



UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

Questionnaire on girls' and young women's activism

Introduction

The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, in preparation for its thematic report to be presented at the 50th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2022, has been researching the topic of girls' and young women's activism focusing on accomplishments, challenges and opportunities for change. The scope of this questionnaire will cover the various aspects of girls' and young women's participation and activism in the political and public life at different levels.

In this regard, the Working Group would like to seek inputs from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), States and other stakeholders to inform the preparation of the report in line with its mandate to maintain a constructive approach and dialogue with States and other stakeholders.

The Working Group would greatly appreciate it if you could **reply by 1 October 2021** to the following email address: wgdiscriminationwomen@ohchr.org. Responses to the questionnaire will be made publicly available at the time of the report publication.

I. Nature, modalities and trends of girls' and young women's activism

- 1. What is the normative framework related to girls' and young women's civic space and activism?**

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) working with Young Women and Girls in Fiji, uses feminist analysis in addressing gender inequality. At the backdrop of this submission FWRM draws references to Fiji's commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Fiji National Gender, Ageing and Retirement Policies; the Fiji 2013 Constitution as well as other human rights commitments.

- 2. What are the main features of their activism/participation in political and public life in countries or regions you are working? Please describe, in particular, in terms of:**
 - i. Specific issues (thematic areas) on which girls and young women are mostly engaged**

The Fiji Young Women's' The forum builds on the initial Fiji Young Women's Forum of 2013 and the rich tradition of activism and feminism by Fijian women throughout our national herstory and is committed to representing young women throughout the country. We recognise the work of the many

women who have gone before us and the gains that they have made for young women today. We acknowledge and respect the rich herstory of women's participation in political spaces including social movements and we call for more recognition of this hard fraught journey. Young women demand *inclusive* processes of development, including the allocations of National Budgets, that are strictly transparent, efficient, accountable and more gender-responsive

- there is an enabling and accessible environment for all to participate in all levels of decision making
- ii. Political actors and authorities they mostly engage with
 - there is freedom to express our views, opinions and political beliefs in safety and with dignity
 - information is accurate, empowers and is disseminated through appropriate and accessible channels and forms
 - education is resourced, affordable, accessible, decentralised, equipping us with skills and information about our bodies and our world throughout our lives
 - our bodily autonomy is respected and celebrated
 - our natural environment and resources are used sustainably and in line with our cultural rights and responsibilities
 - our public services and facilities are non-discriminatory, accessible and responsive to the needs of all diverse women and providers are well-trained and well-resourced
 - we can afford to live a positive, healthy lifestyle that balances our physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional wellbeing

The **Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF)** programme with the critical feminist and gender lens frames diverse young women's issues such as violence against women, sexual harassment and bodily autonomy whereby young women leaders create campaign awareness on social media platforms and in public spaces during International Women's Day and 16 Days of Activism.

The **Emerging Leaders Forum Alumni (ELFA)** consists of the young women that have graduated from FWRMs flagship ELF program. Thus it has been critical in ensuring the sustainability of young feminist movement in Fiji.

iii. Levels of engagement (grassroots, local, national, international)

The various groups/networks that FWRM engages in terms of building girls and young women's capacity have enabled some level of direct or indirect intervention in spaces at national, regional and global spaces. For e.g The FYWF is one critical space that engages at the national level in terms of raising critical issues that directly affect young women in spaces where they are encouraged to actively participate and fully understand their civic duties whether as an aspiring candidate or as an informed voter. ELF and ELFA is another network that enables young women

to actively engage in regional and global spaces. Raising issues that girls and young women face not only in Fiji but through the Pacific region.

iv. Main spaces for engagement (e.g. schools, community, media, online platforms, etc.)

Girls and Young Women participate in community advocacy based work, mainstream media and on social media platforms. On a formal front, girls and young women have engaged in National Budget Submissions and National Bill Submissions.

v. Cross-movement cooperation and solidarity

Through the work of the Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF), young have had the opportunity to work at a national level across human rights based organisations showing solidarity in arising priority issues. The work of the forum also fosters young women's political participation.

The ELF Alumni have had the opportunity to work alongside the Fiji Young Women's Forum as a co-convenor in ensuring that young women are represented at all levels of leadership from formal to informal sectors.

