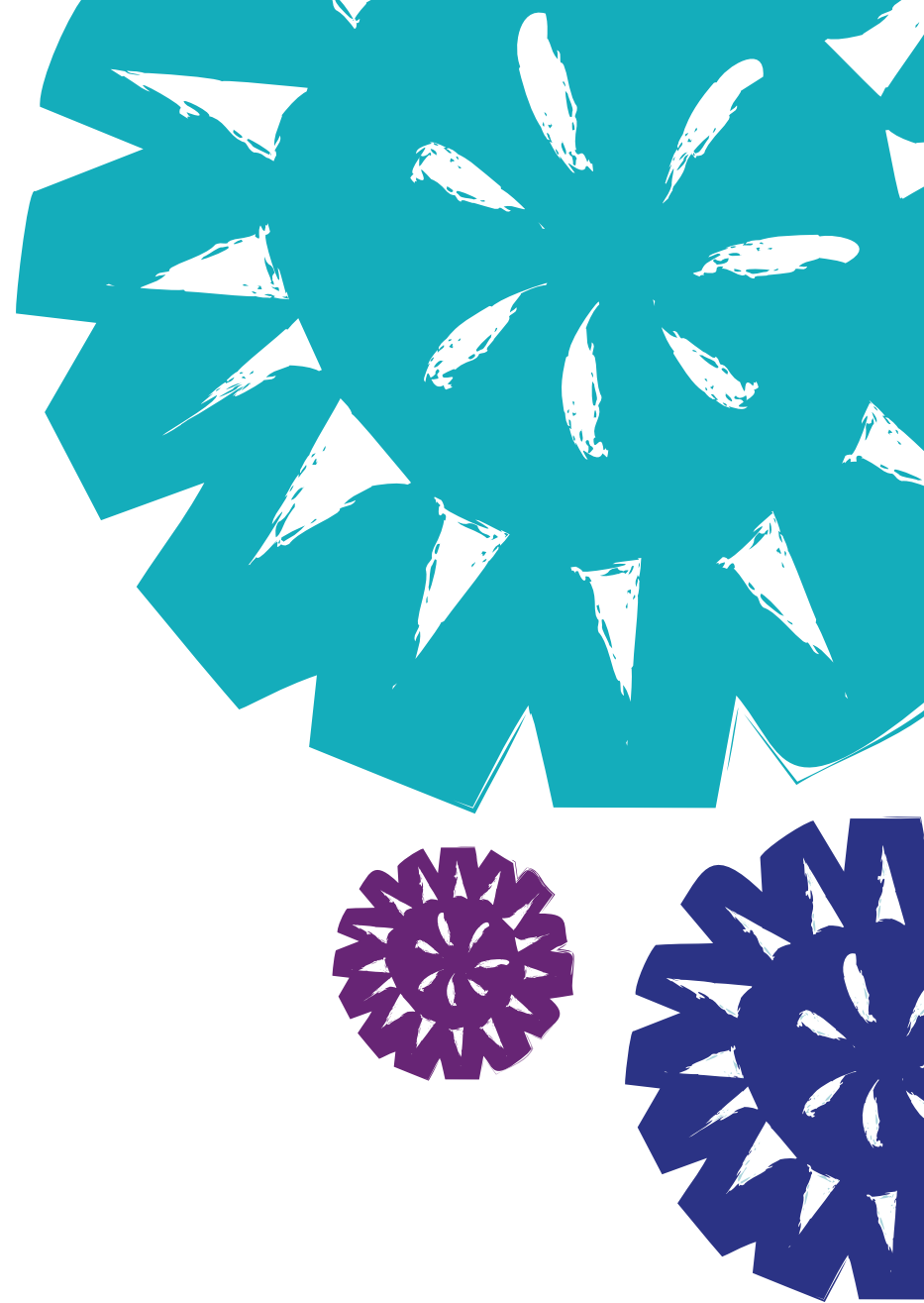
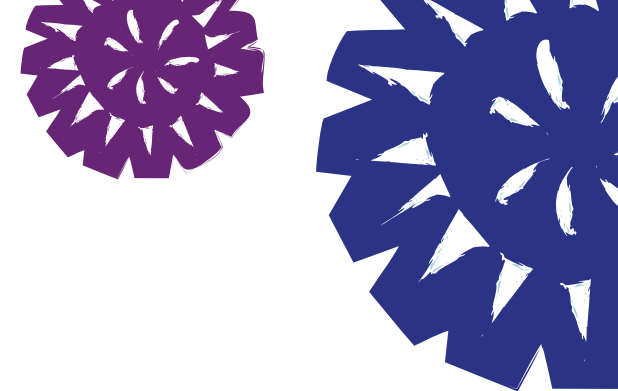


