

OUTCOME DOCUMENT - 2018 CONVENTION OF FIJI WOMEN DEFENDING THE COMMONS

FIJI WOMEN DEFENDING THE COMMONS AND ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITY, CLIMATE INJUSTICE AND UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Studio 6 Conference Room,

10-12 December 2018, Suva, Fiji

On 10-12 December 2018, 70 Fiji Women who are actively defending Fiji communities, the Commons and our planet from the causes and effects of gender inequality, climate change and unsustainable development gathered in Suva Fiji. Working together are women from Yasawa, Taveuni, Qamea, Vunidogoloa and Savusavu, Macuata, Bua, Labasa, Koro, Gau, Kadavu, Levuka, Tavua, Rakiraki, Ra, Sigatoka, Lautoka, Nadi, Tailevu, Naitasiri and Suva.

In this first meeting we have met each other, shared our work, raised possibilities for urgent action, short-term, medium and long-term strategies. Women shared examples of various ideas and initiatives including recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge, and taking forward agro-ecology, organic farming and aquaponics, aquaculture, kai diving, crafts and sewing, multiple forms of farming, construction, beekeeping, solar energy, health work and access to services, baking, coral restoration, eco-tourism, and other opportunities for women to take forward. The work started before this room and continues beyond this week. We are Fiji women defending the Commons.

Fiji women and girls and our communities face multiple challenges in a complex small island developing State such as Fiji. As recognized by our Government and others, climate change is the most serious threat to the lives, land, waterways, air, ocean, biodiversity and cultures of Pacific climate frontline states, including Fiji. These challenges are made worse by lack of direct information, services and resources for women in Fiji's informal settlements, rural and maritime areas. The situation is worsened by very high levels of sexual and gender-based violence. There is rising social and economic inequalities and uneven development between the capital in Suva and rural areas, between elites and poor people, between expatriates and locals, between the numbers of women and men in local and national formal decision-making spaces, and the overall lack of resources to take forward localized strategies and solutions - by and for women and all the people of Fiji.

We want to work with Fiji Government and all stakeholders to change this, and we have ideas and strategies on how this can be done:

*One urgent need identified in this room from five divisions, is the provision of women-owned and run boats in order to ensure both emergency and economic focused activities have adequate, gender just access to transport.

*There is an urgent need for training and education opportunities, including full scholarships for women from urban poor, rural and maritime communities

*Another urgent call from the room is on extractive industries, sand mining and river erosion. There is an urgent call for enforcement of relevant Acts, adequate policy, adequate consultation, resources and solidarity including legal resources. Additionally, there is a need for responsible corporate and government regulated response on land based, waterway and oceanic pollution.

*We also are against corporatization on water, as it is a human right for people of Fiji, not a commodity. This is a climate change issue, as is food security, water, sanitation and housing

*Project and development consultations must include all genders and diversities including age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and other variables in community and villages. Women have less access and continuous contribution to decision-making at many village meetings, and we do not agree this is right, fair or smart. Women have good solutions and need to be able to voice them and have them enacted. This includes equal representation in high level and parliamentary spaces, national and local Government, faith based organisations, schools, civil society, women led NGOs, partners and stakeholders and in climate negotiation spaces.

*We are building a grassroots Fiji women-led loose network of climate and environmental activists that uses a healthy, fun, creative and equitable resource and information-sharing system

*We are improving opportunities for women to free up and make decisions on using their time, to pursue both personal and community development, and require men to understand and support this in all ways

*Decent work conditions and employment are required for all. Challenging traditional divisions of labour is key to ensuring that women have equal opportunities. This includes issues such as access to water and sanitation where women are working in public spaces, outside formal markets (eg. Kai (freshwater mussel) sellers needing sanitation facilities)

*Women led organisations must broaden their networks and partnerships with women outside urban and central division, ensuring that all gender justice and climate response work is based on principles of 'nothing about me, without me' and 'do no harm'.

We are suffering loss and damage every day. We are working on climate change survival and development strategies every day. We need to be substantively included in local, national, regional and global work on adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage, technology development and transfer and climate finance. This is not the work of external experts. We are women experts, so include us.

To urgently address this crisis of our women and people of Fiji, we call for an inter-linked and intersectional approach to development. This simply means that we realize all human rights and justice issues are linked, and that all people hold multiple identities, and have varying levels of power and lack of power, depending on their identities as young women, older women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender men

and women and girls, women with disabilities, rural women, Indigenous women, poor women, Fiji women of Indian descent and other ethnicities, and others. We insist that we leave no-one behind.

Fiji women are not all the same, we are diverse - so climate change does not affect us all in the same way. Therefore, we need more grassroots women in the decision-making spaces, not just to be consulted, but to have direct access to decision-making power, control over programmes and to experience the benefits of just and sustainable development.

We demand that governments of the world listen carefully to the women and people of the majority world, and not to global corporate elites. You do not represent them, you represent us. They are doing damage to us by not changing their way of doing business. By not moving urgently away from fossil fuels. We do not accept this. We insist on free, prior and informed consent, before ANY development.

We call urgently for a fundamental shift in all government policy to incorporate a strong gender and human rights perspective in all social, economic, environmental and climate change policies.

We call for recognition of indigenous women's human rights, and justice for all.

We remind our Government and others of their long-held obligations and accountability to translate gender equality and human rights commitments into legislation, policy and budget allocations.

Urban poor and rural women of Fiji are key agents of climate justice and development. We play a core role in achieving transformational economic, environmental and social change required for sustainable development. Core to the wellbeing of Fiji, is the wellbeing of urban poor, rural women and women from maritime communities.

We need to make the norms of equality, justice and love the main standard to reach as Pacific women and in all societies – We will not go backward. We will not give in to old, outdated patriarchal beliefs and systems. We move forward together.

We will not give up on our beautiful planet, and we support each other as women.

Fiji women can do anything.

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