

**“Our Voices, our Communities, our Rights: Advancing
Human Rights related to Sexual Orientation, Gender
Identity & Expression in the Pacific”**

Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference

Nuku’alofa, Tonga

11-14 May 2015



**Co-organized by the Pacific Sexual Diversity Network (PSDN),
Diverse Voices for Action and Equality (DIVA) and ARC
International (ARC)**

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Executive Summary

The Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference “Our Voices, our Communities, our Rights: Advancing Human Rights related to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression in the Pacific” was held in Nuku’alofa, Tonga from 11-14 May 2015. It was organized by a steering committee consisting of the Pacific Sexual Diversity Network (PSDN), Diverse Voices for Action and Equality (DIVA), and ARC International (ARC). The host organization, the Tonga Leiti Association (TLA) provided logistical support and warm hospitality for all delegates.

The conference was attended by 96 people (including steering committee), with 73 participants from 12 different Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). The Pacific representation broke down as follows: 7 (Samoa), 1 (American Samoa), 5 (Vanuatu), 11 (Tonga), 4 (Cook Islands), 26 (Fiji), 8 (Papua New Guinea), 2 (Tuvalu), 1 (Kiribati), and 1 (Palau), 5 (Australia), and 2 (New Zealand). In addition, there was a steering committee member/trainer from Canada, a resource person from St. Lucia, a representative from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a representative from the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), a representative (and spouse) from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a representative from the United States Embassy, and a team of 10 volunteers.

The key objectives of the conference were to:

- Connect people and LGBTQI organised groups across the Pacific region to share ideas, information, strategies and programmes to affirm the dignity, equality and security of LGBTI communities
- Educate about international human rights law, recent international developments and agreed principles (e.g. the Yogyakarta Principles), and encourage participants to use these to review the human rights situation in their countries, to better engage with the UPR and UN Special Procedures, and advocate nationally and as a regional group
- Promote collaboration to build genuine and accountable partnerships and networks for advocacy and social action across the region, learning from successes and challenges, and responding to violations against people because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Promote and enable access to sharing and dissemination of information, ideas, experiences and resources (including human resources) amongst LGBTQI organisations throughout the region
- Improve understanding and strengthen collaborations amongst key stakeholders about health and human rights issues.

The Conference was made up of several panel presentations, discussions and plenaries including sessions on human rights mechanisms, health, religion, and media. Delegates also identified regional and thematic priorities for improving the human rights for LGBTQI communities in Pacific Island Countries and Territories. Rapporteur/evaluator, Dr. Tulia Thompson, documented outcomes of the discussions and conducted a written evaluation with a majority of those in attendance. Some of the key priorities that emerged included:

- **Access to health services** is a priority for LGBTI persons, especially for those in remote communities. Health must be considered in the broader

context of climate change and limits on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Condoms and HIV testing/counselling need to be accessible for key populations of MSM, transgender women, and sex workers. Health professionals also require sensitivity training to provide adequate services to the LGBTI communities.

- **Young LGBT people** face extensive bullying and even assault during secondary school in the region, contributing to young people leaving school early. Delegates identified the development of school curriculum as a priority area.
- **Barriers to security** were identified in many discussions. This included accessing police in cases of domestic violence by partners/family members, as well as harassment and abuse of power by police, which included requests for sex acts in order to secure assistance.
- **Movement building** across the region needs to continue through future in-person convenings, trainings on human rights and strengthening of Pacific networks like PSDN. The movement needs stronger input and participation from lesbians, bisexual women and trans-masculine persons, perhaps through separate, but mutually reinforcing convenings.
- **Research** specific to Pacific LGBTQI populations remains a challenge, and is a gap area. Lumping data from “Asia-Pacific”, or even the “Pacific” (including Australia and New Zealand) does not give an accurate picture of the region.



Introduction: Objectives, Background and Methodology

Goal and Objectives

The **long-term goal** of the Pacific LGBTIQ Human Rights Conference was to:

“Increase acceptance for diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and expression in the Pacific through forward-looking inclusive law reforms removing punitive laws and increase political and community advocacy to reduce institutional and social stigma and discrimination against Pacific Islanders of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities; LGBTQI in particular”

This goal was to be achieved through five primary objectives:

1. Connect people and LGBTQI organised groups across the Pacific region to share ideas, information, strategies and programmes to affirm the dignity, equality and security of LGBTI communities and individuals
2. Educate and advocate about international human rights law, recent international developments and agreed principles (e.g. the Yogyakarta Principles), to enhance respect for persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Participants will be encouraged to use the Principles to review the human rights situation in their countries, to better engage with the UPR and UN Special Procedures, and in turn advocate nationally and as a Pacific regional group on the basis of their analysis.
3. Promote collaboration to build genuine and accountable partnerships and networks for advocacy and social action across the Pacific region, learning from human rights successes and challenges, and responding to violations against people because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

4. Promote and enable access to sharing and dissemination of information, ideas, experiences and resources (including human resources) amongst LGBTQI organisations throughout the Pacific region;
5. Improve understanding and strengthen collaborations amongst key stakeholders about health and human rights issues.

Background

The Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference was in Nuku'alofa, Tonga from the 11-14 May 2015. Tonga was chosen as the host for this inaugural conference because of the opportunity it provides to apply pressure for law reform, including decriminalization of consensual adult same sex.

Steering Committee Members and key facilitators for the Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference were: Joey Joleen Siosaya Mataele (PSDN and TLA); Ken Moala (PSDN); Kim Vance (ARC); Isikeli Tumaiwakaya Vulavou (PSDN); Noelene Nabulivou (DIVA); and Shirley Tagi (DIVA).

The Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference was hosted by the Pacific Sexual Diversity Network. The in-country host organization was the Tonga Leiti Association (TLA). Lead facilitator was Noelene Nabulivou from DIVA.

Methodology

The conference brought together regional civil society organizations (CSOs), including LGBTQI organised groups, and human rights defenders working with SOGIE human rights across the Pacific region. The conference used plenaries and small group sessions to educate delegates and about international human rights law and recent international developments and advances.

The Conference included 'open' and 'closed' sessions. Open sessions were open to the public and included media. Closed sessions were only for registered and funded Pacific LGBTQI participants, speakers, facilitators and Steering Committee.

There was a 'Rainbow Market' where regional CSOs had informational displays on their work. Conference packs included background materials such as: The Yogyakarta Principles (2007) and An Activist's Guide to the Yogyakarta Principles (2010), and both the briefing note and report from the 'Pacific Sexual Health & Well-being Shared Agenda' 2015-2019 (SPC 2014). In addition, the OHCHR was conducting video interviews and collecting images to support a Pacific component to their "Free and Equal" campaign.



Conference Summary

Day One

Opening Ceremony and Welcome

Joey Joleen Mataele of the Tongan Leiti Association welcomed the delegates and participants on behalf of PSDN and Reverend Henry Onzem of the Uniting Church gave an opening prayer, after acknowledging 'the harm caused by the church to this community'. Tamani Rarama performed a spoken word poem about the loss of a close friendship on the basis of her gender identity.

The Honourable Salote Lupepau'u Tuita Taione (Tongan Royal family) opened the conference and reflected her time as Patron of the Tongan Leiti and Shirley Tagi led everyone in singing. Isikeli Vulavou expressed gratitude on behalf of the Steering Committee and acknowledged that it was the first conference on LGBTQI and Human Rights to be held in the Pacific. He thanked the princess for her keynote address, and the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Siaosi Sovaleni, for attending the welcoming ceremony. He acknowledged the presence of donors, the Australian High Commissioner, and a representative from UNDP.

Reverend Ali'tasi Aiono Salesa gave a blessing for the food.