3. What are the forms and modalities for girls' and young women's engagement/activism in countries or regions you are working (specifying the country/ries or region/s)? Please provide information about any structures in place (formal and informal) and how they operate.

Formal Spaces for Girls participation:

- Girls Forum is a recent formal advocacy space for girls all over Fiji to engage.
- Student Council girls are a part of in their schools
- National Children's forum organised by Save the Children, Fiji
- National Budget Submissions (usually written now)
- National Bills/Policies' consultations before being made formal. Eg: FWRM made a submission to the National Youth Policy 2018-2022 with girls and young women's voices
- The National Children's Coordinating Committee (NCCC) is housed under the government ministry responsible for women and children. On the NCCC a child representative sits in on meetings with government officials where he/she may represent the voices of children. However, this committee has been dormant for the past few years.
- Young women sharing Fiji Young Women's Forum Outcomes Declaration with political parties to prioritize issues in their manifestos
- Young women raising issues on university campus such as security and access to better hygiene facilities including menstrual hygiene products

Informal Spaces:

- Community meetings
- Targeted community awareness programmes led by young women and girls
- In the home space
- In school with friends/sports clubs girls are a part of.

4. **What are the main trends and drivers influencing their activism in countries or regions you are working? Please explain if there are particular ways NGOs and feminist movements influence girls' and young women's activism.**

As part of leadership training under Fiji Women's' Rights Movement programme they are able to strengthen self-confidence and have opportunities at multiple platforms to highlight their priorities. As well being part of alumni and the bigger young women's and girls' network the support mechanisms is much stronger to be able to partake in activism.

5. **What are the distinct experiences and shared experiences of girl and young women activists with other WHRDs of different ages, and what is the state of intergenerational interactions and movement building? Are there also any distinct trends in the way in which young women are active now, compared to previous generations of young activists?**

The Fiji Women's' Forum (FWF) and Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF) was an excellent example of strengthening intergenerational learning exchange and movement building. This platform provided the first ever national convening of diverse young women and older/aging women.

In turn, girls have also entered such intergenerational learning spaces. Work with girls and young women have been key to sustaining the feminist movement in Fiji. Today one can see how older/ageing women, young women and girls sit together, learn and share multiple lived realities particularly looking at intersectionalities through a feminist lens. Such learning spaces have been key in the Intergenerational Women's Leadership Programme (IWLP) that FWRM implements.

In particular, this ongoing work acknowledges the WHRD's work that was done before and continuing to create stronger feminist spaces.

Today, technology has further provided different ways of activism whereby young women are being represented at panels, side events, hosting various topics on social media etc.

6. **What are the positive and inspirational examples of girl's activism in terms of:**
- i. **Social mobilization and change**

Social mobilization and change - young women and girls are marching on the streets during the One Billion Rising Campaign, International Women's' Day, 16 Days of Activism and Human Rights Day. This further influences their families and friends to take part and learn about the movement and how they can be part of the social justice movement.

- ii. **Influencing policies and legislation**

Influencing policies and legislation - through multiple submissions and outcome statements young women and girls are putting their lived realities at the forefront of national conversations. Through consultations such as National Action Plan they are able to further share opinions and recommendations ensuring inclusive representation with their feminist learnings.

- iii. **Personal development and empowerment (of girls and young women)**

Personal development and empowerment (of girls and young women) - the FWRM leadership programmes strongly believes in self-agency thus the sessions/programme is designed firstly to unpack self. Personal development with a feminist and gender lens is critical for young women and girls to be able understand own identities and intersectionalities as well as privileges. Thus this further leads to recognizing multiple intersectionalities of self and others creating an equal and feminist perspective of empowerment

iv. Solidarity with feminist and human rights movements

Solidarity with feminist and human rights movements - taking part in activism via marching, calling out inequalities via press statements

II. Enabling factors and good practices

1. What solidarity and support frameworks are available in the countries or regions of your operation that enhance girls' and young women's activism? Please provide information on the role of:

i. Legal/policy and institutional frameworks

The NCCC as shared above and the Fiji National Youth Council (NYC) are two institutional frameworks set up by the state where young women and girls may enhance their activism. However, as shared earlier the NCCC has been inactive for the past few years while the NYC have been trying to revive its members.

