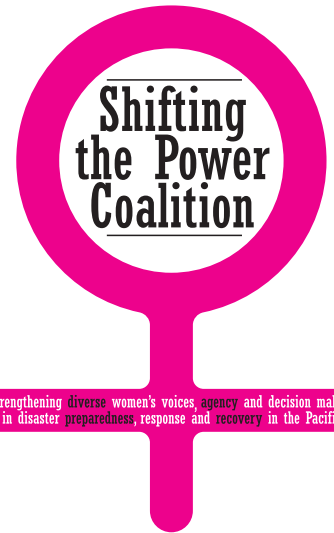
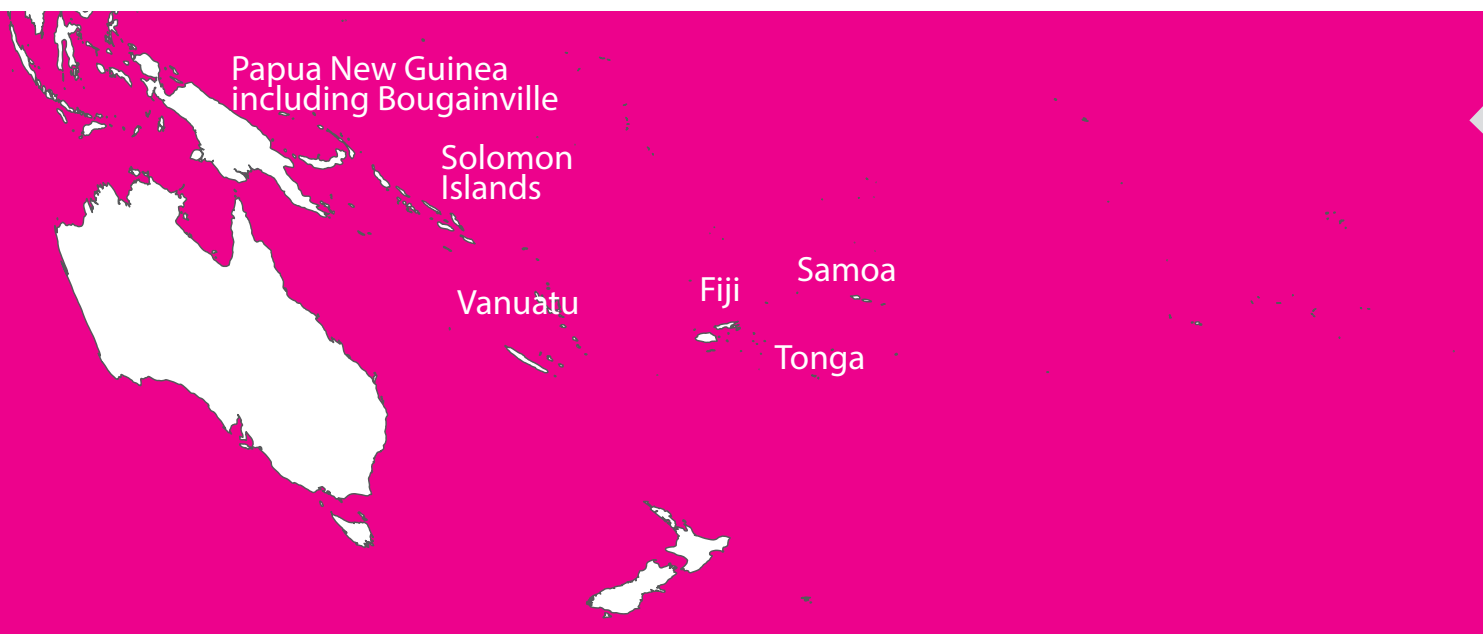


Mobilising Women's Leadership

in Response to COVID-19
and
TC Harold
March – June 2020





(...) COVID-19 has been a blessing in disguise for women of Bougainville because it has brought us together. We have meetings regularly. It has brought us together to re-look at the terms of reference for the technical working group on women, peace and security. In Bougainville we have Bougainville action plan on women, peace and security. We have that plan which was endorsed by our government in 2013. It has called for actions from different actors. The Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation (committed to) establishing safe houses for women because of the high incidences of gender-based violence especially in post-conflict Bougainville. That has come about already. As we are looking at reviewing the terms of reference, we are seeing now how we must be up to date right now what is happening in Bougainville especially with the COVID-19 situation
Agnes Titus, Bougainville

The Coalition recognises the vital need for the inclusion of women with disabilities in leadership as well as supporting LGBTQI rights in response efforts. An intersectional approach that acknowledges and addresses gender and intersecting inequalities is crucial in all crises response, from climate change to COVID19.