Introductions

Noelene Nabulivou asked participants to introduce themselves, explaining that from an intersectional framework we are all holding multiple, relational

identities. She asked people to share something of their personal journey and their hopes for the conference.

Delegates expressed their enthusiasm for building friendship and connections with other LGBTQI activists and CSO workers in the Pacific, to inspire their own work. They expressed their pride in participating in the conference. Some delegates referred to the importance of the participation of marginalized groups within the LGBTQI communities and spoke of the need for visibility of HIV + MSM, people living with disabilities, sex workers, LBT women and youth/young people's voices. Some spoke about their participation in particular sectors that gave them particular insight into LGBTQI lives; as health and CSO workers, as hairdressers, sex workers, entertainers and musicians, as ministers and as sports people. There was acknowledgement of ancestors, and of Pacific leaders.

Learning Contract

Shirley Tagi lead the participants in agreeing to a participatory social contract for the duration of the conference based on agreed shared values, principles and guidelines. Amongst others, these included:

- To participate fully, but to be respectful.
- To bring discussions back into the main group, as everyone was responsible for their own learning and for the learning of the room as a whole.
- That if offering a critique, to offer strategies.
- "No negativity"
- To practice confidentiality, not to photograph people wearing "no media" stickers.

Participative 'Mapping' Exercise/Commemoration.

A Pacific map was co-created in the middle of the room. Delegates took turns standing and acknowledging significant community elders, mentors, community members and advocates, leaders, friends and family who have made an important contribution to their lives or the lives within their community, particularly those who have passed on. Some delegates acknowledged the spirit, suffering and fortitude of invisibilised or marginalized people and groups within our communities. These included HIV+ people, MSM, transgender women who had been murdered globally, people living with disabilities, sex workers, and people still living in fear and isolation.



Plenary Session: Introduction to Human Rights

Kim Vance from ARC International

Delegates were asked to break into small groups and answer the following questions:

- 1) What is a human rights framework?
- 2) How and why is it useful for your work?
- 3) Is it enough?
- 4) What else is needed?

Kim Vance explained that the Yogyakarta Principles came about because of the misperception of states that there was no clear law that applied to the human rights abuses of LGBTQI. The Yogyakarta principles applied a set of existing principles from international human rights law to sexual orientation and gender identity, such as the Right to Life, and the Right to be Free from Torture. This provided a framework for applying international human rights law that governments could be expected to follow and that human rights defenders could use to promote human rights.

Short Catalytic Presentations

The following delegates then short presentations about the four questions posed to all participants.

Gillio Baxter, Vanuatu, talked about starring in the television series, 'Love Patrol' which raises awareness of HIV and related issues.

Bonita Qio, Fiji, Bonita worked for a sex worker-led sex working community and youth network (PRAN) and used a human rights framework to conduct sensitization training with relevant stakeholders, and for accessing legal aid.

(Rhonda) Eroni Dina, Fiji, is a recording artist in Fiji whose songs involve raising awareness of social issues. She suggested collaboration as a way forward, by working with churches and allies within church communities.

Shaniqua Ngaoire, Cook Islands, works in HIV/STI awareness and sexual identity advocacy and represents ILGA. She raised the question of whether individualized notions of human rights were in conflict with community rights, and also asked whether human rights were in conflict with the environment.

Ymania Brown-Gabriel, Australia/ Samoa, discussed the need for human rights defenders to be alert to constitution reviews in their countries. Where SOGIE rights were protected by constitutions, it was important that this right was also translated into legislation and policies.

Day Two

Panel Session: SOGIE invisibility, discrimination, recognition towards freedom and equality – advancing positive changes in law and in practice

The following delegates gave five-minute presentations about the topic.

Parker Frank Hou, PNG, from Friends of Frangipani (a sex worker advocacy network based in PNG) raised awareness about gay, trans and sex worker the wider community by explaining “who I am”. The main issues faced in PNG were rejection of the gay or trans person by their family, bullying in school - leading to incomplete education, and harassment by police.

Phineas Hartson, Australia, from Oceania Rainbow Network discussed the need to think about who we are as gender diverse people. “LGBTQI” as a label often doesn’t fit the Pacific context, and these divisions can have a negative effect on how we support each other. Advocacy cannot be focused on our own specific identity group instead of building connections, and we also needed to think about how to include our wider communities in our struggle, particularly the voices of our families and partners.

Polikalepo Kefu, Tonga, from the Tongan Leiti said that through the “Miss Galaxy” pageant, Leiti are seen as useful community members. He said we need activities that promote awareness of SOGIE within education, along with sexual health.

Fleur Ramsay, Australia, works as a lawyer within a law reform context, but says it is important to consider the limitations of what legal frameworks could achieve. Hate Crime legislation, for example, works on the concept of the perpetrator being unknown to the victim, but in fact most violence comes from within our own communities from known perpetrators. The development of more also laws leads to increased law enforcement, which does not make it safer for LGBTQI or Pacific communities as police tend to target marginalised communities. We need alternatives to law reform.

Zelda Kissun, Fiji, talked about the need to make the disability movement inclusive of LGBTQI, and the challenges she faces to advocate as a lesbian with disability within the disability community. She discussed the importance

of building an alliance between LGBTQI and disability communities. She encouraged LGBTQI to reach out to the disability community.

Jasmine Kaur, Fiji, from Oceanic Pride, discussed how campaigns like IDAHOT was an effective way of saying, “Here we are, we exist”, along with social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and community radio. She also suggested dealing with instances of tokenism by using them as a means to be a voice for change.

Noelene Nabulivou, Fiji, reflected on the importance of considering how resources are moved geopolitically. It is important to consider where we are located in the Pacific. Through her long history of working with Development Alternatives with Women for a New era (DAWN), she uses a feminist social justice framework of interlinkage analysis, and paying attention to how we can complicate the reductive stories produced within UN, legal and NGO frameworks. System change relates to the need to address much broader issues that involve differential access to power and resources; food insecurity, fuel, climate change, human rights, inequality and poverty.

Report Back and Discussion

There was a moderated a discussion on local issues, comparing the realities of the various countries represented. Some of the issues and questions that arose for participants were:

- How can we change things for young people who are bullied and abused within their families?
- How can we create more support systems without recreating the kinds of binaries or limited categories that are perpetuated in broader society?
- There is a need more research, monitoring and evaluation on these topics



Deeply Rooted and Ever-changing? An LGBTQI Dialogue on Pacific Society, Culture and Tradition

The LGBTQI dialogue on culture and tradition occurred in five discussion groups, highlighting many differences and commonalities across the region.

Differences arose between the experiences of Polynesian PICTs (Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands) where there has been a cultural 'third gender' group of *fa'afafine*, *faka Leitis*, or *Aka Vai'ine*, and Melanesian PICTs where gender diversity has not been recognized in the community. In the Polynesian PICTs, crossdressing may be illegal in the penal code but no one is charged. However, even where there is third gender recognition and visibility, there is still the message "you can be a girl, just never get married", and they still face challenges in school, and drop out without receiving their qualifications. There are positive aspects to the way they are seen, particularly when there is a need for community or church work: "Call them, they have all this energy, and are creative", but other issues or questions (of equality or human rights) don't get talked about.

There was commonality across the region about the complete invisibility of lesbians, and how they experience silencing: "everyone knowing but no one talking about it". Likewise MSMs are forced by their families to get married and have children. This experience was common across Melanesian countries. Situations might arise where a man was forced to get married, and so would get married but continue to have sex with other men secretly.

