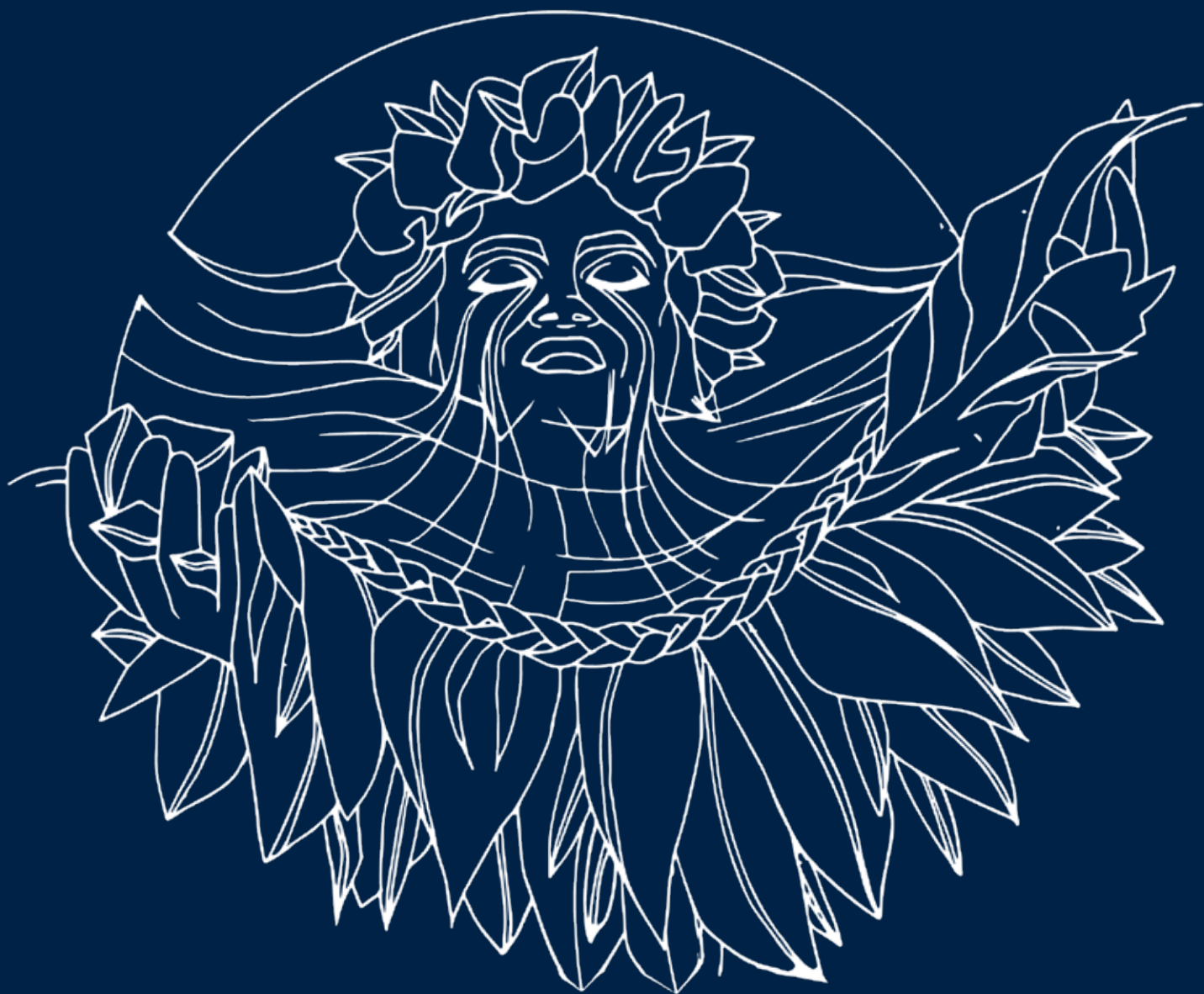# CREATING EQUITABLE SOUTH-NORTH PARTNERSHIPS: NURTURING THE VĀ AND VOYAGING THE AUDACIOUS OCEAN TOGETHER

A Case Study in the Oceanic Pacific
35 women leaders from the Global South courageously share their perspectives of engagement with Global North organisations 1990-2020

'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Louise Guttenbeil-Likiliki
OCTOBER 2020

WE SWEAT AND CRY SALT WATER,
SO WE KNOW THAT THE OCEAN
IS REALLY IN OUR BLOOD

TEAIWA (2008)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

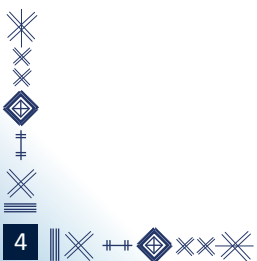Each section of this report commences with a quote from conversations with Oceanic researchers, academics, feminists, activists and research participants. Each quote represents a wave of Oceania in its diversity and audacity. It is a strategy employed in this research paper to not only acknowledge the voices of the 35 women who took part in the research, but to also acknowledge the women of Oceania in all their diversities who have shared, expressed and demanded decolonized ways of working over the last 30 years.

TRADITIONAL GREETINGS FROM THE AUTHOR

MĀLŌ E LELEI;

TALOFA LAVA;

NI SA BULA VINAKA;

TĒNĀ KOUTOU, TĒNĀ KOUTOU, TĒNĀ KOUTOU KATOA

'OKU OU KOLE KEU HUFANGA ATU HE NGAAHI FAKATAPU 'O E TAHI 'OSENIA, KAE 'ATAA KEU FAKAHOKO ATU HA KI'I LAVELAVE FEKAU'AKI PEA MO AU.

I share with you Oceanic greetings that are embedded in who I am and why I am.

The first two greetings are from Tonga and Samoa, the lands of my immediate ancestors, specifically Talau and Fungamisi Vava'u, Vaini Tongatapau and Samusu Aleipata in Samoa and Pagopago.

The third greeting is from Fiji, where part of my first name orginates: 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka. Levuka being the first Capital of Fiji and a land where my great grandfather spent a significant part of his life. My entire name meaning Love-To-Levuka.

The fourth greeting is from Aotearoa, otherwise known as New Zealand. Aotearoa is my place of birth and the land where my fonua (placenta) is buried. The greeting is in the language of the Indigenous Maori of Aotearoa and the people whom I acknowledge as the tangata whenua of Aotearoa and equal partners of the Treaty of Waitangi. The last part of my greeting is an acknowledgement and ode of respect to Oceania, taking refuge in its vastness to present the findings of this research.

I am an Oceanic feminist researcher and storyteller.

My primary role in this research was to navigate women's experiences and perspectives - which meant that, at times, I have had to dive in as far as I could, as far as the women would allow me, into the deepest ocean basin of the entire world: Pacific Ocean. My own experiences and perspectives did place me at the heart of this research, with one goal: to reimagine the way we move forward with Global North partners, to create a voyage that validates the voices in this research and one that enables the genuine creation of equitable partnerships and empowered relationships.
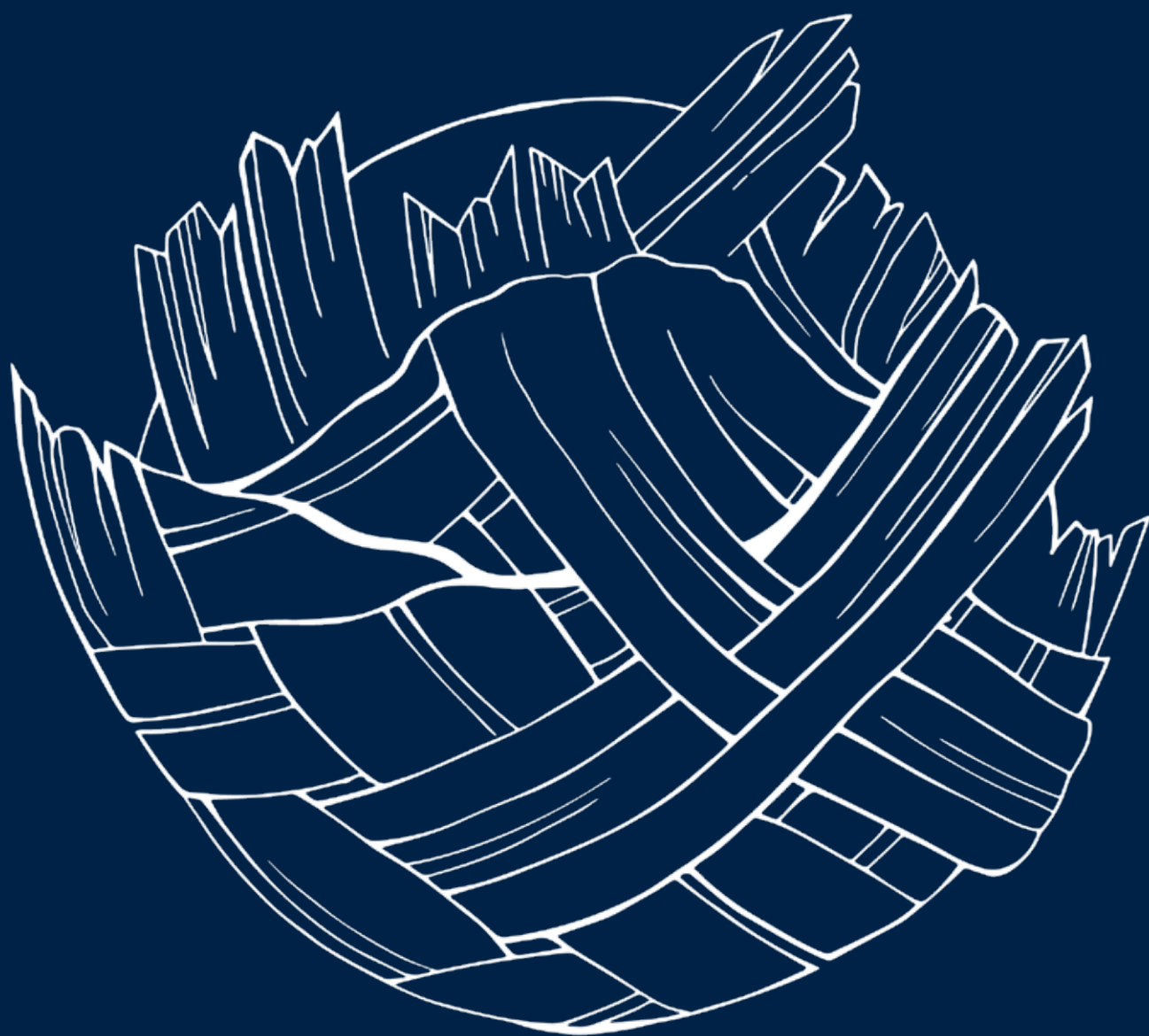
"I know what I need to do in my country and how to do it because this is my land, my people. But sometimes trying to convey our reality to people sitting somewhere in New York or Europe is like being in a constant email—war and most of the time I feel like they don't believe what I am reporting to them."

Research participant

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oceanic (Pacific) women's rights actors have insightful working knowledge and intimate lived experiences of engaging with the Global North. This research report navigates through this knowledge and experience by capturing, amplifying and representing their voices as they share their perspectives on the role of Global North organisations and the interactions they have had with them over the last 30 years.[1] A total of 35 Pacific Island women who have been working in the women's rights movement space over the last three decades agreed to participate in this research 'talanoa' (conversations). [2] The talanoa focused on examining three key research questions:

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

One
What perspectives do Pacific women's rights movements and actors have on the engagement of Global North organisations with movements in the region to date?

Two
What role do Pacific women's rights movements and actors[3] propose for Global North organisations engaging with movements into the future?

Three
What are the key elements of supportive, equitable and decolonized models of engagement between Global South women's rights movements and Global North organisations suggested by previous research and research informants?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

Indigenous Maori researcher and academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us that research using western frameworks "continues relentlessly and brings with it a new wave of exploration, discovery, exploitation and appropriation. Researchers enter communities armed with goodwill in their front pockets and patents in their back pockets… No matter how appalling their behaviours, how insensitive and offensive their personal actions may be, their acts and intentions are always justified as being for the 'good of mankind.' Research of this nature on indigenous peoples is still justified by the ends rather than the means" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

The key questions developed for this research, combined with the research methodology used, are a bold attempt to move away from this practice and embrace indigenous and decolonized ways of accessing information, sharing, documenting and building knowledge.

The research methodology used was the indigenous approach of talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006, Fa'avae, 2019), interwoven with a Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) framework (APWLD, 2017). Both guided the processes of the indigenous led research and the collection of talanoa from the participants. The talanoa methodology included the use of individual interviews, focus groups and collective story mapping to develop focused accounts of three Pacific organisations and one Pacific regional network.

1 Global North organisations are defined as organisations based in OECD countries that engage in development work. These may include International NGOs, bilateral donors, multilateral donors, UN Agencies and managing contractors amongst others.
2 See Annex 2: Talanoa Research Methodology: Decolonizing Knowledge.
3 Actors meaning activists, advocates and Women's Human Rights Defenders.

This report presents the findings from the talanoa, where participants' knowledge and experiences are navigated throughout to ensure that their voices are present and have active participation. The women were encouraged to story their experiences with the Global North over three decades: 1990-1999, 2000-2009 and 2010-2019. Annexed to this report are accounts relating to three major sub regions of the Pacific: Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) in the South West Pacific, Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) in the Northern Pacific, and Punanga Tauturu Inc (PTI) in the East Pacific. These three accounts reflect the generational perspectives and experiences of women's rights actors over the three decades. A fourth regional account is also presented combining the outcomes of the last two regional meetings of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women (PWNAVW).

An Expressions of Power analysis was applied to the qualitative findings with the key entry points being power-over (dominance vs subordinance), power-with (shared power), power-to (power to make a positive difference) and power-within (self determination and autonomy) to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences in their engagement with Global North organisations (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). The talanoa with 35 women exposes power as either enabling or disabling South-North equitable partnerships.   Power in the form of domination, control and authority of North over South resulting in tensions and unequal power struggles and the other power in the form of self-determination, autonomy and decolonization resulting in South-North equitable partnerships. The metaphoric use of the phrase Audacity of the Ocean, coined by Dr Yvonne Te Ruki-Rangi-o-Tangaroa Underhill-Sem, is used to reconcile the tensions of the unequal power struggles present in the talanoa and provide trajectories in moving forward in the form of a proposed Engagement Model for Equitable South-North Partnerships and Empowered Relationships moving forward (Underhill Sem, 2020).

INFORMED CONSENT

The research undoubtedly posed risks for participants where for example, the fear of losing future funding or support from Global North organisations was perceived as an impediment to participants sharing their honest perceptions. Participants' willingness to be vulnerable and courageous in their talanoa - free from fear of retaliation by Global North organisations - should therefore be acknowledged and respected within this context and handled with care. All 35 participants provided oral informed consent to participate in the study. They knew they could withdraw from the research at any time. They understood their identity would be kept confidential as much as possible.

The hope is that this collective, honest talanoa from 35 women's rights actors across the Oceanic Pacific will result in the co-creation and co-design of a vaka (double-hull canoe) that can set sail on a decolonized voyage that is built on mutual solidarity and understanding, and one that acknowledges and validates the voices represented in this report.

KEY FINDINGS

The research findings highlight both the positive and negative impacts of Global North organisations on Global South organisations and women's rights actors in 16 Pacific Island countries: Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (Pohnpei), Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia (Nouméa), Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna and West Papua. The research has documented participants' thoughts, observations and feelings through their individual and organisational experiences; some positive, some challenging and some mixed. These experiences

include perspectives on the design and development of projects, programs and initiatives, the various types of funding and support provided, the processes to access funds and technical assistance, the implementation of activities, monitoring and evaluation requirements and reporting mechanisms. Participants did provide positive reflections, particularly where Global North support has been critical in the context of failing national and/or regional systems. The solidarity resulting out of this type of Global North support has resulted in some major advances for Pacific women's rights organisations, for example, connecting Pacific organisations to other women's rights organisations across the globe who have a shared experience and call-to-action, i.e. climate and environmental justice. The main talanoa however did revolve around perceptions that have caused or resulted in unpleasant experiences. The following table gives summaries of the perceptions of 35 participants about their most challenging experiences when engaging with Global North organisations over the last three decades.

PERSPECTIVES OF PACIFIC WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS ON GLOBAL NORTH ENGAGEMENT 1990-2019	SUMMARY
Global North Agenda	Global North organisations bring own agenda (western agenda) to the table with very little input from Pacific women's rights organisations as partners or there is a lack of consultation at the design stage through to implementation.
Lack of Support for 'Other' Women's Rights Issues	Issues not identified as Global North priorities are not included on the Global North agenda.
Imbalanced Power Dynamics	Global North organisations are perceived by almost all Pacific women's rights actors interviewed as having more power. An unequal partnership at the onset or one that does not value Pacific women's rights organisations as an equal partner.
Continuing Colonial Practices	Impact of colonization resulting in dependency of Pacific women's rights organisations on Global North organisations where the partnership continues colonial practices and is perceived as one of donor and beneficiary. The undermining of autonomy of Pacific women's rights organisations results in low confidence to negotiate.
Hierarchical Clustering	Global North organisations perceived as having better relationships with well established Pacific feminist or women's rights organisations and are responsible for encouraging elite feminism in the Pacific.
Contextual Understanding	Global North organisations lack contextual knowledge of the situation of women in Pacific countries, resulting in unrealistic expectations.
Fragmenting Movements	Global North organisations have played a role in Pacific women's rights organisations working in silos and, as a result, the wider women's movement has seen weakened national and regional solidarity.
Sustainability and Long-Term Support	Pacific women's rights organisations and women's rights actors constantly fear the 'unknown' in terms of sustainability of funds/support and accountability and transparency are often perceived as only one way.