A key recommendation from the Coalition from the earliest onset of COVID19 has been that the pandemic **does not discriminate, nor should our response.**

All Coalition members have adapted their work to support prevention, awareness raising, preparedness actions and advocacy. The Coalition is part of the Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster and has tabled key recommendations from across the 6 member countries:

There were 19 awareness sessions in total conducted since March 2020 on COVID-19 conducted in several locations and communities in North and Central Bougainville, reaching 591 people in total
Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation

This is supported by a focal point network which documents local impacts and has mobilised locally with the support of emergency response grants. Through the Coalition's emergency grant support, coalition members are responding to economic and food security priorities among their constituencies. It is evident that development assistance as well as crisis response must be more accountable to women, who are often the first responders as well as connected to local and community decision-making processes. The Coalition members in Solomon

Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga, including the Pacific Disability Forum, have also responded to the impact of TC Harold, alongside COVID-19 prevention and response efforts:



Our members are living on the edge. We want to feed the children; we want our members to be able to purchase sanitary pads when they need it. We want our members and their families to eat a daily balanced diet. We want them to have a mask available to wear it when they need it
Sabrina Brown, CEO Vanuatu Young Women for Change

Redesigning the Table in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Response

As a result of advocacy by Coalition member, the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation, the Bougainville Regional Disaster Committee has appointed a women's team:

I can tell you those who are decision making have taken into account our call and now Bougainville, the state of emergency – the controllers – they included a team of women – and we are team number 11. We were seeing that these things were really not meeting our needs. A couple of months passed and then they saw the need of including women and that is how team women came up. I can tell you a positive thing that I noticed when we were included in the committee – the two of us. We spoke for the need to include women in the design table of this disaster management or disaster recovery. I could see that you could hear a pin drop because it was the first time for these men who normally go to these meetings to hear that because we stressed the fact that women's needs are actually different from men's needs and so we have to take these things into account when we are preparing for disaster and recovery. So, I know that these things have come now to the table of the decision makers

Agnes Titus, Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation

The collective advocacy of Coalition members in Fiji and Vanuatu, as well as the Pacific Disability Forum, has resulted in the inclusion of gender equality and social inclusion language in disaster management policies. An important development has also been the use of sign language interpreters in televised government updates.

In Fiji, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy specifically notes “Women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risks and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive DRR policies, plans and programmes; and measures for adequate capacity building need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as build their capacities for alternate livelihood means in post-disaster situations”. The policy is also inclusive of human rights approaches to include the LGBTQI community and persons with disabilities.

According to Adi Ana Ramatai who coordinates a divisional wide network of rural women through the Bua Soqosoqo Vakamarama the response to COVID19 as well as recent disasters, including TC Harold, must address the gaps in decision making and engagement with women who are concerned about the lack of clean water supply, prevention measures for not only COVID19 but also dengue, typhoid as well as leptospirosis.

Supporting Women-Led Responses

TC Harold was a clear reminder that humanitarian crises situations often feature multiple crises so resilience must be understood across these dimensions and the multiple impacts on communities. In Vanuatu, where women are dealing with multiple threats, members of Women Wetem Weta (Women’s Weather Watch or WWW) worked closely with the Vanuatu Ministry of Health (MoH) to develop an SMS in the local language Bislama. The message, in simple non-technical language, was sent to more than 77,148 people on five islands across the Digicel mobile network – directly reaching more than one quarter of the Vanuatu population:



We have been using the different media platforms that we have with FemLINKpacific, using our community radio station femTALK89fm, social media pages, SMS messages and Women's Weather Watch Viber group to disseminate relevant information, awareness programs on health tips and latest updates on COVID-19 and most importantly informing on how assistance could be accessed and other assistance

online questionnaire respondent

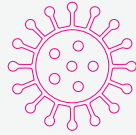
The Coalition has proven successful in elevating the voice and agency of diverse Pacific women in decision-making processes. By supporting women leaders to share experiences, collaborate and amplify recommendations the Coalition has enabled women to inform disaster preparedness, response and recovery processes at national and community level.

Drawing on the technical expertise of ActionAid Australia, the Steering Committee of the Coalition has collectively developed and adopted emergency funding criteria to support local women's leadership in response to an emergency ranging from increasing human resource capacity and/or specific activities led by women and/or focused on responding to the specific needs and protection of diverse women in response to cyclones, floods, disease outbreak, earthquake, food crisis other emergency that affects a significant part of the population and has been declared by the Government as a national emergency.

The Shifting the Power Coalition Emergency Grant mechanism has also provided a much-needed avenue for coalition members to quickly mobilise humanitarian funding in times of crisis. Small grants of up to AUD \$5,000 are available for members to organise at the community, local and national level to enable them to take the lead in ensuring that the needs and interests of women and girls area addressed in long-term response and recovery efforts.