MID TERM REVIEW

Summary Report





About the Fund

The Fiji Women's Fund (the Fund) is an initiative of the Australian Government's Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) Program. The Fund has committed AU\$10.5 million from 2017 to 2022 for funding and capacity development support to women's groups, networks, and organisations in Fiji to expand and enhance their work on women's empowerment and gender equality.

The Fund works towards reaching women living in rural and remote locations and those who are marginalised, including women with disabilities and those facing discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Fund supports networks and organisations across four thematic areas:

- (i) women's economic empowerment (WEE);
- (ii) ending violence against women (EVAW);
- (iii) women's leadership and decision making (WLDM); and
- (iv) strengthening women's groups and coalitions for change (WCC).

The Fiji Women's Fund is a women's fund governed by women that mobilises resources for women's organisations and movements to, advance leadership and empowerment of women and girls. Women's funds play a critical role in supporting human rights, building coalitions for transformative change, capacity development and ensuring the survival and growth of grassroots women's groups and movements.

The Fund aims to achieve the three following outcomes by 2022:

- ▶ Grantees' capacity strengthened: Women's groups, organisations or networks supported by the Fund are empowered and have improved capacity to contribute to transformative change that improves women's lives;
- ▶ Grantees's influence strengthened: Women's groups, organisations or networks supported by the Fund are more influential at different levels (individual/systemic and formal/informal) and are contributing to transformative change in women's lives; and
- ▶ Independent Fund: The Fund has transitioned to an independent local entity and has secured funding from donors, private sector, and local philanthropy



About the Mid Term Review

In November 2019, the Fund commissioned a Mid-Term Review (MTR) and focused on four¹ criteria:



Relevance: Does the design of the Fund (the ToC and the Program Logic) remain relevant and continue to make sense given the need, policy context and implementation context?



Effectiveness: Is the Fund progressing towards its intended outcomes? What challenges are affecting progress and how could these be addressed?



Efficiency: How efficient has the management of the Fund been to date?



Sustainability: How is the Fund moving towards sustainability?

The MTR was designed to assess progress towards key outcomes and to provide guidance and recommendations for delivery of the program to 2022. The review was both summative and formative in that it assessed both achievements and shortfalls to date and looked forward to how the program should best be shaped in the future.

The MTR applied an 'investigatory framework' that was primarily qualitative to underpin analysis. It used analytical rather than statistical inference, drawing on triangulation to maximise the reliability of findings. The review maintained a strong focus on promoting the utilisation of findings by linking key decisions to key stakeholders and decision-makers.

¹An assessment of impact was not included in the MTR as the period of implementation was not considered long enough to address long term effects.



Methodology

To comprehensively answer the evaluation questions and sub-questions, the MTR combined a range of methods.



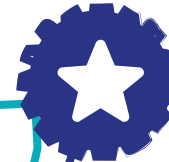
Utilisation of key findings and results: The review is grounded in a utilisation-focused approach in that results and findings are presented in a way to maximise the ability of stakeholders to process, apply and learn from them. These include grantees and other women's organisations, Fund staff and consultants, Steering Committee and Grants Committee members and Government representatives such as the Department of Women.



Desk review: involved a review of relevant documents to identify initial issues and provide guidance to the type, nature and focus of key evaluation questions. The desk review provided a basis for the assessment of key achievements with regards to targets and outcomes.



Data analysis and verification: content analysis, coding and tallying of qualitative and quantitative data to provide evidence-based responses to the evaluation questions was conducted. An evidence matrix was completed to support analysis. The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Aid Quality Check (AQC) matrix was used for analysis and data quality to indicate the source of data and to support the narrative result for each key evaluation questions (KEQ) and sub-question.