CALL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION TO STAND IN CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN REALISING THE OCEANIC FEMINIST ENGAGEMENT MODEL FOR EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS AND EMPOWERED RELATIONSHIPS

The research mobilises the reimagining of Global South-North relations not only in the Oceanic Pacific but also in the wider development context. This research has created the knowledge and tools for setting sail on a new voyage. A voyage that acknowledges the vast Pacific Ocean as the largest in the world and the deepest of all ocean basins. It requires women's rights organisations and women's rights actors in the Oceanic Pacific to think big and be bold in what they expect of their Global North partnerships and relationships. It requires a massive paradigm shift from internalised gender norms and patriarchal colonialism to one that places power and reimagining in their hands. This necessitates the preparing of strong 'double-hulled' *vakas* (canoes); *katea, nadura, tipairua, kalia* or *va'a tele* that can withstand the roughest waters of Oceania: the 'audacity of the ocean' (Underhill-Sem, 2020).[4] The talanoa in this research raises the heat and presents uncomfortable yet much needed discourse on white privilege, unequal power struggles and overwhelmingly North domination. This no doubt will and can create tensions between South-North relations as well as South-South relations. To 'reconcile these tensions and provide trajectories' (Underhill-Sem, 2020), a double-hull vaka representing equitable partnerships and empowered relationships is the key recommendation moving forward. The vaka, iconic to the Oceanic Pacific as a traditional form and method of voyaging, represents the 35 women's voices calling for decolonized relationships between Oceanic Pacific women's rights organisations/movements and Global North organisations. The meeting of the Pacific Ocean with the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans of the North represents vast spaces between the waters where these oceans meet. This requires the nurturing of the 'vā' or space in between South-North oceans.
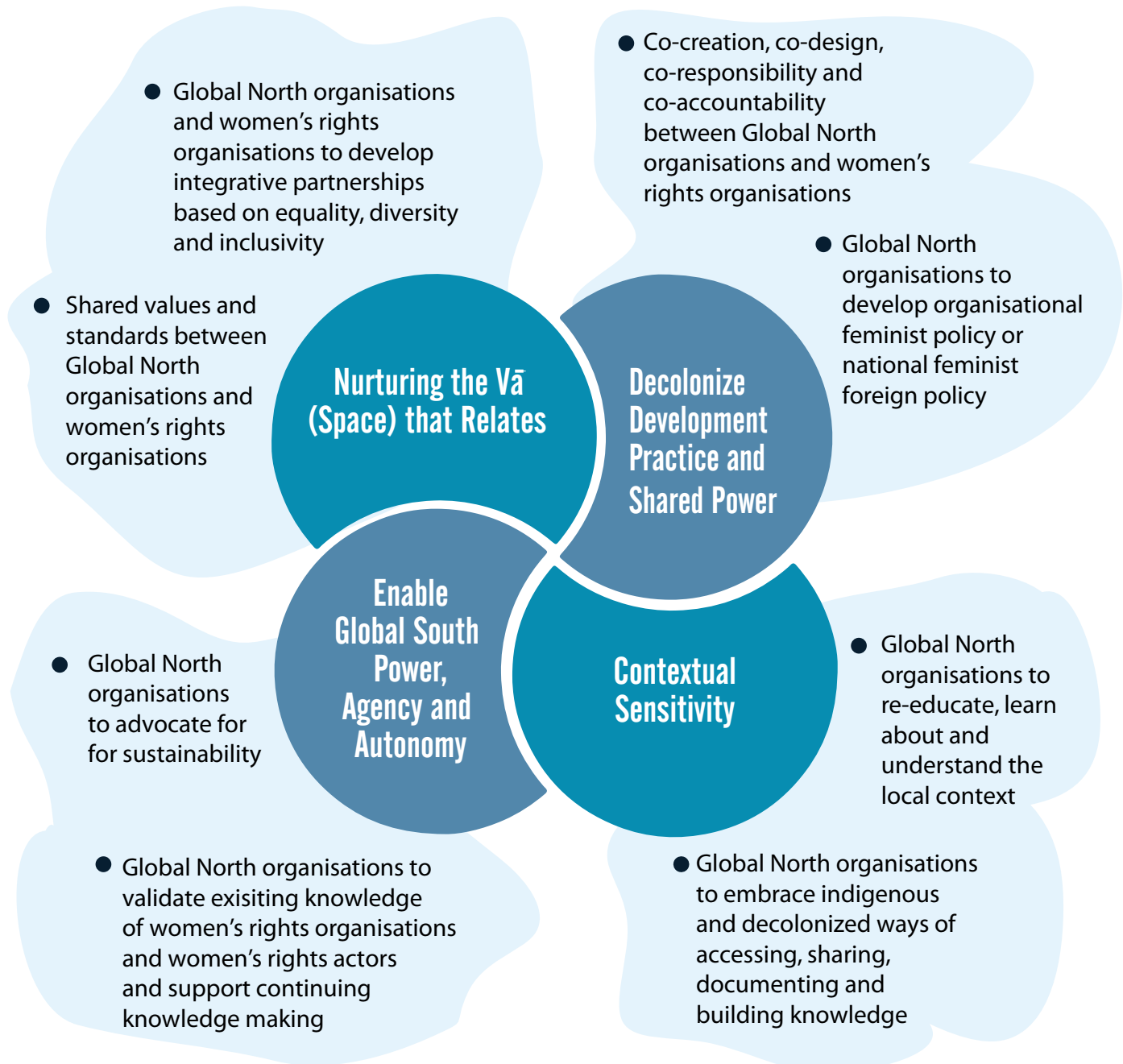
One of the key elements strongly described by participants as critical for moving forward is what many Pacific scholars refer to as nurturing the 'vā' (space) between North-South relationships. The belief is that by nurturing these spaces it will inevitably connect them (Airini et al, 2010). Emeritus Professor Albert Wendt describes the vā as the "space between, the betweeness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things" (Wendt, 1999). Nurturing the space between is a critical aspect of Oceanic engagement, yet it has been sorely left out of South-North engagement. Often, in the development context, the focus is on forging partnerships based on western ideologies and knowledge. The results of this research gives ample evidence of how indigenous knowledge and practices, such as nurturing vā, presents an opportunity to embrace it as part of the reimagined voyage moving forward. The development of the Engagement Model for South-North Equitable Partnerships and Empowered Relationships that has resulted from this research, is based on listening deeply to the 35 women's voices, navigated through talanoa and feminist research approaches. In its totality, it requires both South and North to invest in different ways of working. It calls for Oceanic Pacific women's rights organisations to recognise and acknowledge the power-within, value their indigeneity (Underhill-Sem, 2020), relational, and specialist knowledge and demand equal partnerships in the development frameworks of their countries and the Oceanic region. Similarly, it calls for Global North organisations to support these demands and, thereby, a paradigm shift from development rhetoric to reality, for equitable and empowered partnerships and relationships.

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4 Double-hull canoes of the Pacific: vaka katea (Cook Islands), nadura (Fiji), tipairua (Tahiti), kalia (Tonga) and va'a tele (Samoa). The double-hull has a huge significance in ensuring the vaka has better stability and seaworthiness.

The following model gives an overview of the key elements for future engagement proposed by the participants. It also provides a summary of the proposed roles and responsibilities of each element.

DEVELOPING EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

- Global North organisations and women's rights organisations to develop integrative partnerships based on equality, diversity and inclusivity

- Co-creation, co-design, co-responsibility and co-accountability between Global North organisations and women's rights organisations

- Shared values and standards between Global North organisations and women's rights organisations

- Global North organisations to develop organisational feminist policy or national feminist foreign policy

Nurturing the Vā (Space) that Relates

Decolonize Development Practice and Shared Power

Enable Global South Power, Agency and Autonomy

Contextual Sensitivity

- Global North organisations to advocate for for sustainability

- Global North organisations to re-educate, learn about and understand the local context

- Global North organisations to validate exisiting knowledge of women's rights organisations and women's rights actors and support continuing knowledge making

- Global North organisations to embrace indigenous and decolonized ways of accessing, sharing, documenting and building knowledge

ACHIEVING EMPOWERED RELATIONSHIPS

"WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT OUR PERSPECTIVES WITHOUT FEAR, YOU KNOW, LIKE NOT WITH FEAR THAT A FOREIGN DONOR MAY WITHDRAW FUNDS OR NOT WANT TO WORK WITH US BECAUSE WE ARE WILLING TO SPEAK UP ABOUT THE THINGS THAT THEY DO THAT DON'T WORK IN OUR COUNTRIES OR IN OUR ORGANISATIONS."

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT, 2000–2019 PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

Creating Equitable South-North Partnerships: Nurturing the Vā and Voyaging the Audacious Ocean together - A Case Study in the Pacific research is both timely and urgent. With 2020 being a critical year for women's rights, there have been attempts globally, regionally and nationally to meaningfully undertake a Beijing+ 25 year review amidst the obstinate challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is an opportunity to examine the perspectives of Pacific women human rights activists and advocates and their relationship with Global North organisations over the last 30 years. This in itself presents a review of practice, behaviour and experience over the same time period of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and its subsequent reviews. This includes the periods of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 2030 Agenda and its gender equality ambitions in the Sustainable Development Goals and UN Security Council Resolution 1325.[5]

This research is part of a civil and political participation program known as WAVE (Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment) funded by the Government of the Netherlands and delivered in Asia and the Pacific by International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) in 2016-2020. IWDA at the time of undertaking this research has working relationships with 18 women's rights organisations across the Pacific and Southeast Asia. The purposes of the research are to (i) gather and document the views of Pacific region women's rights movement actors on Global North engagement with these movements and (ii) identify key elements of effective engagement between Global South women's rights movements and Global North organisations in the future. The research is informed by an interest in identifying the elements of supportive, equitable and, in particular, decolonized models of engagement.

The research was led by 'Ofa-Ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki, an Oceanic Pacific Indigenous Researcher. Project management support was provided by IWDA staff members; Palwesha Yusaf (WAVE Program Manager), Bronwyn Tilbury (Feminist Movement Strengthening Advisor) and Stella Mulder (WAVE Research Project Manager). An indigenous reference group was created enabling the lead researcher to touch-base and reflect on key aspects of the findings and the writing of the report: Dr Yvonne Te Ruki-Rangi-o-Tangaroa Underhill-Sem, Seema Naidu and Dr Claire Slatter.

SPECIFICALLY OCEANIC PACIFIC

Over the last three decades, 1990-1999, 2000-2009 and 2010-2019, reviews have been undertaken on the Pacific's progress on global commitments to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals and more recently goal 5 of the 2030 development agenda reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[6] These reviews give ample evidence of where Pacific nations are still struggling to achieve the targets and indicators of these global commitments. The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) 2012, reaffirmed in 2015, specifically called for development partners to work in a coordinated, consultative and harmonized way in addressing gender inequality across the region.[7] It requests development partners, typically from the Global North, to provide both financial and technical support to women's empowerment programs on the ground.

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5 UN Security Council resolution 1325 aims to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender into all UN peace and security decisions and efforts.

6 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN member states in 2015, provides a "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet." See https://sdgs.un.org.

7 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2016, *Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration Trend Assesment Report 2012 - 2016*, p.6.

The call follows the core principles of the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectivess* (2005), the *Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific* (2009) and the *Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action* (Samoa Pathway, 2014).

The five principles of the 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness:* **ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results and mutual accountability** should be a key driver of approaching effective engagement between Global North and Global South. These principles were further reiterated in the 2012 *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*, emphasising the importance of transparency in funding decisions by donors and the engagement of civil society organisations as independent development actors. Despite progress made in achieving gender equality and improving the rights of women and girls across the Pacific over the last 25 years, there is still a lot of work to be done. The global outlook on meeting the targets for gender equality and equity commitments is grim with not a single country globally on track to achieve the standalone goal on gender equality (SDG5).   The Pacific has been right in the middle of this struggle:

> **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.**

(Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration PLGED 2012)

Similarly in the 2013, 2014, 2015 and subsequent Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration reports, not much had changed from what had been expressed in 2012, hence the reaffirmation by Pacific leaders of PLGED in 2015. The *First Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report* shows that progress is uneven across the Pacific in the six priority areas of the Declaration.[8] This despite the considerable Global North donor funding and technical assistance poured into the Pacific to tackle issues of gender inequality, violence against women, women's economic empowerment and other equally important women's rights issues including: LGBTQI+, women living with a disability, women and mining, women's rights to land, climate change and self determination.

PURPOSE

The findings of this research therefore have critical significance in providing valuable information that can yield answers, bringing to light the complex impediments experienced by women's rights actors across the Pacific, that have impacted on the progress of women and girls in enjoying and accessing their rights and achieving gender equality and equity. Consequently, the information from this research can also highlight best practice that is inclusive of Pacific/Oceanic women in all their diversities, underpinned by human rights and the awareness of intersecting inequalities. Pacific women's rights organisations and Global North organisations should invest in these practices moving forward, in the hope of achieving tangible transformative results that can change the lives of women and girls across the Pacific. Ultimately co-creating and co-designing the development frameworks that work best for them. This is explored further with the proposed Engagement Model for South-North Equitable Partnerships and Empowered Relationships.

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8 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2018, *First Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report*.

SCOPE

This research (i) gathers and documents the perspectives of Pacific women's rights movement actors on Global North engagement and (ii) identifies key elements of effective engagement between Global South Pacific women's rights movements and Global North organisations in the future. The original scope of the research had a target of 12 women. The actual number of women who agreed to take part and who contributed to this research is 35 which in itself reflects the desire of women's rights actors to story their experiences in the hope of co-creating, co-designing and reimagining decolonization. An additional four focused accounts are annexed to this report, giving an overview of one Pacific regional network and three individual Pacific women's rights organisations' perspectives over 30 years.

This research also reflects the benefits of using the indigenous research methodology of talanoa where conversations between researcher and participants are based on knowledge that is relational and where the researcher has positionality (refer to Talanoa Research Methodology: Decolonizing Knowledge. Annex 2). This was combined with a Feminist Participatory Action Research framework that calls for women as researchers, researching and developing their own development frameworks. This is where women can unite to demand that development benefit them by mobilising systemic development changes that enable co-creation and co-design, leaving behind old systems that do not (APWLD, 2017). The use of these research methods, reflecting practice towards decolonizing rigid western research approaches and ensuring the active, participatory and conversational voices of the 35 women involved, was documented over the period May-August 2020 and is discussed in this final report.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Global North organisations are defined as organisations based in OECD countries that engage in development work. These may include International NGOs, bilateral donors, multilateral donors, UN Agencies and managing contractors amongst others. For the purposes of this research, participants will not be named due to the multi-layered sensitivities. Similarly, Global North organisations will be referred to in general terms based on the following: Feminist and Human Rights Specific INGO, General INGO, Bilateral Donors, Multilateral Donors, Banks and Financial Institutions, Managing Contractors and UN System. This ensures a focus on the 'way forward' addressing both technical and adaptive challenges whilst refraining from personalisation and organisational targeting.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, physical face-to-face interviews were not possible and all interviews, focus groups and story-mapping for focused accounts were carried out online using tools such as Zoom, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Skype or via mobile and landline telephone calls. The research involved acknowledging the sensitivities at the outset, where the lead indigenous researcher, who personally knew the majority of the participants, informed women's rights actors that the conversations could result in discomfort in discussing the subject matter and, in some specific cases, discomfort in discussing current and historical activities of IWDA who commissioned the research.

The interviews held online exacerbated these sensitivities in creating a somewhat non-relational space between the lead researcher and participant, despite the lead researcher being known to the participant. In-person, the physical presence of the lead researcher could have offered some kind of recourse to the anxieties experienced by participants. In this situation, participants were in a vulnerable position many miles away and communicating through a screen or an online audio communications

tool. However, the lead researcher was able to hold pre- and post-talanoa with research participants to reaffirm a relationship of trust and validation that their voices were critical to achieving the research objective.

It was initially proposed that the lead researcher would use her access to Pacific regional meetings to discuss the methodology and test some of the key research questions to build solidarity around the outcome of the research and to make the research process more meaningful and purposeful for Pacific women's rights actors. However, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, this was not possible. Nevertheless, the lead researcher used the Talanoa Research Methodology combined with a Feminist Participatory Action Research approach to ensure that relationships were developed and nurtured online with the 35 women. The pre- and post-talanoa ensured the women felt safe to participate and that their voices were valued and validated. There are 16 country experiences reflected in this research. Women's rights actors from Niue, Tokelau and Tuvalu are not represented here because of the time restrictions of the research.

IWDA who commissioned this research is categorised as a Global North organisation, a feminist and human rights specific INGO. IWDA played a role in shaping the research questions and design. The fact that the research team was made up of mostly IWDA staff was acknowledged very early on. To balance this, the indigenous lead researcher undertook the talanoa-field-work and the write-up of the report independently of the research team following the design stage. In order for this to happen, a strong holding environment was developed amongst the research team members who trusted the indigenous research methods being used and validated the lead researcher's proposed processes. Regular research team reflection and debrief sessions were held between the lead researcher and the research team. These sessions proved invaluable for the creation of better understanding of the complexities

and vulnerabilities of the research and the support of indigenous knowledge building and sharing. The creation of the indigenous go-to-reference group provided an additional support-base for the lead researcher, where informal talanoa was held regarding the key findings and the analysis of the findings.

Key definitions, terms and concepts used throughout this research are further discussed in the Guidance Literature Review (Annex 1), and the Talanoa Research Methodology: Decolonizing Knowledge (Annex 2).

"WE OFTEN REFRAIN FROM USING EXPRESSIONS AROUND WHITE SUPREMACY OR CALLING IT OUT BECAUSE IT IS FROWNED UPON OR LOOKED AT AS BEING RUDE OR UNKIND TOWARDS THOSE PEOPLE OR ORGANISATIONS WHO ARE 'JUST TRYING TO HELP' THE PACIFIC. BUT WHEN YOU REALLY GET DOWN TO IT AND PEEL THE ONION DOWN TO ITS CORE, IT IS WHAT IT IS, WHITE PRIVILEGE AND POWER UNDERESTIMATING OUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, CLAIMING THEIR DOMINANCE WITH THINGS LIKE INTRUSIVE LOGOS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, WHEN REALLY ALL THEY ARE FUNDING IS THE AWARENESS, PRINTING OR BROADCASTING OF IDEAS THAT WERE ALWAYS OUR IDEAS TO BEGIN WITH."

— RESEARCH PARTICIPANT 2000–2009, 2010–2019 PERIOD

KEY FINDINGS

SUMMARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review found that there is good information available on Southern women's rights movements' perspectives on the role of the Global North and that the gaps in knowledge are primarily due to the paucity of literature available specifically on the Pacific.

The terminology 'Global North' and 'Global South' has been used in this research as a preference over 'First World' and 'Third World countries' and 'developed' and 'developing' countries'.[9] In fact, in everyday parlance in the Pacific, these latter terminologies are more prominently used. 'Global South' as one of the key concepts of this research and in designing the conceptual framework of this research, could very well shift the paradigm of the way respondents would be asked to reflect on the key questions being asked of them. It could shift the conversation from being asked about the role of 'developed' countries on their organisations and movements - which at its premise is hierarchical and unequal – to being asked what their views are on the role of the Global North in the Global South, potentially reducing the power and resource-based distinction (Hollington et al, 2015).

It's the difference between respondents (as actors or movements) perceiving the support provided as hegemonic welfare, i.e. from their **Developing or Third World context**, perceiving the provider of funds, resources and technical assistance, however well meaning, as having power-over. The challenge with this, however, is that most of the Pacific women's rights organisations and women's rights actors taking part in the research had never used the Global South and Global North terminology. To address this challenge, the difference between the terminologies Global North/Global South was understood by

critically looking at the historical, geographical, economical, educational and political differences between North and South for example in the context of power dynamics, disparities of privilege and colonial practices. In a Global South partner context there is an expectation or demand that the Global North understand their privilege and power-over, having access to more resources because of their history and political economy (Clarke, 2018). This shifts the paradigm from 'developed'/'developing' countries and/or 'First World'/'Third World' in which economic and geographic determinants (eg GDP per capita) are the key hierarchical determinants. This was discussed with the research participants before continuing the talanoa. Women's rights actors and movements in the Pacific are categorised under Global South for the purposes of this research.