Religion, mostly introduced Christianity, is part of the culture across the Pacific with tightknit communities, where the church is central, and

maintaining good relations among the community members is important. This causes conflict where pastors discussing the sins of homosexuality are juxtaposed with LGBTIQ persons in close families. If the families support these family members, it is often done secretly. There are sometimes non-Christian traditions that also affect LGBTIQ persons, such as the “first-born” ceremony in Palau, where a child is given gifts by community members. If you have a “first-born” ceremony for your child and you are not married, or single, or in a same-sex relationship, you can be fined by the local chief. This is difficult because it is culture and family that provides a supportive setting to build relationships.

In PNG, the Wantok system is a social network and a social welfare system, primarily working through the family structures, and there is very significant honour/shame dynamic within the system. LBGTQI identities are often hidden in the structure to protect the honour of families and communities. Even though there is no legal barrier, gay and transgender people experienced being rejected by family and it is a common situation for a gay or transgender person to run away from home.

Culture is a system of beliefs, practices AND language. Not all delegates come from the same cultures or languages, so it is challenging to reach consensus on strategies to move forward. In PNG, for instance, they do not have words that mean “gay” or “transgender”. Gay and trans community were still trying to figure out what the most appropriate words were. And delegates from Vanuatu noted a public perception that SOGIE issues are a Western phenomenon; people say, “If you want to do that then go overseas”.

Priority Issues arising from discussion

- Communal Rights and/or [vs] Human Rights – more analysis
- Utilization and partnership with faith based organisations
- Attention to land rights as human rights
- Coalition Building with private sector
- Developing a Pacific platform for advocacy on SRHR/MSM/TGs
- More trainings/ programs on human rights across languages
- Strategies for key/focal entry points: Chiefs /Provincial Elders/Leaders.

How culture and tradition challenges/blocks activism

- Language barriers across the region and some hierarchy of language within countries
- Censorship and silencing
- Forcing LGBTQI activists to leave their home culture and tradition

Culture and tradition and how this supports activism

- Specific elements of culture and tradition can support activism (i.e., sense of community, shared rituals, etc.)
- It can foster mutual respect and dialogue/understanding
- Establishes values and principles
- UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) provides some entry points

Strategies used by Pacific Sex and Gender Diverse People

- Creative Platforms
- Pageants/talents/skills/variety shows/entertainment

- Community engagement/service and having high profile members of the community as patrons (such as the Princess in Tonga and the Prime Minister in Samoa)
- Music Composition
- Festivals
- Rallies
- Workshops/Forums
- Social Media campaigning
- Lobbying for legislative changes, policies, etc.

A briefing about the conference protestors

The Hon. Salote Lupepau’u Tuita Taione addressed delegates and explained the protest was minor and there was no security threat from it. She encouraged the delegates to “be brave”, and said that bravery is “one of the things we pride in Tonga”. She said she was working with police to resolve it. It is an internal matter for Tonga, and “we are dealing with it”. The steering committee also indicated that they had been in contact with the police, additional security was being provided, and that many other community members felt the protest was an affront to Tongan values and they did not have broad community support.



Ethics, Spirituality, Religion: Sharing Pacific LGBTQI personal, group and national experiences

The following delegates gave five-minute presentations about the topic.

Lalit Prasad, Cook Islands, talked about how she is Hindu, and values the key concept that society and culture are 'bound together by a tacit agreement to live in harmony'. In Hinduism, Hijra are mentioned in holy books, are blessed, and have the ability to "bless and curse".

Henry Onzem, Australia/ PNG, is a Minister at the Uniting Church of Australia, an affirming Church that accepts gay and transgender people. He talked about how we often ask ourselves "Why Did God Create Me this Way?" He talked about feeling for years as a teenager that God was pissing on him, which he realized came from incorrect homophobic interpretations of scripture. Now he believes "God created you exactly the way you are meant to be." He mentioned queer and liberation theology. He discussed how an aspect of faith must be the opportunity to question theology and teachings.

Aliitasi Salesa, New Zealand /Samoa, articulated that places of worship should be places of joy for all people, and sadly they are not. Pacific people appreciated God long before missionaries came. Aliitasi encouraged people to go back to their villages, family, and churches and tell the church of their accountability and responsibility to grace.

Noelene Nabulivou, Fiji, noted that decision-making about her personal engagement with faith-based organisations is premised by a feminist ethics of identifying where she can experience nurture, nourishment, and being fully herself. Church experiences can harm us. Churches would be improved by intersectionality, being able to be your authentic self, acceptance of SOGIE diversity and safe spaces.

Isikeli Vulavou, Fiji, identified strategies based on working in a faith-based organization that organized a march against gays a few years ago. He left that church after school and became a youth development activist with a progressive church. It's useful to identify champions within churches, and be alert for pastors who are allies.

Following the panel, Ken Moala led participants in a moving hand-washing ritual to build the spiritual bonds between conference participants.



Pacific Island Country Coordinating Mechanism

The Pacific Island Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) manages Global Funds for HIV, TB and Malaria. Funds are dispersed through a regional fund manager. Isikeli Tumaiwakaya Vulavou is the Regional Pacific Island Representative for the Multi-Country Coordinating Mechanism. There are also State Representatives.

Key Populations identified in combating the spread of HIV globally were MSM, Gay men, and Sex Workers. There is an HIV concept note that gets input from the LGBTIQI community in two ways; firstly through making short inputs on key populations, and secondly through the Technical Working Group of NGOs, based in Suva.

CSOs working with key populations of MSM, gay men and Sex Workers can apply directly to UNDP (if they are registered) based on a newly established specific funding stream that has been created for key populations. If not registered they could apply through PSDN or another registered CSO that shares their mandate. There is a call for proposals in July.

Day Three

Human Rights, Sexual Rights and Development: Engaging Regional and International Mechanisms.

This session was part plenary and part interactive. Kim Vance from ARC International started with getting the delegates to play a game where each team had to identify human rights terms and win prizes. She then presented a detailed slide show of entry points for UN engagement. Short Catalytic Presentations (3-5 mins) followed. (Later in the day, Kim invited activists from Palau, Samoa, and PNG, along with representatives from RRRT and OHCHR to attend a specific meeting on the UPR process, as those countries had upcoming reporting deadlines.)

Isikeli Tumaiwakaya Vulavou, Fiji, talked about the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process for his country. The CSOs working on SOGIE put together a shadow report based on a template sent by ARC, who submitted the report on Fiji's behalf. ARC came back and updated them about the discussions and suggested that they lobby other Governments through the High Commissions based in Suva. Many PICT's don't have activists that have contributed at a UN level. It is necessary to build this capacity.

Kenita Placide, St Lucia, is a Caribbean LGBTQI human rights activist who has experience dealing with the UN system. Kenita's group was the only CSO from St Lucia to put in a UPR shadow report about her small island state. The UPR process was an opportunity to speak to other Governments to then raise SOGIE human rights issues with their government, which was intimidating because she had to speak to governments. She encouraged delegates to learn how to be diplomatic, and learn how to speak to other countries to ask them to raise SOGIE issues with your own country.

Miki Wali, House of Chameleon, talked about the fourth World Conference of Women in 1995 which saw the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. It is similar to the Pacific Platform for Action, also in line with Moana Declaration (that Pacific parliamentarians have endorsed around the region). Critical areas are women and policy, education and trade, violence against women, and the girl child. Miki attended the Commission on the Status of Women in New York this year with a position on sexual health developed

through the Pacific Sexual and Reproductive Health (PSRH) Network and encouraged more LBT women to attend this forum.

Noelene Nabulivou, Fiji, discussed Small Island Developing State (SIDS) Platform for Action, noting that it is a useful framework for Pacific Regionalism where our governments have their own set of agreements. The framework is intended to produce game-changing public policies. She also noted that during the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, there was a significant shift to a human rights framework from the more punitive framework that sort to merely manage the global populations. There has been a shift to talking sexual and reproductive rights more holistically. There is a need to reduce inequality in and among Countries. It's important that there are specific indicators about sexual identity and gender within the Sustainable Development Goals framework. It's important to raise the question of "How are we going to pay for sustainable development goals?"

