

JOINT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE – FIJI WOMEN’S FUND MID TERM REVIEW

The Mid Term Review (MTR) was a useful exercise that provided the partners and stakeholders an opportunity to examine the Fund’s results to date, and to plan effectively moving forward. This process has proven to be useful in identifying areas where the the Fund needs to vest more resources.

Fiji Women’s Fund (the Fund) and the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) agree with the majority of the recommendations and findings of this review (Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13). There are a number of recommendations that the Fund and DFAT agree to in part (Recommendations 5, 6, and 7). Details of the Joint Management Response to each recommendation is included in the table below.

Mid Term Review (MTR) Recommendation	Joint Management Response
<p>Recommendation 1: <i>The Fund strengthen and expand facilitation and networking.</i></p> <p>This is grounded in the finding that networking through the Fund has assisted grantees to access resources and increase respective profiles and provide a sense of empowerment (e.g. networking events among women’s groups, organisations and non-grantees). A useful outcome of networking could be a mentoring program between grantees.</p>	<p>FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.</p> <p>The Fund’s Capacity Development Strategy states that the Fund can play a role in brokering learning relationships with and amongst grantees. This can be either learning exchanges or through mentoring support.</p> <p>As part of its current approaches, since its inception, the Fund has hosted spaces such as its launch, orientation, cross learning exchanges and annual reflection workshops which has increased the profiles, social capital, funding, collaborations and other learning opportunities for the grantees. The Fund will continue to host such spaces and explore opportunities with other relevant DFAT programs, stakeholders and government.</p> <p>The Fund team have provided mentoring to grantees and feedback from grantees indicate that there are informal mentoring that occurs between grantees. The Fund will explore this further as it reviews it capacity development approach (as outlined in Recommendation 2).</p>



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Recommendation 2: *The Fund continue with on-going improvements of its capacity development strategy.*

Capacity development activities should be based on a careful assessment of grantee needs rather than simply asking grantees to choose training courses. Asking grantees to select training courses resulted in trainees signing up for more courses than they could manage and sending different staff members to courses with multiple sessions. The Fund already includes one-on-one mentoring in addition to training and opportunities should be sought to enhance this approach. Grantees needed specific support for the activities they are engaged in rather than additional general capacity building. The Fund has already noted the need to carefully schedule training so as not to overburden grantees. Peer-to-peer capacity building could be considered based on the finding that networking opportunities were strongly appreciated by grantees. The Fund should seek to streamline mandatory training (e.g. GESI, child protection, finance management, and MEL) to allow for more time to support technical knowledge for activity implementation.

Joint Management Response

FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

The Fund will review its capacity development approach and activities (by July 2020). The Fund will continue to deliver key trainings such as gender equality and social inclusion, financial management, monitoring, learning and evaluation, and child protection. In addition, the Fund will assist each grantee to prioritise 1 - 2 key areas that they will need capacity development support to be tailored specifically to their organisational needs and overall strategic direction. (June 2021)

Mid Term Review (MTR) Recommendation

Recommendation 3: *The Steering and Grants Committees revisit the system for establishing eligibility and categorisation of grants and make any necessary adjustments moving forward.*

The MTR identified some potential imbalances in the current system of distributing funding. Selection of an approach should also consider resourcing requirements. The Fund could consider the strategies below.

- Continue business as usual with the Type A, Type B, Type C system and its current eligibility rules.
- Streamline the system into two categories of a) organisations with relevant levels of experience to qualify for multi-year funding and core funding; and b) new organisations proposing small, experimental or short duration activities. This could include catalytic funding for smaller organisations working on innovating ideas at the incubation stage.
- Have a minimum criteria for applications but remove any categorisation system for proposals and assess each proposal on its own merits in regards to deciding the duration and amount allocated.
- Exchanging the size/experience basis for categorising proposals and replacing it with a sector (e.g. WEE, EVAW, etc) or geographical based system

The MTR does not recommend one particular approach but rather the Steering and Grants Committees should discuss and decide on a way forward.

Joint Management Response

FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

Outlined below are next steps that the Fund will undertake.