This research draws on the definition of decolonization as offered by Oceanic academic Dr Konai Helu Thaman, that is, **reclaiming indigenous Oceanic perspectives, knowledge, and wisdom that have been devalued or suppressed because they were or are not considered important or worthwhile** (Helu Thaman, 2003). This understanding helped navigate and develop a clear theoretical framework for gathering information from the field, analysis of the data and in the final write up.

Epeli Hau'ofa's pre-eminent Oceanic philosophy in his essay *Our sea of islands* (1993) speaks directly to the issue of imagining Pacific identity from one that is often described as many tiny little islands spread across oceans of tranquil water, hence the name 'Pacific,' coined by Explorer Ferdinand Magellan in the 16th century. This has come at a price with the Pacific region often being labeled as small economies of scale dependent on its bigger brothers Australia and NZ (Kelsey, 2004), geographically scattered and some being, completely isolated from the "outside" world. In fact, the most recent global referencing to this is the discourse of COVID-19 where comments have been made about most countries in the Pacific being spared because of their

9 Mostly understood as former colonies.

'remoteness' from the rest of the globe. Hau'ofa challenged this thinking and urged a paradigm shift from viewing or understanding the Pacific as small pocketed islands with small land mass spread across the vast Pacific ocean, to asserting a more commanding and decolonized Oceanic presence - as the biggest sea of islands in the world - with a multitude of deeply rooted histories, cultures and peoples:

> **Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces which we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed place, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom.**

(Hau'ofa, 1993)

Academic Dr Yvonne Te Ruki-Rangi-o-Tangaroa Underhill-Sem suggests an additional paradigm shift from Hau'ofa's Oceania, **re-imagined to explicitly position women in the Oceanic space.** Hau'ofa's call for Oceanic people to rise up and be liberated from the 'tiny spaces' that they have resisted 'accepting as [their] sole appointed place' fails to recognise the additional multilevel and intersecting struggles faced by women throughout the Pacific that 'still' leaves women behind in those 'tiny spaces'. Reclaiming Oceania for women recognises and

acknowledges women in all their diversities and the double burden they face to be liberated from those 'tiny spaces'. When this happens, women can begin to confidently resist being 'confined physically and psychologically' by demanding supportive, equitable and decolonized relationships.

In approaching this research, it was the task of the lead researcher to ensure that the conceptual framework was developed using the Oceanic philosophy, re-imagined as the 'audacity of the ocean' and placing women's voices in the centre. This is the approach that is needed to attain oceanic liberation in moving forward with South-North relations. This approach will encourage both the research team, the research itself and its key respondents to re-conceptualise the work of the Global North from a frame of benevolence (with hierarchies between 'givers' and receivers') to one of solidarity that is marked by equality and horizontal relationships (Clements, 2018), supporting respondents to share their thoughts and feelings because they understand its power-within to make and call for positive change.

SUMMARY OF TALANOA

Identifying recurring issues has been a key driver of building this collective voice during the documentation of conversational voices through talanoa and the analysis of information received. The collective Oceanic voice aims at developing recommendations that project participants' 'commanding' and decolonized positionality in how they want to effectively engage with Global North organisations moving forward. This process has brought to light tensions between mainstream western feminist epistemology and the power struggles between Global North organisations and Pacific women's rights actors and movements.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

WHAT PERSPECTIVES DO PACIFIC WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENTS AND ACTORS HAVE ON THE ENGAGEMENT OF GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS WITH MOVEMENTS IN THE REGION TO DATE?

1 GLOBAL NORTH AGENDA

Global North organisations bring their own agenda (western agenda) to the table with very little input from Pacific women's rights organisations as partners or there is a lack of consultation at the design stage through to implementation.

More than half of the research participants spoke about their perceptions of Global North organisations bringing their own agenda (western agenda) to the table. Examples were shared where participants felt that there was very little input from Pacific women's rights organisations as partners or that there was a lack of consultation at the design stage through to implementation of a program or activity. Many of the women's rights actors who took part in the talanoa raised similar concerns about Global North organisations often bringing pre-conceived agendas to the table. Examples were shared across the Pacific about recent programs in the last two decades which they felt had been developed with very little consultation. Women's rights actors working in the Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) space raised concerns around not fully understanding or being fully informed of how a particular program had come about. Questions around how was the program designed and who designed it to how were partners on the ground identified were storied as examples of Whose Agenda is it anyway?

> **I remember thinking, "Who on earth designed this program?" because it was just not working well. They sent in so many consultants to build the capacity of our police and to strengthen their relationship with us as a service provider. But the problem was these consultants or experts in domestic violence only spent something like one or two weeks at each time and, come on, let's be real, how is that going to change anything?**

Research Participant 2000-2009 period

> **We had to answer questions raised by members of our parliament when one Member of Parliament got up and asked during a parliamentary session, "What is this orange campaign that has come, forcing us to wear orange now after we have been encouraged to wear black every Thursday for the very same issue? I am confused and what these people are doing is confusing all of us…." I actually agreed and I remember being so mad at them for doing this without consultation with us.**

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

There was a shared sense of exasperation amongst participants about Global North organisation

engagements during a national crisis or disaster. The swarming in of a number of Global North organisations at any given time into a country during a disaster and carrying out "technical" assistance and advice is done much to the great annoyance of local women's rights organisations:

> **It happens all the time. I have observed the way they operate over two different cyclone disasters here in my country and it's not a pretty picture. (...) Most of them fight amongst each other about who is going to do what and who shouldn't be stepping over the line and duplicating or trying to do the job of the other, while we national Non-Government Organisations just sit by and wish they would all just disappear and give us the funds because we know what to do, it's our country, our people. We don't need to refer to best practice in Africa or Asia which they often come with when they try and advise us.**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

2 IMBALANCED POWER DYNAMICS

Global North organisations are perceived by almost all Pacific women's rights actors interviewed as having a position of power-over. An unequal partnership at the onset or one that does not value Pacific women's rights organisations as an equal partner.

This is felt particularly when it comes to control over decisions and resource distribution. Some research participants felt that unequal partnerships were very

obvious at the onset, whereas others described not feeling valued as the partnership progressed. Power struggle dynamics were repeatedly storied in the talanoa conversations covering the three decades. A closer analysis suggests that the first decade (1990-1999) was seen as less challenging in this respect than succeeding decades. Examples of positive relations between Pacific women's rights actors and Global North organisations from the first decade were described by participants as being connected in a large way to the global momentum following the three World Conferences for Women (Mexico 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985) and the lead-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995. Participants shared that during these early years, establishing women's rights organisations in their countries was supported by Global North organisations - both donors and International Non-Government Organisations - because of the Beijing agenda, "so there were feminists from the Global North who were committed to helping out Pacific initiatives but not in a colonized way," as one participant put it:

> **Because I lacked sufficient knowledge and I guess was not able to articulate what it was that I knew in my head and heart that we needed to do, I just let consultants write the design of our early projects.... but also I didn't feel those women from Global North organisations had any bad intention, we all had something in common and that was to strengthen and build women's movements and activists around the world.**

Research Participant 1990-1999 period

> **1990-1999 is when the women's movement emerged as result of world conferences on human rights, an active period [with] the formation of organisations... promoting advancement of women, more women in decisionmaking, women's empowerment, legal and human rights, sexual abuse, rape, violence against women, employment issues: parental leave, maternity leave, request for state sponsored childcare, sexual harrassment in the workplace, pay parity.   These issues were addressed at meetings, conferences and workshops. General discussions and public awarenes on the rights of women. Gender and human rights were new terms for the older generation of women.**

Research Participant 1990-199 period

Participants who shared their perspectives of the 2000-2009 period described the entry of power dynamics that reflected unequal relations, particularly towards the end of that decade. They suggested that Global North organisations, in particular donors, started to be more forceful in dictating ways of working rather than listening to their partners on the ground in spite of the *Paris Declaration, Busan Partnership* and *Cairns Compact:*

> **I felt that they didn't believe me when I was trying to explain our situation here on the ground, the reality of not being able to get receipts or invoices from suppliers. Because where I live, most of the suppliers do not have receipt books etc and they don't have time to travel to the bank and so they want cash payments up front. And so when I explained this to the donor, they obviously didn't believe me because they ended up suspending our funds and sent someone from New York to come and check. And of course this held up the work for quite some time and I was so frustrated because I couldn't understand why they didn't believe me. And so after, when the independent auditor found that we were clear of any money mismanagement or fraud, we were allowed to continue. But, yeah, that whole experience made me feel so disempowered, it's that feeling of a big super power not understanding anything about my country and ignoring my explanations and attempts to educate them of how things are here on the ground.**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

Where power was shared and relational and there were shared development goals, the relationship showed more supportive, equitable and decolonized models of engagement, which is the overarching hope of this research. There was a strong sense

of agreement amongst the participants that there was a dissimilarity between Global North general donors and Global North feminist donors or feminist International Non-Government Organisations. Feminist donors were thought of as having a relational development approach and were thought of as 'sister organisations,' who nurtured the 'vā' space between by helping women's rights organisations claim agency and autonomy:

> **What they did was help us articulate a feminist analysis and writing it down in a way that donors would accept it, so, yeah, they were a terrific partner, just like a sister organisation because they were a feminist organistion.**

> Research Participant 1990-1999 period

Whilst participants did acknowledge that, at times, expertise in writing, finances and applying gender analysis to issues can end up with the Pacific women's rights organisation having to rely on Global North organisation expertise and technical assistance through the provision of consultants, there is a distinct difference mentioned by participants when the consultant is a feminist and when the consultant isn't. It makes for a better relationship also when the Global North feminist consultant is au fait with the intersectionality of issues in the particular country context in which the Pacific women's rights organisations are situated and how they can be allied to the wider Pacific women's movement.

There was a strong perception that Global North organisations who were not feminist or who did not have feminist consultants operated very much like the big brother, big sister of the 'developed-west' helping the poor countries of the 'developing-south'. Although perhaps well intentioned, the approach is

still very much welfare-based. These Global North organisations operate out of a need to 'help' those less fortunate or with little resources by passing on knowledge, skills and experience through the guise of 'advisors' and 'technical experts,' as seen with the emergence of intermediary companies backed with generous funding. This inevitably results in and further reiterates the North-South divide in terms of the colonized mentality of the 'giver' of funds and the 'recipients' of funds:

> **I couldn't understand why they did the training, we do the same training, they know very well we also do the same training but because they had 'experts' from overseas it made it look to the other participants that their training was better or more important.**

> Research Participant 2010-2019 period

Other concerns around who defines empowerment also featured in the talanoa. For example, the assumption that there are certain activities with targets and indicators that can measure whether empowerment has been achieved among women as beneficiaries:

> **I received a wake up call when I went to carry out my normal legal literacy trainings to the outer islands, when a woman said to me, "All I need is a washing machine to help me do the washing so I can do other work." That made me question my reality versus their reality.**

> Research Participant 2000-2009

3 COLONIAL PRACTICES IN POST-COLONIAL CONTEXT

Impact of colonization resulting in dependency of Pacific women's rights organisations on Global North organisations where the partnership continues colonial practices and is perceived as one of Donor and Beneficiary, Administrator versus Administered. The undermining of autonomy of Pacific women's rights organisations results in low confidence to negotiate.

The impact of colonization on Pacific women's rights actors was discussed in the context of colonial practices generally and, in addition, the patriarchal structures that place women across the Pacific in inferior and subordinate positions to men, particularly in their roles as wives and mothers. This type of thinking and mentality, which is a learned behavior and internalised belief, can result in Pacific women's rights actors engaging with Global North organisations with a lack of or low demand for equality. Examples were storied about how during negotiations of finalising programs, activities, work plans and budgets, the consultant (who has been sent to help develop work plans and budgets) acts as the intermediary between the donor and the women's rights organisation and the women's rights organisation is left feeling powerless during those negotiations, having to accept decisions already agreed between the Global North donor and consultant:

> **There was a time where I wanted to say something and I wanted to fight for something but something inside me kept saying to keep quiet otherwise you'll lose the funding…. The consultant came, helped us design our proposed program**

that included our work plans and budgets, but it was like talking to me and the staff for a few days and then she went back to her country and designed our program. And then we would hear back from her that the donor wanted us to cut things down and also suggested leaving some activities out. But I don't know why the donor couldn't just talk to us about it because I would have given a really good reason why we needed to do those activities and why they, the donor, only wanted to talk to the consultant. 99

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

When asked why she felt disempowered to speak up, the participant made the connection to women in her country not having the confidence to speak up because they feel powerless in those situations. She made the link to society's expectation that women remain submissive, humble and appreciative – a direct impact of colonization and its patriarchal structures. Other women's rights actors gave examples of where there were perceptions of them as strong, fierce leaders perhaps at a regional level or within the women's movement in their countries or communities. However, when seated at the table discussing matters of their organisation's core operations and programs with donors, they were made to feel feeble and powerless. This has led to women's rights organisations feeling very much like beneficiaries of funds rather than an equal partner. One participant summed it by saying that in her experience, some Global North organisations have become administrators with no sense of humanity for the groups they work with:

> **❝ You can sense it from the way they communicate and the things they care about, which is always about numbers and tables and reports and ticking the box. It's never really about our relationship with each other and making sure we learn from them and they learn from us. ❞**

Research Participant 1990-1999 period

Participants from the 1990-1999 period felt that the strong insinuations of colonialism described by others during the later periods were due to the women's movement losing strong feminists from the 1960s-1980s period who were then leading many Global North organisations. Principles of liberation and consciousness raising were no longer a priority, the nurturing of the vā or space between relationships was decreasing in importance. Global North organisations developed more complex North-South relationships that were based on monitoring and evaluation frameworks and cumbersome reporting processes. Often these relationships are devoid of personal contact and contextual knowledge which ends in frustration and misunderstanding embedded within a string of emails and online communication that increases the un-nurtured vā, thereby increasing the tension between them.

It was felt by some participants that although most Pacific countries have achieved political autonomy, they still feel and experience continuing colonial practices. These practices they claim are now hidden behind the development façade of 'empowerment of women,' with strong neocolonialist underpinnings. Examples included development programs which were spending most of their funds on foreign consultants whose primary interest is to become experts in empowerment and women's development in the Pacific.

4 CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Global North organisations lack contextual knowledge of the situation of women in Pacific countries, resulting in unrealistic expectations.

There was a strong sense of concern from participants that many of the Global North organisations that they have engaged with (non-feminist Global North organisations) did not have contextual knowledge of the situation of women in their countires and the complex impacts of patriarchal structures on women's lived realities. There was a high risk of such Global North organisations implementing and supporting programs that were unprincipled, unethical and ill-informed, potentially undoing decades of work in gender equality and the recognition of women's human rights. This lack of knowledge has led to failed activities, outputs and outcomes and increased tensions and difficult relationships between Global North organisations and women's rights organisations on the ground:

> **❝ This program was created with no input whatsoever from us or any other women's organisation and it was painful to try and work with this program over the last two or so years. All of a sudden, it was announced in my country. My organisation questioned it and how it came about and we were quickly looked at as trouble makers. It was very awkward and the tensions increased between us very quickly.... On the name of the program itself, we were not consulted, it came as a full program all ready to be rolled out, no sense**

> **of ownership at all….And I guess the biggest problem was that it felt like they were funding anything and everything without careful consideration of the risks that come with that. For example, funding the renovation of infrastructure, rather than investing in developing the skills of those working in the Domestic Violence Unit which was what we kept reiterating, because we believe an earlier Global North organisation program had failed to do that.** 〞

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

Participants also shared experiences where Global North organisations found it difficult to believe the high costs in overheads, resources and transportation. In some Pacific countries, the cost of travelling to all the outer islands and remote areas is extremely high, for example, $500 USD to travel to an outer island. The cost of printing can also be way above the costs to which Global North countries are accustomed:

> 〞 **I don't get it when they have approved for us to do outreach to rural areas, but they want us to cut back on the transport costs. How are we going to meet the goals and targets we have set for ourselves if they keep cutting back on these costs? What's the use of doing one-off training and the next time they see us is in another two years?** 〞

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

> 〞 **When I sent them my budget, one of the first things they asked me to cut back on was my printing costs. And this was after they talked with us and we told them we needed to distribute information brochures during our awareness sessions.** 〞

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

A series of interesting conversations also ensued where participants shared that many Global North donors would send consultants at different periods all asking the same questions and gathering the same information rather than coordinating amongst themselves the collection of information so as to avoid returning to ask the same questions and hold up implementation:

> 〞 **There was one time where I went through about four to five consultants during the lifetime of the project and all of them basically asked the same questions over and over again.** 〞

Research Participant, 2010-2019 period

> 〞 **When they came here to my country, they didn't listen to us and they didn't listen to our Ministry for Women either. Because we were trying to tell them that there was a risk to women's safety. But they went ahead anyway, they just wanted to tick their box, I guess, and they used us for commenting on the content and training the enumerators. But that was it.** 〞

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

These storied examples from the participant's talanoa highlight how women's rights organisations feel as if Global North organisations are an external force that 'grants empowerment' to women's rights organisations, belittling their power and agency.

5 LACK OF SUPPORT FOR 'OTHER' WOMEN'S RIGHTS ISSUES

Issues not identified as Global North priorities are not included on the Global North agenda.

Women's rights issues outside those prioritised by Global North organisations are not given sufficient attention. This is particularly in reference to the last decade (2010-2019) when Global North organisations' thematic priorities are perceived by many of the research participants to have been heavily focused on (I) eliminating violence against women; (II) women's economic empowerment and (III) increasing women's representation in Parliament and at all decision making levels. The emphasis on these three themes has left some participants feeling that 'other' women's rights issues are regarded as less important:

> **I have to pick and choose who I go to, because a lot of times, my issue I already know they don't agree with. With my issue, [which] is about the injustices of what America has done to us, I fight for decolonization and self-determination. So I have to be very careful and aware of whom to approach. And so I do a lot of research into the donors before I make a decision whether to request support or not....And I know that my issue doesn't fall under the typical issues that donors are after. You know, I've heard time and time again, "Oh no, sorry, we can't support this." And so I feel this support provided from the donors is already set-up to go against the issues I fight for.**

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

Interestingly, participants who identified as 'general' activists talked about their hesitancy to be identified as feminists or women's rights activists because of the negative perceptions that society has of women's rights actors and of feminism. It was felt that 'other' issues were outside of the scope of general donors and that the only hope of having these activities funded or supported was by approaching Global North feminist International Non-Government Associations or feminist Asia Pacific International Non-Government Organisations:

> **As long as we don't do anything on self-determination, we will get funding. And if we do ask for such support and the government comes to find out, my organisation will be targeted and our lives will be at risk.**

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

Issues identified as hard to get support for included women's rights to land, the impact of mining on women's development issues, LGBTQI+ issues, women as widows and single mothers, elderly women and women living with disabilities. It was noted that the challenge was mostly to do with accessing 'core funding' and the difficulty for women's rights actors and women's rights organisations to apply for funding or to set up

orgnisations that focus specifically on these 'other' issues. The perception was that organisations working on Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW), Women in Politics and Decision Making (WIP) and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) issues have easier access to Global North organisations' support.