Limitations of the review. There was not extensive quantitative data available to the review team that would help with understanding of the size, scale and depth of the difference the Fund has made to women's lives. Moreover, as the grantee projects are unique and diverse, it was challenging to make generalisations between projects.



Data collection: included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The review team employed stratified purposeful sampling among sub-groups to ensure that analysis captured the perspective of all groups. The review team conducted KIIs (face-to-face and remote) and FGDs. KIIs were held with 39 stakeholders including 35 women, three men and one transgender person. Of these, there were 23 grantee representatives, eight staff and short term advisers (STA) of the Fund, one donor representative, one women's fund representative, three Steering Committee/ Grants Committee members, and two DFAT/ex-DFAT representatives.

The KII and FGDs applied a semi-structured approach to questioning. Site visits were conducted to the Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group (NWDG) and Rise Beyond the Reef (RBTR) to meet with beneficiaries and members of the community to hear their perspectives on the work of the grantees.



24

To date, the Fund has disbursed 30 grants to 24 organisations

The Fund's grantees have reached over

8,160 people

5,600 women and girls



2,480

men and boys



80 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) people



This number is inclusive of 97 people living with disabilities (67 women/girls, and 30 men/boys)

The data above reflects the number of people that the Fund reached in 2019. We have not presented cumulative data from 2018 and 2019 as the current nature of our granting mechanism and data collection structure do not allow us to record cumulative data across years. We are currently developing a system that will allow us to do so.

Summary of Key Findings

The Fund has scored well on relevance. Since its commencement, developments in the local and global context have confirmed the continued relevance of the Fund's overall strategic intent and purpose. The Fund has done an excellent job in balancing the requirements as a DFAT-supported program, while also maintaining flexibility to advocate and support a range of projects and interventions relevant to women's organisations. Assumptions underpinning the program and risks may need to be revisited as part of the transition to independence.

The Fund has established its place as a credible vehicle to facilitate support towards women's movements. To foster local ownership, the Fund adopted a partnership approach with Fiji women's organisations based on collaborative, rather than hierarchical, relationships.

The Fund has made linkages to regional and global funds such as Prospera, the International Network of Women's Funds and the Urgent Action Fund Asia and Pacific (UAF A&P). The Fund has also supported emerging women's funds such as in the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), the 50:50 Innovation Fund and the Francophone Women's Fund based in Togo.



The Fund scored well on effectiveness, contributing to a transition of the Fund towards independence, empowering women's organisations and increasing the influence of women within their communities.

Aside from building local, regional and global relationships to secure its identity and legitimacy, a key achievement to date has been a partnership with UAF A&P to present a paper, *Where is the money for women and girls in the Pacific? Mapping funding gaps, opportunities and trends*. The paper recommended the establishment of a Pacific Feminist Fund (PFF) to manage grants made by a range of donor partners for distribution to Pacific women's organisations.³ A localisation/handover strategy has also been prepared by the Fund which outlines, among other things, the legal processes and human resource requirements for transitioning.

While the Fund has progressed well in this area, **transition planning should be accelerated to ensure its smooth transition to independence and to promote a greater chance of sustainability.** It is notable that, while there are many options for potential sources of funding, to date, DFAT has been the largest donor for women's organisations in the Pacific.⁴ To build on the support, while at the same time opening the Fund to alternative sources, 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.

The Fund has helped empower women's organisations through funding, capacity building, mentoring and facilitating networking.

Grantees indicated that the Fund has been supportive in fielding and assessing proposals, managing grants and promoting networking opportunities. Capacity building support has been viewed as useful, but training was difficult for grantees to fit in with their schedules. Also, due to DFAT funding requirements, training was slightly weighted towards compliance rather than technical activities. Grantees appreciated networking opportunities as they helped increase their knowledge, profile in the community and access to resources.

