminist organisations in the survey received.

Globally, feminist and women's rights organisations operate on slim and shrinking budgets

USD 22,000: median annual budget of 1,174 feminist and WROs surveyed worldwide

15%: the budgets sufficient to meet strategic goals

1.8% of tracked philanthropic giving goes to women's rights and feminist organisations globally

The income of three major global anti-rights organisations is more than double the combined budgets of 1,174 feminist organisations surveyed

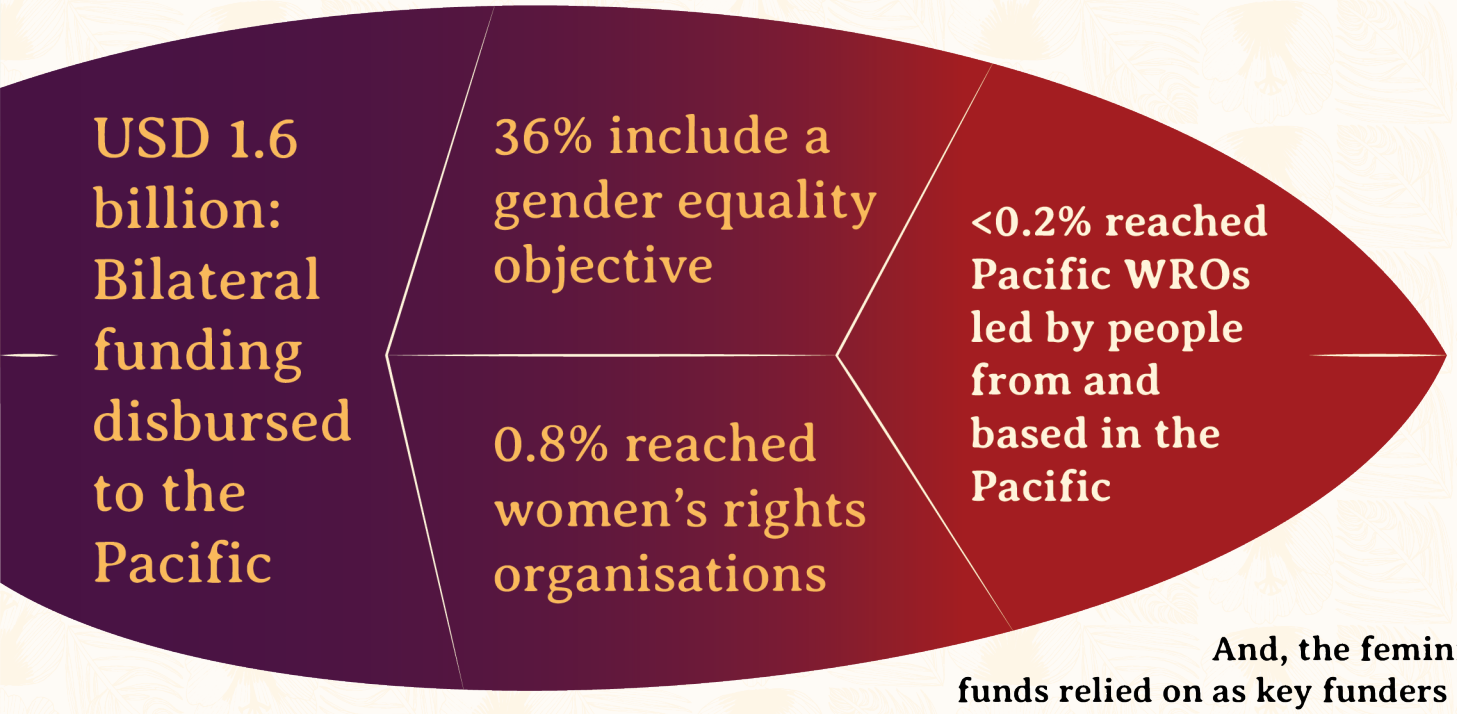
3 Information in this section has been sourced from: Alejandra Morena, Inna Michaeli, and Kasia Staszewska (2025), *Where Is the Money for Feminist Organizing? Understanding the Landscape of Funding for Feminist Movements* (Toronto: Association for Women's Rights in Development [AWID], 2025), https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/AWID_WITM_REPORT_28_10_2025.pdf

FUNDING PACIFIC FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

In the Pacific, the picture is even starker.[4] Of roughly USD 1.6 billion in total bilateral aid disbursed to the region in 2017, only 36% went to activities with gender equality as an objective. Of that, an estimated USD 13.3 million (0.8%) reached women's organisations, and just USD 2.5 million – **less than 0.2% of all aid to the Pacific Islands region – went to Pacific women's organisations** led by people from, and based in, the region. Funding for women's empowerment in the Pacific has stagnated since 2012.

The quality of funding matters as much as the volume. Most grants are short-term: 72% of feminist organisations report average grant durations of 18 months or less, and only 16% receive funding lasting more than two years, undermining long-term planning. Meanwhile, 86% of organisations say funding processes are complex and unrealistic, taking time and energy away from delivering on their objectives and driving real change, while 80% report that monitoring and evaluation demands are disconnected from their realities.

