



## Climate Justice at the Heart of Women's Health:

Community-led action on climate, gender equality and health in the Pacific

The Pacific is experiencing accelerating climate impacts, entrenched gender inequities, and some of the world's fastest rising burdens of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, stroke and cancer.

These pressures converge in ways that uniquely endanger Pacific women, who are more exposed to heat, pollution, and environmental hazards through their roles in cooking, caregiving, agriculture, and water collection. **Women are also 14% more likely to die in climate related disasters and make up 80% of those displaced<sup>1</sup>**, while climate shocks continue to push girls out of school and limit women's economic participation — reinforcing cycles of inequality and weakening community resilience.

These intersecting challenges reflect broader structural issues identified across the region: under resourced health systems, limited access to prevention and primary health care, and gender norms that restrict women's decision making power. Addressing them requires long term, locally led, gender transformative approaches — a priority consistently articulated by Pacific governments and echoed in Australia's development and foreign policy consultations.

**Community-led, gender-responsive approaches, including those led by Indigenous women and shaped through inclusive, participatory processes, are not only possible — they are already underway and ready to be scaled across the region.**

**Climate change is not  
gender neutral.**

**Women are:**

14%

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80%

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## A moment for governments and funders to scale what works

Pacific nations are on the frontlines of the climate emergency and are leading global efforts to highlight the human cost of climate change — including its profound impacts on women's equality, health, and economic participation.

Development partners, including Australia, have a unique opportunity to partner with Pacific nations and First Nations women leaders to advance solutions that align with Pacific-defined priorities, invest in local capacity and leadership, and support long-term systems strengthening.

Governments, regional bodies, and international funders can expand and invest in scaling existing initiatives that:

- integrate climate adaptation with NCD prevention and primary health care strengthening,
- centre women's health, leadership, and decision making,
- strengthen community driven models that reflect local knowledge and priorities, and
- build long term resilience across health, food, and social systems.

Scaling these initiatives would accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, universal health coverage, gender equality, and climate resilience — all essential not only for the Pacific's future stability and prosperity, but for the security and wellbeing of the broader region.

## Existing multisectoral solutions ready to expand at scale

Across the Pacific, **The George Institute for Global Health** is part of blended, practical projects partnering with communities, health systems, and regional institutions to develop solutions that are:

- **community-led,**
- **gender-responsive,**
- **evidence based — including Indigenous and place-based knowledge, and**
- **designed for long term climate and health resilience.**

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These existing projects demonstrate Pacific driven innovation that can be scaled to expand further health services and geographic areas.

### RESist NCD: Strengthening community based NCD care

RESist NCD works with Pacific communities to redesign how hypertension and type-2 diabetes prevention and care are delivered — shifting from hospital centric models to **community anchored, culturally grounded approaches informed by Indigenous knowledges and local models of care**. For Pacific women, who often act as caregivers and health decision makers, RESist NCD provides tools and support that directly improve household and community resilience.

### SHECAN: Elevating women's leadership in climate and health

SHECAN (The Strengthening Health Equity Climate Action Network) is a network ready to spring into action. It places **women's leadership at the centre of climate health solutions**. In Pacific communities. The groundwork for SHECAN demonstrates that when Pacific women lead, climate and health policies become more equitable, more effective, and more sustainable.

### NIHR Global Health Research Centre for NCDs and Environmental Change

This project — co-led by The George Institute for Global Health — is one of the few global research initiatives explicitly focused on the intersection of climate, environment, and NCDs. It includes community based studies on how extreme heat affects hypertension and pregnancy outcomes, research on the health impacts of saltwater intrusion and changing food systems, and pilots that test climate resilient models of primary care delivery in remote island settings.

For more information on projects mentioned above, please contact:

**RESist-NCD:** Anna Palagyi, Program Lead, Ageing and Health Systems [apalagyi@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:apalagyi@georgeinstitute.org.au) or Keziah Bennett-Brook, Program Director, Guunu-maana (Heal), [kbennett-brook@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:kbennett-brook@georgeinstitute.org.au)

**SHECAN or NIHR Global Health Research Centre for NCDs and Environmental Change:** Laura Downey, Program Lead, Universal Health Coverage, Health Systems Science [ldowney@georgeinstitute.org](mailto:ldowney@georgeinstitute.org)

**We will be planning further events in the leadup to COP31 to keep women's health on the climate agenda.**

To learn more or become part of these discussions, please contact Veronica Le Nevez, Co-Director of Impact and Engagement, [vlenevez@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:vlenevez@georgeinstitute.org.au)

## COP 31 – a moment for action on climate, gender and health

With the Pre-COP meeting to be hosted in **Fiji** in October, there is a unique opportunity to highlight the human impacts of the climate emergency in the Pacific to motivate increased leadership, action and funding.

Now is the time to build **long term initiatives with the funding and longevity needed to strengthen systems, build local capacity, and support Pacific defined development goals**.

Any global response emerging from the Pacific must recognise the leadership of First Nations peoples, whose stewardship of land and ocean has sustained resilience for generations and will be central to equitable climate and health action. Global health was a foundation of global prosperity and security in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Now, we need to meet today's challenges with renewed vigour and action.



**Investing in women's health — and scaling community led solutions already underway — is a strategic investment in long term Pacific-wide resilience.**

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