³Sumner, C. (2019). *Where is the Money for Women and Girls in the Pacific: Mapping Funding Gaps, Opportunities and Trends* (draft), FWF and UAF A&P

⁴Sumner, C. (2019) notes that in the Pacific, the Australian Government is estimated to have disbursed AUD215 million on women's empowerment and gender equality between June 2012–June 2019. In 2017, the EU spent USD3 million targeting gender equality in the Pacific as a principle objective and NZ USD3 million. The Philanthropy Advancing Women's Human Rights (PAWHR) showed that their 12 member foundations received USD1.4 million in the Pacific region in 2017.

The Fund has also helped increase the influence of individual women and organisations within their communities.

Many grantee projects have worked across and created synergies between the four thematic areas and the quadrants of the 2005 Rao and Kelleher's Gender at Work analytical framework - i.e. consciousness capabilities, resources, informal norms and exclusionary practices and formal rules and policies.⁵ More work is required to link the four quadrants and ensure sustainability.

The most notable achievement of the Fund is to counteract the Suva-centric bias of the Fiji women's movement by prioritising funding, empowerment and capacity building for organisations outside of Suva. All grantees supported by the Fund were supporting projects in rural and/or remote areas.

Grant funds tended to be concentrated among a few organisations.

⁵Rao, A. and Kelleher, D. (2005), Is there life after gender mainstreaming?, Gender and Development 13(2) 57-69

A total of
24



organisations have received assistance to date.