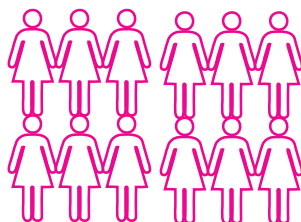
As a result of the funding support from the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Programme, since 2019, a total of AUD \$36,500 has been disbursed to 7 Coalition partners in response to the Samoa measles epidemic, COVID-19 and TC Harold emergency response. The grants provided from December to June are directly benefitting 162 women including women with disabilities, rural women, young women, traditional women leaders, and LBTQI community representatives. As many of the emergency response initiatives are

supporting women and their families, it is anticipated that an additional 1620 family members including children are benefitting from the assistance.



Relief supplies were provided by Transcend Oceania for 10 women leaders from youth and disabled persons groups as well as farmers, market vendors and rural women networks, representing more than 1600 women from across the three provinces of Vanua Levu. The supplies were identified through communication outreach during and after the COVID-19 lockdown in Vanua Levu. Women leaders had been assisted with communications funds to be able to stay in touch with Transcend Oceania. The assessment highlighted the impact of COVID19 on the tourism sector. With the tourism tap turned off, unemployment has soared while GDP has plummeted. In Fiji the national airline laid off 775 employees and souvenir business Jacks of Fiji laid off 500.

In Vanuatu 70% of tourism workers have lost their jobs. Women leaders have reported that many laid-off workers are now returning to their village homes without an income. Food security is a priority and while food gardens are flourishing without cash families cannot afford grocery items from supermarkets including soap, sugar as well as sanitary items.



Driving Accountability to Women's Rights

Coalition members in Vanuatu - **ActionAid Vanuatu** and **Vanuatu Young Women for Change** conducted a Training of Trainers Workshop in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The workshop was part of the AHP Disaster Ready Program and built on current prevention and preparedness work in local communities. The training was an opportunity to respond to what are the key concerns and recommendations that 24 women leaders are responding to through the Women I TokTok Tugetha (WITT), Woman I Wetem Weta (WWW) and the Vanuatu Young Women for Change and Sunshine WITT ensuring the specific leadership and recommendations of women with disabilities are integrated in all response activities as well as identify what is needed scale up work on supporting their leadership and agency

Following the 2019 Regional Training of Trainers on Women's Leadership and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action, local workshops led by YWCA of Papua New Guinea, Transcend Oceania in Fiji, ActionAid Vanuatu and Vanuatu Young Women for Change are building the humanitarian leadership of a core group of 30 women leaders, young women and women with disabilities who represent more than 6000 women from local clubs and networks to become part of national efforts to shift the power in disaster management and humanitarian action.

Feminist Collaboration

ActionAid Australia (AAA) as a women's rights focused humanitarian organisation supports Coalition members to engage in the humanitarian system is demonstrating a strategic role within the feminist partnership. It is ensuring Coalition members collectively realise a humanitarian and disaster management system where there is equal and meaningful engagement in humanitarian coordination by national, community-based and women's rights organisations in the cluster system. In doing so AAA is also demonstrating to other international

actors how feminist practice in programme partnerships can result in a transformation of the humanitarian system including local and national disaster management:

The 3 Coalition members in Vanuatu conducted the first local women-led joint Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) providing a safe space for 167 Women from East and West Malo, including young women and women with disabilities to share firsthand how TC Harold brought destruction to their communities, as well as provide recommendations for a localised response that will put women's protection of their safety and dignity at the centre. The three-day assessment in Malo focused on supporting deeper contextual analysis and supporting the agency of women from affected communities in driving response efforts rather than being passive recipients of aid.



Integrating the Climate Change Agenda:

ActionAid has developed a Gender Responsive Framework for Responding to climate change and related disasters, which promotes an integrated approach to climate change, disasters and gender equality, specifically promoting four key actions: Supporting women's participation in policy spaces at all levels; Resourcing women's networks as key platforms for women's collective influence; Valuing women's localised and accumulated knowledge alongside scientific knowledge; and Shifting gender norms across all domains. This is designed to bridge the peace, humanitarian and development nexus and take a more targeted approach rather than one that silos women's experiences.

The following Key Protection Principles guide the Coalition in our engagement with the community:

Do not cause further harm or create new risk of harm.