The National Children's Coordinating Committee (NCCC) is housed under the government ministry responsible for women and children. On the NCCC a child representative sits in on meetings with government officials where he/she may represent the voices of children. However, this committee has been dormant for the past few years.

Currently, the NYC is actively involved in the National Action Plan on ending violence against women and girls. The NYC looks at involving its members in this process to ensure young women's voices are included in this National Action Plan. This work has gone out to rural and maritime areas.

The ongoing consultations for Fiji's first ever National Action Plan (NAP) for the prevention of VAWG is another national space which seeks to capture voices of women and girls in the area of VAWG which will input into the final NAP introduced by the State.

ii. Social, cultural, religious institutions

Cultural institutions do play a role where young women may enhance their activism. One such organisation is the Nai Sausavou, which is a indigenous set-up for Itaukei Young women. The institution encourages young women's participation and provides avenues through which their issues may be heard and addressed through formal consultations.

For religious institutions we now have young women and girls taking on a more proactive role in churches as they lead sermons and church services on youth Sundays and children's Sundays.

Regardless, there is still a gap in addressing gender biased issues within such organisations where young women and girls continue to be discriminated against for being female and too young.

iii. Collaborative initiatives, human rights and/or women's movements

a.) Through the work of NGO Human Rights Coalition (NGOCHR), young women and girls have been part of collective voices in various advocacy efforts. Such efforts include the annual human rights day march/virtual rally.

b.) We Rise Coalition where its members are local and regional feminist organisation mobilising for change where young women and girls play an integral role in substantiating ongoing advocacy work.

c.) Recently, girls were able to input into the Alternate Reporting process of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) through a combined effort of local NGOs who work with children. However, there is still a need for girl-centred work NGOs need to take as a collective to sustain ongoing rights based work. There is little to no recent research/ study on girl's issues/rights. Most of this information can be found dating back to 2014 at the latest. The Fijian government needs to collect children based data for below 18 year olds in population counts or/and all official government work to get a better understanding of the status of girls (as defined in the CRC) in Fiji .

iv. Technological infrastructures/means

v. Donor organizations

Feminist donor's providing the necessary support to ensure diverse young women and girl are able to participate in feminist leadership programmes

vi. Other frameworks/ actors

2. What are the concrete ways in which the State promotes and secures girls' engagement/activism? Are there particular issues and platforms in which the State encourages their engagement?

Currently, there is no state-led work for girls on this. However, girls have utilised other opportunities such as national consultations. These consultations include the National Budget submissions, and National Plan of Actions (NAP) consultations, youth policy consultations, national bill submissions to ensure their voices are heard and to have an influence on formal structures that directly impact them.

3. How do NGOs promote girls' and young women's engagement and activism in your national or regional context? Please describe which other stakeholders are very active in this area and what role they play.

Ensuring leadership programmes are inclusive and have a strong feminist rights based approach. In turn, such programs ensure it is a safe space whereby young women and girls are able to share their lived realities. Ensuring confidentiality and consent stories/data are presented via multiple platforms such as case studies and digital stories.

In addition to this, young women and girls take on lead roles in advocacy based public events to voice their concerns and present solutions that address their needs.

In a few instances, stakeholders such as the Fiji Association of the Deaf (FAD), the Ministry responsible for education, young women and children have been involved in dialogue with young women and girls. NGOs have taken a lead role in providing a safe space for the meaningful engagement of young women and girls in such dialogues.

4. Are there ways to assess and support girls' evolving capacities to fully and freely participate in all spheres of public decision-making? Also, how is the diversity of girls' activism and inclusion in all human rights activism initiatives ensured (e.g. gender equality, disability, environment, LGBTI issues, etc.)?

Currently, young women and girl centered leadership programmes utilise various evaluation methodologies to capture pre and post data thus measuring changes in mindset and learnings in the programme. The programme further supports participation at other events such as panels, intergenerational learning programmes and national media talk back shows.

Referring to public sphere of decision making, young women and girls continue to face multiple challenges in accessing such spaces that is free of discrimination and are not tokenistic.