Sulique Waqa, Fiji, gave feedback that there is a need for capacity building for future activists in the Pacific to be able to participate at a UN level. There is a gap between older and younger activists, and there is not enough mentoring or enough conversations taking place. One conversation is not enough to digest how the system works, and how to be effective within the system.



Health and Wellbeing in the Pacific

5 Minute Presentations

Lionel Rogers, Fiji, Youth Champs for Mental Health (YC4MH) found suicide to be a leading cause of death amongst young people. Contrary to popular belief, it is important we talk to young people about suicide and ask them how they are. Mental health survivors are often bullied throughout school. Young transgender people often experience sexual and physical violence.

Jioweli Colati, Fiji, outlined that treatment and ongoing counseling for people who live with HIV in Fiji is available but **not accessible** for a lot of people, particularly members who need to have their treatment shipped to outer islands. Jioweli also talked about the 'self-stigma' that is experienced by people living with HIV in Fiji and PNG and said that amongst LGBTQI community there was still stigma for HIV+ people.

Viva Tatawaqa, Fiji, said that the Pacific SRHR coalition is not just about the text but about what you can do practically about your own sexual and reproductive health, "We need to take control over our bodies. If we are giving it up it's like letting other people take control over your body". It was important to have a holistic view of wellbeing incorporating mental, physical and spiritual aspects to health. It is also important to work with governments to work out how we can push for sexual and reproductive rights. We need to look after each other. It's also important that the strategy is adopted around SRHR, it's not enough to come up with plans and then not implement them.

Saimoni Tuni, Fiji, discussed a way of thinking about health with five pillars: physical, economic, spiritual, social, and mental. Social agents in society help define who we are, shape our boundaries and identity. Our values contribute to our mental health. Our thoughts influence our emotions. Thinking about the different pillars means you can check with yourself to consider what aspect of your life is putting you in danger. Simi talked about the importance of young people being involved and asking questions about mental health, and taking ownership of organisations. "Sharing stories" project has recreated recognition. It's important that people are counselled by people with professional qualifications in counselling.

Obert Samba, Papua New Guinea, works for the Transgender health clinic, and is a member of the Transgender, MSM and female sex worker network. They are the only clinic in PNG that deals with transgender health. They also offer counselling for gender-based violence. Save the Children have policies

that provide the framework for the counsellor's work. The location of clinic is close to trans community.

Group Discussion about Health and Health Rights

Delegates separated into small groups and identified health priorities. We have collated feedback from the five different groups and included key points in the conclusion/recommendations section of this report.

Pacific Rainbow Market



Art, music and movement - There were a number of inspiring dance and musical performances from our talented delegates including "When You're not Strong" and "Stand Up for Love". Some delegates also took part in the Rainbow Chalking Exercise outside on the beautiful grounds.



Social Media - Delegates were encouraged to post on Social media from the messages corner . #2015phrconsogie, #idahot2015@phrc, #pacificfreeandequal

Session on CEDAW (especially in Tongan context)

The Tongan Government is moving towards ratifying CEDAW. The issues arising in Tonga were: article ten about abortion; article 14 rural women; and article 16 marriage and life, which gives women equal right to decide choice of partner. Aggressive opposition in Tonga is saying ratifying CEDAW will lead to implementation of same-sex marriage. Because CEDAW only applies to women it could not be applied in that way. Definition of women is not diverse.

Tonga is very religious society and the Church has issued two statements against CEDAW. This is raising the misconceptions and myths around same-sex marriage and abortion. There is both aggressive challenges and aggressive support for CEDAW. Access to media is a problem, because conservative opposition can pay for radio play.

Teach-In on Interlinkages

It's an ongoing process to figure out how to discuss issues that people claim are complex in ways that are easy to understand. What DAWN and other feminist groups found really helpful was PRAXIS – action reflection cycles. Learn/ reflect/ act/ reflect.

It's also important to share tools for activism, and strengthen our own organisations. One way it is possible to do this is by having different circles of trust. Feminist groups might be the groups you are closest to. Affinity groups are your core. However, you need to build outer networks from your core group to build the movement. Advocacy must also use multiple channels of entry.

In terms of interlinkages – we need a framework like a spiral with grassroots communities at centre, and economies and structural adjustment policies at the outside so that we don't just transform small parts of the state in isolation from the broader global economic causes.

Caucuses

There were meetings of caucus groups of MSM, Women, and a Pacific “LBTIQ” Caucus. These caucus groups were asked to identify regional priorities on SOGI, which were fed in to the conclusion/recommendations section of this report.



Day Four

PSDN

It was decided that the PSDN AGM would be held at a later date, because financial information was not available and timing was tight. Delegates made suggestions about structural and constitutional changes to PSDN, and priorities and goals for PSDN moving forward, most of which are in the conclusion/recommendations section of the report. The current board explained that the new board selected will address these issues once it is in place.

Next Conference

The delegates decided that the **next conference** be held in **2017 in the Cook Islands**. There was a vote of member countries (1 vote per country) for host country based on the self-nominations of Fiji and the Cook Islands. The vote was tied, and Fiji gave their vote to the Cook Islands.

Global Equality Fund

Leah George from the US Mission in Suva discussed the Global Equality Fund. This acts as an emergency fund for organizations based on short term needs e.g. if there is a change of constitution in your country or someone is arrested.

- Your CSO does not need to be registered, but needs to be working in human rights field for 6 months prior.
- Invites community to bring forward issues that require support, they have some funding available.

Way Forward Matrix

Delegates separated into groups and moved around posters, adding their group feedback about forward steps for 4 different aspects of SOGIE rights-based work in the region. We have collated this group work and discuss it in

the conclusions and recommendations. There were different interpretations of the task. Some groups identified key priorities or needs at a national or regional level, whereas others identified 'ways forward' for the Pacific Sexuality Diversity Network. In the conclusion, we have separated out the recommendations for PSDN into a separate category.

Conference Closing

There was a closing circle where each delegate spoke and gave their acknowledgments and farewells. They were asked to identify aspects they found difficult and challenging, the aspects they most liked, changes they wanted to see, and any final reflections. We have collated the responses into themes, and included some examples.

Challenging and Difficult Aspects

Terminology and language

It was clear that much of the language of human rights and the regional and international mechanisms was a lot to take in within the four day conference.

- "We need a glossary of terms",
- "I don't speak much English, and it's hard to understand the terms being used. I tried my best to understand those words"

Protest

While most people felt reassured by the Princess's comments and the actions of the Steering Committee, some aired their feelings about the protestors.

- "I've never seen protesting, it's the first time, I was very sad"
- "So difficult seeing the protestors, later gave a challenge to face it because it will benefit the next to come"

Logistics

Not many noted this, but some delegates did not have their luggage from the airline for several days, and some felt the accommodation had problems like non-functioning appliances.