Women's and feminist funds, particularly those working through feminist and decolonial approaches, have become a critical lifeline. More than half (55%) of organisations identify them as key funders, and their grants often account for half or more of a grantee's budget. But these funds are under pressure: 78% in the Prospera network[5] have been hit by cuts totalling USD 65.3 million, with **an average 30% budget reduction projected by 2026.** In response, Pacific feminists have established an independent Pacific Feminist Fund to channel dedicated feminist climate-finance mechanisms and move more – and better – resources directly to women-led movements. A feminist fund mechanism represents both foresight and future-proofing. Ultimately, progress depends on shifting social norms, addressing backlash, and ensuring feminist movements receive the flexible, sustained funding needed to meet the scale of the challenges they face.



And, the feminist funds relied on as key funders by over 55% of WROs in the Pacific are being hit by aid cuts: 30% budget reductions are anticipated this year (2026)

4 Information for this section has been sourced from: Sumner, Cate Sumner (2019), *Where is the money for women and girls in the Pacific? Mapping funding gaps, opportunities and trends: A scoping study summary brief.* Fiji Women's Fund & Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights Asia and Pacific. https://womensfundfiji.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DOWNLOAD-THE-8-PAGE-SUMMARY.pdf

5 The Prospera International Network of Women's Funds is a global political network of autonomous women's and feminist funds primarily in the Global South and East.

Thirty thousand conversations towards political equality in the Solomon Islands



Women's Rights Action Movement

In Solomon Islands, only six women have ever held a seat in the national parliament. Six, over the country's entire 48-year history as an independent state. It is a statistic that reveals a lot about who has power, and who doesn't. It also reveals a myriad of intersecting social, economic, and political factors that contribute to this picture.

But in meeting halls and community centres across all nine provinces, something is shifting. Over the past decade, a movement led by women, many of them young, has been quietly and persistently reshaping the political landscape. And in recent years, it scored a victory that few thought possible.

Between 2022 and 2024, Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM) embarked on an ambitious consultation exercise. Working alongside the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs and the National Council of Women, WRAM sent teams out across every province, sitting down with communities to ask one question: should there be dedicated seats for women in government?

More than 30,000 people took part in those conversations – men and women, in urban centres, and remote villages. These were not token consultations: they were designed to surface objections, hear fears, and build genuine understanding; producing an estimated 95% support for Temporary Special Measures. This was no small feat.

"Our key message was clear: having women in decision-making positions is not about taking up your space," says Bezel Aonima, a WRAM spokeswoman. "It's about sharing and making decisions together. It's not about taking away your seats, because these are new seats."

The collaborative, not combative, framing proved crucial. When the proposal for Temporary Special Measures to guarantee women's representation reached the Cabinet of Ministers, it had the weight of thousands of community voices behind it. Cabinet approved it.

"Getting this through Cabinet is really quite a success story for us," Aonima says. "For us young women, it's empowering. We are willing to go the whole mile to get this through Parliament."

WRAM was founded in 2011 by a group of women and men who looked at the Solomon Islands' political and legal structures and saw what was missing. Not only

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- Bezel Aonima, a WRAM spokeswoman



women in parliament, but women's voices in the laws, policies and institutions that shape daily life.

Since then, the organisation has worked province by province, forum by forum, building a network that connects women in villages with the policy spaces where decisions get made. In 2014, it led Solomon Islands' first shadow report to the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women – a process that forced an honest reckoning with where the country stood on women's rights. And it convened national women's forums that brought together generations of activists.

None of this happened quickly. The Cabinet approval on special measures came after years of sustained advocacy – years of showing up, making the case, and refusing to let the conversation die. It was also enabled by years of sustained, trust-based, flexible funding so that each new challenge that came their way could be navigated, knowing that the funding could be re-purposed and activities re-shaped to meet the demands in front of them. But Cabinet approval was only the first step in a much longer journey towards parliamentary approval – the conversation is ongoing.

For funders looking at the Pacific, WRAM represents a particular kind of investment: long-term, locally led, and rooted in the transformative work of changing minds before changing laws. The results don't always arrive on a grant cycle's timeline. But when change happens – when a cabinet votes yes, when a law passes, when a young woman sees a future in politics for the first time – the returns are profound.

WRAM's influence reaches beyond parliamentary representation. Its advocacy was instrumental in the passage of the Family Protection Act (in 2014), which for the first time made domestic violence a criminal offence in Solomon Islands. Before that law, violence within families existed in a legal grey zone.

Criminalising domestic violence didn't solve the problem overnight. But it gave women a legal footing they had never had, and it sent a signal: this is no longer acceptable.

Across the provinces, WRAM continues to foster intergenerational dialogue and connect younger women advocates with those who have been doing this work for decades. The forums and community gatherings aren't just about policy. They're about building a shared sense that women's participation in public life is normal, necessary, and overdue.

Trusting local knowledge to unlock unlimited potential in rural Fiji



Rise Beyond the Reef

In a Fijian village several hours' drive from the nearest town, a grandmother sits cross-legged on a woven mat, threading pandanus leaves into a pattern her own grandmother taught her. A few years ago, this was simply something she did; a skill, passed between generations, with no market or monetary value. Today, her handiwork sells in Suva and Nadi's boutiques and through Rise Beyond the Reef's website to overseas customers. She has money of her own for the first time. Her daughters are watching.

This is where Rise Beyond the Reef begins – on the ground, in the hands of women who have always known how to make beautiful things and are now, finally, being paid for it.

