



Unit 19, Level 1, Garden City, Raiwai

Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade RG Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent Barton
ACT 0221
Australia

13th September 2023

Dear DFAT Gender Branch,

As Executive Director of Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji (RFHAF), I am pleased to make a submission to inform consultation on the DFAT International Gender Equality Strategy.

RFHAF is a strong advocate for Gender Equality and sexual and reproductive rights in Fiji. We are a key government and non-government partners and trusted provider of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services across the country, reaching 11,774 as of 31st August this year.

We appreciate DFAT's ongoing support of our work and your focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the region and welcome this opportunity to make a submission.

As a Member Association of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, we support the key recommendations made by IPPF in their submission to DFAT:

1. Australia should affirm its position as a strong leader and champion of sexual and reproductive health and rights as integral to the achievement of gender equality.

- *Advance sexual and reproductive health and rights within the International Gender Equality strategy, recognising it as fundamental to the achievement of Universal Health Coverage.*
- *Boldly support the adoption of policy and legislative frameworks to advance, promote, and protect sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.*
- *Ensure DFAT Development Partnership Plans include gender equality objectives and outcomes, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.*

2. Australia should adopt a gender-transformative, decolonising approach across all programming

- *Prioritise genuine partnerships with local civil society, feminist organisations and sexual and reproductive health providers to inform gender responsive programming.*



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- [Strengthen the integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights within climate adaptation, disaster resilience building and emergency response programming.](#)
- [Ensure programming to address sexual and gender- based violence takes a rights-based approach and includes access to sexual and reproductive health services.](#)

[3. Australia should increase investment in targeted tools and interventions to advance sexual and reproductive rights health and rights and drive gender equality.](#)

- [Support a shift in gender norms and improve the sexual and reproductive health outcomes for young people through the acceleration of Comprehensive Sexuality Education \(CSE\).](#)
- [Increase investment in digital health interventions to support gender inclusive access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.](#)

Based on our experience and representing local civil society in Fiji, we would also like to highlight the following key points for consideration when developing the new International Gender Equality Strategy:

- There is a need to better understand the impact of digitalization on gender norms in Fiji (for example, How can digital platforms be more effectively used to access SRHR information and services? How are digital tools impacting on parenting?)
- We need a stronger focus on cervical cancer prevention and screening. This should include:
 - research on the impact of HPV injections for girls age 13yrs on reducing the risk of cervical cancer.
 - greater access to smear tests for those in hard to reach areas.
 - increased capacity in pathology at the national level (i.e. an additional pathologist at the national level and training in Thin prep for midwifery students)
- Improving access to quality SRH services through mobile services in hard to reach areas where women and marginalised groups are particularly disadvantaged
- Capacity building for trainers to ensure quality delivery of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and awareness raising to help shift gender norms and achieve behaviour change.

RFHAF thanks DFAT for the continues support over the years and looks forward to strengthen our relationship as we continue to serve our people.

Yours faithfully

Frederick Sukhu
Executive Director