



## **Outcome Statement – Brown Girl Woke Feminist Forum**

Date: September 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 2022

Venue: Millenia Hotel, Apia Samoa

Host Organization: Brown Girl Woke Samoa

Brown Girl Woke Samoa (BGW) has developed a strong reputation locally and regionally for its work on youth empowerment, discourse on gender-based violence, feminism and community development. BGW was established with a focus on developing the capacity of the next generation to address the emerging and topical issues facing the country through the provision of safe spaces to share and discuss sensitive issues; opportunities for internships and program leadership to build resilience, leadership and critical thinking; and actively engage with the community. Programs currently being delivered include Open Mic Night, menstrual health and hygiene workshops, read aloud programs and STEM programs in primary and secondary schools, training on peer to peer counseling with a focus on referral of intimate partner violence cases, “Safe touch” training in primary schools, sourcing and distribution of donations from local and international donors to the vulnerable in the community. As a champion of youth empowerment and raising the voice of youth through its platforms, BGW provides equal opportunities for diverse representation of youth in all activities.

Attendees – The Feminist forum was advertised to the public through social media platforms and invitations to local NGOs were delivered via email, phone calls and social media platforms. There was diversity in the ages of attendees, from the youth category and older, males, females and LBGTIQ++ and participants from rural and urban areas across the country. Approximately 100 attendees attended each day of the workshop. NGOs which attended represented a variety of causes; deportees, counseling services, climate change, youth empowerment, sports, and disability advocacy. Some of the NGOs were Samoa Returnees, Lights of Hope (counseling service for prisoners), Salani Right Horizon (Climate Change), Peer 2 Peer and Sociology Club from the National University of Samoa, Tiapipata Youth, Special Olympics, Nuanua O le Alofa (Disability advocacy NGO), Deaf Association of Samoa, Apelu Sports



## **Agenda of the Workshop**

### **Achievements at the National Level – General?**

- Equality in Hiring Practices by the state government, equal access to education

**Issues** – still gendered roles in certain professions, sexual harassment

### **Major Point Raised**

Feminism is not widely debated or recognized as a concept that is relevant to Samoa, as it viewed as a primarily western philosophy within developed western countries. The primary points and questions raised by attendees were on the concepts and definitions of feminism, the relevance of feminism to their practice as NGOs, seeing the incorporation of feminist practice within their current work practices, and where their work could be improved by incorporating feminist philosophies in day to day life. Questions were raised on the intersectionality of feminism, being persons of color and diverse gender identity. Feminism highlights the benefits of equality by lifting up those who are most vulnerable and marginalized to have representation and a voice in decision making. Some participants sought clarification on the role of men in feminist practice as the term feminism sounds very close to feminine, which is considered by many in the conservative, patriarchal society as only for women and excludes men. The audience also brought up the potential of establishing a feminist coalition in Samoa. Although there was enthusiasm and interest in learning more about feminist philosophies and how it could be incorporated in daily work activities, some were reticent to highlight feminism in their work as they did not want to draw unwanted attention, which they were already experiencing from working in sports, considered a space for men by some.

### **Recommendations**

The attendees requested further educational opportunities on feminism, and how to incorporate the feminist approach to their work practice.

### **Outcome**

This workshop raised awareness among attendees about feminist approaches to NGO work.