Key Action (s)	Timeframe	Responsible
Develop and present new grants structure for endorsement by Grants and Steering Committee	April - May 2020	Senior Program Manager
Realignment of grants mechanism to current grantees and new grant calls	June 2020	Senior Program Manager Program Officers
Announcement of new grant structure with 4th call for funding	End of July - August 2020	Senior Program Manager Communications Officer

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Joint Management Response

Recommendation 4: *The Fund to consider committing long-term core funding to organisations that play an essential role in the Fiji women's movement.*

This is based on a finding that such organisations can lose core funding and become reliant on project funding as donor priorities change. This should be based on a mapping of resourcing for organisations in the women's movement that identifies where organisations are providing important services but lacking in core funding for medium-term programming.

The Fund and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

The Fund team undertakes after each call for funding an analysis of partners and will include a mapping of resourcing for organisations in the Fiji women's movement. This will provide the Fund the information needed to make any commitments to long term core funding.

Recommendation 5: *Explore scaling or replicating successful but small activities which have demonstrated lessons learned around improving women's lives.*

This is based on the finding that some successful Type C activities were small in scale and were well placed for expansion. One example is Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group which has successfully improved the income of 40 cooperative members and is now branching into other income streams.

FWF and DFAT partly agree with this recommendation.

The decision and approach to either scaling or replicating is guided by the grantees. The experiences and voices of the grantees are important to the design of any scaling or replication activities that the Fund can support.

The Fund sees the importance of documenting practices that lead to successes in transformative gender equality. The Fund has taken a collaborative approach to capture and document learnings with our grantees and is committed to continuing this approach. For example, in 2019, the Fund co-authored with Rise Beyond the Reef, Ra Naari Parishad and Talanoa Treks a learning paper titled Promising Practises from *Fiji in empowering women economically*.¹

The Fund will continue to learn and document with its grantees to guide any scaling or replicating of small activities. Part of the analysis that the Fund team undertakes after each call for funding currently includes the Fund's suggestion in consultation with grantees on either a scaling up or replication of activities.

¹<https://fijiwomensfund.org/promising-practices-from-fiji-in-empowering-women-economically/>



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Recommendation 6: As a specific strategy for People Living with Disabilities (PWD) inclusion based on the quota system established by the grants committee,² the Fund assist umbrella agencies such as FDPF and their affiliates with programming and disbursement.

Organisations supporting PWD should also be supported to expand their scope of work including mainstreaming support for PWD within other organisations, the private sector, and government agencies. This is based on the views expressed by PWD grantees that there is more need for mainstreaming work with PWD into a broad range of organisations in order to effectively support the needs of PWD. The Fund should also consider broadening support to include equipment such as wheelchairs as there is a high need in this area according to PWD grantees.

Joint Management Response

FWF and DFAT partly agree with this recommendation.

The Fund's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion strategy and accompanying capacity development activities contribute to enhancing grantees' knowledge and skills on how to mainstream social inclusion for people living with disabilities in all projects and programmes. PWDs are included in all projects.

The Fund sees its role as one that supports the mainstreaming of gender equality and social inclusion by working with FDPF and its affiliates to be able to strategically and politically influence civil society and other stakeholders.

To this end, the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation (FDPF) represents one of the biggest grants that the Fund has committed to. The grant also supports FDPF's four affiliates who also receive funding, program and capacity support from the Fund through the FDPF partnership. The four affiliates are Spinal Injuries Association, Fiji Association of the Deaf, Psychiatric Survivors Association and United Blind Persons of Fiji.

The three-year grant has strategies and activities which support and create the opportunities to mainstream social inclusion for people living with disabilities. The Fund will continue to support FDPF and its affiliates through an assigned Program Officer and Senior Program Manager with programming budget and support when and as needed.

In reviewing the Fund's grant mechanism, the Fund will explore the potential to broaden its support to equipment that is needed for people living with disabilities.

²Over the implementation period, a special temporary measure in the Fund's granting process was implemented to ensure that the Fund is reaching rural, remote women and marginalised groups. The Grants Committee recommended that a dedicated budget be set aside at every funding call to work specifically with disabled people's organisations and groups that work exclusively with people with disabilities.

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Recommendation 7: The Fund, as part of good practice, consider revisions to the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework to support on-going data and information collection and overall decision-making.