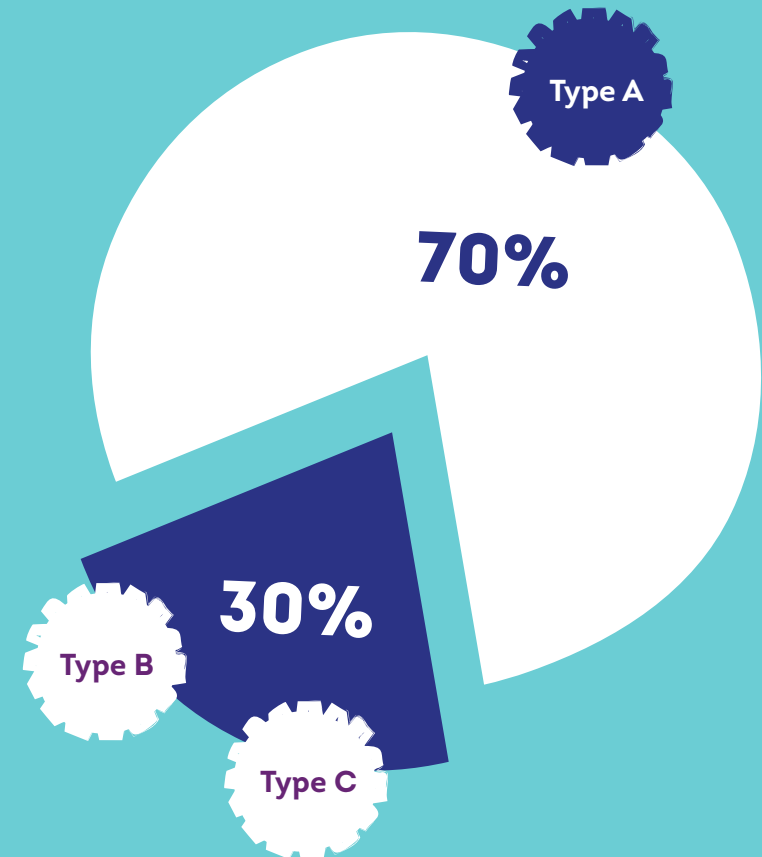
Type A

9 grants

Type B

Type C

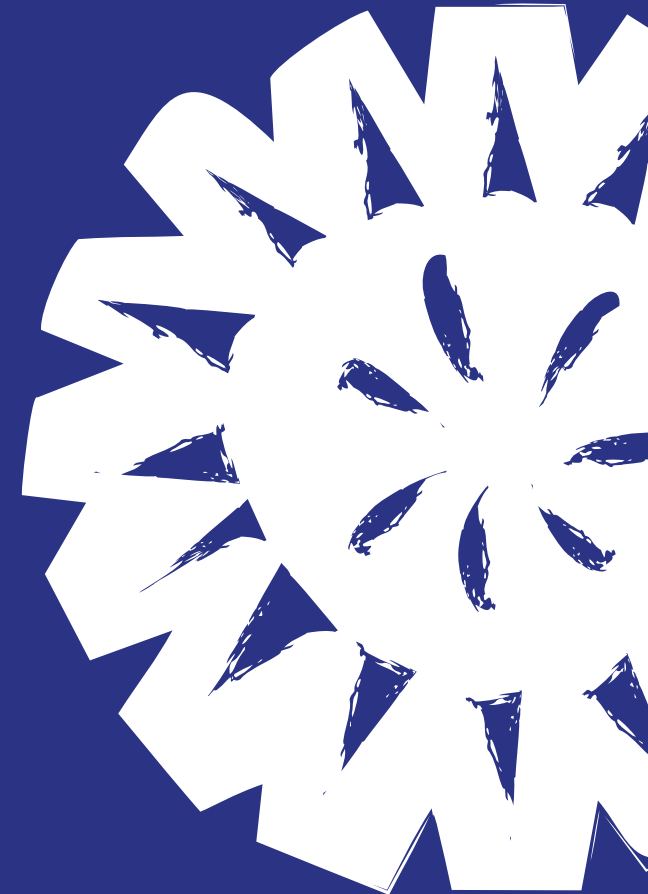
15 grants



This distribution of funding is understandable given that Type A organisations were deemed more reliable from a fiduciary and program management perspective. Their grants included multi-year funding and a contribution to core funding which is more resource intensive. However, part of the design concept with the Type A, B and C system was the possibility that the larger organisations could re-grant to smaller organisations and a mentoring relationship could develop between the large and small organisations. This approach was not mandated by the design but was presented as the first of two options. The second option was direct grants to Type A, B and C organisations for implementing their own projects. The Fund chose the second option. This has had positive implications for sustainability as rural women's organisations can remain operating after the grant ceases and seek funding from other sources.

The duration of grants is an area that requires attention going forward. While funding for Type A organisations is multi-year, grants for Type B and C organisations are of a maximum one year in length. A grant duration of one year is generally too short for effective implementation and engagement. Some Type B organisations lagged in disbursement. Type C grants (small grants of under AUD100,000) worked well for one-off events or capital purchase for economic empowerment projects but the scale of these activities was small.

Given the success of some Type B and C projects, the Fund could also consider the option of catalytic funding to enable these organisations to build on the progress made under the first funding cycle and contribute to sustainability. Catalytic funding refers to funding for an innovative idea that needs to be tested for its viability for scaling up.



The Fund scored well on efficiency although there are some areas to improve. The Fund is delivering value for money (VfM) and tracking well in delivering the budget.

At end of financial year (FY) 2018-19, the Fund had disbursed 101 per cent of the budget for the year

and, as of December 2019, the Fund had disbursed

40%
of the budget for
FY 2019-2020.

Type B

Type A

However, some Type A and Type B agencies are lagging in disbursement.

Notably, the Fund team has sought to maximise funding directed towards grantees - for example, increasing the percentage of the budget directed towards grants from 38 per cent in the budget to 54 per cent in implementation in 2018-19.

The Fund has quite high operational costs with

34%
of the budget going
on operations and
staffing in **2018-2019**



39%
for the first half of
2019-2020.

This does not include the Managing Contractor fee.

High operational costs are understandable given the hands-on approach of working with grantees, but financial conditions after Fund independence may be more restrictive. The Fund has been sufficiently well resourced but there may be more demands on staff moving towards Fund independence when there is no longer support from the Managing Contractor firm. Governance systems are working well but will also need to be reviewed and adjusted as the Fund transitions towards independence to ensure that they fit with the modalities of the global network of women's funds that require that grantees are not beholden to a bilateral donor.

The Fund has taken steps towards sustainability pertaining to preparing for independence of the fund in 2022 by developing a localisation strategy, positioning itself as a key member of the national and Pacific regional women's movement, conducting research, and leading strategy development on funding for gender equality in the Pacific. As of December 2019, there is still a need to develop a clear strategy regarding the transition from a DFAT-supported initiative towards a fully independent fund. At present, DFAT contractual arrangements preclude the Fund accepting funding from international women's organisations and donors. It may, therefore, be prudent for the Fund and DFAT to establish transitional arrangements to ensure the Fund's effective move to independence from 2022.