Consequently, there is also the issue of women's rights organisations in countries which are associated with, or a territory of, a Global North country. Some of these feel that they are often 'forgotten' about because it is assumed that the Global North organisations from the original colonizing country, for example USA (in the case of Guam, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia), France (Tahiti, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna) and New Zealand (Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau) are "taking care of them" or will partner with them:

> **When I go to Pacific regional meetings and hear the number of different donors in other parts of the Pacific, I feel really bad because I wish I had the same access to donors in New Zealand, Australia or Europe. But it seems as if I have to be content with donors only based in the United States of America. Unless I am ignorant of the processes of how to access the others. But, like I said before, they are not in my country and it's hardly ever that I am sent information on how to access other donors from other countries.**

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

There was a concern that Global North organisations

are detached from some of the political tensions and realities experienced by Global South organisations across the Pacific. One participant remembered submitting a proposal for funding a decolonization project and although it passed the initial assessment stage, it failed to progress to the final stage. She was later advised to focus on more common and 'non-political' issues such as gender issues or Gender Based Violence (GBV). This is the same for women's rights organisation working in climate justice, where loss, damage or environmental justice issues (eg the impact of nuclear waste on vulnerable communities) are not part of the development funding of Global North organisations.

Another participant expressed that there is so much she wants to fight for, particularly around political independence and for women to be part of decision making processes of political movements towards self-determination. However, she understands that once she makes this decision, her life and that of her family members will be at risk. She described donors as only being interested in 'general' women's development issues such as food security, education, health and domestic violence, because that is what the government supports in her country. She feels that there should be some kind of engagement available to support the documentation of women's lived experiences as well as supporting women's political voice but that it always seems impossible to access this type of support without the extreme high risks.

6 HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERING

Global North organisations perceived as having better relationships with well established Pacific Feminist or women's rights organisations and are responsible for making feminism in the Pacific elite.

Global North organisations were perceived by some participants as having better relationships

with well-established Pacific feminist women's rights organisations and International Non-Government Organisations who are set up in Pacific countries. It was suggested that this is what makes feminism and women's rights movements elite. There was also a sense of Global North organisations investing only in relationships with Pacific women's rights organisations who are more well-versed in feminism and human rights issues. This was particularly in reference to regional women's rights organisations who were perceived to have the upper hand because of their understanding of regional policy processes and international development frameworks. Other Pacific women's rights organisations felt intimidated and of less value, especially when in those regional spaces.

Participants shared their observations of Global North organisations referring to these more "developed" women's rights organisations for their contribution on particular issues relating to women's human rights and gender equality. It was felt that there is a bias in the way Global North organisations approach women's rights organisations in the Pacific. There was a perception that Global North organisations are part and parcel responsible for elevating feminism and women's rights work to a level of elitism. Hierarchical clustering of those Pacific women's rights organisations that fit a particular type of profile has made the wider women's movement inaccessible at both the national and regional levels. Some participants shared that they felt that Global North organisations often identify partners in country and then shut the doors to others:

> **I feel donors are very selective... very picky. I feel they at times they are not fulfilling the purpose of their wider organisation but instead they work only with those who are popular or who have recognition in society....So many times we have knocked on their**

> **doors but they don't really want to engage with us, maybe because we're not high society feminist women, so we don't matter.**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

Talanoa around International Non-Government Organisations "setting up shop" in country raised the perception of this as bad practice, especially when these organisations are perceived locally as better resourced and better staffed. Bad practice examples given included International Non-Government Organisations duplicating activities and/or speaking on behalf of national Non-Government Organisations at meetings and workshops:

> **We had just finished our activity and it proved to be successful despite the limited resources we had. And then they came into the picture and just duplicated what we had done. But because they had better resources, their output was greater and outreach was bigger. They never asked us if we were planning to do the activity again. It made me so mad and sad at the same time, because it felt as if they had stolen our idea.**

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

> **We had just finished building the capacity of our staff and I believe she had the skills and knowledge to take our work to the next level. She had represented us at so**

> **many workshops and trainings over the last five years, it was a big investment. And then when they established themselves, they offered her a job and she took it because the pay was better. And now we are back to square one.**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

Hierarchical clustering can occur amongst women's rights organisations at the national level as well as between national women's rights organisations and International Non-Government Organisations. It highlights unequal power relations, where national women's rights organisations are always at a disadvantage.

7 FRAGMENTING MOVEMENTS

Global North organisations have played a role in Pacific women's rights organisations working in silos and, as a result, the wider women's movement has seen weakened national and regional solidarity.

For example, women's rights organisations working in the Eliminating Violence Against Women or Gender Based Violence space were seen by some participants as separate from women's rights organisations or women's rights actors working in climate change, women's economic empowerment, women in decision making or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Intersex (LGBTQI+) rights. Participants suggested that by making this distinction, or by dividing funding or support into these particular silos, Global North organisations contributed to the fragmentation of the wider women's rights movement:

> **I've been in meetings where women's rights actors working in the Eliminating Violence Against Women space just stick to each other and other women's rights actors working in other areas such as climate change stick to each other... I don't think this is right.**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

It was communicated quite strongly that in order to rebuild or strengthen women's rights movements both at the community level and across the Pacific, women's rights organisations should be encouraged to have a broad approach to achieving women's rights in their countries and at the regional level, where solidarity and regionalism can be strengthened:

> **We have sisters in West Papua who are fighting for self determination and sisters in other parts of the Pacific who are fighting for land rights, or the right to live under laws that do not discriminate against our lesbian sisters. In a way, when you think about it, it's very strongly linked to the way the funding is set up by the donors, you either fall into this category or this category and sadly this is what it has ended up looking like amongst us women's rights actors. But we need to rebuild our solidarity and regionalism and support all our issues across the Pacific.**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

One participant expressed the view that foreign donors should contribute to a regional vision, because the problems of women in her own country can be found elsewhere in the Pacific. Thus, united in similar fights:

> **We could act together in a more impactful way to reduce the inequalities associated with gender, gender discrimination, gender stereotypes in all its forms and not just a few areas of focus.**
>
> Research Participant 2000-2019 period

This draws on the discourse around women's rights organisations also being geopolitical actors. Often support from Global North organisations is concentrated in priorities at the national level, yet women's rights organisations are transnational and have far-reaching networks through which they work in close solidarity on several issues:

> **I don't think we can work in isolation to our sisters across the shores in West Papua who are fighting silently for self-determination... Until all our sisters are free from violence and all forms of discrimination and can access their rights without fear, we all remain oppressed. That is what our Pacific sisterhood is about.**
>
> Research Participant 2010-2019

There was a sense that the women's movement has been diluted and is in a quandary. A few of the women participants had suggested that the majority of young women leaders they had come across in their own countries have no knowledge of the global,

regional and national ground work that went into building momentum around the Beijing Platform for Action and the Pacific Platform for Action, United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and gender and development policies.

As a result of this, some participants shared their perception of young women leaders being trapped in 'somewhat commercialised positions' at Non-Government Organisations. As one participant described it, that it was becoming 'cool' or the 'in-thing' to be a young woman leader or feminist, as opposed to being a young women's human rights activist. Some participants said that the disconnect between older activists and young women leaders was never greater than it is now. It was felt that Global North donors had contributed to developing a type of elite feminism, one that is 'not challenging or that lacks the fire in the belly,' and always plays it safe:

> **Because they [Global North organisations] haven't done their homework, they come in for a short period and then leave. And when they are here, they really have no idea of the ground work that has been done many years ago. And then they act all excited when they work with our young women, mostly on climate change and leadership... We never meet, or we are never called to any meetings, hardly ever.**
>
> Research participant 1990-20009 period

Separating funding and activities as either-or, rather than supporting initiatives and activities that support ongoing inter-generational dialogue – the view was

that this type of silo funding occurs and that it also contributes to the weakening of the movement:

> **"I fear that some of the ways that empowerment is being framed now by up-and-coming feminists is the talanoa around older feminists not doing enough to build bridges. And I have a problem with that, because in the Pacific, we are born with bridges, we are born on the same mat, we naturally all come together. But the ways in which empowerment and some of the structures, training and funding have broken those threads, I'm afraid that in the next decade it's forcing those who have aged to the fringes or to become invisible. And we are buying into it because we don't want to take the light away from our young ones coming up. "**

Research Participant 1990-2019 period

The young women participants talked about the huge disconnect they felt towards their women's rights movement at a national level. Some suggested that they would rather invest their time in working with young women so as to not feel unwanted, belittled or judged by the older women. At the same time they acknowledge that this is at the expense of not being connected to women's rights actors in their own countries who have been in the game for decades and who can no doubt pass on skills, knowledge and their experiences to the young women.

At the same time, participants also talked enthusiastically about how there is an opportunity for Global North organisations and Pacific women's rights organisations to work on re-imagining a Pacific women's movement founded on the intersectionalities of all women's development issues across the Pacific, leaving no one behind. A movement that is re-energized, inclusive, diverse and founded on processes of decolonization.

8 SUSTAINABILITY AND LONG TERM SUPPORT

Pacific women's rights organisations and women's rights actors constantly fear the 'unknown' in terms of sustainability of funds/support and accountability perceived as one way.

Some participants expressed strong resentment in relation to expectations placed on them by Global North organisations. First, they felt that these organisations were prone to requiring transparency and accountability from women's rights organisations in ways that the Global North organisations themselves did not provide. Second, they felt that some Global North organisations behave differently with Pacific women's rights organisations than they do with Pacific region national governments, where the latter are not held accountable for their spending of budgets and implementation of activities around gender and women's human rights:

> **"We receive funding to collect data and monitor our data on domestic violence cases, so does the Police. But when it comes to stakeholder meetings, it seems as if the Non-Government Organisations are the only ones constantly providing**

information on stats and data. They are always coming up with an excuse, but they keep getting funded and having their capacity built. And yet I see very little progress. 🗨

Research Participant 2000-2009 period

🗨 **I remember sitting at a Ministry of Health meeting once and being told that they have a large gender equality budget. However, it was one of the most underspent budgets. This wasn't the first [time] I had heard that from government ministry reps. 🗨**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

Participants shared that donor uncertainty places Pacific women's rights organisations and actors constantly in fear of the 'unknown' as the Global North organisation agenda can change immediately with a change of government in their respective countries, leaving Pacific women's rights organisations stranded. The larger impact, with a piercing outcome that is rarely talked about, is the walking away of strong women's rights actors from the movement and from life as a women's rights actor:

🗨 **When we lose women's rights actors and they leave the movement, or a women's rights organisation closes down, especially when they have been a great voice for the rights of women and gender equality, it means the women's movement in that country loses out. And it**

may mean that country having to wait another 10-20 years before another strong women's rights actors comes along to pick up where things left off. Because, as you would know, it is not easy to be a women's rights actor in our patriarchal countries and societies and this is what most donors don't understand, the impact that this has. So there needs to be a way for us to talk about this and the big 'what if' funds are pulled: how do we continue supporting women's rights actors and the movements in their countries? 🗨

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

🗨 **We were not ready to stop our work when we were told our funding was being pulled. I felt a great injustice. Sure, we had to improve in areas of operations, but the overall impact we had in our constituencies spoke for itself. The pulling of funds ultimately came about because our donor had a change of government and the focus shifted from people to money or whatever they are calling it now as economic empowerment..... You know, after that I just let go and walked away. It was really hard for me to do that, but I did. 🗨**

- Research Participant 2009-2010 period

There was a collective call by participants for open and honest talanoa to be held between Global North organisations and women's rights organisations at all levels of engagement. It was felt by many that Global North organisations needed to understand that, when moving into spaces to work with Pacific women's rights organisations, careful consideration be given and long-term commitments be made because ad hoc and intermittent partnerships and engagements bring negative results in the long run:

> **When [Bilateral Donor] pulled out, in about 2009, from human rights and gender programs and initiatives, it left a devastating impact. My organisation changed focus and we had to go down the path of women's economic empowerment. But that just put us back years and years of human rights work and gender work. And, look, now we still have some major human rights issues to work on … I believe had we been given the opportunity to continue with what we were doing, we could have been talking about some major changes right now but we're not because of this type of donor behaviour.**
>
> Research Participant 2000-2009 period

The perceptions of women's rights organisations on Global North engagement over the last three decades present opportunities to co-create, co-design and develop better links between themes: political, economic, social, cultural, inter-generational and urban/rural strategies. This will inevitably develop collective accountability and co-responsibility in Global-South-North relations.

The proposed roles for engagement moving forward are discussed below.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

WHAT ROLE DO PACIFIC WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENTS AND ACTORS PROPOSE FOR GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS ENGAGING WITH MOVEMENTS INTO THE FUTURE?

1 GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS TO CO-CREATE AND CO-DESIGN, TO HAVE CO-RESPONSIBILITY AND COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY WITH WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

Global North organisations and Pacific women's rights actors value and support each others' contributions and participation. There was a strong call for Global North organisations and Pacific women's rights actors to work closely together to achieve goals and impact change. The ability to question each other and call each other out on inappropriate behaviour in respectful ways, and to find solutions for how to move forward together. Participants identified that this required relationships that are built on understanding and trust:

> **It's all about relationships. We will partner up with you becuase there is something we can collectively change together and because we both believe in the principles of co-responsibility, co-design and co-creation.**
>
> Research Participant 2010-2019 period

2 GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS TO DEVELOP ORGANISATIONAL FEMINIST POLICIES OR NATIONAL FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICIES

Global North organisations who have a feminist grounding and understand the intersectionalities of complex issues in the Pacific are likely to have better relationships with Pacific women's rights organisations. Global North organisations who are not feminist but who have funding or support available to Pacific women's rights organisations should be guided by internal Feminist Policies or by national Feminist Foreign Policies, where they exist.

Global North organisations who have national Feminist Foreign Policies can "make a huge difference in terms of improved relations and valued partnerships," as stated by one participant. This type of engagement featured prominently in the talanoa:

> **I would see the ideal relationship as one whereby we are driven by mutual goals and that they understand that for us, it's not just about feminism per se – It's feminism intersected with race, poverty and decolonization - you know, literal decolonization, not theoretical decolonization....One of the most important things about this relationship and why they need to co-exist with us is because some of the countries we live in in the developing world in the Pacific, live under very difficult conditions.**

Research Participant 1990-1999 period

3 GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS TO SELF EDUCATE AND LEARN ABOUT LOCAL CONTEXT AND POLITICAL POSITIONING

Global North organisations educating themselves on the systems, institutions and mindsets that perpetuate patriarchal hierarchies of power and social order in the countries of the women's rights organisations they establish relationships with. This includes understanding the challenges and oppression faced by women in these countries.

Talanoa around the ideal engagement included Global North organisations needing to recognise the difference in power dynamics between Women's rights organisations in the countries they engage in and in countries across the Pacific. To see where Global North organisations can provide support directly to women's rights organisations who struggle with their own internal power dynamics, for example, by writing about issues in that country applying a gender analysis and articulating a demand for decolonized processes from Global North organisations.

One of the ways of providing this type of support involves Global North organisations investing in time to develop a better understanding of the local context, the political positioning of the women's rights organisations and the realities of operating a Non-Government Organisation or movement in that country. This time, and time spent by Pacific women rights organisations in the Global North organisation, develops better genuine and trusting relationships and collective accountability, reinforcing a relational development agenda:

> **The parachute type of assistance, like sending consultants for a week to advise us and then they go away for about 6 months before coming back again, does not work in the Pacific. What we need are people who are sent to our organisations to spend quality time with us and really get to understand the dynamics which we work in and help mentor us as a friend and partner, rather than someone who's an expert who has been sent in to teach us because we don't know anything. You know, there is a lot we teach consultants too and they benefit from it, like increasing their chances of getting more consultancies.**

Research Participant 1990-2009 period

> **We only have access to funding from organisations in the United States….Right now, we are fighting for the indigenous people's right to vote, fighting for decolonization, against militarisation and the desecration of our sacred sites … None of these issues are issues that these organisations from the US want to fund.**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

Global North organisations must understand the issues of Intersectionality. It is not enough that the Global North organisation has feminists working inside the organisation or that the Global North organisation is feminist. It has to go further than that and acquire sufficient understanding and knowledge of the multiple layers of issues of a particular country and the region:

> **If you partner for example with a Pacific Eliminating Violence Against Women organisation in my country and you don't have a good understanding of the political context, of the many coups that have happened over the last how many decades, you don't understand the impact of militarisation on women and you have no idea about the race issues between indigenous Fijians and Indian Fijians, then you will have a very hard time understanding the challenges we face on a day to day basis. And our relationship then just becomes donor and recipient.**

Research Participant 1990-2009 period

4 GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS TO EMBRACE INDIGENOUS AND DECOLONIZED WAYS OF ACCESSING, SHARING, DOCUMENTING AND BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

Having a genuine interest in finding out what the women's rights issues are at the national and regional level will help progress gender equality from a holistic approach. Having the willingness to listen to indigenous knowledge and to build on this

knowledge will assist Global North organisations in gaining access to insights about the women's rights issues of each country and not just focus its funding and support on assumed or pre-determined issues. Participants felt that this would also contribute towards strengthening regional solidarity and bring together Oceanic Pacific women's rights organisations at both national and regional levels and prevent working in silos:

> **Over the last decade I have only ever worked on the one issue and, on reflection, I don't think that has helped the bigger cause.**

-Research Participant 2010-2019 period

> **Maybe this is a time to take stock and talk to our women about what our key women's rights issues are and invest our time in pushing for more than just the one or two or three issues.**

Research Participant 1990-2009 period

> **You know, we worked hard to build our non-government organisation because we knew what was needed and what our women and children needed. And we did it off our own backs and dug into our own pockets and getting the support of our community to help us...They approached us many years later to offer support... What is funny is that it seemed as if we didn't know what we were doing, because they sent experts**

> **to help us design our program like we never had done it before, like turning a blind eye to what we already had achieved on our own.**

Research Participant 1990-2019 period

5 GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS TO ADVOCATE FOR AND SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

Women's rights organisations advocating for better polices, laws, practices, beliefs and attitudes towards women, working towards gender equality/equity and the realisation of women's human rights, require long term investment. Global North organisations can advocate for sustained support to women's rights organisations to support this work.