Positive Aspects

Patron presence

Many delegates acknowledged the significance of the Honourable Lupepau'u, and reflected on what her warmth and support meant to them:

- “Inspired how Her Royal Highness is involved, makes me wish in Fiji we would have uncles and aunties, and those in higher positions support us”
- “Her Royal Highness liberated and inspired me, she is higher than Lady Gaga”

Sense of “family”

Most delegates also reflected on the strength and empowerment they found in Pacific LGBTQI “**family**”, and the warmth and generosity of the Tonga Leiti Association for hosting the Conference. It was clear that being in the Pacific amongst Pacific SOGIE family was significant for delegates. Comments on what we liked most included:

- “Interacting with all you beautiful people”
- “I feel safe loved and belong with my people”
- “Big Mama Joey, and steering committee, made family. I packed my luggage and come and stay in everyone’s house”.
- “I’m proud I have a Mama from PNG and a lesbian sister in Palau”
- “As lesbian woman with disability being able to have space where I am accepted”.
- “Grateful for the humour of the First Lady from PNG”
- “Being comfortable with our own Pacific people”.
- “Having brothers and sisters throughout the Pacific”
- “I liked seeing all rainbow colours under one roof, being mama rainbow to little rainbows”.
- “Passion for Pacific region, where mother gave birth to me, vanua, whenua, having human experience”

Sharing and learning

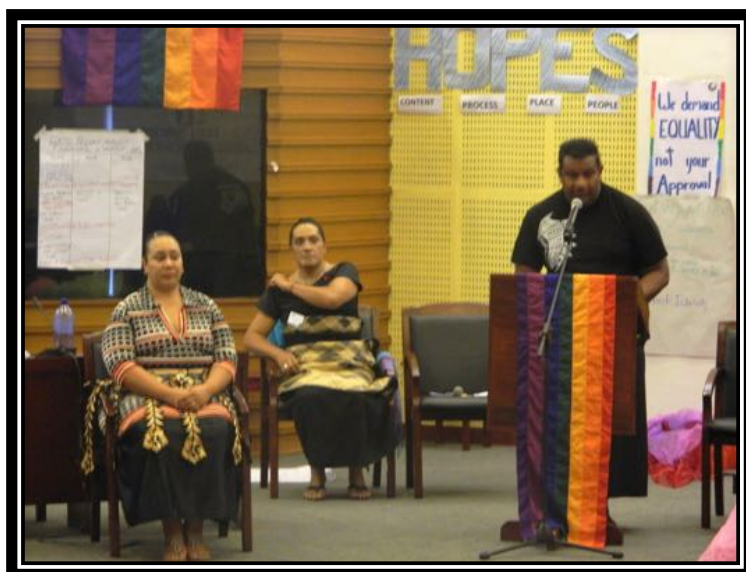
Pacific delegates were **collectively inspired** by the **diverse struggles and stories** that people shared, and the things they learnt:

- “Learning about different countries was really empowering, I realized about the struggles other were facing”.
- “Mapping the different stories, realizing I was privileged because I did not have to go through what many of you have faced”
- “Different cultural approaches”
- “UPR and the mechanism of it”
- “Learning was how important the law is, and how important it is to be accessible.”

Changes and Final Reflections

Overall, delegates were moved and inspired by the conference process and excited about moving the regional work on SOGIE forward:

- “I would like to learn more about MSM and HIV+”
- “I learnt how Leiti use their communities and will reach out to their communities”
- “Next time a panel on activism, as a performing artist I know our singing and theatre is a powerful way to create change”
- “Changes so our PSDN can move forward with new blood and thinking”.
- “Tapping into declarations that are in place, take back”.
- “Morning session where all went to church, cultural norms bring people closer”
- “Going to church on Sunday in full expression. The last time I set foot in church was 12 years ago”
- “When I’m back home it’s like being a person hiding inside a cave.”
- “Hope in next generation to carry next generation of activists forward”
- “How much singing and rhythm is part of our cultures”
- “Nu, We are a Small coconut planted in the ground, we’ve laid the seed, for us to be better we need to be better, political wars in own organisations, we need more seeds to bring down those barriers. I’m putting ideas in practice when I get home”
- “To try and hold solidarity and that your issue is as important as mine, we are going to learn from this and take it forward”.
- “Oceania is not small – it is massive, good luck with work and hopes”.



Conference Evaluation

Methodology and Survey Design

Conference delegates were asked to participate in a 12-question evaluation survey on the final day of the conference. The survey was completed by 55 of the 73 delegates from PICTs (75%) on paper questionnaires. The survey was designed to measure the impact of the Pacific LGBTIQ Human Rights conference on Pacific delegates towards meeting five key objectives identified by PSDN. Data from these was manually uploaded for analysis through Survey Monkey online software.

Objective One: Connection and Affirmation

The first objective was to connect people and LGBTIQI organised groups across the Pacific region to share ideas. A short-term outcome for this objective would be whether or not participants felt connected to other conference participants, and that they felt affirmed in their LGBTIQI identities. To elicit responses about whether or not the conference made the delegates feel connected and affirmed, the following statements were included on a five-point scale:

- “The conference made me feel proud of who I am”
- “I felt a sense of belonging at the conference”.

A medium-term outcome for the first objective would be that delegates are able to share their learning (strategies, ideas, knowledge) with stakeholder communities and the CSOs they work for. To elicit responses about whether or not the delegates felt more able to raise awareness of SOGI and whether the learning was relevant to their communities, the following statements were included on a five-point scale:

- “Things I have learnt and gained through the Conference will be relevant to my Communities”
- I feel more empowered to raise awareness of sexual orientation or gender identities and expression than I did previously’

The Conference Steering Committee were interested in getting specific feedback about the strategies that delegates had gained from the conference. Identifying strategies is an indicator for both objective one and objective five. To get more in-depth feedback about the types of strategies and how they might be used we included a qualitative question: “Are there strategies you are taking away from this conference that will be useful in your work? Please write examples”.

Objective Two: Education and Awareness

A short-term outcome for this objective is that participants would increase their knowledge about and understanding of international human rights law that relates to sexual orientation and gender identity. We were unable to do pre- and post- testing because of short timeframe, and also the wide scope of information given during the conference would have made it difficult to identify knowledge-based questions relevant to the whole sample as evidence of learning.

We asked delegates to rate their knowledge of International Human Rights Law on a five-point scale ranging from “I didn’t know anything about International Human Rights Law” to “I have a strong knowledge of International Human Rights Law” prior to and after attending the conference. This is a proxy indicator because it is a measure of the delegate’s perception of their knowledge, not a knowledge-based test.

Objective Three: Collaboration and Networking

A short-term outcome for building genuine and accountable partnerships and networks would be conference participants feeling connected and positive about their relationships with other participants. This is related to the prior question chosen for objective one, where participants were asked to rate their sense of belonging.

A medium-term outcome for increased collaboration and building partnerships and networks for advocacy and social action would be collaboration between individuals and organisations that attended the conference. While it was not possible to test medium-term outcomes (e.g. collaboration) because of the limited scope and timeframe of this evaluation, we sought information about participant's intention to collaborate. Delegates were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed with the statement, "I intend on collaborating with a person or an organisation to further human rights advocacy on SOGIE issues in the future".

Objective Four: Promoting and sharing amongst LGBTQI organisations

A medium-term outcome for this objective would be for the delegates to promote LGBTQI rights by sharing information, ideas and resources in their home countries. The limited scope and timeframe of this evaluation means that testing this outcome is not possible. However, we sought indication from participants about whether they felt more able to promote LGBTQI rights and whether their learning was relevant to their roles in various CSO's or as human rights defenders.

We asked delegates to think about of the work they do in CSOs or as an individual promoting human rights, and assess whether the information

gained would help them improve their work, or whether they had not learnt anything new or relevant.

The survey asked participants who answered 'yes' to this question to provide examples of the information they had gained that would help the work they do. This qualitative data was useful for showing what specific conference information was useful for the work that delegates are doing to promote SOGI human rights in their home countries.

Objective Five

A medium-term outcome for this objective would be increased collaboration amongst delegates on SOGIE health and rights to health. As described above, delegates were asked about their future collaborations. . Delegates were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed with the statement, "I intend on collaborating with a person or an organisation to further human rights advocacy on SOGIE issues in the future". Unfortunately, we did not include a follow-up question that was specific to health, so we are unable to tell how many of these future collaborations relate to health.