When Janet and Semi Lotawa launched Rise Beyond the Reef in 2014, they were initially seeking a way to address widespread gender-based violence in remote, rural Fiji, where two in three women face violence. They set out to listen deeply to rural Fijian women's perspectives, and were told that women wanted more agency, to have something of their own. They then asked a seemingly simple question: what if the skills rural Fijian women already possessed, like dyeing or weaving, could become genuine livelihoods?

The answer has unfolded across some of Fiji's most remote communities. Rise Beyond the Reef connects village artisans to buyers through partnerships, retail outlets and online platforms, turning traditional crafts into a real supply chain that stretches from thatched-roof workshops to international buyers. The women design, produce, and earn. And the craft itself – rooted in Indigenous knowledge passed down through centuries – stays alive.

What's happening in these villages goes beyond commerce. When a woman earns her own income, the dynamics inside a household shift. In communities where men have traditionally held decision-making power, women supported by Rise Beyond the Reef are increasingly sitting at the table in family discussions, village councils, and district planning. The organisation quietly advocates for gender equality, gently fostering the conditions for it to flourish.

In places where gender-based violence is entrenched, that shift matters enormously. **A woman with her own earnings, her own professional identity, her own standing in the community can access her power and agency differently when experiencing or observing violence.**

The work doesn't stop at handicrafts. Rise also supports climate-smart farming. Not by importing

> "Too often, community-based organisations like ours struggle to get funding past a middle-layer economy of grant making organisations whose existence depends on maintaining a status quo. Funding rarely reaches Indigenous rural women."
>
> **- Janet and Semi,**
> **Founders of Rise Beyond the Reef**



foreign agricultural models, but by building on what communities already know about their own environment. Women are growing food that feeds their families and strengthens their villages against climate extremes – the cyclones, flooding, and rising seas that increasingly define life in the Pacific Islands.

It's an approach that trusts local knowledge. Rather than arriving with a predetermined programme, Rise Beyond the Reef asks: what do you already know? What do you need? And then it builds from there.

Hundreds of rural women, many of whom had never earned an independent income before, have come to their programmes. **Collectively, the artisans supported by Rise Beyond the Reef have earned more than FJD 2.3 million from handicraft sales – the price of a small private island in Fiji.**

Behind that figure are individual women learning a new stitch for the first time, opening a bank account, sending a child to school, speaking up at a village meeting. The dollars matter, and so does what they unlock. Rise Beyond the Reef takes its name from the idea that reefs don't just surround islands – they protect them, but they can also keep them cut off. Fiji's rural communities might be isolated, but that distance has helped them hold onto deep traditional knowledge and sustainable ways of living. Rise's approach recognises economic agency and cultural authority as powerful in their own right. When rural women decide what has value, care for their resources, and build businesses grounded in their own knowledge, they are claiming their space in economies that haven't always made room for them. It's not loud advocacy – it is grounded, lived, and deeply rooted in place.

For funders looking to support work that is genuinely community-led, culturally grounded and built to last, Rise Beyond the Reef offers something important: a model that doesn't depend on outside expertise being parachuted in. The women aren't beneficiaries of someone else's programme. They are the programme – its designers, its producers, its leaders.

Founders Janet and Semi attest to deep listening and being attentive to the lived realities of the rural women. They say this enabled Rise to land on a model that worked best for its context. "Too often, community-based organisations like ours struggle to get funding past a middle-layer economy of grant making organisations whose existence depends on maintaining a status quo. Funding rarely reaches Indigenous rural women."

"But from 2018, support from the Fiji Women's Fund (now called Women's Fund Fiji) and the Urgent Action Fund - Asia Pacific changed this for us. It gave us stability and enabled us to enhance our capacity."

In a region shaped by gender inequality, climate disruption, and economic uncertainty, this kind of self-determined resilience is not just inspiring; it is essential.

The strength of a woven funding ecosystem in Oceania



Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice

Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls describes the Pacific feminist funding model as "weaving together a mat" – each strand a church group, a feminist collective, a community organisation – that together creates something strong enough and flexible to carry real weight. It is a powerful image, because the funding ecosystem that Pacific women have built works nothing like a traditional grant program: it works like a mat.

Instead of money flowing down through layers of international bureaucracy – losing context and costing overheads at every step – **Pacific feminist organisations have built a system where the women closest to the work decide where the money goes.**

In 2021, the Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice (PIFA4CJ) was launched through a partnership with the Global Fund for Women. Its founding members – the Shifting the Power Coalition, DIVA for Equality, the Pacific Conference of Churches, and other grassroots networks – each brought distinct communities, expertise, and credibility. Rather than competing for separate grants, they coordinate through a shared committee that allocates funds to the people who already have trusted relationships on the ground.

This was deliberate. Traditional funding structures have historically filtered resources through so many intermediaries that only about 1% of climate finance in the Pacific has reached women's organisations to date.[6] The bulk gets absorbed by large international NGOs with few direct community links. PIFA4CJ's model routes money directly to the groups doing the work. Since February 2025, it has allocated AUD 595,000, including AUD 100,000 in rapid-response grants that can be deployed within weeks when a cyclone hits or urgent health needs arise.

The strength of the 'woven mat' effect becomes concrete when you trace a single grant dollar through the ecosystem.