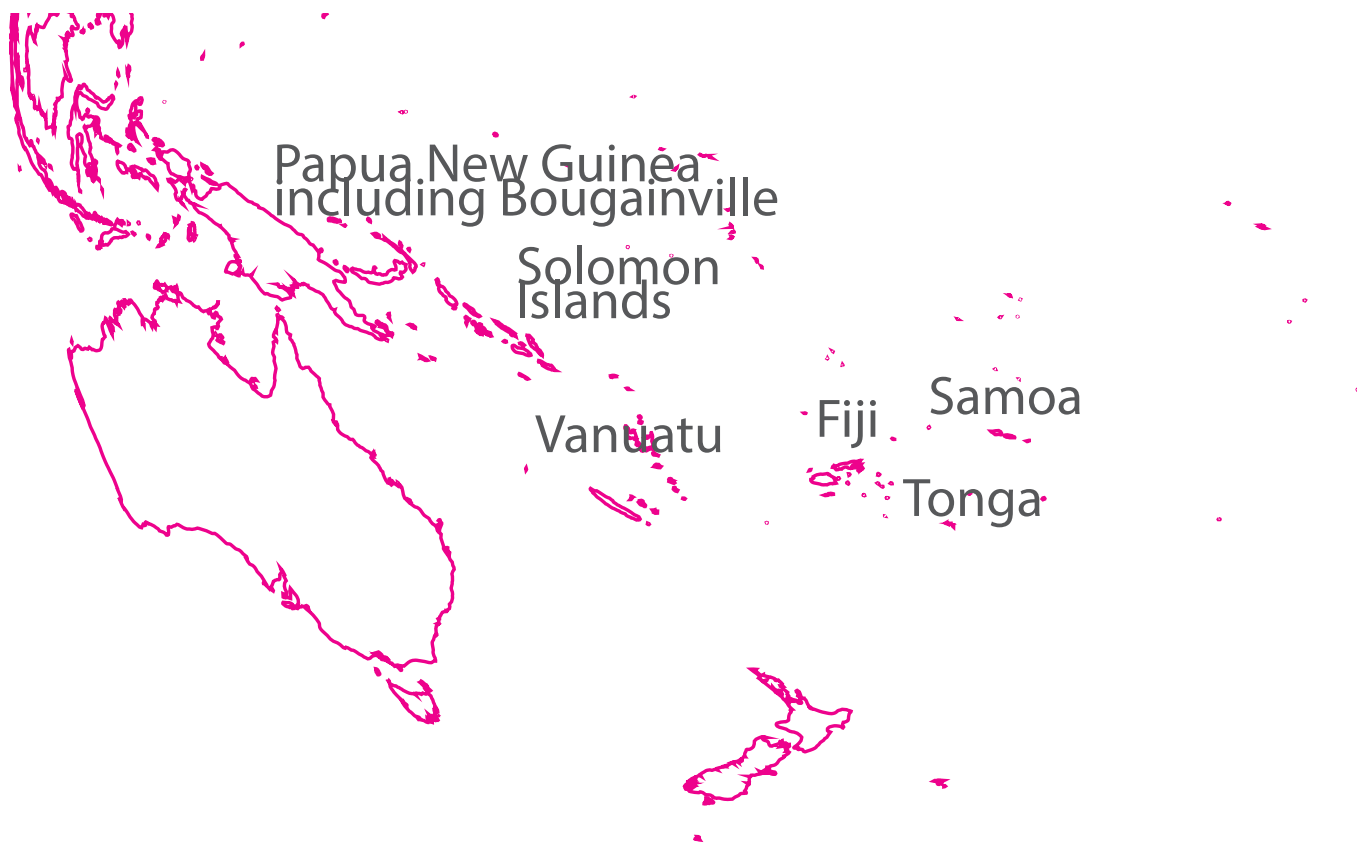
Non-discriminatory access to assistance and services.

Identify the most vulnerable and their specific needs.

Safe and dignified access to basic services.

Community participation and empowerment.

Strengthen positive community protection capacities.



About Shifting the Power Coalition



The Shifting the Power Coalition was formed following the aftermath of Cyclone Pam (2015) in Vanuatu and Cyclone Winston (2016) in Fiji. It is the only regional alliance, with 13 women-led civil society organisations, from six Pacific Forum Member Countries, focused on strengthening the collective power, influence and leadership of diverse Pacific women in responding to disasters and climate change. Members of the Coalition include the gender focal points of GPPAC Pacific. ActionAid Australia as a women's rights focused humanitarian organisation supports Coalition members to engage in the humanitarian system. Since 2018, DFAT's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development has resourced efforts to strengthen diverse women's leadership in humanitarian action through the Shifting the Power Coalition project which is linked to the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration.

Since September 2019 we have been a member of the Feminist Humanitarian Network

The Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN) is a global network of women leaders committed to a transformed humanitarian system that promotes a feminist agenda. Its membership is comprised of women's rights organisations and networks driving change in humanitarian contexts in the global South, INGOs, and individuals.



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Watch our film:

 <https://act.ai/33QkUqu>

Shifting the Power Coalition is a member of the Feminist Humanitarian Network:

 feministhumanitariannetwork.org

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