Women's rights organisations have the responsibility to deliver good robust programs and services that aim at overturning patriarchy and hegemonic masculinities that continue to oppress, restrict and confine women to a 'woman's place' in society. Co-responsibility could mean Global North organisations working to ensure that women's rights organisations' efforts are not pulled back or diluted:

> **I feel our donors need to also be our partner rather than just some organisation that provides funding. We write reports about what we are doing and we provide financial reports to ensure that the money is spent accordingly. But they should also fight for us, because they see the work that is being done. We are always fearful when it comes to the end of a funding round. They can**

pull the plug any time. They need to be straight up with us sometimes, because we do this work with such a passion. But I don't know if the people in those donor offices actually read our reports. 🙶

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

6 GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS TO STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS

Feminist Legal Practice training, Human Rights and Gender training and Training of Trainers, including programs offered by Asia Pacific Women in Law and Development (APWLD), are needed. These kinds of training have built many strong feminists and women's rights actors amongst the participants who have sustained their passion for issues on the ground in their home countries. The leaders of these organisations, in addition to gaining knowledge and a good grounding in feminism, also have skills in contextualising feminism and human rights within their countries. They have gained knowledge of geopolitical happenings in the region and globally. They have learnt how to confidently challenge the status quo, to negotiate and to develop lobbying skills:

🙶 **Most organisations in Fiji… a few others across the Pacific… have strong feminists leading those organisations and they can demand equality with donors, unlike most of us.** 🙶

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

Strong Pacific women's rights actors and feminists have the ability to demand equal partnerships at the very beginning of the relationship. A potential role of the Global North organisation is to assist in providing opportunities that will strengthen the internal power and agency of women's rights actors and feminist leaders across the Pacific.

7 GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS TO INVEST IN INTEGRATIVE PARTNERSHIPS BUILT ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY

Engagement, participation and integrative partnerships are based on principles of equality, diversity and inclusivity. Engagement, participation and integrative partnerships are best when based on principles of equality, diversity, and inclusivity, underpinned by human rights and awareness of intersecting inequalities.

Partnerships and relationships need to be based on equal relationships that are open to diversity and the inclusion of all women's rights actors and women's rights organisations. This requires a paradigm shift, where both Global North organisations and women's rights organisations are viewed as equal partners who can benefit from each other's contribution and participation, as opposed to donor and beneficiary. This includes Global North organisations opening up their support to women's rights organisations who are traditionally left out because of political positioning or are wanting to address issues which donors themselves have not identified as priorities:

🙶 **I fight and speak up on issues such as militarisation, land contamination, desecration of our ancient sites, contamination of land and water…I fight and speak**

up on these issues because of my children, grand children and great grandchildren – what kind of world am I leaving behind for them? I need to show my children the injustices and get them to learn about the truth of our rich cultural histories and the current state of our country and how our sovereignty is being affected...The US based organisations who fund projects in my country won't touch these issues and the movement I'm in can't get funds from them, I guess, because we're challenging them for the mess they've made in our country. 🙶

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

8 GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS AND PACIFIC WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS TO AGREE ON SHARED VALUES AND STANDARDS

Finally, and most profoundly, Global North and Pacific women's rights organisations must be willing to negotiate and regularly revisit shared values based on feminist principles, gender equality and human rights. This reiterates the nurturing of the vā, the space between South-North relationships that must be carefully navigated in order to achieve equitable and supportive ways of moving forward together. It presents a new way of investing resources that can yield better results in terms of strengthening women's movements across the Pacific in each country and also at the regional level. Investing in building the

capacity of strong women activists in the Pacific region, on human rights, feminism, gender relations and consciousness raising on a wide range of issues affecting women across the Pacific, means investing in local calls to action and building sustained solidarity. Feminist principles and the human rights framework are often perceived as western frameworks and concepts that have no relevance or context in the Pacific. Global North organisations have an opportunity to re-imagine the way they engage with Pacific women's rights organisations in the reconstruction of a women's movement and supporting women activists across Oceania. This can be done by giving Oceanic women the space to re-imagine and co-create an Oceanic feminist women's rights movement that is inclusive and diverse, with Global North organisations playing a role in supporting financially:

🙶 **The women's movement is weak and we have ended up working in silos. There are those of us who identify as feminist or women's rights actors and there are those of us who do the work of feminists and women's rights actors but refrain from being identified specifically as feminist and prefer not to be labeled as such. But when we get together as women and sit and share our stories, we are all connected in our resilience and longing for a better Pacific for our women and children. There has to be a better way of doing this because we can't keep on the trajectory that we are on. We need to look at new ways of strengthening the**

women's movement and how to unlearn misconceptions and re-learn feminism and women's rights as part of who we are. And claim our own understanding of it, because if we don't, we'll end up talking about the same thing in 10 years time. 🙲

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

The roles proposed by women's rights actors for future engagement with Global North organisations are simple, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. Talanoa around the suggested roles of Global North organisations enabled participants' storied experiences, both positive and negative, to be extracted. This presents a unique opportunity for the co-creation and co-design of the Oceania Feminist Vaka, the double hull representing equitable and supportive roles and responsibilities.

The key elements of supportive, equitable and decolonized models of engagement are proposed below.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF SUPPORTIVE, EQUITABLE AND DECOLONIZED MODELS OF ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN GLOBAL SOUTH WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENTS AND GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS SUGGESTED BY PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND RESEARCH INFORMANTS?

1️⃣ DECOLONIZE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AND SHARED POWER

Global North organisations must recognise the impacts of colonization on Pacific women's rights organisations and support decolonized forms of partnerships that involve sharing power. Understanding the impacts of colonization across the Pacific is critical to unpacking and identifying Global North behaviour that is inappropriate and insensitive. Such understanding requires Global North organisations to think outside the box and diversify funding into areas that may not be the norm in their gender equality and women's human rights programming but are in fact the spaces that feminists and women's rights actors work in. This can open up constructive and much needed dialogue on decolonization and power dynamics such as in the creative arts:

❝ **I think it's important that they understand how they have contributed and continue to contribute to eradicating our history. And so supporting creative projects I think is owed to us – they need to expand their funding and scope into the arts because this is a space that helps decolonize the way we think and behave and can help us claim back our collective power and voice.** 🙲

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

Decolonized forms of engagement, where there is power-to and power-within, is a demand from Pacific women's rights organisations moving forward, with Pacific women's rights actors and organisations exercising the power to decide their own development agenda. It is a paradigm shift from the *palangi* (white

person) who knows everything, to reclaiming power and knowledge that already exists.

Women's rights actors and women's rights organisations could workshop or engage in transformative and adaptive leadership talanoa about the re-imagining of Oceanic women's movement. Departing from the colonized terminology of 'Pacific' and encouraging women's rights organisations to identify decolonized models of engagement as Oceanic women of the audacious ocean past, present and into the future. Women's rights organisations and actors should be actively engaged at all levels, with the provision of safe spaces for reflection on the overall impact of colonization in creating dependency on the Global North as the 'big brother or big sister.' Examining how this has resulted and impacted Pacific people to view their world as insignificant compared to the rest of the globe:

> **We need to revive the wider women's movement in the Pacific and in our own countries. It makes me feel so sad, because sometimes I feel like I'm alone in this fight because I never hear from my Pacific sistahs or my own sistahs here in Papua New Guinea … I want to hear my Pacific sistah voices because it helps me keep strong, I feel depressed when I'm only working towards reports and acquittals for donors and it feels like I am doing the work for them. But this work I do is for the women and girls of my country and for the Pacific.**

Research Participant 1990-2019 period

2 ENABLE GLOBAL SOUTH POWER, AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

There was a strong collective call from the 35 women for co-creating relationships and co-designing initiatives where Pacific women's rights organisations have access to the means, skills and opportunities to be independent and to lead in developing their own solutions. It was agreed that when there are strong Pacific feminists leading or participating in Pacific women's rights organisations or movements, there is immediately a shift in power dynamics. Strong Pacific women's rights actors and feminists have the ability to demand equal partnerships at the very beginning of the relationship. The call from participants in this research is for Global North organisations to co-create and co-design the development agenda of Pacific women's rights actors rather than dictating what the development agenda should be. Especially taking care when there are no strong feminists or women's rights actors making the demand for equal partnerships:

> **Any development initiative should be based on the knowledge of women's rights organisations and the unique needs and demands for improving the lives of women in their communities and country. They shouldn't come with an already designed initiative and try and force it on us. Even though it working well in Africa doesn't mean it will work well here in the Pacific…They need to believe in our ideas and have faith that we know what we want and what we are doing and can deliver.**

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

> **We need to develop more of the few women leaders we have now who can speak without fear and who know how to deal with donors and demand equality. You know, some of us hold back mainly because of language barriers and fear of funding being pulled. But that doesn't mean that we don't know what we are doing; we just need to build our self confidence.**

Research Participant 2000-2019 period

Women's rights organisations, particularly those started by Pacific women and not by donors or governments, grounded in their own development agenda and having agency and autonomy should be acknowledged for their home grown and movement building beginnings. Almost all participants identified and talked about this in their storied responses:

> **They need to understand that, even before they became our donors, we had done the hard ground work in setting up our organisation and had done community fundraising and digging out of our own pockets to do this work that we are passionate about. We did our own fundraising and we built three safe houses before we even asked for support. We need to be recognised for that so we can avoid being looked at as organisations that can only survive through donor funding.**

Research Participant 1990-1999 , 2000-2009 to 2010-2019 periods

> **Sometimes their approaches create a bottle neck, the funds that get approved, a lot of it gets absorbed into cumbersome M&E frameworks and systems set up by their consultants, when women's rights organisations should be able to come up with their own M&E frameworks and take ownership of its design and implementation.**

Research Participant 1990-1999 period

3 NURTURE THE SPACE IN-BETWEEN; THE VĀ

Research participants talked about nurturing the spaces of relation and nurturing the spaces in-between. In-between spaces include the space in-between Global North organisations and Pacific women's rights organisations, the spaces in-between Pacific women's rights organisations themselves, the spaces in-between the work that is being implemented and the spaces in-between feminists and Pacific women not identifying as feminists. This was an area of neglect that the 35 women raised throughout the talanoa, suggesting that investment in nurturing the spaces in-between is often sorely lacking:

> **It's a never-ending saga going back and forth so many times. I have lost count of how many times I've sat at the table with different consultants who have been sent here, being asked to cut the budget down, then having to explain again and again the purpose of the project when the new consultant**

comes and it's just never ending. And I tell you, by the time the funds get approved, the project cycle would have ended. 🙿

Research Participant 2000-2009 period

The example above is devoid of a relationship and one where no care is taken for the nurturing of the relationship. The lack of nurturing the space that relates, the space in-between, results in Pacific women's rights organisations losing faith and having ill-feelings towards the Global North organisation. This creates tension and inevitably the program/project/initiative ends in a bad way, lacking any meaningful outcomes.

Nurturing the spaces in-between also means bringing together women's rights organisations and Global North organisations working on different issues: Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW), Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), Women in Decision Making and Politics (WIP), Women in Agriculture, Women in Business, Women and Climate Change, Women working in Government, Women in the Church and Women's Grassroots Development Groups (to name a few) and changing the trajectory of women's movements. Rather than continue on the trajectory of feminist versus non-feminist, women's rights organisations have an opportune entry point to talanoa with these groups in safe spaces where consciousness raising and awareness of issues can be shared and advocated. The hope is that women's movements at national and regional levels will be strengthened to encompass women in all their diversities and intersectionalities:

🙾 **We label ourselves as non-feminist and feminist organisations. But when you think about it, we were all once non-feminists, it**

wasn't until we had access to feminists who talked to us about the situation of women and realities of our everyday lives that we had never had the time to give deep reflection to. And the conversations came naturally to all of us, regardless of our religion, ethnicities or sexual orientation. We can do the exact same for our other sisters who haven't yet had the fire in their belly experience, we need to keep these relationships alive. 🙿

Research Participant 1990-1999 period

Effective engagement commands an understanding of the Pacific with an Oceanic lens that presents the vastness of cultures, languages, politics, economics and social standing. Traditionally, investment was focused on 'building partnerships' (irrespective of whether these were equitable), while nurturing relationships or investing in the development of empowered relationships was almost always non-existent. This in itself poses a huge challenge for the Pacific, as creating and maintaining relationships is at the core of Oceanic relationships.

4 CONTEXTUAL SENSITIVITY

Global North organisations should have cultural sensitivity when working with women's rights organisations as partners. An element that was featured strongly during the talanoa was the critical need for Global North organisations to have cultural sensitivity when engaging with Pacific women's rights organisations. Many participants felt that Global North organisations failed to have a good understanding of the cultural sensitivities,

protocols and practices on the ground. Lumping all countries under the banner of the 'Pacific' is also problematic. Past experiences have shown that where Global North organisations have worked in two or three countries, there is an assumption that those experiences are sufficient to claim working knowledge in the Pacific.

Global North organisations must acknowledge their privilege and understand how it impacts on engagement with Pacific women's rights organisations or be willing to be advised on these matters:

> **Sometimes when you try and explain that you cannot just walk into a community and run an activity, that there are certain cultural protocols that you have to follow, the donor has no idea, and because of a lack of cultural sensitivity on their part they mistakenly identify it as corruption or going against 'normal' practice of community engagement - of the 'western world' of course.**

Research Participant 2000-2009 period

In addition to the individual talanoa that was undertaken, story-mapping of selected talanoa was used to create three focused accounts from the three main geographical regions of the Oceanic Pacific: (1) Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) – South West Oceania, (2) Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) – Northern Oceania and (3) Punanga Tauturu Inc (PTI) – Eastern Oceania.

A fourth account has been developed as a regional women's movement example based on the two most recent 'Outcomes Documents' of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women (PWNAVAW). These focused accounts have contributed to the collective Oceanic voice and are presented as an annex to this report.

"WE ARE STRONG WOMEN. WE NEED TO SPEAK UP AND TELL THEM WHEN THINGS WILL NOT WORK FOR US AND WE SHOULD ONLY PARTNER WITH THOSE WHO WILL LISTEN TO US."
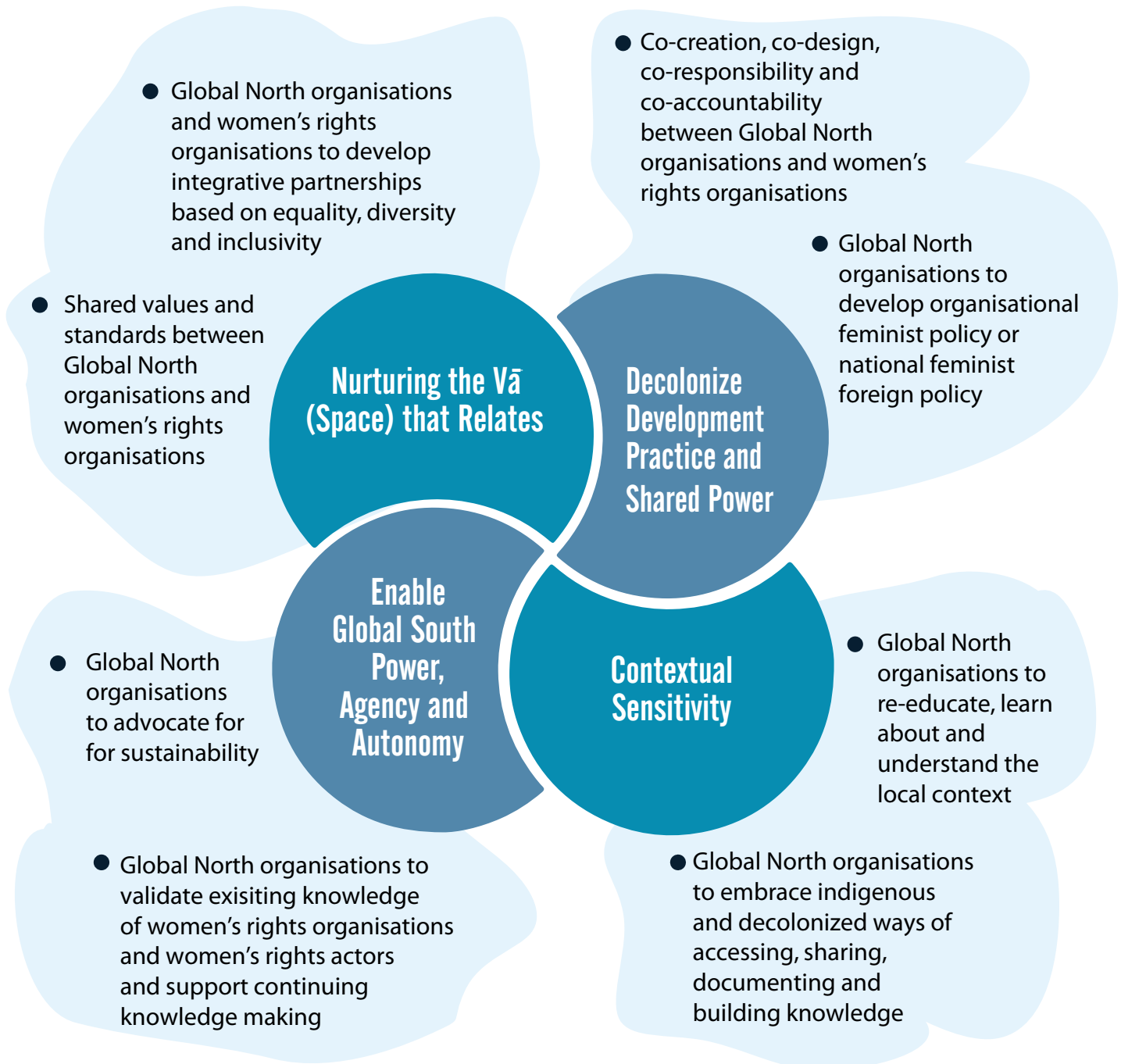
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT, 2010-2019 PERIOD

"WE'VE LED GENERATIONS OF WORK IN THIS AREA BUT NOW IT SEEMS AS THOUGH NOBODY CARES ABOUT WHAT WE'VE DONE FOR WOMEN, EVERYONE IS INTERESTED IN YOUNG WOMEN NOW. BUT THAT'S NOT RIGHT, WE HAVE TO ALL WORK TOGETHER AND PASS ON THE KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE AND DONORS HAVE TO BUILD ON THIS, NOT TEAR US APART."

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT, 1990-2019 PERIOD

RECOMMENDATIONS

The storied experiences of the 35 research participants covering over 30 years of combined voyages throughout the Pacific provides this research with a unique opportunity to change the course of engagement between Global North and Global South organisations in Oceania. Prior to commencing the research, particularly the talanoa, there was a need for the lead researcher to work on the various levels of hesitation amongst some participants who feared that sharing their honest perceptions would put their organisations at risk of losing funding or support from the Global North. The combined use of talanoa and Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) methodologies facilitated the nurturing of the vā not only between the lead researcher and the participants, but also between fear and reclaiming power and knowledge.

The positioning of the analysis of this research on an expression of power analysis, combined with Underhill-Sem's 'Audacity of the Ocean' analogy as an overarching theoretical framework, has created a strong sense of a commanding, collective voice calling for decolonized forms of engagement moving forward:

> **Taking part in this research has really made me think about our relationship with our donors and how colonized it is and how I've never really had the time to sit down and think about it...There are some of us women who know exactly what to say and how to say it when they have meetings with donors. And then there are those of us who know what to say but can't**

> say it because of lack of confidence, knowledge and skills. So if we are talking about strengthening the women's rights movement in the Pacific and here at home, then we need to start by building the capacity of all women's rights activists because we don't all have the same opportunities to learn.