A grant arrives at the coordination hub – the movement-led committee. A portion goes to DIVA for Equality to run climate finance training for community leaders in Fiji, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands. Those trained leaders help local women's cooperatives draft their own climate risk assessments, which then get submitted to national climate ministries. The ministries integrate the assessments into national adaptation plans, unlocking government-matched funding for infrastructure upgrades in remote villages.

From the same pool, the Pacific Women Mediators Network (PWMN) trains a cohort of women mediators in the Marshall Islands. They go on to facilitate peace dialogues around land-use conflicts driven by climate-related migration. The dialogues produce agreed mitigation measures that feed back into the regional climate agenda – completing a circle from local trust-building to high-level policy influence.

6 Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice (PIFA4CJ), *Pacific Island Feminist Climate Justice Landscape Survey* (Suva: PIFA4CJ, n.d.).



One funding pool. Multiple outcomes across climate, gender, and peace. No duplication.

Sharon's own work with PWMN shows how the model scales. PWMN uses the same approach – women from the region making the decisions – to train mediators, draft regional action plans, and embed gender perspectives in national security policies. Over time, the network has joined the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators, positioning Pacific women to support peace processes at home and abroad.

This happens because **the funding structure trusts the expertise already in the room and pays for the coordination time that makes this cross-sector work possible.**

In practice, the committee resources the time and labour of women already working full-time in their own organisations – paying for their expertise in political analysis, community organising, and movement coordination. Rather than reinventing the wheel, the committee is investing in infrastructure that makes everything else possible, but rarely gets funded.

The Pacific Feminist Charter[7] spells out what good funding looks like in this context: multiyear core funding for movement building, rapid-response windows for climate emergencies, and dedicated resources for documentation and accountability. PIFA4CJ puts this into practice with a dual-track system: a fixed core budget for strategic, long-term work, alongside a separate pool for crisis grants, so that building networks and influencing regional policy doesn't get crowded out by emergencies.

For funders, the practical case is straightforward: it's an ecosystem that's already built. The relationships are already in place; the capacity – from DIVA's climate finance workshops to PWMN's mediator training – is already there. Additional resources get woven into an existing fabric, making it go further rather than funding a new program from scratch.

The Pacific feminist funding ecosystem is self-reinforcing: each strand contributes to a stronger whole, and flexible funding ensures new resources are woven in rather than pulled apart by competing grant requirements. By nurturing the weaving of this mat, funders can move beyond the limited reach of siloed grants and back a system that turns modest investments into lasting change – from the smallest atoll community all the way to the international climate negotiation table.

7 The Charter was developed in 2016 at the inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum held in Suva, Fiji.

Pacific feminist movements are dynamic, community-rooted forces for change that are already delivering significant, high-impact results – often with limited resources but extraordinary commitment. Against all odds, they are advancing bold, transformative approaches to gender equality, especially at the intersection of gender and climate change – a reality the Pacific is experiencing before most, and one that will increasingly shape the rest of the world. They demonstrate what sustainable change can truly look like.

Pacific feminist movements are ...

Breaking down barriers for young girls

Brown Girl Woke (Samoa)



Picture a group of teenage girls on a stage in Apia, performing spoken word poetry about things their families don't usually talk about – mental health, violence at home, what it means to be young and female. The audience is riveted; some are uncomfortable. But that's rather the point.

This is Brown Girl Woke in action. Founded by Maluseu Doris Tulifau, the organisation works with girls and young women aged 10 to 25 across Samoa – through after-school programmes, university clubs, leadership training and, most significantly, the arts. Dance, music, spoken word, and performance become the entry point: a space where difficult subjects can be raised without anyone having to sit through a lecture.

"For us, because we do a lot of work in the arts, we tell the girls, 'You're preserving your culture, and you're helping yourself and your family with the income,'" Doris says.

The difference that income makes is real. Brown Girl Woke's support does not stop there – rather than just running workshops and moving on, they connect young women to scholarship programmes, provide business mentoring, and operate a market platform where they can sell their products – and get paid fortnightly. Where some grant makers hand over funding and hope for the best, Brown Girl Woke takes more of a mentoring approach. "Ideally, we'd like to stay on the journey with our girls for at least three years to make sure they've secured a stable market base for their work."

The organisation also runs the Alofa Initiative, which supports young people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities – work that takes courage in a Pacific Island context.

What comes through in all of Brown Girl Woke's work is a team that genuinely knows its community. "We're trusted in our community," Doris says. "We know our context, we know what works and what doesn't."

The SheBuilds program, for example, has supported 50 young girls with technical and vocational scholarships, and visits them in schools twice a week to ensure their safety and support. "We prioritise girls from high-violence environments to give them ongoing support," Doris says, noting that 95% of SheBuilds participants come from broken homes.

That trust has given Brown Girl Woke reach beyond Samoa. It played a role in shaping youth-led frameworks that emerged from the 2024 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, connecting young Pacific women's voices to global conversations about climate and gender justice.

For funders, Brown Girl Woke offers an invitation to share their journey: a young, nimble organisation deeply embedded in its community, blending culture and commerce, art and advocacy – and staying with its girls long enough for the work to embed. It is also an opportunity to fuel a local community to a regional movement; it is amplifying the voices of youth in a way that connects their unique experiences with others across regions.