Suggested guidance includes:

- Streamline the MEL framework to include shared outcomes and a mix of clear qualitative and quantitative indicators. Introduce into the MEL system reporting on organisational capacity and ability to leverage resources and sustainability.
- Developing clear methodologies for qualitative assessments as well as standardised data collection tools and reporting processes.
- Systematically reporting against quantifiable indicators to support qualitative findings to facilitate the assessment of the size and scope of the Fund's investments and support evaluative analysis.
- Support capacity assessments of women's organisations using standardised methodologies, and which includes an analysis of their ability to exert influence in their communities and their ability to attract resources in a systematic way.
- Supporting grantees to improve their own MEL systems. As the Fund approaches grantees as collaborative partners in the women's movement, support should focus on strengthening the quality of reporting and analysis rather than prescribing outcomes which the grantees are required to achieve.

Joint Management Response

FWF and DFAT partly agree with this recommendation.

- The Fund revises its MEL framework on an annual basis, as part of good practice. Responses to suggested guidance offered is below:
- The Fund's MEL plan has a mixture of qualitative and quantitative indicators. However, these indicators can be better captured and presented through the Fund's reporting systems.
- With regards to reporting on organisational capacity and ability to leverage resources and sustainability, follow-through processes will be implemented after the needs analysis and due diligence process in order to track grantee progress in these areas throughout the grantee engagement period. The grantee reporting templates will also be amended to better capture data that respond to these indicators.
- At the Fund level, methodologies for qualitative assessments already exist. For example, the Fund undertakes thematic analysis of grantee reports in developing six-monthly and annual reports and uses the Value for Money rubric in assessing the Fund's performance in this area.
- In terms of methodologies and tools for grantees, the Fund has provided technical support to grantees when they commission evaluations. Additionally, the Fund's MEL team will develop a MEL toolkit for grantees that will include a range of methodologies. The reporting templates will be amended to accurately capture and present both quantifiable and qualitative findings. The MEL Coordinator will work with the project team to implement processes to capture and verify data through follow-up visits and other verification processes.

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Joint Management Response

- The Fund will implement periodic, standardised assessments to determine grantee progress in the areas of organisational capacity and ability to exert influence and to attract and leverage resources systematically.
- The Fund's MEL Coordinator has scheduled one-on-one sessions with grantees to strengthen their ability to collect, analyse and report data that reflects the positive change that both they and the Fund would like to see. All grantees will be supported to develop their own MEL plan. Further efforts will be made towards an enabling environment for grantees to share their learnings and stories (reports) to us in ways they find most effective.

Key Action (s)	Timeframe	Responsible
Review and update the Fund MEL	March - June 2020	MEL Coordinator
Develop a Fund MEL Toolkit	April - June	MEL Coordinator
One-on-one MEL capacity building sessions with grantees	To be considered post June 2020 (due to COVID-19 response)	MEL Coordinator

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Recommendation 8: *The Fund to consider introducing risk management strategies and processes for grantee proposals.*

It would be helpful to include a risk management section into the proposal template for grantees. This would ensure alignment to all Value for Money (VfM) standards. The VfM Rubric found that the Fund needs to improve reporting on performance and risk management by grantees.

Joint Management Response

FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

The Fund has not used a risk management tool to continually assess the risks associated with the grantee projects and programs. However, as a practise the Fund's monthly program meetings have included risk updates as well as providing risk updates to the Fund's Grants Committee.

The Fund will review its proposal template to ensure that the risk management section is outlined along with risk mitigation strategies. The Fund will also ensure that project monitoring undertaken by the Program Officers and the MEL Coordinator undertaken is linked and aligned to the VfM standards.

Risks that have been assessed as high in terms of likelihood will be noted and monitored periodically by the Program Officers who will advise the Senior Program Manager and Fund Manager.

Recommendation 9: *While the Fund has strong accountability procedures and transparent systems, the Fund should maintain ongoing monitoring of potential conflict of interest issues particularly given the small size of the Fiji women's movement.*

FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

Since its inception, the Fund has developed and implemented strong accountability and transparency mechanisms. All members of the Fund's Steering and Grants Committees including the Fund Team are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest. In cases where there are areas of conflicts of interest, key actions are outlined and implemented.