Research Participant 2010-2019 period

Australian feminist, author and activist for indigenous rights, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, shared a personal reflection about her relational positionality to the indigenous women of Australia:

> **I am only who I am through my relationships with all of them. They pretty much shape the way I think, be and do.[10]**

Moreton-Robinson's personal statement sets up the overarching recommendation of the proposed South-North engagement model. The model represents the gathering of responses provided by the participants to each of the key research questions. Although the research was heavily based on individual talanoa, the responses were analogous, giving life to the collective call to action. The 35 women's voices unconsciously shaped the way they collectively, think, be and do. The model is founded on two foundational purposes: Equitable Partnerships and Empowered Relationships and has four decolonized elements presented in the quadrants, each with its own co-responsibility of practice.

10 Aileen Moreton-Robinson: 20th Anniversary of *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, The Wheeler Centre, 2 September 2020.

Equitable South-North Engagement Model: Nurturing the Vā and Voyaging the Audacious Ocean together

DEVELOPING EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

- Global North organisations and women's rights organisations to develop integrative partnerships based on equality, diversity and inclusivity

- Co-creation, co-design, co-responsibility and co-accountability between Global North organisations and women's rights organisations

- Global North organisations to develop organisational feminist policy or national feminist foreign policy

- Shared values and standards between Global North organisations and women's rights organisations

Nurturing the Vā (Space) that Relates

Decolonize Development Practice and Shared Power

Enable Global South Power, Agency and Autonomy

Contextual Sensitivity

- Global North organisations to advocate for for sustainability

- Global North organisations to re-educate, learn about and understand the local context

- Global North organisations to validate exisiting knowledge of women's rights organisations and women's rights actors and support continuing knowledge making

- Global North organisations to embrace indigenous and decolonized ways of accessing, sharing, documenting and building knowledge

ACHIEVING EMPOWERED RELATIONSHIPS

This model ultimately validates Teaiwa, Underhill-Sem, Helu-Thaman, Tuhiwai Smith's and Moreton-Robinson's claims that Oceanic (indigenous) women's experiences, skills and positionality, their understanding of their own environment, people and ways of being, are forms of expert knowledge. The model presents four foundational elements key to developing programs that are relevant and owned by Pacific Oceanic women's rights organisations and that ultimately allow the creation of equitable partnerships and empowered relationships:

(1) NURTURING THE VĀ (SPACE) THAT RELATES.

(2) DECOLONIZE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AND SHARED POWER

(3) CONTEXTUAL SENSITIVITY AND

(4) ENABLE GLOBAL SOUTH POWER, AGENCY AND AUTONOMY

This requires a paradigm shift from engagement built on power-over to shared power and decolonized forms of engagement.

The four roles presented in this model are either examples of best practice roles and/or proposed roles that arose from the talanoa. For each of the four elements, there are two proposed roles that Global North organisations can play to ensure that equitable and empowered relationships and partnerships are achieved. This includes the validating of women's rights organisations and women's rights actors' existing indigenous knowledge, the need to co-design and have co-responsibility, the role of Global North organisations in advocating for sustainability

and a call for shared values and standards. All these roles have been raised by the 35 women participating in the research. They make for an audacious departure from power-over to inspiring partnerships and relationships built on power-within and power-to. Women's rights organisations and women's rights actors are therefore able to co-create and co-design programs, activities and initiatives based on indigenous knowledge and practice that will be meaningful and impactful for each country-context.

To conclude the talanoa on the engagement model, there is an old Hawaiian proverb that Teresia Teaiwa refers to in her article L(o)osing the Edge:

> **'A 'ohe o kahi nana o luna o ka pali;**
> **iho mai a lalo nei; 'ike I ke au nui ke au iki,**
> **he alo a he alo.**
>
> **The top of the cliff isn't the place to look at us;**
> **come down here learn of the big and little currents, face to face.**

The navigation of women's rights actors' voices in developing the model has positioned us face-to-face with the lived experiences and realities of women's rights actors and women's rights organisations across Oceania. Their willingness to be vulnerable and courageous in their talanoa - free from fear or retaliation from the Global North - has enabled the development of the **Equitable South-North Engagement Model**, the overarching outcome and recommendation of this report. The model encompasses Oceanic feminist knowledge and the reimagining of the Oceanic Feminist Vaka preparing to set sail on a new trajectory across the vast audacious Oceanic waters.

CONCLUSION

The voices in this report are anchored in hope, the hope of beginning a wider discourse on a topic that has been narrated and re-narrated amongst Pacific women's rights actors and women's rights organisations over the last three decades. Twenty-five years since Beijing and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought about a time for reflection, to step back, re-think, re-educate and re-imagine moving forward. Decolonized practices and processes inclusive of women in all their diversities, underpinned by human rights and the awareness of intersecting inequalities is the new voyage - thus leaving behind bad and disempowering practices. The research undertaken for this report presents critical entry-points for both Global North organisations and women's rights organisations in Oceania to use as key learnings in voyaging forward together.

The findings of the research mobilise the re-imagining of South-North relations not only in the Oceanic Pacific but in the wider development context. This research has created the tools for the creation of Oceanic Feminist vakas that can withstand the roughest waters of Oceania: the 'audacity of the ocean.' To be bold in calling for equitable partnerships and empowered relationships and setting sail on new, re-imagined, decolonized voyages.

In the same spirit this report began, it again calls upon Teaiwa's Oceanic re-claiming of power and indigenous knowledge to conclude the women's storied experiences navigated throughout this report. Teaiwa's words are a reminder that women of Oceania are resilient seafarers of the vast Pacific Ocean, the largest ocean in the world and the deepest of all ocean basins. The women's voices reflected in this report rest on the shoulders of Oceanic women's rights activists and advocates who have fought for equitable, decolonized and empowered engagement over the last 50 years. The Ocean is in our blood. There are rough and treacherous waters to chart and then there are calm seas where we need to navigate carefully. This research report invites you to re-imagine South-North partnerships and relationships with women's rights organisations and actors, in all their diversities, across Oceania.

WE SWEAT AND CRY SALT WATER,
SO WE KNOW THAT THE OCEAN
IS REALLY IN OUR BLOOD

TERESIA TEAIWA

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ANNEX 1: GUIDANCE LITERATURE REVIEW FOR CREATING EQUITABLE SOUTH-NORTH PARTNERSHIPS: NURTURING THE VĀ AND VOYAGING THE AUDACIOUS OCEAN TOGETHER

KEY CONCEPTS

- **Global North, Global South**
- **Women's rights activists, advocates, actors**
- **Power-over, hegemony**
- **Decolonization**
- **Pacific as tiny islands**
- **Oceanic philosophy**
- **Talanoa methodology**
- **Feminist Participatory Action Research**
- **Personal is political**
- **Ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results and mutual accountability**

This literature review accompanies a research project originally titled 'The role of the Global North in supporting Southern Women's Rights Movements'. Whilst doing the initial preliminary readings, our research team, after careful consideration, amended the topic title to: **Creating Equitable South-North Partnerships: Nurturing the Vā and Voyaging the Audacious Ocean Together.** This amendment is quite significant. There is an immediate shift from placing the emphasis on examining the 'support' role of the Global North to gaining a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of Southern women's rights actors. This opens up room for interrogating power and relationships and other modes of engagement such as movement building, solidarity or just stepping back.

This involves the investigation into decolonization and decolonizing solidarity where this research has the opportunity to richly inform and re-educate readers by identifying the elements of supportive,

equitable and, in particular, decolonized models of engagement[1] from the stories told by the respondents.

Interestingly, the use of the terminology Global North-South, has been used as a preference over the terminologies 'First World and Third World Countries' and 'Developed and Developing[2] Countries'. In everyday parlance, the latter is perhaps more prominently used in the Pacific. Global North/Global South for the purposes of this research is understood by critically looking at the historical, geographical, economical, educational and political differences between North and South for example in the context of power dynamics, disparities of privilege and colonial practices. It is the framing of rich powerful nations of the world who have accumulated their wealth by taking and extracting resources from their colonies. It also questions how these practices have continued even after independence has been gained by the poorer and less powerful former colonies. This shifts the paradigm from developed countries/developing countries and/or first world/third world where economic and geographic determinants are the key differentiators, for example geographical positioning and hierarchical GDP per capita determinants.

The literature review, for this reason, assumes that there is information available on Southern women's rights movements' perspectives on the role of the Global North and that the gaps in knowledge would primarily be the paucity of literature available specifically on the Pacific.

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1 OECD, 2005, *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.*
2 Mostly understood as former colonies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

One
To explore the views of women's rights movement actors on the positive and negative impacts of Global North engagement with movements in the Pacific region over the past 30 years.

Two
To develop recommendations on effective models of engagement between Global South women's rights movements and Global North organisations aiming to support these movements.

Three
To document and share key learnings from the Pacific region to assist Global South women's rights movements and Global North organisations engaging with these movements elsewhere.

The lead researcher referred to this guidance literature review in navigating and developing a clear theoretical framework and research methodology for gathering information from the field and in the analysis of the data.

GLOBAL NORTH AND GLOBAL SOUTH

Global North and Global South can present as slippery terminology (Bradley, 2017). The literature available on this discourse shows that use of the term is dynamic and complex and that scholars have different perspectives (Clarke, 2018). The research team during the early stages of design, agreed on the following definition; *"Global North organisations are defined here as organisations based in OECD countries that engage in development work in the Pacific region. These may include International NGOs, bilateral donors, UN Agencies and managing contractors amongst others."*

In fact, a quick check-in with five women's rights actors across the Pacific during the undertaking of this literature review, resulted in only two having used the terminology Global North and Global South in their own interactions with donors, report writing and presentations at national and international forums. Two of the actors have had significant relations with regional and international women's rights and feminist organisations and forums over the last decade, noting that this type of interaction had raised their awareness of Global North and Global South terminology and thinking, whereas three of the actors described having only referenced using 'developed or developing countries,' as was the practice they believed applicable for the Pacific.

Global South refers to countries that have been acknowledged by organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations as low middle income countries, namely; Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania (Dados and Connell, 2012) and Global North referring to high income countries in Europe and North America. More recent literature shows that the Global North is commonly understood to mean the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, all member states of the European Union, Russia, Israel, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. This is useful in identifying the key players from the Global North working with women's rights actors and movements in the Pacific, where the latter are assumed to be part of the Global South.

The use of the phrase 'Global South' has been viewed as carrying more weight in resisting hegemonic forces (Hollington et al, 2015) than its predecessors. This presents an interesting dynamic, as 'developing' versus 'developed' has often been used in the Pacific to suggest that, in order to survive economically, countries have needed to look to New Zealand and Australia as 'more resourced' and 'skilled' Pacific neighbours, sometimes blindly following because of their 'powerless' position, or better coined by

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3 Kelsey, Jane, 2004, 'Big Brothers Behaving Badly: The Implications for the Pacific Islands of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER)'.

Jane Kelsey as 'Big Brothers Behaving Badly.'[3] An example is the 'PACER Plus' free trade agreement between Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island Forum Countries. This agreement has been seen as primarily benefiting the Pacific (developing) countries who enter into the deal with developed Australia and New Zealand. However, a report by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat looking into the impacts of this agreement on Forum members found that under PACER-Plus:

Pacific countries would stand to lose tens of millions of dollars each year. The report found Vanuatu stands to lose around 17% of its annual government revenue, as does Tonga, while Samoa and Kiribati stand to lose around 14% of their revenue. Even bigger countries like Fiji and PNG stand to lose more than $10 million each year.[4]

The free trade agreement has been criticised by others as being an economic farce, claiming that funds promised by Australia and New Zealand to support Pacific business in its trade and export are actually funds diverted from other pockets of funding that these developed countries had already committed to, including in the education and health sectors.

In reviewing the literature, consideration was given to the possibility that use of the phrase Global South as one of the key concepts in the research could very well shift the paradigm of how respondents reflected on the questions being asked of them. Rather than being asked what their perception is of the role of developed countries on their organisations and movements - which at its premise presents as hierarchical and unequal – shifting the conversation to their perceptions of the role of the Global North on the Global South might reduce the power and resource-based distinction (Hollington et al, 2015). It's the difference between respondents (as actors or movements) perceiving the support provided

as hegemonic welfare, that is, developing or third world context, and perceiving the provider of funds, resources and technical assistance as having power-over. One that richer, 'developed' nations depend on to maintain their 'developed' status. Alternatively, a Global South/North paradigm might support an analysis by respondents (as actors or movements) that the Global North understand their privilege and power-over, having access to more resources because of their history and political economy, and acknowledge the challenges, structures and processes that generate poverty and global inequality (Clarke, 2018).

The phrase Global South draws on the impact of colonialism, neo-imperialism and differential economic and social change, with a deeper emphasis on geo-political relations of power rather than a more limited focus on development or cultural differences (Dados and Connell, 2012). For example, issues that have been identified by Global North partners as their priority whilst refraining from other issues that are not explicitly political.

This could be applied to the last decade of work in the Pacific, where the three key priorities on women's rights have been the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW), increasing the number of Women in Parliament (WIP) and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Whilst these are important areas, other issues such as land ownership by women in Tonga or the impact of mining on women and their families in PNG have been left on the backburner and have rarely been talked about by Global North organisations in the last 10 years. When women's rights activists on the ground have tried raising other issues, these have been labeled as too difficult, too political. This raises concern about the domination of 'collaborative' agendas by the interests of Global North donors and organisations and the question of whether women's rights' organisations in the Pacific have been able to challenge this (Bradley, 2017). Dados and Connell remind us of the idea of a powerful Global North and a resistant Global

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4 See https://www.bilaterals.org/?10-reasons-to-challenge-pacer-plus&lang=es and https://www.bilaterals.org/?pacer-plus-development-assistance.

South promoted by the Zapatista revolt in Mexico, the 'African Renaissance,' and the World Social Forum launched in Brazil. Similar examples in the Pacific may be women's rights organisations attempting to 'go against the grain' with Global North organisations, with mixed results.

Women's rights actors and movements in the Pacific are categorized under Global South for the purposes of this research. A closer look at the concept of women's rights actors and movements requires an understanding of (1) what constitutes a 'women's rights actor' in the Pacific and whether this is the same as a women's rights 'activist' or 'advocate' (2) what constitutes women's rights movements in the Pacific and (3) the differences between women's organisations in general versus women's organisations working specifically on women's rights. In addition, it is important to understand if there is a difference between women's rights NGOs and individual women who are activists/advocates/actors (Glasius et al, 2015).

The phrases 'women's rights activist' and 'women's rights actor' are sometimes used interchangeably in the development context - but are they perceived as the same? It may seem a trivial issue, however the difference is as significant as the amendment made to the title of this research. What perceptions are there in the Pacific of the terms 'women's rights activist' (Hala, 2018), 'advocate' and 'actor'?

In terms of usage in the Pacific, the two most commonly used words are 'activist' and 'advocate,' with the latter more widely accepted. 'Activism' is mostly connected to leftist politics and feminist principles and is often frowned upon across the Pacific mainly by religious groups and some more conservative governments because of misconceptions. An activist is at the forefront of an issue, a key person speaking on behalf of the issue, seeking justice and evoking change, often at huge professional and personal cost. An advocate supports an issue through taking time to research

and learn more about it, listening to those impacted by the issue and working with others to bring about change (Lewis, 2018). Most women's rights NGOs in the Pacific fall into the category of women's rights advocates, not necessarily because of its more unassuming nature, but because it is the more accepted approach, particularly in highly stratified religious and cultural contexts:

> **❝ ....I do not call myself an activist because my government doesn't like that word so I just keep to 'advocate' because my government, they also advocate on issues so it's the same language I stick to.... ❞**

> Facilitator's notes, FWCC Regional Training Program, 2019

In this research, women's rights actor is intended to encapsulate both activist and advocate. This aligns with the concepts explored during the design of this research and the thinking behind the blog; *What's the Difference between an Advocate and an Activist, Have You been Mislabeling?*, which suggests that activism and advocacy cannot function without each other and are both necessary to create systemic change (Lewis, 2018).

The question around who and what constitutes a women's rights movement in the Pacific has been intensifying at regional and national discussions over the last decade. In this research, women's rights movements has been conceptualised as movements that acknowledge women's oppression and struggles and includes those movements self-identifying as feminist. This broad understanding is increasingly being articulated through Pacific regional forums, including the Pacific Feminists Forum held in 2016 and 2019.[5] The keynote address at the second

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5 See http://www.fwrm.org.fj/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=71&Itemid=100.

Feminist Forum was delivered by the Fijian Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Mereseini Vuniwaqa, who stressed the importance of Pacific feminists engaging collectively in decision-making forums at regional and global levels.[6] Fiji is a case-in-point, where the interweaving of actors labeled as women's rights activists, advocates and feminists is more accepted than in other Pacific countries.

Fijian feminist and activist Noelene Nabulivou suggests that women's rights movements focusing on specific themes can pose challenges because they may be resistant to non-specialists stepping into their spaces:

> **A lot of our women's movements are very siloed ... the women in climate work on climate, a lot of women in EVAW work primarily on EVAW and the women in economic development, a very small group, work on economic development. So we have spent a lot of time doing the conceptual work around South feminist organising on interlinkage, not intersectionality, but interlinkage.[7]**

The question raised by Hala, "t*o what extent are the current modalities of intervention prioritised by Northern governments and surrogates contributing to women's movements?*" is relevant in the Pacific. This is a key area of navigation for the research, with the ultimate aim of rethinking feminist organising and movement-building in the Pacific (CREA, 2016). This requires careful analysis of the discourse around Global North agendas supporting women's movements (Muriithi, 2015). The Pacific Island Forum Gender Equality Declaration (2012) has three priority themes: EVAW, WIP and WEE. To what extent has the Global North influenced this? Who holds the power-over in setting the objectives and administrative processes (Carbonnier et al, 2014) which result in thematic priorities and how has this impacted women's rights movements across the Pacific?

EXPRESSIONS OF POWER ANALYSIS

This research draws on the Expressions of Power analysis developed by VeneKlasen and Miller (2002). Key concepts include power-over (dominance vs subordinance), power-with (shared power), power-to (power to make a positive difference) and power-within (self-determination and autonomy). Expressions of Power literature is useful in understanding how power can be experienced as either as enabling or disabling in South-North partnerships. Power in the form of domination, control and authority of North over South results in tensions and power struggles; power in the form of self-determination, autonomy and decolonization can lead to more equitable partnerships. Dr Yvonne Te Ruki-Rangi-o-Tangaroa Underhill-Sem's metaphor of 'the audacity of the ocean' is also relevant. Underhill-Sem proposes a model of engagement between South and North that may

> **reconcile the tensions of the unequal power struggles present in the talanoa and provide trajectories in moving forward.[8]**

OTHER LITERATURE

The literature review has highlighted the rich research and documentation of the topic of this research globally. Further literature on this topic has been produced by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), University of the South Pacific, Australian National University (ANU) and various Pacific Oceania academics. There is

6 See http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-05/20/c_138074292.htm.

7 'Feminist Organising: Strengthening a Movement - A perspective from the Pacific Small Island States,' available at https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2019/9/feminist-organising---strengthening-a-movementa-perspective-from-the-pacific-small-island-states.