Other Sources of Feedback

There was an opportunity for participants to give feedback verbally to the conference body during the closing session. While this was important for conference attendees, it is limited methodologically because of its public nature and because of cultural expectations for Pacific people around the need to hold the 'va', or relational space between people. This feedback has been included in the conference proceedings section.

Survey Results and Discussion

Home Country

55 respondents from the total 73 delegates from Pacific Island Countries and Territories (75% of Pacific delegates) participated in the Evaluation Survey on the final day of the Conference. See Figure 1 for the breakdown of countries.

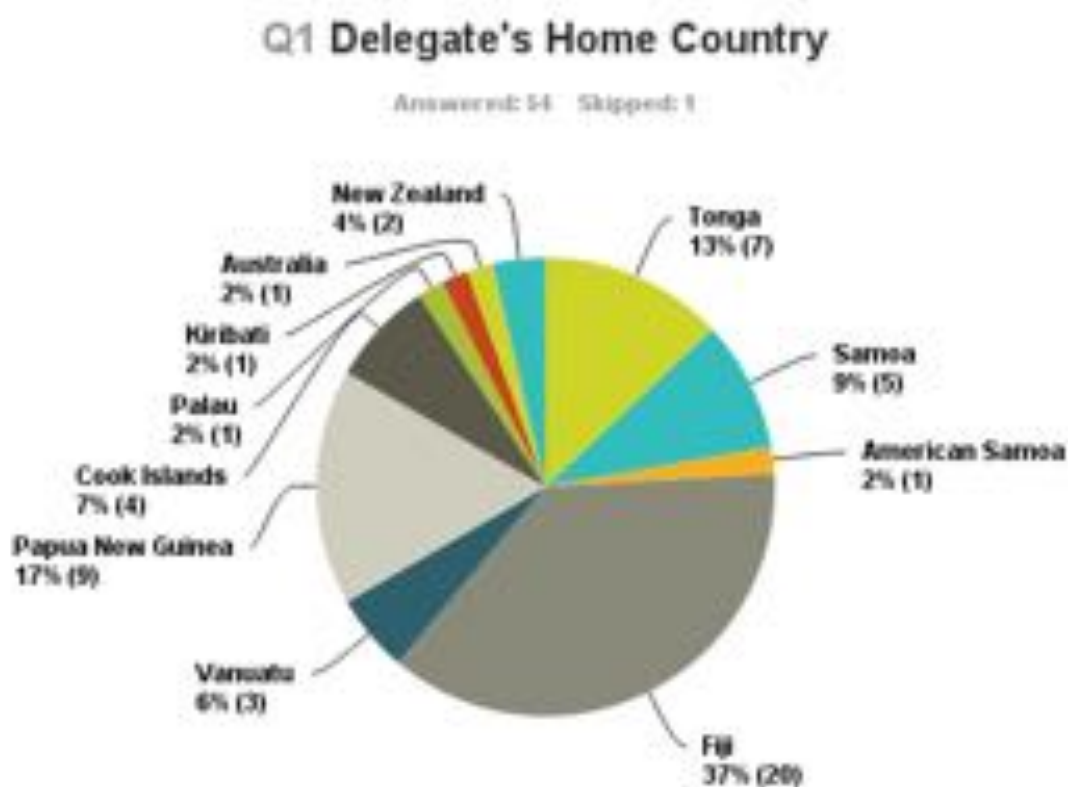


Fig.1 Distribution of survey respondents from the represented Pacific Island Country and/ or Territories.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Of the 55 total survey respondents:

- 9 respondents (16 %) identified as 'Lesbian': Lesbian or Butch, or Lesbian and Fem, lipstick gal, or lesbian and queer.

- 6 respondents (11%) identified as Fa'afafine, one of these respondents identified as both Fa'afafine and Transgender Woman.
- 13 respondents (24%) identified as 'Men who have Sex with Men'(MSM): MSM, gay and MSM, or as "MDS, man with diverse sexuality".
- 22 respondents (40%) identified as 'Trans': 'tranny', transgender, transwoman or Transgender woman.
- 1 respondent (2 %) identified as female, and 1 respondent (2%) identified as "a mother who is married".

Objective 1: Connection and Affirmation

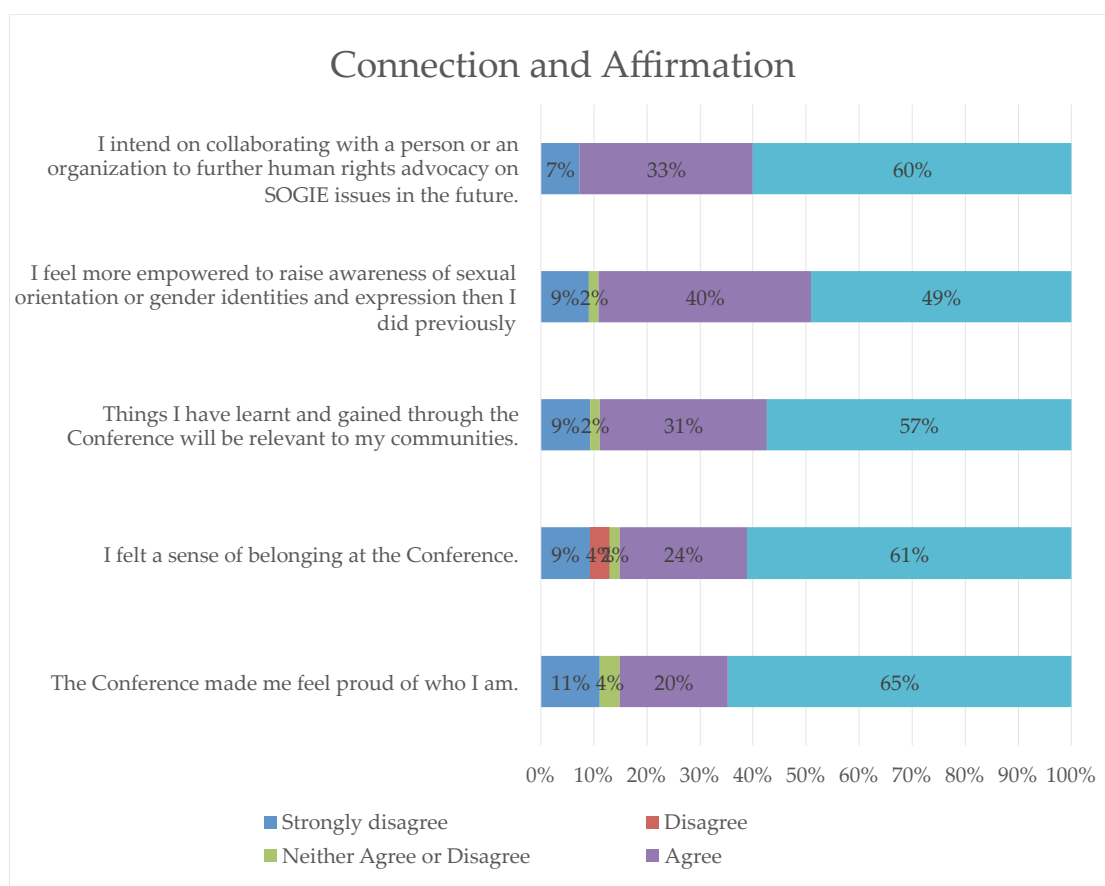


Fig. 2 Participant's sense of belonging and connection following the conference.

The Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference met the first conference objective by connecting 73 LGBTQI groups, CSOs and human rights defenders across the Pacific region. Most Pacific delegates felt more empowered and connected by the conference. 85% agreed that the conference made them feel proud of who they are and 68% said they felt 'a sense of belonging' at the conference.