The MTR has identified three possible options for transition:

Option 1

The Fund continues in its current form until June 2022. It negotiates with other funders to continue operation as an independent fund after the cessation of the contract with DFAT.

Option 3

Option 3: The Fund continues in its current form until June 2022 but secures an endowment/seed funding of core funding for up to five years from DFAT.

Option 3 is recommended by the MTR due to the current unpredictability of funding and the relatively short timeframe between now and June 2022. It is also recommended that the Fund continues to seek support from additional donors/women's organisations to support core funding. The critical step is to seek some form of funding for an interim period either before or at independence.

It would be useful if the core funding took the form of seed or endowment funding. Seed or endowment funding would mean that funds are paid into a trust fund to which other funders could contribute. Accountability would be to a group of trustees rather than one donor. It may even be possible for the fund to be invested and interest accrued as income for the Fund.

Option 2

The Fund continues in its current form until June 2022. In the meantime, it looks to secure an endowment/seed grant of core funding from one or more bilateral donors and/or philanthropists for a transitional period of up to five years.



1

The Fund strengthens and expands facilitation and networking.

This is grounded in the finding that networking through the Fund has assisted grantees to access resources, 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.

2

The Fund continues with ongoing 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 to 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. Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), child protection, finance management and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)) to allow for more time to support technical knowledge for activity implementation.

3

The Steering and Grants Committees revisit the system for establishing eligibility and categorisation of grants

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

- ▶ 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 and core funding; and b) new organisations proposing small, experimental or short term activities. This could include catalytic funding for smaller organisations working on innovating ideas at the incubation stage.
- ▶ Have minimum criteria for applications but remove any categorisation system for proposals and assess each proposal on its own merits in regard to deciding the duration and amount allocated.
- ▶ Exchange the size/experience basis for categorising proposals and replace it with a thematic (e.g. WEE, EVAW, etc.) or geographic-based system.

The MTR suggests that the Steering and Grants Committees make decisions on a way forward.

4

The Fund considers 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.

5

The Fund explores scaling up 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 well-placed for expansion. One example is the Naitasiri Women in Dairy Group (NWDG) which has successfully improved the income of 40 cooperative members and is now expanding into other income streams.

6

The Fund assists umbrella agencies, such as the Fiji Disabled People's Federation (FDPF) and their affiliates, with programming and disbursement

as a specific strategy for expanding inclusion of people with disabilities (PWD), based on the quota system established by the Grants Committee.⁶ 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, according to PWD grantees, there is a high need in this area.

7

The Fund, as part of good practice, considers revisions to the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework to support ongoing 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 reporting on organisational capacity and ability to leverage resources and sustainability into the MEL system.
- ▶ Develop clear methodologies for qualitative assessments as well as standardised data collection tools and reporting processes.
- ▶ Systematically report 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, including an analysis of their ability to exert influence in their communities and attract resources in a systematic way.
- ▶ Support 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.

8

The Fund considers 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 value for money (VfM) standards. The VfM rubric found that the Fund needs to improve reporting on performance and risk management by grantees.

⁶A special temporary measure in the Fund's granting process was implemented to ensure that the Fund was 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 PWD.

9

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

10

DFAT develops an approach to streamlining the approval of Fund communications materials.

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

11

The Fund conducts an analysis of 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.

12

The Fund develops a detailed strategy for transitioning to independence based on comprehensive analysis and assessment that considers:

- ▶ selecting a suitable approach based on the three recommended models for the transition period
- ▶ how the Fund will interact with a proposed Pacific Feminist Fund and the implications for programming and resource mobilisation at a national and regional level
- ▶ the implications for governance of the Fund during the transition period (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 operating as a collaborative partner in building the women's movement, rather than as a donor-supported activity focused on programming.

13

To help secure the future financial security of the Fund, the Fund explores the potential of investing a proportion of medium to long term core funding received by one or more donors in a trust fund.