8 Yvonne Te Ruki-Rangi-o-Tangaroa Underhill-Sem, 2020, 'The Audacity of the Ocean: Gendered Politics of Positionality in the Pacific,' Singapore Journal of Tropic Geography.

ample grey literature produced by non-government organisations, women's rights organisations, artists and poets sharing their perceptions of the impact of Global North organisations in their countries.

The contextual analysis undertaken at the 2016 regional meeting highlighted members' deep concerns about the increasing neo-colonialism in approaches to funding for women human rights and VAWG work in the Pacific, its negative impacts on partnerships and the sustainability of Pacific women's human rights organisations, and the consequent lost opportunities for re-doubling the work to eliminate VAW. [9]

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) commits in this paper to taking on a regional role over the period 2017-2021 to:

❝ engage with donors and build understanding and learning about effective EVAW strategies, and the risks associated with lack of accountability to a human rights approach. ❞

(FWCC, 2017)

REIMAGINING THE PACIFIC AS OCEANIA

Epeli Hau'ofa's pre-eminent Oceanic philosophy in his essay 'Our Sea of Islands' (1993) speaks directly to the issue of reimagining Pacific identity from one that is often described as many tiny little islands spread across oceans of tranquil water, hence the name 'Pacific,' coined by Explorer Ferdinand Magellan in the 16th century. This has come at a price with the Pacific region often being labeled as small economies of scale dependent on its bigger brothers Australia and NZ (Kelsey, 2004), geographically scattered, with some being seen as completely 'isolated' from the 'outside' world. The most recent global referencing

to this is the discourse of COVID-19 where comments have been made about most countries in the Pacific being spared because of its remoteness to the rest of the globe. Hau'ofa challenges this thinking and urges for a paradigm shift from viewing or understanding the Pacific as small pocketed islands with small land mass, spread across the vast Pacific ocean, to a more commanding and decolonized Oceanic presence - the biggest sea of islands in the world with a multitude of deeply rooted histories, culture and people:

❝ Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces which we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed place, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom.[10] ❞

Yvonne Underhill-Sem suggests an additional paradigm shift. She argues that Hau'ofa's call for Oceanic people to rise up and be liberated from the 'tiny spaces' that they have resisted "accepting as [their] sole appointed place" fails to recognise the additional multilevel and intersecting struggles faced by women throughout the Pacific that *still* leaves women behind in those 'tiny spaces'. She elaborates on Hau'ofa's Oceania to a re-imagined positioning

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9 PWNAVAW, 2017, 'Updated Strategy Paper.'

10 Hau'ofa, Epeli, 1993, 'Our sea of islands.' In Epeli Hau'ofa, Eric Waddell and Vijay Naidu (eds), *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*. Suva: The University of the South Pacific, pp. 2-16.

11 Yvonne Te Ruki-Rangi-o-Tangaroa Underhill-Sem, The Audacity of the Ocean: Gendered Politics of Positionality in the Pacific, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 2020.

of women in the Oceanic space. When this happens, women can begin to confidently resist being "confined physically and psychologically" by demanding supportive, equitable and decolonized relationships.[11] This conceptual framework is central to this research.

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN GLOBAL SOUTH WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENTS AND GLOBAL NORTH ORGANISATIONS IN THE FUTURE

While the project focuses on the Pacific region, it is hoped that learnings will be applicable to other contexts in which Global South women's rights movements engage with Global North organisations. Future engagement between the Global North and the Global South must revisit the five principles of the 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness:* ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results and mutual accountability. These principles were reiterated in the 2012 *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation* document, which foregrounds transparency in funding decisions by donors and the engagement of civil society organisations as independent development actors.   This should be looked at against the backdrop of understanding decolonization and the experience of women's rights actors and movements across the Pacific over the last 30 years.

It is envisaged that this approach will provide a new impetus for 'the personal is political,' seen by many women's rights actors across the Pacific as having been lost in the conglomerate of development frameworks. It will provide an understanding of why there is a need to redefine funding that has the potential to strengthen feminist movements in Asia and the Pacific (Reddy et al, 2020). To put it more bluntly, to:

> **Allow the people for whom this is life and death to take the lead. We all live on this planet, need each other's support. I've been supported throughout my life and career by people of different races, classes, genders. I would be lying if I said no, we can do this alone. We need support, but don't want the white man to be the centre of the stage. Support us financially, give credit where credit is due – there's power that comes with whiteness, and you have to acknowledge that.[12]**

This is the navigational journey of this research. It is the voices and stories of the Pacific women's rights actors and movements for whom this work is life and death, and who want to lead revolutionary and decolonized ways of working with the Global North.

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12 Oxfamblogs/From Poverty to Power interview, 14 Feb 2020, 'How to Decolonize Academia: Interview with Prof Akosua Adomako Ampofo.'

ANNEX 2: TALANOA RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: DECOLONIZING KNOWLEDGE

" Why hound me with a question when you don't care for an answer... "

Vaioleti, 2006

Pacific Island participants who are invited to take part in research or consultations often view western[13] research-methodologies as a tick-box exercise. The methodologies used are devoid of relationship between researcher and participant and time bound against a set of pre-approved questions and hypotheses (Vaioleti, 2006). When a Pacific Island research participant begins to respond with a story to a structured question, the failure to connect with the researcher can be immediately felt by the participant. This can result in a number of issues: (1) the participant is reserved about how much information they will share with the interviewer and (2) insensitivities felt by the participant, particularly where the participant allows herself to become vulnerable in order to answer a particular question and (3) the researcher by default fails to understand the complexities of the response and the vulnerable position that the participant has been placed in to answer the question.

The researcher, mostly because of having an 'outsider'[14] view and perspective, will stick to the numerical questions formulated and will often use the standard list of questions to guide and keep the interview compact, rather than carefully navigating the 'personal encounter' and authentic information that become possible when participants story their issues, realities and aspirations (Vaioleti, 2006). Baskin argues that emotional bonding with those who participate in a research project has the ability to generate new insights and knowledge (Baskin, 2016). Baskin identifies this as a holistic approach, whereby all four aspects of a participant (spiritual, psychological, emotional and physical) are interconnected and cannot be separated. It is from this that knowledge is derived.

The challenge for this research at the onset, is to ensure that western research methods - surveys, questionnaires, qualitative one-to-one interviews, qualitative focus group discussions and qualitative case studies - are used not only within a culturally responsive methodology but also one that carefully navigates the stories told by acknowledging, understanding and validating the lived experiences of the women leaders who will be invited to take part as participants. This research aims to collect information from participants that is quite sensitive and vulnerable. It requires participants to speak their truths regarding Global North relationships and the impacts, both negative and positive, on their activism, women's rights organisations and movements as a whole in each of their respective countries. This requires a lead researcher who is an insider of the women's rights movement in the Pacific and one who understands the different dynamics of power, knowledge and practice held by each of the women leaders in the context they work in. Holding this knowledge, of course, against the backdrop of the impacts of colonization and protectorate relationships between countries in the Pacific and the Global North. This approach will assist in decolonizing the research to de-centre the focus from the aim of the non-indigenous researcher towards the agenda of indigenous people "by adopting indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and methodologies" (Prior 2007, Asselin & Basile 2018 as cited in Fa'avae 2019).

The TALANOA RESEARCH METHODOLOGY (TRM) is the research methodology used for this research. It is based on the concept of talanoa, a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal (Vaioleti, 2006). Talanoa removes the distance between indigenous lead researcher and

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13 Originating from the West as in Global North, in particular United States, Europe, New Zealand and Australia.

14 Outsider in terms of researchers from the Global North.

participant and provides research participants with a human face they can relate to. This is an ideal method of research because relationship is the foundation on which most Pacific activities are built (Monison et al as cited in Vaioleti, 2006). This research will apply the TRM in its quest to decolonize the processes it undertakes in its interactions with the indigenous participants invited to take part with the overarching aim of placing their voices and epistemologies at the centre of the research process (Smith, 1999 as cited in Simmonds and Christopher, 2013).

TRM aims to assure the participant that her storied response to the research questions matters. That the indigenous lead researcher cares about the answer and that there is a commitment to ensuring that the research is not disempowering, that is, another tick-box exercise that does little or nothing to improve the relationship between the Global North and women's rights organisations and movements across the Pacific. Baskin argues that when indigenous researchers conduct research within indigenous communities, they are not only grounded geographically, culturally and experientially, but they also have a personal investment in the research findings because the results may impact the researcher just as much as they will the participants (Baskin, 2016). The positionality of the lead researcher in relation to the context of this research should therefore be a critical consideration of the research team.

TRM invokes a process that requires the indigenous lead researcher to talanoa with participants prior to the actual research interview, informing them of what the research is about and listening carefully to the responses that could range from disagreeing to take part in the research, hesitation and fear to excitement and a willingness to participate. At the same time, the indigenous lead researcher in working with the research team (who may not all be indigenous researchers) must also ensure that rigid western approaches to research are disrupted in the design

process to allow TRM to be applied at all stages of the research. An example of this:

Rather than just using the 'standard' approach of sending out research information sheets and formal invitations to participants to take part in the research, the lead researcher will make informal contact with potential participants and establish a pre-talanoa before the actual interview takes place. This pre-talanoa will allow possible participants to share their frustrations, fears and excitement as well as indicate whether they feel well placed to participate or feel 'others' should take part in the research. The researcher will also share, informally, how she feels about the research and what the key expectations are from the research, allowing participants to ask critical questions and discuss in depth issues at play before the interview takes place. The researcher also acknowledges and allows participants to weave through multi-layered expectations placed on them prior to finding time to participate: their roles as women rights advocates, activists, feminists, human rights defenders, decolonization activists and their roles as mothers, wives, aunties and grandmothers and their responsibilities to their wider extended families which could result in cancelled, postponed and re-scheduled interview times. This acknowledgement weaves in the Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) methodology. A typical Western approach would be to place a cut off time for data collection to allow for write up and analysis. TRM combined with FPAR allows for the possibility that participants whose voice is pertinent to the research may face a number of challenges in relation to participating. Together, these methodologies allow the researcher to find a way to weave the participant's voice into the web of conversations reflected in the research right up to the final moments of the write up. This disruption opens up space for indigenous knowledge by acknowledging the various challenges there may be in accessing such knowledge. It also disrupts patriarchal and masculinist ways of

collecting information, which are almost always blind to women's multiple roles and the scores of expectations placed on them. Why should we take away an opportunity from a participant who has agreed to take part but finds it challenging to participate because of issues out of her control? TRM finds ways of having conversations with the participant even if it is a number of sporadic conversations held in small pockets of time, all contributing to the building of the participant's story. This requires commitment and personal investment on the part of the researcher to ensure that the participant can still give voice to the research.

TRM as a methodology allows for a more meaningful approach between researcher and participants as well as a more meaningful participation by the participant, as Vaioleti explains: to "allow Pacific peoples to help identify issues, then co-create knowledge and solutions for themselves." (Vaioleti, 2006). It is based on this co-creation of knowledge and solutions, using TRM, that the analysis and implementation of findings, according to Vaioleti, "….should be more trustworthy, relevant and widely supported by Pacific peoples, because they will feel that they have had meaningful engagement in the research processes."

In addition to the research team, the indigenous lead researcher will have access to an indigenous go-to-reference group to talanoa around the experiences, information gathering, thinking and writing. This strategy contributes to the decolonizing of knowledge and research processes. Wilson says that understanding Indigenous peoples' ways of thinking and being in the world is *"based on the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational…and shared"* (Wilson, 2001 as cited in Fa'avae, 2019). A research team that is made up of mostly non-indigenous Pacific people, who accept this approach, must acknowledge that their understanding or knowledge of Pacific ways of storytelling their experiences is limited in terms of the cultural, contextual and spiritual depths of the participants sharing and theorizing (Vaioleti, 2006).

TRM however, is not a panacea for decolonizing research as it also has its limitations and flaws. In fact, Tunufai describes TRM as having reached an impasse and calls for more conversations and contributions towards a safe, honest critical analysis of the methodology (Tunufai, 2016). One of its limitations is that, despite it being identified as a Pan-Pacific approach, TRM only features in a few Pacific languages. It is therefore critical for the indigenous lead researcher to understand this discrepancy and to ensure that participants from Pacific Island nations who do not know the concept or are not familiar with the term *talanoa* are not left with a feeling that they are not valued as an equal voice alongside those who are. The indigenous lead researcher should focus the participant's attention on the concept of decolonization as the key common thread throughout the research through the use of the following research methods: individual interviews, focus groups and case studies.

ANNEX 3: FOCUS ON THREE ORGANISATIONS AND ONE REGIONAL NETWORK

In addition to the individual talanoa that was undertaken for the report, story-mapping of selected talanoa was used to create three focused accounts from the three main geographical regions of the Oceanic Pacific:

1. Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) – South West Oceania

2. Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) – Northern Oceania

3. Punanga Tauturu Inc (PTI) – Eastern Oceania

A fourth account of a regional women's movement was developed based on the two most recent 'Outcomes Documents' of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women (PWNAVAW).

FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT (FWRM)

Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) is one of the very first women's rights organisations to have been established in the Pacific (1986):

❝ **We were the first women's rights organisation in the Pacific Islands, if I remember correctly, to kind of have that relationship with a women's organisation in the North...Even though it's in Australia, it's an OECD, a developed country, and the reason why we connected to them was through Shireen Lateef who was kind of a founding member but not really. She wasn't based in Fiji, but was a big advisor to us in establishing FWRM, in the setting and deciding of policies and what to take on first. She was at the time working with [an INGO], well she wasn't a paid person, but she was a member...She was working with the sex workers in Thailand on behalf of [the INGO] to empower them. So she was helping an organization establish itself in Thailand and also helping an organization establish itself in Fiji.** ❞

FWRM board member 1990-1999 period

It was acknowledged that because the INGO was a feminist organization with a good colonial analysis, none of the kind of negative relationship issues arose. There was no recollection of where the INGO influenced the FWRM agenda during those early days. It was suggested that this was because they were a feminist organisation with a solid understanding of what we now refer to as intersectional issues. It was expressed that there are Global North organisations that are all about feminism however they still lack a good understanding of the context of colonization and all the other kinds of intersectionalities that women experience and live through in the Pacific. It was felt that this particular INGO was different, where the relationship was very good and was truly a relationship of equals:

"I ended up going to Melbourne spending time in their office staying with Shireen, spending time with them, learning about them, talking to their board, so they were very adamant that we had a equal voice. We of course had other donors from the Global North who were also driven by a common agenda, willing to listen to us, take our ideas on board to fight for us and with us, to help us find funding. I mean, I think one of the wonderful things with [INGO] was that they sent people to work with us - we also had others – we had some other INGOs too – so women from the GN came and worked with us for a year or two. But I think this is important, that they send us experts who don't dictate but who teach us through mentoring and all of that. But also that we have the opportunity to spend time in their organisation and learn about their processes and so forth."

FWRM board member 1990-1999 period

During the second decade, FWRM had new leadership. FWRM was one of the few stable women's rights organisations in Fiji following the 2000 Coup due to core funding, which enabled the organisation to keep its doors open and advocate against human rights violations post-Coup. FWRM's focus at this time was on employment relations, legal reform and, more controversially, family law. Relations started to change in the second decade:

"I remember my first month on the job, doing courtesy visits to well known feminists and human rights defenders as a way of educating myself about the issues and the movement. And one of the first things I will always remember is being told quite frankly: "You just be careful, don't become the monkeys for these donors."

FWRM staff member 2000-2009 period

Challenges in North-South relations emerged during the second decade, including with the INGO mentioned in the first decade:

"We had outgrown our first development partner because we had grown and the funds available from this INGO could not cover all our costs. But also, too, the politics involved, again, sending young white development program managers who would just rock in as experts in development. I found it challenging when they called themselves feminist but worked in a development space and framework. I really struggled with that and I remember telling them, "Okay, we're not going to take any money from you, because you are not practicing what you preach and you're not really listening to our concerns."

FWRM staff member 2000-2009 period

Having access to feminist legal theory and practice, human rights and gender training has resulted in women's rights actors and organisations claiming power and equality at the table:

> **I immediately noticed that the development sector was very white and full of men. They were all seated at the table claiming themselves as Pacific Island experts. In my gut and in my heart, I knew what was happening was making me fundamentally feel uncomfortable and I knew that there was a fundamental flaw. So I explained what I was seeing but couldn't put a theoretical analysis to it. For example, looking around at the table full of white people and thinking, 'You're not Pacific Islanders and yet you're all calling yourselves experts in the Pacific. Why?' Eventually, I was able to better articulate my thoughts and through open dialogue at the time, they [INGO] were open to making changes. I remember telling them, 'How can you work in the Pacific when you don't even have a Pacific Islander working in your organisation?'**

FWRM staff member 2000-2009 period

The INGO was open to these constructive criticisms and took the advice and recommendations on board, which was reported to have been possible because the leadership of INGO at the time had a good analysis of colonization in the Pacific.

A research partipant who spoke about FWRM in the current decade, particularly the last three years, gave examples of both good and bad practice. This of course sheds light on the Global North organisations being able to build equitable relationships. The participant suggested that these can be trickier when there are larger organisational structures involved:

> **It depends a lot on the personalities that are in GNOs. So, for example, we have been very fortunate over the last three years, where we have had good leadership with one of our current partners [UN Agency] that has been very supportive of women's rights organisations. [The leadership] of course coming from the work we've been doing in the women's rights space. And so she knows us very well and she has been very open enough to say to me that they will not go into spaces where there is activity from civil society – and that I have welcomed. Say, for example, you look at an area like sexual harassment in the work place. FWRM has been the pioneer organisation in Fiji and perhaps in the region working on this issue, with the two studies and the successful policy work we have done in this area in Fiji. And, more recently, our Parliament has signed onto the ILO Convention.**

When an UN Agency approached another UN Agency to do some sexual harassment studies, the head of the UN Agency said to them, 'We cannot meet on this without bringing FWRM to the table who have been instrumental in pushing these issues forward in Fiji.' ""

FWRM staff member 2019 period

It was raised that the emergence of intermediary organisations and managing contractors is of some concern. Co-creation and co-design are paralysed due to geo-economic and geo-political factors. There is a need to tread carefully with new partners under the guise of gender and development otherwise women's rights organisations will find ourselves following rather than leading and will land the development agenda back in the hands of the colonizers.

LEARNINGS FROM FWRM

1. Momentum from the Decade for Women resulted in movement building in-country and women's rights organisations being established.

2. Women's right's activists working within government in leadership positions can advocate for women's rights organisations and multi-sectoral approaches on the ground.

3. Long term commitment to providing Technical Advisors with specific skill sets can build the capacity and sustainability of women's rights actors and organisations.

4. Global North organisations have an important role to play in advocating for long term investment in women's rights organisations and women's rights organisations and movements towards the achievement of women's human rights and gender equality.

WOMEN UNITED TOGETHER MARSHALL ISLANDS (WUTMI)

WUTMI was formally established in 1987 just after the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985). The Republic of the Marshall Islands was at this time one of six districts incorporated as the 'Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands,' administered by the United States. To celebrate the Decade for Women, the Trust Territory organised women's conferences in the districts. This was the first time women were gathered from across the Marshall Islands to meet and discuss issues they felt needed to be addressed.