This objective was further supported by evidence that conference delegates found the information relevant and that they felt more empowered to advocate for SOGIE human rights. 88% agreed with the statement, 'Things I have learnt and gained through the Conference will be relevant to my Communities'. For the statement, 'I feel more empowered to raise awareness of sexual orientation or gender identities and expression than I did previously', 89% agreed.

The first conference objective was to build connections and increase regional capacity in order to "affirm the dignity, equality and security of LGBTI communities and individuals". There are limitations to the ability to achieve this long-term objective because of the scale needed to create an impact across the region. Recognising some of the challenges/obstacles to producing this outcome may help PDSN and associated CSOs identify some forward steps.

39 participants gave comments. These responses have been coded into key themes identified within the data: communication and public awareness, UN mechanisms, and networking. Some other strategies were also identified. Communication strategies were the most represented (10 participants). This included using social media, "success stories" and "activism", the use of music or creative arts for promoting a social justice idea. 5 people referred to

networking with people or organisations as a strategy. 3 people mentioned inter-linkages analysis, and 3 people mentioned lobbying international governments around UPR shadow reporting.

Objective 2: Education and Awareness



Fig.3 Participants rated their level of knowledge about International Human Rights Law before attending the conference.

The Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference met the second objective by educating delegates about International Human Rights Law. This finding was supported by the survey results, which found an increase in how participants rated their knowledge of International Human Rights Law. When asked into think about their knowledge of international human rights law that relates to SOGIE before attending the conference 14 delegates (27%) answered 'I had a reasonable understanding of international human rights law that relates to SOGIE', 12 delegates (24%) answered 'I had a good understanding of

international human rights law that relates to SOGIE' and 2 delegates (4%) answered 'I had a strong understanding of human rights law that relates to SOGIE. When asked to rate their knowledge of international human rights law that relates to SOGIE after attending the conference 17 delegates (35%) answered 'I have a reasonable understanding of international human rights law that relates to SOGIE', 15 delegates (31%) answered 'I have a good knowledge of international human rights law that relates to SOGIE', and 10 delegates (20%) answered 'I have a strong knowledge of international human rights law that relates to SOGIE'.

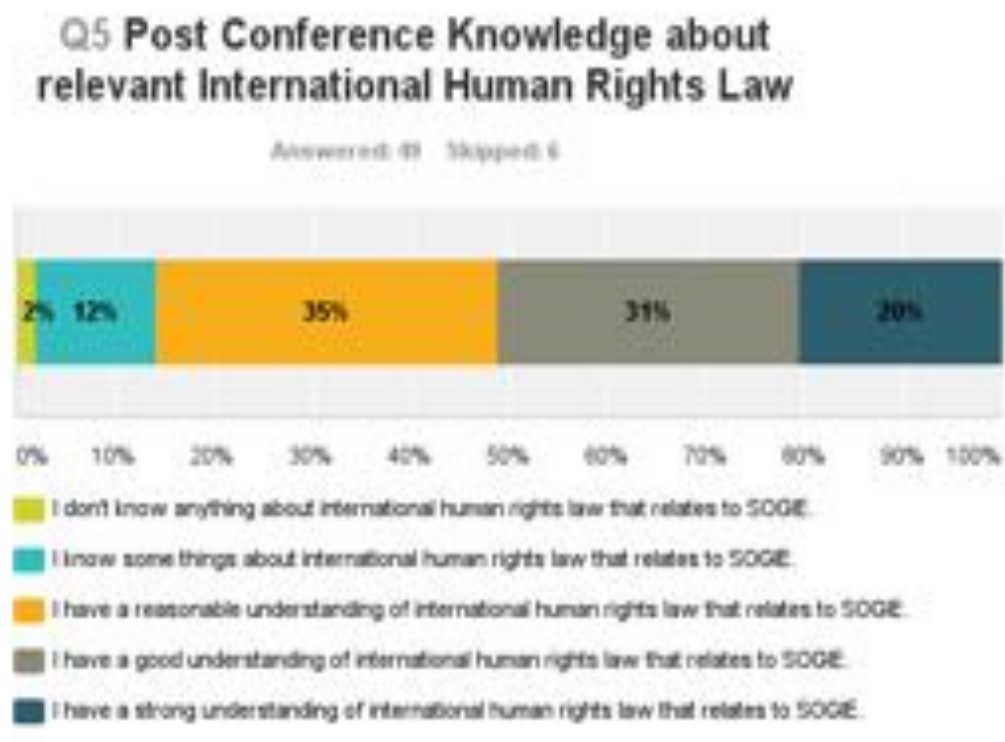


Fig.4 *Participants rated their knowledge about relevant International Human Rights Law after attending the conference.*

Participants identified learning in the areas of advocacy, networking and collaboration, and the UPR process. The survey provided some evidence that participants will be better able to engage with the UPR process through the

qualitative question on what information participants found useful where several participants listed the UPR process.

Objective 2 also says “Participants will be encouraged to use the Principles to review the human rights situation in their countries” and that delegates will be able to “advocate nationally and as a Pacific regional group on the basis of their analysis”. Copies of The Yogyakarta Principles were provided in Conference bags, along with the publication *An Activist’s Guide to the Yogyakarta Principles* (2010). Kim Vance also discussed the Yogyakarta principles in her session on human rights.

Expecting delegates to have gained sufficient exposure to be able to apply the Yogyakarta principles to the human rights situation information in their own countries is fairly demanding. This would require delegates learn enough about the human rights framework to be able to both apply it to their own situation and teach others. There was a clear desire from delegates to have further capacity building in the area of human rights.

Objective 3: Collaborating and Networking

As stated above, when asked to rate on a five-point scale how much they agreed with the statement, “I felt a sense of belonging at the conference”, 68% agreed. When asked to rate on a five-point scale how much they agreed with the statement, “I intend on collaborating with a person or an organisation to further human rights advocacy on SOGIE issues in the future” (see figure 2), 78% agreed with the statement.

Networking was supported through the attendance of the Pacific delegation and other stakeholders in regional SOGIE human rights. There were two representatives from UNDP, a representative from UNOHCHR, a consul

from the U.S. Embassy, the local representative from RRRT, two representatives from the Tonga Family Health Association and the Global Fund HIV Co-ordinator.

This objective sought to build networks for advocacy and social action to respond to 'violations against people because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity'. While a flow-on affect of the conference is likely to be increased ability to respond to human right's abuses within CSO's when they are contacted directly by LGBTIQ community or when an issue is raised in the media, this long-term objective is still difficult to achieve because of regional lack of monitoring of human rights abuses. The need to monitor human rights abuses related to SOGIE emerged as a priority in the 'Way Forward' session.

Objective 4: Promoting and Sharing amongst LGBTIQI organisations

There was strong indication that participant's felt that the conference strengthened their work in promoting LGBTIQI rights. When asked about whether the learning gained would support the work they do, 96% of survey respondents said information gained would help them improve or strengthen the work they do. The survey asked participants who answered 'yes' to this question to provide examples of the information they had gained that would help the work they do. This qualitative data was useful for showing what specific conference information was useful for the work that delegates are doing to promote SOGI human rights in their home countries. 41 participants gave comments. The main areas of learning that participants identified as useful were:

- Advocacy – several participants identified that their advocacy work would be improved. An example included, "I do community work as a Peer educator, so I will advocate more on LGBT Human Rights"

- Networking and Collaboration – several participants identified that people or groups they had met would strengthen their work. An example included the comment, “Networking with the other lesbian organisations in the Pacific to affirm the dignity, equality and security of LGBTI in communities and individuals”.
- UPR – several people identified that learning about the UPR process was useful for their work. One example included, “UPR - Shadow Report - Pushing for Yogyakarta principles to be enforced in Pacific”.