Reclaiming Indigenous agency through storytelling

Nihi Indigenous Media (Guåhan)

On a screen in Guåhan (Guam), an animated Micronesian hero leaps across the ocean. But this is not a Hollywood invention, it is a figure drawn from the region's own history, brought to life by the people whose ancestors have been telling this same story for countless generations. In a classroom nearby, children are watching *Nihi!*, the island's first culture-based kids' television programme, learning words in their own language through characters that look and sound like them.

This is what it looks like when a community turns the camera back on itself and tells its own stories.

Nihi Indigenous Media, based in Guåhan but reaching out across the Marianas and wider north Pacific, makes films, series, and media content based around the principle that Indigenous communities should tell their own stories, in their own way. Not filtered through outside documentary crews, or framed as problems to be solved. These stories are told with pride, humour, and connected to the land, to the sea, and to the ancestors.

"Storytelling has such a critical role in our movements. To be seen and heard on our own terms, to shift Indigenous perspectives toward the centre – there's a real power **in reclaiming a media landscape that shapes how our people see themselves and what they believe is possible for our future,**" says Nihi's filmmaker Siobhon Rumurang.

Their productions range from Heroes of Micronesia, an animated series celebrating the region's leaders and legends, to films that tackle environmental protection and Indigenous rights through a cultural lens. Screenings travel across the region, from Saipan, to colleges in the Federated States of Micronesia, sparking conversations that cross island borders and generations.

What makes Nihi's work so powerful is the shift it represents. For decades, stories about Pacific Island communities have largely been told by outsiders: researchers, journalists, and aid organisations. Nihi flips that script. It puts the camera and the creative decisions in Indigenous hands. And the result is not just better content; it's a reclamation of who gets to say what Micronesia is, what its values are, and what its future looks like.

And there's joy in it. It's children's television that makes kids laugh while teaching them their own language. It's animation that makes regional heroes exciting. It's storytelling that builds cultural pride and community connection – not as a development outcome, but because that's what good stories do.

For funders interested in how Pacific movements are reclaiming Indigenous agency, Nihi is a compelling example: narrative power, shifted back to the people it belongs to, creating media that entertains, educates, and connects communities across thousands of kilometres of ocean. No development jargon required: just stories, told well, by the people who own them.

Providing trusted care and access to justice for the most vulnerable

Tonga Women and Children's Crisis Centre (Tonga)



'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki

Mo'ui ke fiefia – "life that is happy." That's what the Tongan Women and Children's Crisis Centre call their safe house, a place where a woman can bring her children at two in the morning and find a door that opens, offering safety, dignity, and respect.

The Tongan Women and Children's Crisis Centre (WCCC) has been that open door since 2009, when 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki and a group of advocates decided that Tonga needed somewhere – a real, physical safe space – for women and children escaping violence.

What began as a safe house has grown into a national, integrated support system, which 'Ofa describes as a "one-stop". WCCC's services include counsellors, legal advocacy, health support, and a 24/7 helpline. All of this ensures that survivors who walk through the Centre's doors are not alone in navigating the complex maze of external agencies.

Domestic violence does not only happen where the services are, and so the WCCC's counselling services, legal support, and mobile clinics travel to Tonga's outer islands as well. On remote islands, hours from the capital Nuku'alofa, WCCC's teams arrive by boat, set up, and create a temporary space where women can talk to someone trained to listen.

Three out of four women in Tonga have experienced physical and sexual violence. Thousands of women and children have come through WCCC's doors over the past fifteen years. Some needed shelter for a night; others needed months of support to rebuild a life. The centre meets them wherever they are.

WCCC understood early on that crisis response alone would no change things. So alongside the safe house and the helpline, the organisation works on prevention. Through conversation every week, a radio *talanoa* programme goes out across Tonga: open, honest discussion about family violence, relationships, and what respect actually looks like. In a society where these subjects are often kept private, the act of talking about them publicly – on the radio, in Tongan, in a familiar conversational style – is quite revolutionary.

The centre's culturally-designed *uloa* prevention framework takes that same approach into communities, working with families and leaders to shift the attitudes that allow violence to continue. It is patient work that takes the time needed to get to the root of these beliefs, and for Tongan people to lead their own change for it to endure. Through the *uloa* approach the centre has worked in 30 communities, reaching over 6,000 people.

WCCC has helped drive some of Tonga's most important legal and policy reforms on violence and abuse. WCCC played a central role in the passage of the Family Protection Act, which criminalises domestic violence and made clear that it is not a private matter, but a public offence with legal consequences. It also helped shape the Public Service Commission's Sexual Harassment Policy, formally recognising workplace harassment across government and strengthening accountability.

WCCC has also led long-term advocacy to **amend Tonga's legal definition of rape** – legislation that has now passed through Parliament and is awaiting Royal Assent. This reform reflects years of survivor-informed evidence, careful legal analysis, coalition building, and steady engagement with policymakers.

For funders drawn to the idea of trusted circles of care, WCCC is the real deal: a locally led organisation that looks after vulnerable women, giving them immediate safety and sustained support, without shying away from the longer work of changing a culture from within, and the laws that help positive reforms stick.