Looking forward⁷

Towards Localisation

The Fund has developed a Localisation Strategy which includes a handover plan has been approved by the Steering Committee of FWF. The Localisation Strategy which is tailored towards the Fund registering under the Charitable Trust Act of Fiji in 2020 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.

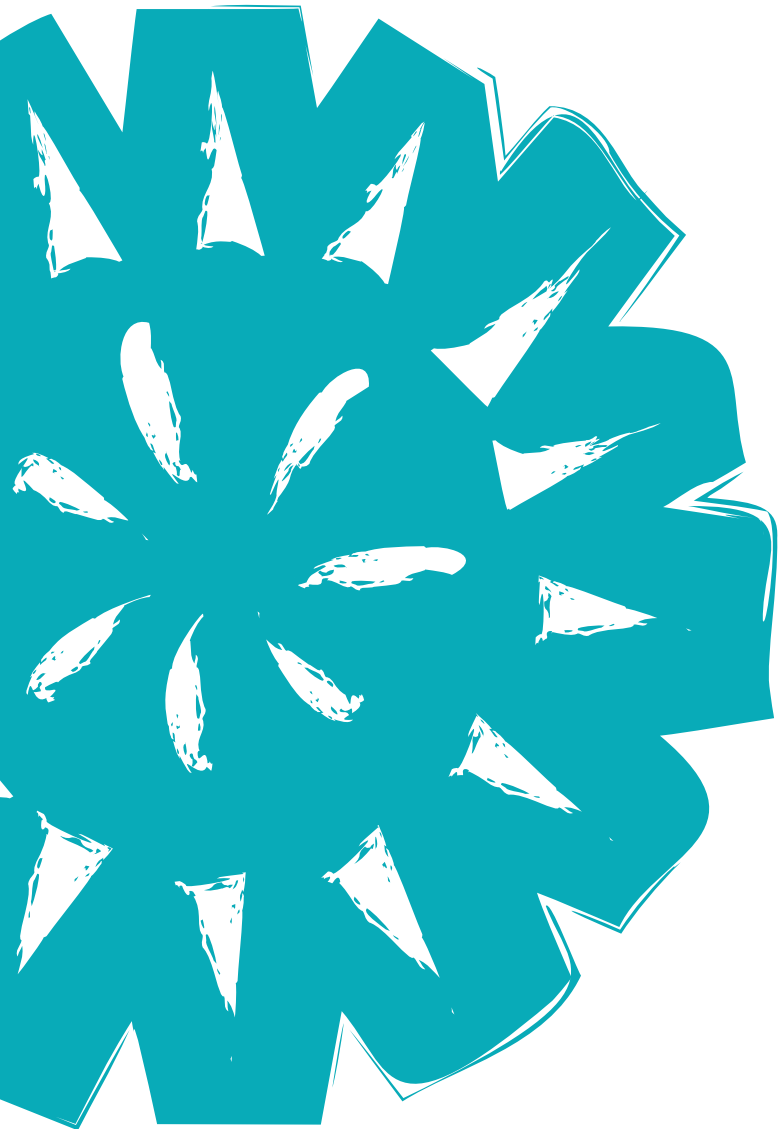
The future financial security of the Fund is essential to its ability to support a wide range of women's groups, networks and organisations in Fiji for transformative gender equality. In 2020, the Fund will develop its Resource Mobilisation Strategy. The Strategy will explore this recommendation and 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 MTR⁸, 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.

⁷For a detailed response to the recommendations, please refer to the Joint Management Response by FWF and DFAT https://fijiwomensfund.org/mtr_report/

⁸Mid Term Review of the Fiji Women's Fund report, page 7





Capacity Development Support

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.

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.

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 its capacity development approach

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.

Grants Mechanism

Learning from global women's funds, the Fund will be developing the new grants structure that addresses findings and recommendations from the MTR to be endorsed by the Grants and Steering Committee. The realignment of the grants mechanisms to the current grantees and new grant call is expected to take place before December 2020.



Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL)

Some of the specific changes for the Fund's MEL include:

- ▶ The Fund's MEL plan has a mixture of qualitative and quantitative indicators. These indicators will 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.
- ▶ 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.

Managing risks

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.



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