Significant issues were at play, with the districts all considering their futures as political entities. People were considering whether they wanted independence or to join the Commonwealth. The status quo at that time was not an option. There was campaigning on the Constitution for the Federated States of Micronesia and who did or did not want to join this:

" **Because of all those movements, women began to become involved. Women became a force that was recognised. We started having small groups of women discussing social, economic and political issues. This which was quite new and WUTMI was one of the smaller organisations that some leading women and I were part of. There were other, bigger women's organisations at the time too and everyone started to realise the importance of women in those movements. I was elected as Chairperson of the Public Service Commission for a three-year appointment. I remember**

> **mobilising while inside, with other women, funds for a women's leadership training program for $30,000. It was approved by cabinet without question and that's how we started to get women trained throughout the islands.** 〞

> WUTMI staff member 1990-1999 period

Several donors from the Global North have provided support and assistance to WUTMI over the last three decades. WUTMI has had support from INGOs based in the USA both via government ministries and directly. WUTMI has now had decades of engaging with Global North organisations, with both positive and negative experiences:

> 〝 **This is the big challenge we have. With some donors, we just have to just work with the budget they give to us because we get tired of having to justify, all the time, for example, that printing costs here on the island are really high. Every time they tell us to cut those costs down, it really doesn't help because it will impact on the quality of delivery and implementation of the activity.** 〞

> WUTMI staff member 2000-2010 period

In the current decade, the main donor is a managing contractor. Having waited for almost one year before receiving their funding, WUTMI has lost staff:

> 〝 **There was a lot of back and forth and there was a moment where we didn't hear from anybody. So**

> **it was a huge challenge and it had the biggest negative impact on the program that it funds, and that is our ending violence against women support service. It really stressed that program. And the loss of the technical advisor of the program really hindered the program from moving forward beyond and building on the capacity that the staff had gained. And so we were not able to move up to the next phase, because we just didn't have anyone. And then they told us they'll put someone in Pohnpei. But just FSM alone, that's more than a full-time job. And so that person just wasn't able to come to RMI because she was too busy in FSM. The North Pacific is often seen as one nation and so we are often all lumped into one, when we are all completely different. We have our different challenges and unique situation. And so there is this assumption that we are these small countries and that one person will be enough for the North Pacific.** 〞

Despite these challenges, WUTMI is recognised as the leading women's organisation in the Marshall Islands as well as having regional and global recognition. WUTMI has been instrumental as a voice for women and has continued to push for gender equality. Many young women use WUTMI as a foundational base for learning about women's issues, made possible because of the organisation's longevity:

> **WUTMI has been invited to sit on national committees and on government boards. WUTMI has had members and supporters moving into powerful positions, such as Hilda Heine who was elected as the eighth President of the Marshall Islands. Because we have been around over the last three decades, it helps with the sustaining of our credibility and we just hope that working with donors, that they will recognise our critical importance in keeping the women's movement alive, supporting our frontline services for survivors in the Marshalls and the keeping of our government to account regarding all the issues we women in the Marshalls see as critical for our development.**

WUTMI staff member 2000-2010 period

LEARNINGS FROM WUTMI CASE STUDY

1. Momentum from the Decade for Women resulted in movement building in-country and women's rights organisations being established.

2. Women's right's activists working within government in leadership positions can advocate for women's rights organisations and multi-sectoral approaches on the ground.

3. Long term commitment to providing Technical Advisors with specific skill sets can build the capacity and sustainability of women's rights actors and organisations.

4. Global North organisations have an important role to play in advocating for long term investment in women's rights organisations and movements towards the achievement of women's human rights and gender equality.

PUNANGA TAUTURU INC.

The Cook Islands women's movement emerged as a result of the four World Conferences on Women in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995). A number of pioneering Cook Islands women attended these conferences. They, along with other Pacific Island women, were involved in convincing the South Pacific Commission to focus on the essential role of women in national development. *"We must continue to acknowledge the women who came before us,"* was the strong call from one of the early pioneers of PTI sharing her perceptions from Punanga Tauturu Inc's first decade of work.

During this time, the Cook Islands had a vibrant civil society. PTI was founded during a period where many other organisations dedicated to advancing women's rights were being established: more women in decision making, women's empowerment, legal and human rights, sexual abuse, rape, violence against women and employment issues (parental leave, maternity leave, request for state sponsored childcare, sexual harrassment in the workplace, pay parity). These issues were addressed at meetings, conferences and workshops. Public awareness of the rights of women was high. 'Gender' and 'human rights' were new terms for older generations of Cook Island women. The meaning and contextuaisation of these terms were prioritised by pioneering women's rights actors and organisations including PTI:

> **I think I worked with donors in an era that was very supportive of our issues and it was very much a multi-sectoral approach. From there, I basically went from strength to strength because of all the training I had been exposed to - from leading a grassroots NGO, then working for a regional organisation, then being exposed to the transition of an independent, regional NGO to the South Pacific Commission, and then moving on to a much larger Asia-Pacific feminist organization... I had come back to the Cook Islands and the Pacific with strengthened knowledge and skills, from legal advocacy and lobbying to negotiating with both small and big donors... My journey has been one of making impact at the grassroots through to regional and global spaces. And now I am back at home and still working passionately on women's rights to land issues. So, as you can see, once an activist, always an activist.** "

PTI staff member 1990-1999 period

During the early part of the second decade, PTI was focusing on CEDAW, legal literacy, ending domestic violence and the provision of frontline response services for victims and survivors of violence. The relationship between PTI and Global North organisations was bilateral donor heavy. The research participant who spoke about PTI's experiences during this period suggests positive and productive relationships formed with the bilateral donor at the time were very much due to the personalities and leadership within:

> **It was the people inside who made the difference. They had a good foundational knowledge of women's rights, which made it easy to work with them. I think working with them in the earlier years, we were valued as partners because the women working inside whom we were dealing with valued us as partners.** "

PTI staff member 2000-2009 period

In about 2009, this relationship came to an end with a change of government in the bilateral donor's country. The focus went from women's rights and gender equality to women's economic empowerment. The momentum built during the first decade and the first part of the second decade came to a halt with the bilateral donor pulling out funds and the Government of the Cook Islands taking over the funding of PTI. PTI felt that they did not have any say in this decision as it was an agreement between the two governments. As a result, the original three-member staff group was reduced to one person:

> **PTI now applies directly to Internal Affairs who is managing the new fund. The Managing Contractor working with Internal Affairs provided short term one year funding for free legal aid. However, the free legal aid officer was situated within government and now at PTI. It would be good to find another donor who can work directly with us, because I**

feel the transition to government has left PTI in a restricted and limited capacity to do the work it's supposed to do. 99

PTI staff member 2010-2019 period

LEARNINGS FROM PTI CASE STUDY

1. The momentum from the Beijing Decalration and Platform for Action and the four World Conferences for Women resulted in vibrant civil society in-country and women's rights organisations being established.

2. A holistic, multi-sectoral approach by Global North organisations can generate strength in the women's rights sphere.

3. Working with Global North staff who have a women's rights framework is makes the work more effective.

4. Supporting Pacific women's rights organisations for a long term produces momentum and progress around women's rights issues on the ground.

5. Global North organisations have an important role to play in supporting the autonomy and independence of women's rights organisations and reducing the likelihood that they will become dependent on government.

PACIFIC WOMEN'S NETWORK AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

66 **The Network is always a safe space for us to share our challenges and problems working with donors. The problem is we only get together every two to three years, so I think what we need**

to do is start writing about and documenting our experiences so we can see, over time, if things are getting worse or better. 99

WRA Participant, PWNAVAW member

The Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women (PWNAVAW) is the first and longest standing women's rights network in the Pacific. Established in 1992, the Network has a membership of over 60 organisations in 16 countries. PWNAVAW's foundations are rooted in the principles of feminism, women's human rights, gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Understanding the Context, growing the movement

For thirty years, Pacific feminists have been leading advocacy and social movements for women's rights, democracy and human rights and climate justice. In the past 10 years, however, due to changing priorities and demands from traditional donors, and the continuous challenges of neo-colonialism, concerns are being raised by PWNAVAW members. Funding is becoming scarce, the movement's leadership is being overlooked in favour of more technocratic and less 'feminist' approaches, and it is becoming hard to sustain important work being done in the Pacific. The PWNAVAW is powerful and unique because it pushes and challenges the status quo which often defaults to romanticising Pacific societies and Pacific women - the notion that we are 'okay' compared to other parts of the world.

PWNAVAW leads the way in urging Pacific governments to take statistics reflecting the realities of Pacific women seriously. These may relate to women's human rights in the highlands of Papua New Guinea (sorcery, witchcraft), women who continued to be silenced and stripped of their rights in West Papua (fight for independence), the types of discrimination and abuse faced by women in Timor-Leste (prior to Independence and ongoing), the massive push-back against women's human rights in Tonga (protests against CEDAW ratification and the Family Protection Act) or the impact of militarisation on women and girls in Fiji (four decades of Coups).

Key areas of GNO Partnership concern

The following overview highlights key issues raised at the last PWNAVAW meeting (2016) regarding the funding of women's human rights and VAWG work in the Pacific:

Coordination and partnerships that are perceived as unequal and where postcolonial practices are still prevalent:

- **We note** with deep concern the widening gap between the coordination of programs on the ground and the work of overseas consultants who are recruited to provide technical support.

- **We are concerned** about the non-recognition of the technical expertise available in the PWNAWAW over consultants from outside the region by development partners, INGOs and donors.

- **We are concerned** about the growing influence of INGOs and development partners over the work on EVAWG in the region.

- **We call** on development partners to re-assess this situation and design project funding to improve this partnership and transfer the necessary skills for institutional capacity building to Pacific Islanders.

The sustainability of Pacific women's human rights organisations is uncertain

- **We acknowledge** that we have become dependent on one donor and continue to demand adequate and sustained budgetary commitments by our governments towards the implementation of legislation on VAWG

- **We are concerned** about the local spaces that are being taken over by international consultants and INGOs who do not have a human rights approach nor are trained in VAWG.

- **We are concerned** about the donor budgetary allocations to INGOs and non-Pacific led organisations over local NGOs working to ending VAWG.

- **We are concerned** that international mechanisms that are being proposed and implemented are not home-grown and contextualized.

- **We call** for the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre to be given a greater monitoring role in the region for its Network members.

- **We call** on donor partners to honour the five fundamental principles (ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results and mutual accountability) for making aid more effective under the *Paris Declaration*.[15]

The concerns outlined in the Outcomes document regarding Global North funding were a collective call to action by representatives from 12 Pacific Island Countries (PICs): Autonomous Region of Bougainville (Papua New Guinea), Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The meeting also had representatives from West Papua. Participants included individual activists and representatives of women's human rights organisations,

15 Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2016, 7th Regional Meeting Outcomes Document.

government, churches, faith-based organisations and male advocates.

One of the key challenges for the Network is remaining faithful to its key principles without donor interruption, as well as growing deeper roots of solidarity across more diverse movements in the Pacific.   The PWNAVAW needs to remain strong and steadfast, ready to challenge and ensure it provides solidarity and support whenever needed by its members across the Pacific. The reality is that this can become very challenging, especially when the Global North organisation is the main donor and there are feasible alternatives:

> **It's hard to demand equal partnerships, especially when your donor has a monopoly over you. It's not a nice feeling because you feel powerless. For one thing, our government cannot provide the same level of support and other donors cannot cover core funding costs. So the reality is, we just have deal with both good and bad practices of the main donor.**

Research Participant, PWNAVAW member

LEARNINGS FROM PWNAVAW CASE STUDY

1. Dependency on one donor for core funding is problematic. Women's rights networks and movements must diversify funding sources and donors should encourage rather than discourage this.

2. INGOs, Global North advisors and experts working in Pacific spaces must have an excellent understanding of human rights, gender and feminist principles.

3. Global North organisations should encourage and support home-grown and contextualized program designs.

4. Global North organisations should advocate for sustainability.

5. Global North organisations should be familiar with and honour the five fundamental principles for making aid more effective under the *Paris Declaration*: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results and mutual accountability.

ANNEX 4: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study on the views of Pacific region women's rights movement actors on Global North engagement with these movements. You have been identified as a possible participant in this study by the Research Consultant based on your work with women's rights movements in the Pacific region.

The information provided here is intended to help you make an informed decision about participating in the study. Participation is voluntary. You do not need to take part if you do not wish to. Please read this form and ask any questions before deciding whether or not to participate.

RESEARCH TITLE AND RESEARCH TEAM

The title for this study is:

> Global South women's rights movement perspectives on the role of the Global North - A case study in the Pacific (*)

The short title in use for the study is the 'Movement Strengthening' research.

The research is being conducted by research consultant 'Ofa Guttenbeil.

This study is part of a civil and political participation program known as WAVE (Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment) funded by the Government of the Netherlands and delivered in Asia and the Pacific by International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) in 2016-2020.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the study is to (i) gather and document the views of Pacific region women's rights movement actors on Global North engagement with these movements and (ii) identify key elements of effective engagement between Global South women's rights movements and Global North organisations in the future. The research is informed by an interest in identifying the elements of supportive, equitable and, in particular, decolonized models of engagement.

The research will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What views do Pacific women's rights movements and actors have on the engagement of Global North organisations with movements in the region to date?

2. What role do Pacific women's rights movements and actors propose for Global North organisations engaging with movements into the future?

3. What are the key elements of supportive, equitable and decolonized models of engagement between Global South women's rights movements and Global North organisations suggested by previous research and research informants?

(*) Global North organisations are defined as organisations based in OECD countries that engage in development work. These may include International NGOs, bilateral donors, UN Agencies and managing contractors amongst others.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY INVOLVE?

You are invited to participate in one in-depth interview with the Research Consultant.

The interview will be conducted by phone or online depending on availability of reliable technology and as agreed between you and the Research Consultant. You may choose any private environment in which to speak. The Research Consultant will discuss with you the option of audio recording the interview. Recordings of interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcription service adhering to a

The interview will take up to one hour. There is no compensation for participation.

Risks in participating in the study acknowledged by the research team include discomfort in discussing the subject matter of the research and, more specifically, discomfort in discussing current and historical activities of IWDA (if relevant).

You may agree to participate initially and later decide to withdraw. If you wish to withdraw at any point prior to analysis of all data being finalised, data from your interview will be excluded from the data set and securely destroyed/deleted. If you wish to withdraw after analysis has been completed, all efforts will be made to remove references from your interview and to your satisfaction. Data from your interview will also be destroyed/deleted in this instance.

The Research Consultant will be conducting 16-18 interviews in May 2020.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All care will be taken by the research team to ensure that your privacy is protected.

Interview data will be available to the Research Consultant and, in de-identified form, the transcriber, only. Participant identifying information will be stored separately from interview data. All material produced, including audio files and written notes, will be kept strictly confidential on a secure server or (if hard copy) in a lockable cabinet.

All data collected for the study will be kept securely by the Research Consultant and IWDA for seven years as per ethics requirements.

You will have an opportunity to review content developed from your interview with the Research Consultant prior to a final research report being produced.

The research has been ethically approved by the IWDA Ethics Committee.

HOW WILL THIS DATA BE USED?

The research team will develop a range of research products based on this study. The Research Consultant will produce a final research report incorporating insights from a review of literature and data from interviews. Other outputs may include advocacy briefs, briefing papers for governments, social media content, academic papers and conference presentations.

IWDA is committed to using this research to support the strengthening of women' rights movements in the Pacific region and globally.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

If you have any questions about the research, please discuss these in the first instance with the Research Consultant.

If you have any concerns about how the research is being conducted, please contact Research Coordinator Palwesha Yusaf at pyusaf@iwda.org.au. If you would like to speak with someone independent of the study, please contact Joanna Pradela, Chair, IWDA Ethics Committee at j.pradela@iwda.org.au.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (IWDA) MOVEMENT STRENGTHENING RESEARCH – PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT

This consent relates to the following study:

> Global South women's rights movement perspectives on the role of the Global North - A case study in the Pacific

Interviews for this study will be conducted remotely by Research Consultant 'Ofa Guttenbeil on behalf of IWDA in May 2020.

DECLARATION BY RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the Participant Information and Consent Form and have spoken with the Research Consultant. I understand the purpose and intended outcomes of the study. I agree to participate in one in-depth interview for this research. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any point.

VERBAL CONSENT _____

NOTED BY 'OFA GUTTENBEIL

DATE   ____/ ____/ _____

DECLARATION BY RESEARCH PARTICIPANT- MEDIA AND COMMUNICAITONS

I am happy to be contacted by International Women's Development Agency in the future to discuss possible media and communications activity in relation to this research (please circle).

YES   **NO**

DECLARATION BY RESEARCH CONSULTANT (THE INTERVIEWER)

I have provided the Participant Information and Consent Form to the participant and have answered any questions. I believe that the participant understands the purpose, risks and intended outcomes of this study.

I undertake to keep all data collected through this interview strictly confidential.

SIGNED

_____

DATE   ____/ ____/ ____

ANNEX 5: RESEARCH GUIDING QUESTIONS

Interviews in this study will be semi-structured following the talanoa methodology. The questions shown below are indicative and interviews may include some but not all questions. This approach explicitly allows for informal conversation and the inclusion of personal story telling as opposed to a rigid question-answer dynamic. A discursive approach is considered appropriate given the subject matter and location of this research.

Each interview participant will have a pre-talanoa with the interviewer who is the research consultant for this study. This is to establish an environment of trust between the participant and the research consultant. The pre-talanoa will document any fears or hesitation on the part of participants in relation to the theme of the research. The research consultant will ensure that there is a safe holding space by acknowledging any concerns prior to commencing the interview. Where the research consultant feels that the holding space is not safe, the talanoa will cease and possibly be rescheduled.

The following eight questions will guide the talanoa:

1. Can you please tell me about your organisation/movement/life as a women's rights actor?

2. Can you talk me through funding and support of your organisation by Global North organisations and funding bodies?

3. In terms of your relationship with each of these Global North organisations, can you describe what your relationship is like with each of them? You can answer this question in terms of the relationship you have individually as a women's rights actor or in terms of your organisation or movement's relationship with the organisation.

4. Are you able to share with me any examples of where there has been conflict with a Global North organisation/funding body? Why did the conflict come about? What was the outcome?

5. Thinking beyond your specific experiences, how would you assess the overall contribution of Global North organisations/funding bodies to strengthening women's rights movements in your country or the region over the [relevant timeframe]?

6. Thinking about the current historical context, what are the most useful things Global North organisations/funding bodies can do to strengthen women's rights movements in the region going forward?

7. What do you think are the most important elements of 'decolonized' relationships in terms of Global North organisations/funding bodies supporting women's rights movements?

8. Wrapping up our talanoa, and considering the recent COVID-19 situation, could you talk me through what are the specific needs of women's rights movements and organisations in your country/region, in all their stages?