



Charter of Feminist Principles for Pacific Feminists

The inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum took place from the 28th – 30th of November 2016 at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. The forum brought together over 100 feminists from the Pacific region. In a collective space we acknowledged those who came before us, recognised our diversities, identified our challenges, celebrated our achievements, rearticulated a shared vision, shared strategies, built new and strengthened old alliances, and further defined our shared politics.

Our diversities include; women, girls, lesbians, bisexual, trans diverse people, gender non-conforming identities, ethnically diverse women and girls, women of indigenous minorities, women with disabilities, sex workers, women living with HIV and aids, women living in rural and remote areas, young women, older women, heterosexual women, women in sports, women in non-traditional roles, women in creative industries and women in the informal sector and others.¹

A key outcome of the forum was the creation of the Charter of Pacific Feminist Principles. Participants at the forum endorsed the Charter and recommended further endorsement by those who were not able to be at the forum. It sets out the collective principles that are key to our work as Pacific Feminists. The Charter is a living document and is intended to guide our analysis and practice.

Defining Ourselves as Feminists

We are Feminists from Oceania. We have common bonds of *wansolwara* (ocean), *vanua* (land) and *tua'a* (ancestors). We recognise that our strength lies in our diversity. We respect our differences. We work towards transformative change by upholding the rights of women, girls, and non-gender conforming people. We want the best full lives for ourselves and our Pacific communities. Our work and love is focussed on the lives of the women and the people on our many islands and atolls, and the whole planet.

¹ From here on when we mention 'women and girls' we refer to specific identities and needs of lesbians, bisexual, trans people, intersex people, fa'afafine, leiti, and other non-heteronormative Pacific identities, women with physical disabilities, women with psychosocial disabilities, sex workers, living with HIV aids, women living in rural and remote places, young women, the girl child, older women, heterosexual women, women in sports and creative industries.

As feminists in the Pacific we recognise multiple intersecting forms of patriarchy, long standing and unequal gendered power relations and emerging processes of oppression. Our journeys as Pacific feminists to address these are varied and diverse. We recognise the specific challenge of geographical location in the richness of the vast Pacific Ocean. We also acknowledge our geopolitical histories and their contemporary manifestations as part of the global economic south. We are in solidarity with south communities in the global north, such as indigenous, ethnic minority, Pacific diaspora and climate frontline communities. The diversities of our cultures, experiences, and the multiple social, political, economic and ecological challenges we face as climate frontline states are our realities.

The pandanus mats of our current struggles reveals our history of: gendered cultural and social hierarchies; criminalisation of LGBTQI; gender based violence; sex work and human trafficking; poor education systems; underfunded health systems; lack of attention to mental health, including societal stigma; internally displaced persons; rise in fundamentalist religious groups; ethno-nationalism; colonisation including the world's last remaining colonies and territories; forced foreign and domestic military occupation; the erosion of democratic spaces; unfair trade; aid; hyper-development and no development; enforced labour regimes; extractive industries; environmental and nuclear disasters, closure of the commons, ecological damage; climate change, refugee and enforced migration and more.

We affirm that our Pacific feminist and women's activism is vibrant and always growing, and draws on its rich lineage and herstories. We acknowledge that there is still a long way to go and this Charter guides our future work.

Our Principles as Feminists

Wherever we are working, as individuals, in our homes, workplaces, in governments and intergovernmental institutions, regional development institutions, as funders, civil society organisations and social movements, we commit and believe in the following feminist principles:

- Women's human rights are, indivisible, inalienable and universal
- All Pacific women and girls have the right to live free of patriarchal oppression, discrimination and multiple, intersecting forms of sexual and gender based violence and discrimination
- Feminist solidarity should be based on mutual respect, honesty and open discussion of differences;
- Universal, comprehensive, integrated and quality health and education systems, including Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is supported
- Safe systems of care, wellbeing and support should be available for all women and girls

- Issues of freedom of choice and autonomy regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC), affirm the inextricable links between bodily integrity and autonomy, SRHR and social justice, as central to our advocacy
- Ensuring the inclusion and explicit needs of women and girl's with disabilities
- Women and girl's knowledge, skills and lived realities are acknowledged and affirmed
- Inclusive multiculturalism where the knowledge, skills and lived realities of Indigenous Pacific peoples, as well as of all ethnic minority groups, including descendants of indentured and settler communities, in all their diversity, are acknowledged and affirmed
- We commit to non-violence, human security and peacebuilding
- We will strengthen alliances that assist feminist social movements to dismantle patriarchy, colonisation, neo-liberal development and militarisation
- We acknowledge men and boys as participants and allies in our work

Our Principles as a Collective

Whenever we organise collectively as Pacific feminists, we commit to the following:

- The leadership of women's organisations and networks in our region should be led and managed by Pacific women from small island states
- Recognising the leadership of women of all ages, including older women, young women and girls, and women of all intersectional identities
- Spaces of power sharing are created across our diversities, in socio-economic and other class and privilege systems, generations, ethnicities, spiritual beliefs and other intersectionalities
- We recognise our privilege or lack of it, including education, cultural and traditional status, ethnicity, race, urban status, language, sexuality and others
- Transparency, accountability, and financial responsibility are practiced in our collectives, partnerships, coalitions, networks, organisations and institutions
- Feminist ethics is practiced everyday
- All women and girls, including those in rural, remote and urban communities must have access to information and communication platforms, including feminist, appropriate and accessible media and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)
- Social and economic justice, including sustainable livelihoods, universal social protection and fair and decent work are realised
- We will collectively escalate our work to address the climate and ecological crisis of our times, and protect our commons and our planet

- We commit to decriminalization of LGBTQI people of all countries in the Pacific region, and advancing legal rights of all LGBTQI people, with focus on third gender legal recognition
- We commit to decriminalization² of sex work in all countries of the Pacific
- We commit to decriminalization³ of abortion in all countries of the Pacific
- We commit to protecting women human rights defenders including trans human rights defenders
- We commit to escalate and support innovative feminist social organising efforts by all Pacific women, inclusive of marginalised rural, remote and urban communities

The Pacific Feminist Charter is endorsed by participants of the Inaugural Pacific Feminist Forum.

² The call for decriminalization of sex work is based on evidence that criminalization makes sex workers less safe, by preventing them from securing police protection and by providing impunity to abusers. Decriminalization does *not* mean the removal of laws that criminalize exploitation, human trafficking or violence against sex workers. These laws remain. It *does* mean the removal of laws and policies criminalizing or penalizing sex work.

³ Decriminalising abortion means the removal of laws and policies that criminalise women who have an abortion, or those who assist women who have an abortion. Laws that put women in jail for having an abortion are unjust, separate women from their families and lead to unsafe abortions that endanger women's lives.