Noelene Nabulivou

Challenging discrimination and bringing social justice for all

DIVA for Equality (Fiji)

In 2013, Fiji did something remarkable. When the country adopted a new constitution, its Bill of Rights included protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. **This was a first for the Pacific and is still rare globally.** Behind it was years of work by a collective of activists who knew exactly what was at stake, because it was their lived experience.

DIVA for Equality (Diverse Voices and Action) was founded in 2011 in Nadi by lesbian, bisexual, gender-non-conforming, and trans-masculine activists and their allies. They came together around the idea that in a region where gender-diverse people are often killed, violated, or stigmatised at home or in public life, they need to be in the room when laws were being written. So, they put themselves in that room, talked to faith-based leaders, worked with friendly academics, and wrote formal public submissions to change laws.

The Fiji constitutional win was defining, but DIVA's work stretches well beyond this single milestone. From its base in Nadi, the collective reaches into informal urban, rural, and remote communities across Fiji and the wider Pacific, fostering safe spaces, a community centre, education programmes, and community gatherings that bring together women, girls, and gender-diverse people - those often pushed to the margins by poverty, violence or discrimination.

DIVA's distinction is who it's made up of. It's led by, and constituted from, the marginalised communities it serves. DIVA also facilitates and serves as a secretariat from some of the most active and large networks and coalitions in the region, including the Pacific Feminist Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Coalition - Pacific Feminists Defending the Living Planet, among others. The people running the programmes, shaping strategy and sitting in policy discussions are the same people whose rights are on the line. That changes the nature of the work entirely: it is about mobilising and distinct organising; it is also about efficacy, justice and accountability.

The collective is now conducting the first major research into the lives and rights of lesbian, bisexual women, transmasculine people, transgender men, and gender-diverse people in the Pacific – designed and led by diverse communities themselves. This research does more than document experience, it gives communities evidence they can take to policymakers and say: 'here's what's actually happening, and here's what needs to change'.[8]

DIVA also connects with regional coalitions working on gender, socio-economic, ecological, and climate justice, carrying local voices, analyses, and strategies into Pacific-wide and transnational conversations that shape how governments and institutions respond to development injustice.

For funders interested in how Pacific feminist movements are changing discriminatory laws and driving social justice, DIVA is a powerful example: an organisation that, with others, helped write gender justice and equality into a nation's constitution, laws and policies, and keeps showing up – in villages, courtrooms and across the region—to make sure those words mean something.

8 See for example DIVA's 2019 publication: *Unjust, Unequal, Unstoppable: Fiji Lesbians, Bisexual Women, Transmen and Gender Non-Conforming People Tipping the Scales Towards Justice.*

Providing safe access to health care for marginalised populations

I Am (Federated States of Micronesia)



Years ago, on an eighteen-hour boat crossing between islands in Chuuk, Sincera Fritz sat near a man living with HIV. She was too afraid to offer him water. In the Chuukese language, the word for that feeling is *niamam*: regret.

Sincera's regret changed everything.

Encouraged by her aunty, she attended an HIV awareness workshop, then began volunteering with the Chuuk Women's Council, travelling between islands to talk openly about a subject most people would avoid. At a high school presentation, she was asked to read a farewell letter written by a man who had died of AIDS. "I read it from my heart, and I thought, 'What if this were someone in my family?' Since then, I've continued to educate people."

In 2000, she founded I Am – a name chosen with care. "If we just said LGBTQI, it's stigmatised. But I am one of them, all of them. I am a woman. I am LGBTQI. I am a community leader. It's not only one – it's a group of people, including all."

Chuuk is the most densely populated state in the Federated States of Micronesia, with over 50,000 people (49% of the population) spread across 23 islands, many with little access to health services. Stigma around HIV and sexuality runs deep, and those most at risk – LGBTQI people and sex workers – often suffer in silence.[9]

I Am meets people where they are. The organisation runs HIV awareness workshops across every island and provides confidential mobile STI testing. To bring people through the door, they offer phone credit, fuel support or a t-shirt, then set up private spaces for testing and counselling afterwards.
More than 10,000 people have taken part.

But Sincera doesn't stop just with outreach. I Am provides ongoing services to over 1,000 continuing clients. "I don't just do the training and leave them, no. When we follow up, they believe that we care. That's how you build a good relationship."

The change is visible. More LGBTQI people in Chuuk are entering the workforce and living openly. "Now we see people, LGBTQI, working in government and private sector. They go work abroad and send money home," Sincera says.

Still, she knows there's further to go. "I hope one day that more HIV positive people in Chuuk will feel safe enough to come out." Being tested will enable their access to life-saving medication that means HIV is no longer a death sentence. But the social stigma remains strong.

And that boat trip? "I wish I had offered him some water or given him my sweater to use as a pillow. If it happened again today, I would. Would you?" Sincera reflects, appealing to communities and funders alike to join I Am's journey.

For funders interested in supporting HIV prevention and healthcare access for vulnerable populations in some of the remotest areas of Oceania, I Am is a powerful example of a trusted, dedicated local organisation reaching marginalised communities one at a time and transforming their lives.

9 McMillan, K., Nicholls, R., Rawstorne, P., O'Connor, M., Worth, H., and McGill, S. (2016). *Pacific Multi-Country Mapping and Behavioural Study: HIV and STI Risk Vulnerability among Key Populations – The Federated States of Micronesia.*



Sister Lorraine Garasu

Rebuilding peace from the ground up, in communities scarred by war and everyday violence.

Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation (Bougainville)

When Bougainville's civil war ended, Sister Lorraine Garasu could see what was coming next. "We realised that when the war was going to end, there would be lots of issues to deal with after the war, like trauma," she recalls. And so the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation was created - and right from the start, **it refused to separate peacebuilding from women's safety.** One arm helps communities reconcile after a decade of conflict, the other confronts the violence that plays out in homes. "These two programs work together," Sister Lorraine says.

Today, the Centre runs four safe houses from Buka Island to Bougainville's southern constituencies, alongside counselling centres where men who use violence can "get educated about their violent behaviour." Over time, participants "have been able to realise and understand that violence against women is not something which is normal." This work is deliberately women-led: "The Male Advocacy Program always has to come under a women-led organisation," Sister Lorraine emphasises. But the Centre's deeper reach is in the hundreds of community actors trained and placed across the island. "They are the ones who do the first response in the communities." In remote areas where government services barely reach, that trusted local presence is often the only pathway to justice.

For the first decade, there were no grants. The Sisters grew food, took small contracts, and used the surplus to keep the doors open. "For the first ten years of our life, we did not have any funding support from donors." Australian and New Zealand funding eventually helped build permanent infrastructure, and PNG Women Lead and IWDA now support operations. But gaps remain.

Sister Lorraine's proposal for funders is practical: weave peace and gender work into projects they already support. When agencies fund "water and sanitisation, solar projects, or cocoa projects," she argues, they could include "a component where we go and do human rights training or peacebuilding training, because there are conflicts over water, conflicts over infrastructure."

For funders, Nazareth is more than a post-conflict success story. It is a feminist, faith-based organisation that has walked with Bougainville from war to peace – holding safe spaces for women, working with men, and training local leaders to carry the work forward. Investing here means ensuring that when the next woman knocks on a safe-house door at two in the morning, not only does someone answer, but there is a whole community there to support her.



Amplifying climate justice on global stages

Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice (Regional)[10]

When rising seas threaten your home, climate change is no longer abstract – it's acutely personal. Across the Pacific Islands, women and gender-diverse people are often the first to feel these impacts, increasingly, they are also the ones leading the response.

They do this through collaboration and joining forces to leverage available resources.

"It wasn't just about getting grants out the door. It was about resourcing the women doing the work," says Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, founder and Strategic Lead for the Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice (PIFA4CJ), who we introduced earlier in this publication. Their approach has enabled youth activists, disability rights advocates, LGBTQIA+ networks, and disaster response groups from across the region to join forces in a single, powerful new alliance.

What does that work look like? Communities protecting their watersheds. Elders documenting traditional knowledge that has sustained Pacific peoples for generations. Grassroots groups planning together for the next cyclone season. Feminist organisations building the strength to respond when emergencies hit, all on their own terms.

This matters because climate change does not arrive in isolation. **It hits hardest where gender inequality, disability exclusion, and colonial legacies have already created vulnerability, acting as a threat multiplier.** PIFA4CJ recognises this reality, offering flexible, longer-term support that trusts communities to define their own priorities.

"The gap we were filling in terms of putting the power of decision-making around funding and climate justice priorities really needs to be understood from a Pacific Island context," says Bhagwan-Rolls.

The results speak for themselves: members are convening feminist climate forums, shaping regional agendas, and directing funding to where it is needed. From village-level action to global platforms, Pacific feminist voices are reshaping what climate justice looks like.

From the grassroots to the global stage, PIFA4CJ is proof that when you resource the women doing the work, climate movements grow – and so does climate justice.

For funders committed to tackling the climate crisis, investing in community-driven climate action is critical. Targeted, flexible and long-term funding enables grassroots feminist organizations to advance locally grounded solutions and scale climate resilience initiatives. Importantly, by resourcing feminist climate justice, it fosters the opportunity to transform the structural inequalities that make climate impacts more severe for women, girls and gender-diverse people.

10 This builds on pages 14-15, also about the Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice.

Weaving the whole mat: What the evidence says about funding that goes further

Across the Pacific, women are changing laws, building climate-resilient livelihoods, responding to disasters and shifting social norms – often on budgets that wouldn't cover a development consultant's monthly retainer. The organisations behind this work are small, locally led and deeply embedded in their communities. And the pattern in their stories is striking: when funding is flexible, long-term, and rooted in trust, outsized impact follows. When it's short-term, restrictive or routed through multiple layers of intermediaries, that impact is fragile or worse, stalls.

So, what types of funding work best in supporting gender equality and climate movements in Pacific contexts? As set out in the ResourceFULL Collective's 'Principles of Gender-transformative Giving', and evidenced through this research, it is not simply about how much, but also how funding is designed, who makes the funding decisions, and what that funding makes possible over time, which drives far-reaching and sustainable change.

Funding goes further when ...

It trusts and empowers local expertise

Funding goes further when it starts where women actually live – in the outer-island communities hit by cyclones, and in settlements where gender-based violence, climate change, and poverty collide.