NGO based work drives young women and girls meaningful participation in public spheres of decision making where the government falls short. One such example would be the inclusion of young women and girls voices in the Beijing Platform Action (BPA) +25 Fiji Progress report in 2019.

5. What are the achievements at the national level in the implementation of laws, policies, plans and/or programs and practices relevant to promoting girls' and young women's engagement/activism? What roles have NGOs played in this respect?

NGOs have taken a lead role in providing a safe space for the meaningful engagement of young women and girls in ongoing activism work. Whether it be through a written submission on certain national policies, national budget submissions or draft bills yet to be passed in parliament. NGOs have taken on an active role in mobilising young women and girls in leadership programs where these groups build on their self-agency where they actively and meaningfully participate in advocacy based work.

6. Please provide concrete examples of good practices and any innovative initiatives taken by the State, NGOs and other stakeholders, and lessons learnt.

State Initiatives:

- National Action Plan (NAP) on the ending Violence against Women and Girls took a community consultation approach working with local NGOs to ensure diversity and a gender lens to this work. Young women and girls have been part of this ongoing consultation around Fiji.
- The NCCC is an ongoing platform where children's voices may be directly heard.
- National Budget consultations are now taking place in schools where girls have an opportunity to voice their concerns. This is the same for young women who may engage at these consultations that are held around the country.

NGO Initiatives:

- **The Fiji Young Women's Forum**

The Fiji Young Women's Forum (FYWF) is co-convened by feminist based local NGOs. These groups have demonstrated great leadership and solidarity in young Fijian women by producing three progressive outcome statements in three forums in response to barriers to young women's meaningful participation and representation in Fiji's democratization process. The FYWF recognizes the unique young women-led space that fosters solidarity amongst a diversity of young women. The FYWF has provided a strategic platform to motivate young women voters in the 2014 and in 2018 Elections to raise awareness and the ongoing work to enhance active citizenship to hold national leaders accountable.

- **Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF)**

The Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF) is a year-long training program for 18-25 year old women in Fiji that began in 2003 under the then Young Women's Leadership Program banner. The training consists of workshops and retreats aimed at developing young women's ability to critically analyze issues and develop advocacy skills. Topics such as gender, feminism, human rights, trade, the economy, the environment, gender based violence, sexual reproductive health and rights and women's participation in decision-making are discussed and analyzed using a feminist and human rights based approach

- **Grow.Inspire.Relate.Lead.Succeed- GIRLS Program**

The GIRLS programme has increased visibility of the girl child through innovative means to engage and introduce young girls between the ages of 10-17 years to human rights education, gender, feminism and sports that are traditionally male dominated such soccer, touch rugby and sevens rugby. Some of the GIRLS activities include Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights sessions, writing and video editing skills workshops, Day Camps, themed weekend camps and using art as a form of activism. Currently the program works with adolescent hearing and Deaf girls from diverse backgrounds across Fiji.

- **Girls Forum**

June 2021 marked a herstoric moment for the FWRM GIRLS programme. The programme organised the Inaugural Girls Virtual Forum, bringing together 50 diverse young girl leaders aged six-17 years from Nadi, Nausori and Kadavu for five weeks. The overall purpose of the Forum was to discuss priority issues from a girl child's perspective, recommend solutions and key actions to take to address the issues raised. The Forum was facilitated and led by girls from the programme; a girls-led forum by girls for girls. The Forum provided a safe space for girls to share their own stories and experiences, fostering greater self-agency that would in turn establish a girl-led advocacy platform that aims at transforming formal structures that directly impact girls in Fiji.

- **National Children’s Forum**

The National Children’s Forum last held in 2019 was an opportunity to conduct a Child Rights Situational Analysis (CRSA). Hosted by Save the Children, Fiji (SCF), the forum discussions was centred around addressing issues of bullying, unequal treatment of girls, boys and children with disabilities, the need for quality education along with the need for parent’s support from home.

- **Menstruation Health Awareness programmes**

Through target programs for adolescent girls, the Reproductive Family Health Association of Fiji (RFHAF) has been an integral part of promoting such programs for girls in Fiji.

- **Ending period poverty work**

A girl-led campaign called the Lagilagi Campaign aims to supply sanitary pads to girls within the Central Division in Fiji. Led by a 15 year old girl, Faith Raduva, this work is girl led in ending period poverty in Fiji.

