



**PACIFIC ISLANDS
FORUM SECRETARIAT**



CONCEPT NOTE
REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION FORUM
SUVA, FIJI
25 – 27 MARCH 2019

Background

1. Engaging Non-State Actors (NSAs) is an important part of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat's (PIFS) approach to realise the vision of Pacific Island Forum Leaders as articulated in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (FPR). Since the implementation of the FPR in 2015, civil society organizations have pro-actively engaged in policy consultations via the SSCR process and through .
2. Through a series of high-level dialogues, CSOs meet with Forum Economic Ministers and Forum Leaders at their annual meetings to consult further on the priorities of the region. This highlights the importance of inclusive policy making as articulated under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.
3. The Forum Secretariat's engagement with NSAs focuses on:
 - facilitating constructive engagement of NSAs around regional policy development and implementation;
 - building capacity of non- state actors to better inform regional policy with technical policy skills training including evidence-based approaches and tracking monitoring implementation of regional policies.
 - building partnerships to effectively inform, shape, influence and challenge policy advice.
4. Under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), continued ¹funding support to NSA programming within PIFS has enabled opportunities to further strengthen and institutionalize CSOs (including women's groups) to participate meaningfully in regional policy processes and dialogues.
5. The annual convening of regional Civil Society Organization Forum is the corner stone of the PIFS NSA Programme. The CSO Forum aims to provide a space for Civil Society Organizations from across the region to convene, discuss specific policy issues facing the region, and provide governments and policy makers with evidence-based, collective positions on regional level policy.

¹ Under the RAO TECCBUF and Pacific Partnership in Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (PPEVAWG)

Aims and expected outcomes of the regional CSO Forum

6. The aims of the regional CSO Forum will be to:

- Provide representatives of civil society from across the region to meet and explore opportunities around engaging with governments, CROP and development partners on avenues for partnerships to deliver on current Leaders' priorities.
- explore opportunities and entry points for partnerships in the implementation and monitoring of regional priorities and frameworks.
- Provide a forum for civil society to explore options to develop collective positions on regional policy priorities including status of implementation of gender equality commitments in their engagement with Forum Economic Ministers in May 2019, and Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in August 2019.
- Determine prospective CSO representation at the Forum Economic Ministers and Pacific Leaders Meetings in 2019.

The expected outcomes of the regional CSO Forum are:

- Enhanced mutual understanding amongst civil society groups in relation to the paradigm between national and regional level advocacy strategies and how to draw relevant linkages between national and regional priorities/issues
- Collective advice and positions around regional policy priorities presented to Economic Ministers and Forum Leaders
- Collective strategies for enhancing partnerships with Governments, regional organizations, CROP and development partners around tracking and monitoring of leader's priorities
- Increased understanding of gender equality and EVAWG commitments at national and regional level.
- Relationship and network development amongst civil society groups.

Format of the Regional CSO Forum 2020

7. The event will encourage open and respectful discussions around issues of regional importance and where CSOs can potentially add value in further informing, shaping and influencing the regional policy agenda. Participants will elect their representatives to advocate their collective policy positions and perspectives at the dialogue with Forum Economic Ministers and Forum Leaders at their annual meeting in 2020. The regional CSO Forum will culminate with a debriefing session and advocacy strategy development for sustained engagement around identified policy issues.

8. The following table presents the series of events prior to and post regional CSO Forum:

i. National policy dialogue and consultations	Each Forum Island Country January – March
ii. Gender Toolkit Workshop and NSA Capacity Building	Suva, Fiji 17- 28 February
iii. Regional CSO Forum – Preparatory meeting for FEMM and Forum Leaders	25 -27 March

iv. CSO Dialogue with Forum Economic Ministers	Suva, Fiji (date tba) July
v. CSO Engagement with Forum Leaders	Vanuatu 3 – 7 August

9. The agenda setting process for the CSO Forum will be facilitated via (i) call for applications for participation, (ii) online via *Solevaka* platform. The Solevaka platform is a Pacific SDGs partnership platform for virtual communities to engage in issues of interest. The purpose is to create a community of Pacific CSOs to actively participate in setting the regional CSO agenda as well as reach out beyond CSOs that would not be able to make it Suva for the CSO Forum. The outcome will inform key issues that will be discussed at the CSO Forum and CSOs policy positions to be presented to Forum Economic Ministers and Pacific Island Forum Leaders in 2020.
10. Prior to the CSO Forum, participants will be supported to consult broadly at the national level to ensure the issues that are proposed for the CSO Forum is endorsed at country level and align to the regional agenda and Leaders priorities overall. This is to ensure the engagement with FEMM, and Forum Leaders remains relevant and meaningful.
11. Funding support of up to F\$4000 for national policy consultations is available under the PIFS NSA Support unit which aim to strengthen the consultation of CSOs at the national level. National CSOs will be encouraged to provide a consolidated application through their national umbrella NGOs to access this support.
12. A consultant will be recruited to design and facilitate the regional CSO Forum. An open single stage tender will be used for the recruitment of the consultant.
13. A draft program will be developed in consultation with civil society representatives and consideration of the input by CSOs through the *Solevaka* platform. To do this PIFS will work closely with CSOs and CSO Forum Facilitator to moderate the input of CSOs.

Participation

14. The Regional CSO Forum will include *up to* 50 CSOs with the following representation:
 - 2 CSO Representatives from each PACP Member Countries (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.)
 - Non PAPCP member countries, Australia, New Zealand, French Polynesia and New Caledonia based CSOs can apply as a self-funded participant.
 - 10 CSO Representatives from regionally focused CSOs/INGOs
 - CSOs can nominate up to 4 technical experts to assist in development of their policy/position statement.
15. A call for applications to participate in the Regional CSO Forum will be distributed widely amongst civil society networks (including the CSO reps who participated at the PIFS organized regional policy consultations series undertaken over the period January-February 2020). **The Application Form is annexed (1).**

16. A competitive process will be used to select the participants based on their organizations:

- Understanding of regional level issues and how these align to national level interests;
- Capacity to coordinate and collaborate with their governments and development partners in the implementation and tracking of key regional priorities.
- Expertise in gender related and EVAWG policy work.
- Ability to truly represent a constituent group that is impacted by / or interested in regional policy; and
- Demonstrated commitment to maximize the opportunity to participate in this event for the benefit of the region / Pacific peoples

17. A selection panel comprising members of the PIFS Internal NSA Working Group and an external observer including a gender expert will undertake the selection of participants. Selection will be based around the merits of their application with a view to ensuring the composition of the participants is truly representative of the country's perspective, as well as including regional organizations that focus on thematic issues. The panel will also ensure gender balance and technical expertise amongst participants.

ENDS.