

Towards An Inclusive Energy Resilient Blue Pacific



Energy Resources
U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE



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Background

Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy can greatly improve quality of life for all. However, there is a considerable gap in the benefits from energy resources across the 22 Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs). The Pacific Islands region is facing a unique and challenging situation with respect to energy security and resilience. Demographics vary widely between countries, but often feature small, isolated population centres. Markets are very thin, difficult to serve, and without significant economies of scale. Across the PICTs, 36% of the population is without access to electricity, but access varies widely, from 47% to 100% at the national level. Half of the population in the Pacific are still using fuels such as biomass and kerosene for cooking which are detrimental to their health and the environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a key factor in slowing progress toward energy access in the region in the last 2 years. At the current rate of progress, 20 % of the population will remain without electricity by 2030 despite the fact that most PICTs have made commitments to achieve 100% energy access by 2030. Addressing these gaps has become more crucial, especially since the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 7 (ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all) recognizes that energy is central to progress in all areas of development.

While energy is critical to improve quality of life, the access to energy is not equal. This is a consequence of the deeply embedded structural conditions in the Pacific region determined by gender, age, disability, religion, language, kastom and tradition to name a few.

While women and girls carry the higher share of household work requiring use of energy, their access to energy is limited because of these structural conditions. In this context, gender-blind approaches can further institutionalise and perpetuate existing inequalities. There is also inequality in the access of income generation, participation in the labour force and leadership in the energy sector. Women continue to face legal discrimination when trying to join the labour force as employees or entrepreneurs. In the informal sector where a large proportion of women engaged in, they are subject to precarious work condition where most work is low-paid, part-time and unregulated. The labour rights are unprotected, and job security is vulnerable to economic volatility. Limited childcare and access to capital and other financial resources further impedes women's participation.

Pacific Energy Ministers are working towards a carbon-neutral Pacific by 2050 so ensuring clean, sustainable and renewable energy actions for all is a critical priority now and into the future.



Meanwhile women are primary users and key actors in clean energy development. Women can be key agents of change, and their participation in energy-related labour force and leadership can create a more gender-balanced energy sector. This will accelerate socio-economic development and a faster transition towards a cleaner future. As clean energy has become a growth sector, to avoid socially excluded groups to lose out from engaging with these energy projects

This regional strategy reinforces the regional commitment to the Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality. The platform offers targets and indicators on women's rights and gender equality and is a regional counterpart to the global commitment on sustainable development through empowering women.

Why the Pacific Women in Energy Conference?

The Pacific Women in Energy Conference provides for a timely opportunity to reactivate the Pacific Energy and Gender (PEG) Network, a means of sharing of lessons and best practices in harnessing the economic and gender equality benefits that renewable energy presents. This reinvigoration of PEG Network builds on the earlier phase, which mission was to uphold the mandate of regional policy and programmatic framework on gender and sustainable development to ensure active, meaningful, and inclusive participation of all members of Pacific society particularly women in the planning and development of clean energy sector.

The Conference is also an impetus to launch PEG Network Strategic Gender Action Plan (PEGSAP) which offers guideline for gender mainstreaming in the energy sector across the Pacific. Integral to the launch of PGSAP is the setting up of a Regional Steering Committee, a coordination mechanism at the regional level to provide oversight of the delivery of PGSAP at country level and ensure relevant linkages and complementarity with external initiatives and stakeholders.

The discussions and dialogue during the conference will:

- > Enhance the generation of knowledge to inform policies and decision-making, and support advocacy for gender equality in the clean energy sector
- > Mainstream gender across all legislation, policies, programmes, and services delivered by government, CROP agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs)
- > Develop and strengthen effective partnerships between governments, institutions, CSOs, the private sector, so that women and men of all ages across all levels of society have equal access to, as well as benefits from, energy resources flow, and economic opportunities.



Outputs of the Pacific Women in Energy Conference 2022

- > Officially launch PGSAP
- > List of PGSAP priority activities to be implemented in the 1-3 years
- > Identify the resources (personnel and funding) needed to fully implement PGSAP, including beyond the next three years
- > Establish a PGSAP Regional Steering Committee (RSC) and identify RSC members
- > Conference report