- **Women and girls in the media based work**

The portable ‘suitcase radio’ technology allows femLINKpacific to reach women across the nation and discuss important issues that affect them. Whether it be a local market floor or a women’s group meeting, our widespread broadcasts inspire female decision-makers. Much of the work of the suitcase radio has been bridging the intergenerational gap that exists – with young women learning the technology and older women finding their voice, often after years of being told to be silent. Through this program, we demonstrate that all women can improve their media literacy and utilize these tools and technologies to access and produce news and information. Young Women take on the lead role in designing community media based programmes as they document rural women’s stories through the suitcase radio and broadcast this via a community radio frequency with the aim of influencing a positive change.

Subsequently, FemTALK 89FM is a vibrant, women-led, community radio network that promotes femLINKpacific’s feminist values and inclusion. We facilitate a multiracial, rural community media grid that remains a key tool in securing commitments to women’s rights in the Pacific. FemTALK89FM broadcasts on a 24 hour basis in Suva, Fiji and a 5 hour period in Labasa, Fiji

- **Child -centered Disaster Risk Reduction work**

Girls have the opportunity to participate in CDRR based work that takes on a child-centred approach. Save the Children Fiji (SCF) implemented this project in informal settlements around Fiji in the hopes of having children take on an active role in decision making when it came to DRR. This work allows for community based DRR plans to be child friendly and more so, responsive to the needs of girls.

- **Kids Link Fiji**

A Child-led initiative with the SCF. Members take part in national consultations where one member is a representative to the NCCC.

Lessons Learnt:

- The NCCC needs to be revived with a girl child on the committee. Previous sittings have had a boy child representative.
- Ministry of Education to integrate social issues into the curriculum to address violence against women and girls.
- School professionals to undergo gender sensitization training as per the National Development Plan (2017, pp.36)

Harmonize all girl-centred work carried out by CSOs to ensure solidarity in all advocacy work referring to girls' human rights.

III. Challenges and structural barriers

1. **What kind of gender and age specific barriers are affecting girls' and young women's participation/activism in your national context? Please indicate concrete examples of direct and indirect as well as formal and informal factors posing threats and risks for girls and young women engaging in the public space (examples of these can include stereotyping based on gender and age, restrictions on freedom of expression, speech, assembly, liberty, etc., legal restrictions to capacity to provide legal consent, legal age of marriage, etc.)**

For years, gender inequalities rooted in traditional and religious structures continue to impede young women and girls' progress in Fiji. Fueled by patriarchy, young women and girls' rights have not been fully achieved as girls continue to call for a seat on decision making spaces, safer spaces and access to quality education to name a few priorities.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) 2020 Sexual Violence against Women and Girls Rape Case Analysis highlights that the average percentage of the victims/survivors of sexual violence under the age of 17 years is 63% for the period between the years 2016-2020.

Consequently, young women and girls face multiple layers of discrimination because of their gender, age, race, religion, socio-economic background, geographical location and disability. They are generally less valued, their voices are unheard, they have more restrictions on their freedom and movement and have limited opportunities to choose their paths in life. Because they are young and female, they are often ignored, neglected and treated as free labor

Specifically, safety and security is a key barrier in young women and girls activism. Online platforms have become the breeding ground for sexual harassment as young women and girls receive rape and sexual assault threats that deter their activism. There have been instances where young women and girls are unable to take part in leadership programmes due to the negative perception of women's movement by family members.

Moreover, there have been little opportunities for young women and girls living in the most remote places to meaningfully participate in decision making spaces. The Fijian government should provide safe and healthy avenues where these vulnerable groups can be heard that will in turn make a positive change in their communities.

2. **Are there any particular groups of girls and young women who are most affected by these barriers and why? What roles your organization and other NGOs have played to address these barriers?**

FYWF has seen rural young women unable to participate due to lack of family support and/or the gender roles of young women responsible for domestic duties such as looking after siblings and providing care work. The emphasis on gender equality and for girls and boys to be treated equally at all levels is continuously being pushed for. NGO's are ensuring equal and inclusive participation of diverse young women and girls at all their platforms. Thus taking forward their voices at national spaces. Existing frameworks lacks gender inclusive language and representation of gender non-conforming persons.