Mid Term Review (MTR) Recommendation**Joint Management Response**

The Fund will continue to utilise its accountability and transparency mechanisms to ensure that future conflicts of interests are managed consistently and effectively - In line with ethical procurement/recruitment practices, the Fund will manage conflict of interest by maintaining a register when a conflict arises. That is a declaration of any potential, actual or perceived conflict at any time. This will be updated. The Finance and Administration Officer will raise risks of any declarations to the Fund Manager accordingly.

The Fund will ensure that this is also communicated in a manner that builds the confidence of the Fiji women's movement in the Fund.

Recommendation 10: DFAT to develop an approach to streamlining the approval of Fund communication materials.

The Fund's communications (e.g. newsletters, live blogging, issuing of press releases, etc) are constrained by DFAT's lengthy communication approval processes.

FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

Both DFAT and the Fund have continued to use the annual Ways of Working meeting and approach to discussing a way forward to ensuring that approval processes for the Fund's communication materials are streamlined.

Prior and after the Mid Term Review, the Fund has been able to move towards a transitional approach towards more streamlined and independent media product. It is anticipated that as the Fund moves towards an independent entity, DFAT approval on its communication materials will slowly minimise.



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Recommendation 11: *The Fund should conduct an analysis of what are the key elements of a “do-no-harm” approach to communications.*

Some of the Fund’s communications have been confronting to conservative communities in rural areas.

Joint Management Response

FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

The nature of the Fund and its grantees’ work is to progress transformative gender equality and many times this will mean working in a conservative environment to change attitudes and behaviours that harm women and girls. The Fund employs a do no harm approach and will continue to do so in all its work, and constantly analyses key elements of do no harm approach, and how it applies to each application.

Documenting any backlash that grantees face and supporting grantees to employ mitigation strategies that they design, and implement is part of the Fund’s do no harm approach. Gender equality is an area of work that will always be confronting and supporting our grantees to plan for any backlash is integral.

As a matter of practice, the Fund reviews all its strategies such as MEL Plan, Communications Strategy, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion and Capacity Development on at least a biennial basis.



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Recommendation 12: *The Fund to develop a detailed strategy for transitioning to independence based on comprehensive analysis and assessment that considers:*

- the three models for the transition period highlighted in the Mid Term Review report, selecting a suitable approach
- how the Fund will interact with the proposed Pacific Feminist Fund and the implications for programming and resource mobilisation at a national and regional level
- the implications and way forward for the governance of the Fund's transition, e.g. how to balance the requirements of Women's Funds and DFAT regarding board membership
- human resourcing and efficiency considerations
- the approach to MEL under an independent fund that is operating as a collaborative partner in the women's movement building rather than a donor focused on programming.

Joint Management Response

FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

The Fund has developed a Localisation Strategy which has been approved by the Board of FWF. This includes a handover plan which is tailored towards the Fund registering under the Charitable Trust Act of Fiji in 2020. The Localisation Strategy outlines the governance structure, human resources, and other operational matters that will need to adapt and change as the Fund transitions into an independent entity. This will be progressively worked towards with oversight from the board.

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Recommendation 13: *To help secure the future financial security of the Fund, the Fund team should explore whether there is a possibility of investing a proportion of medium to long term endowment of core funding that is received by one or more donors.*

Joint Management Response

FWF and DFAT agree with this recommendation.

The future financial security of the Fund is essential to its ability to support a wide range of women's groups, networks and organisations in Fiji for transformative gender equality. In 2020, the Fund will develop its Resource Mobilisation Strategy. The Strategy will explore this recommendation and look to build on its successes to attract new funding.

The Fund has also begun to diversify its resources and most recently has been confirmed to receive funding via Mama Cash's Solidarity Fund to support the development of the Fund's Trust Deed for its registration under Fiji's Charitable Trust Act. As outlined by the MTR³, *it may be prudent for DFAT to provide core funding support to the Fund through a transitional arrangement until a wider pool of funding can be guaranteed.* It is of importance that the Fund begins to have strategic conversations with DFAT on funding support post the Fund's current project period of June 2022.

³Mid Term Review of the Fiji Women's Fund report, page 7