The numbers are sobering. Feminist organisations worldwide operate on a median annual budget of just USD 22,000.[11] In the Pacific, less than 0.2% of the USD 1.6 billion bilateral aid pool reached locally led women's groups in 2017.[12] Yet of these organisations 86% say funding processes are unrealistically complex, and 72% receive grants of 18 months or less.[13] Rise Beyond the Reef's founders put it plainly: "Too often, community-based organisations like ours struggle to get funding past a middle-layer economy of grant making organisations whose existence depends on maintaining a status quo. Funding rarely reaches indigenous rural women." Funding goes further when it removes those layers, backs the people who already know their context and what works, and lets them focus on strategy and building something lasting – rather than chasing small grants.

11 Alejandra Morena, Inna Michaeli, and Kasia Staszewska (2025), *Where Is the Money for Feminist Organizing? Understanding the Landscape of Funding for Feminist Movements* (Toronto: Association for Women's Rights in Development [AWID], 2025), https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/AWID_WITM_REPORT_28_10_2025.pdf

12 Cate Sumner, (2019), *Where is the money for women and girls in the Pacific? Mapping funding gaps, opportunities and trends: A scoping study summary brief. Fiji Women's Fund & Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights Asia and Pacific.* https://womensfundfiji.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DOWNLOAD-THE-8-PAGE-SUMMARY.pdf

13 Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice (PIFA4CJ), *Pacific Island Feminist Climate Justice Landscape Survey* (Suva: PIFA4CJ, n.d.).

It facilitates long-term strategy while supporting agility

In the Pacific Islands, well-made plans have a way of being upended. Cyclones hit. Seas rise. Saltwater intrusion poisons crops and water supplies. Funding goes further when it builds in room for flexibility by design.

The Principles of Gender-transformative Giving and Pacific Feminist Charter spell this out: multiyear core funding for movement building, rapid-response windows for climate emergencies, and dedicated resources for documentation. PIFA4CJ puts it into action with a fixed core budget for long-term strategic work and a separate pool for crisis grants with AUD 595,000, including AUD 100,000 in rapid-response grants deployed within weeks of a cyclone already allocated. This ensures the work of building networks does not get crowded out when disaster strikes.

Rise Beyond the Reef cites the stability it gained from the Fiji Women's Fund and Urgent Action Fund in 2018 as the catalyst for scaling from craft skills to climate-smart livelihoods. WRAM's work in Solomon Islands pushing for women in parliament didn't happen quickly. Years of sustained advocacy – province by province, forum by forum – and flexible funding through IWDA eventually led to Cabinet approval of special measures. That took time.

It ensures Pacific women have decision-making power

The women already doing the work should be the ones making the decisions: funding goes further when it ensures they are.

Traditional aid filters money through multiple intermediaries; only about 1% of climate finance in the Pacific reaches women's organisations, the rest being absorbed by large NGOs.[14] PIFA4CJ flips the model: a movement-led committee of Pacific women decides where funds go, allocating resources directly to trusted grassroots partners. As founder Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls explains, "the movement shifts from simply being grantee partners to the decision makers, including on how resources are allocated."

14 Information in this section has been sourced from: Pacific Islands Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice (PIFA4CJ), *Pacific Island Feminist Climate Justice Landscape Survey* (Suva: PIFA4CJ, n.d.).

It creates ripple effects that multiply impact

In Fiji, Rise Beyond the Reef's whole-of-community approach shows this in action: a woman learns a new stitch, opens a bank account, sends a child to school, and speaks up at a village meeting. Behind that are individual transformations that ripple outward – earnings, professional identity, standing in the community. When funding recognises the interconnected nature of feminist work, each dollar triggers a cascade that lifts entire communities, rather than a single, short-lived project.

"It wasn't just about getting grants out the door. It was about resourcing the women doing the work." – Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, PIFA4CJ founder.

It treats the movement as an ecosystem, rather than a set of isolated projects

Funding the movement as an ecosystem is like "weaving together a mat"—each strand a church group, feminist collective, or community organisation that together creates a strong, flexible fabric. A single well-structured grant can travel that mat: one part funds DIVA for Equality's climate-finance training, which equips women to produce risk assessments that feed into national adaptation plans and unlock government-matched infrastructure funding. The same pool supports the Pacific Women Mediators Network to train mediators in Solomon Islands, feeding climate-driven peace work back into regional agendas.

One funding pool, multiple outcomes across climate, gender, and peace – and no duplication.

Feminists of the Oceanic Pacific stand against a literal ocean as sea level rises threaten homelands, livelihoods, food security, and safety. We are holding back the tides of backlash to gender equality, militarisation, and gender-based violence. The roots of the mangrove sustain our efforts, the reinforced sea-wall provides relief.

A call to action to philanthropy

We invite philanthropy to join us in securing AUD 48 million for feminist movements of the 24 countries in the Pacific.

The ask is simple:

The "Who"

Funders willing to build relationships and trust over time.

The "Where"

To the ResourceFULL Collective who can direct funding to movement actors across the Pacific already delivering impact at the intersection of gender equality, climate resilience, and peace, and/or directly to movement actors.

The "How"

Through flexible, core, longer-term grants that engage with lived realities, create space to adapt, and nurture the movement as an interconnected ecosystem. Read more in our Principles of Gender-transformative Giving.

Partner with us in the heavy lifting of **breaking down barriers to equality.** Together, we can move beyond funding projects to **transforming the structures that hold inequality in place.**

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Photography

All photographs provided by featured organisations.

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PACIFIC FEMINIST FUND

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