3. **What issues or gaps do arise with regard to existing frameworks (i.e. legislation, policies, plans, and/or programs) relevant to girls' and young women's civic space and activism? Are there any specific laws, policies and practices that place obstacles to their participation, activism or collective action? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?**

With COVID-19 halting all face to face meetings, engagements and gatherings this has curtailed a lot of in person meetings especially for initiatives such as the National Action Plan consultations. Additionally with schools being delivered online, this has further created a gap for young girls in engaging in activism and being able to fully participate in civic space.

The NCCC has been defunct in its operations for several years now, as mentioned above, and thus there is no coordinating body overseeing affairs of children's issues including that of the girl child. The role and function of the NCCC needs to be revived.

4. **Are there particular threats girl and young women activists in your country or region experience in relation to their work? In particular, in terms of:**
- i. being prosecuted and punished for their activism**

Freedom of expression and opinion at various platforms sometimes cannot be practiced. For example female leaders continue to be stereotyped about their bodies, clothes, marital status etc. Both national and social media further becomes irresponsible and adds on the negativity. Young women and women leaders are facing more online harassment and threats if they speak out against social injustice.

- ii. facing intimidations, harassments, and attacks (direct or indirect, online or offline, sexual or physical)**

On Access to Justice, a FWRM research reveals that there is a need for justice services to be decentralized to rural areas as 50% of Fiji's population lives in rural areas. For those who do get to access services there is an average cost of \$50 FJD to be able to get this. This cost is the average amount a woman living in urban areas needs to survive for a week. For young women and girls, these statistics may double as girls do not have an income while young women are most likely to be students and may have restricted access to resources to be able to access such services.

iii. lacking access to justice and reparations for violations of their rights

5. Are there particular concerns that may arise with respect to girls' and young women's access to technology and other infrastructures, and the corresponding divide? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?

- The continuous online harassment and unsafe spaces created by threats.
- Gender parity of young women and girls who are unable to access technology in order to access timely information. This further impedes young women and girls' activism.
- For young women and girls with disabilities there is still a need to make information / infrastructure friendly to their specific needs. In turn these groups are further left behind in advocacy efforts.

6. What are the challenges, in your national/regional context, in the recognition and protection of girls as human rights defenders? What negative trends undermine their evolving capacities and interests at the family, community, and State levels? How do NGOs (including your organization) promote and work with girl human rights defenders?

Due to the negative perception of women's movement some girls and young women are unable to take part in leadership programmes and/or some are subjected to ridicule when they identify as feminists. Despite this, FWRM is one NGO that continues to have leadership programme specifically for young women and girls in the hopes of sustaining ongoing feminist based advocacy.

On the note of protecting girls HRDs, FWRM's GIRLS Program ensures to work within child safeguarding and child protection frameworks. All girl centred or led advocacy is done with full parent or carer consent and done in a childsafe manner within child protective lenses.

For young women, their activism is usually led by them. In a few instances, young women have been subjected to online sexual abuse and rape threats. FWRM usually handles this type of situation with the frameworks of local law while at the sametime taking on a proactive approach in sifting through advocacy based work through in house mock sessions. Such sessions allow for FWRM staff and young women to anticipate reception of their advocacy work and how to best handle such situations. If things go out of hand the Fiji Police is the organisation next liaises with.

7. What are the main challenges in ensuring the following?

i. Safe space for engagement

The FWRM programme ensures safe space for diverse young women and girls and there has never been any challenges so far. The organisation have :

- Young women and Girls Programme Toolkits that outlines safe practices when engaging with these groups.
- Deaf girls engagement strategy that supplements the Girls Programme Toolkit as now the organisation works with Deaf Girls.
- Mandatory :

- Sexual Harassment Policy that all staff sign onto guides all staff when working with these groups;
- Child Protection Policy: Every staff signs this and undergo CP training before engaging with girl children who are direct or indirect beneficiaries.
- All young women joining a leadership program is made fully aware of the above policies and sign onto it
- All young women and girls sign onto commitment sheets that have a clause on making the space in which they engage free of bullying or harassment of any sort.

ii. Inclusion of diverse groups of girls and young women and those from marginalized communities

Sometimes intersectionalities are not taken into consideration for example persons with disability, LGBTQI communities, young single mothers, psychiatric survivors etc.

iii. Access to resources, infrastructures, networks and platforms

Access to infrastructure and technology continues to be a challenge for young women and girls. As the costs of data may outweigh costs of putting food on the table, most young women and girls' families would prioritise the latter. For most in rural and maritime communities these are luxuries or not an option as ICTs with its network connectivity do not reach most of these places.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic young women and girls have been further left behind in accessing these. These have left some young women and girls unable to fully participate in virtual engagement whether it be full school or extra-curricular.

iv. Collaborative programs with different stakeholders

On the note of collaborating with stakeholders, FWRM continues to engage with stakeholders with a very strong feminist and rights based approach principles. However, collaboration with some stakeholders can be challenging when values and principles do not align. Regardless, the organisation continues to engage with stakeholders in the hopes of influencing formal and informal structures that have a direct impact on young women and girls' lives.

IV. Emerging issues

1. Are there new emerging issues related to girls' and young women's engagement at community, national and international levels?

As COVID-19 continues to sweep across the globe, young women and girls face issues of multiple forms of violence, lack of leadership representation at all levels, unequal job opportunities, a major issue during the pandemic was access to technology for education. Some

girls and young women do not have the economic stability and/or access to electricity to be able to study with a laptop.

Added to this the gender roles are further a barrier whereby young women and girls are expected to prioritize care work.

2. **What are the impacts of digital advancements and major shifts in digital activism on girls' and young women's engagement/participation?**

It has emphasised and made it more visible. Digital activism has further provided national issues to reach at regional and global platforms.

3. **What are the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls' and young women's activism/participation?**

It has been limited to virtual participation and with the feedback of FWRM's leadership programme young women feel face-to-face sessions would have been more effective. As such the multiple ongoing sessions further adds on to mental exhaustion as they have to manage virtual school work as well. Some young women are unable to participate at all due to unstable internet and/or lack of technology.

For girls, engagement with hearing girls is ongoing via virtual platforms. The challenge lies with girls from informal settlements who do not have access to online resources. This challenge is double layered with Deaf girls who are part of FWRM's leadership programmes who prefer face to face interaction and live in rural and maritime areas. Currently, the programme is looking at sending our feminist learning workbooks for girls to continue their engagement with the programme.

4. **Please provide information on other recent national, regional and global developments and concerns with respect to girls' and young women's movements.**

The 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women is one of the key regional events that takes place every 4 years which is followed by the **7th Pacific Women's Ministers Meeting**. This space is quite crucial in terms of stakeholders along with the Member State Governments committing to the ongoing development of raising girls and young women's issues. One such critical commitment of our regional governments and development partners is committing to the *Intergenerational dialogue and marginalised groups dialogue and perspectives*:

Ensure that national plans, policies and legislation are developed through participatory processes – with a life cycle approach – that include the perspectives of all marginalised groups in the community, including women and youth.

V. Recommendations/ the way forward

1. **What concrete measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action at all levels?**

Ensuring effective and balanced diverse representation for example persons with disability, LGBTQI communities, young single mothers, psychiatric survivors etc should be able to safely and meaningfully participate at all levels

2. What concrete measures should be adopted to address systemic gender-based/age-based discrimination and challenges affecting girls' and young women's engagement in the public and political life?

Same answer as above.

Ensure their voices are fully heard and opinions and recommendations seriously taken into consideration. For example if girls and young women are calling for safe and better access to menstrual hygiene products into school, it is being actioned. The current budget is an excellent example of ensuring this need is met however proper monitoring mechanisms should be put in place to ensure sustainability and success of government's commitment

3. What concrete measures should be introduced to improve solidarity, support, collaborations towards creating an enabling environment for girls' and young women's engagement in the political and public life?

Intergenerational learning exchange and support is an excellent tool to strengthen solidarity as well as ensuring intersectional representation

4. What particular roles should NGOs and feminist movements play towards the promotion and protection of girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action?

Continue to engage with girls and young women who need to be at the forefront of their issues. They are the experts of their own challenges thus ensuring they are heard and supported. There should be no discrimination at any level ensuring safe and inclusive platform for participation