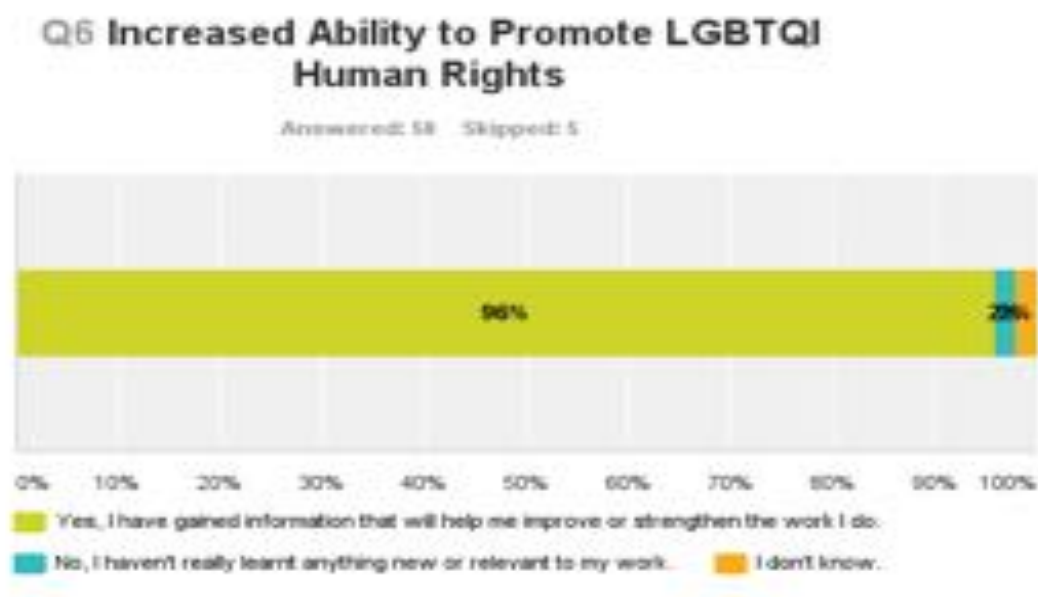


Fig.5 shows the percentage of respondents that gained useful information

There was also other interesting feedback about what delegates had learnt and how it would be useful in their work. The following comments show the broad range of relevant learning from the topics covered, and how different delegates are using different information from panels, discussions, and informal talks between participants:

- “How to identify and co-ordinate champions/ strategic identities to support our programmes and initiatives”.
- “Identify and recognise allies (existing) within community (Government, NGO and Society)”.
- “Collection of data/ information on LGBTQI in the community – statistics”.
- “Points of entry for UN intervention”.

Because of the content overlap between this objective and objectives 1 and 3, the positive indicators for belonging and collaboration identified for those objectives also support this objective.

Objective Five: Improve understanding and strengthen collaborations amongst key stakeholders about health and human rights

This objective was supported by the inclusion of a panel on health, and by a break-out session where delegates identified health priorities for LGBTIQI in the region. The briefing note and report on the 2015-2019 *Pacific Sexual Health and Well-Being Shared Agenda* was included in conference packs for delegates. Some key areas of prioritization were also identified in the 'Way Forward' session.

As discussed above, delegates were asked to rate their likelihood of collaborating in the future on a five-point scale. 33 delegates (60%) strongly agreed and 18 (33%) agreed with the statement. Unfortunately, there was no following question about these collaborations, so it is not possible to know how many of these collaborations are about health.

There was some indication that the health information discussed was useful to some delegates. When asked whether the information gained would improve the work they did, four participants included comments on health or health rights. Two examples of this were:

- "Advocate about Human Rights regarding LGBTIQ in Papua New Guinea in terms of health rights"...
- "Mental health"

Conclusion and Recommendations

Health

Access to health emerged as a priority issue during the conference. Delegates found that access to condoms is a priority issue for MSM, Transgender and Sex Worker communities. CSOs and regional networkers reported several barriers that included inadequate supply, and limited access to health clinics. The *Pacific Sexual Health and Wellbeing Shared Agenda* (SPC 2014) has identified that consistent condom use is low across the Pacific. The Shared Agenda also identifies MSM, transgender women as priority populations in relation to HIV prevention (SPC 2014).

Delegates also raised lack of access to HIV testing, and adequate counseling to support the process. Access issues with clinics were multifaceted, but included the need for sensitization training of health workers. The Pacific Sexual Health and Wellbeing Shared Agenda (SPC 2014) recognizes that HIV testing and counseling are a significant aspect of HIV/STI prevention, but are limited across the region.

It was also noted that HIV+ people do not have access to medication, particularly where costs of transporting medication to islands. Even when they do have access, experiences of stigmatization and lack of adequate, ongoing counseling were also identified as reasons why people might stop taking HIV medication. Lack of confidentiality and stigma in accessing health services has been identified amongst people living with HIV in the Pacific (McMillan 2008, SPC 2014).

Delegates identified a lack of access to hormone treatment for transgender people across the region. They also raised the difficulty accessing hospitals

and health services that required they use their birth name. The New Zealand Human Rights Commission's Work on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity makes two recommendations to Government on the basis of their Transgender Inquiry that seem relevant to the health needs of transgender people in the Pacific. They are quoted in full below because of the usefulness of their specific wording:

- "Improve trans people's access to public health services and develop treatment pathways and standards of care for gender reassignment services"
- "Simplify the requirements for changing sex details on a birth certificate, a passport and other documents to ensure consistency with the Human Rights Act."

The women's caucus also discussed sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the impact of invisibility of their identities and practices when seeking health services. Safe sex information, data, and prophylactics for women having sex with women are virtually non-existent. In addition, the predominance of the focus on HIV/AIDS in the broader LGBTIQ community means that health issues that may be more relevant to their lives are ignored. And finally, many of the women at the conference work on broader linkages to issues that have direct impact on health and well-being, such as climate change, and they expressed a desire to see the movement as a whole take much stronger positions and advocacy on these issues. The inter-linkages teach-in offered some strategies on how to do this.

***Recommendation:** Delegates identified sensitization of health workers about LGBTIQ as a priority.*

***Recommendation:** PICT governments should review and consider implementation of the recommendations of New Zealand's Transgender Inquiry.*

***Recommendation:** PSDN and other groups in the region should develop strong and holistic positions on health and well-being, and include language on sexual and reproductive rights and health and the environment.*

Young people

Delegates to the Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference gave accounts of serious bullying during secondary school because of sexual orientation or gender identity. This led to young people leaving the education system before completing their qualification and included ongoing verbal, sexual and physical assault. The outcomes of this bullying range from driving young people to engage in sex work, as they lack qualifications for other employment, or worse, they commit suicide. Recognizing and addressing the mental health needs of LGTQI, particularly young people, is a high priority.

It was recognized that addressing the bullying of young LGBTIQ people requires a multilayered response from state and non-state actors including but not limited to: inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education and human rights education within school curriculum, sensitization training about sexual orientation and gender identity by teachers and other educators, and capacity building in specialist areas of social work and counselling. The *Shared Agenda* has identified that the level of implementation of comprehensive sexuality education is mixed across the region (SPC 2014, 31).

Internally, as a movement there is the need for more mentoring of young LGBTQI so that they can move into leadership positions within LGBTQI human rights advocacy and work within local, regional and international frameworks.

Recommendation: Governments must be pressured to introduce comprehensive sexuality and human rights education in school curricula.

Recommendation: Educators and counselors require sensitization about LGBTI issues and the effects of bullying.

Recommendation: PSDN and all groups in the region should consider fostering youth in leadership positions within their organizations.

Security

Delegates identified that MSM and transgender people, particularly sex workers, are unable to access help from the police because of harassment and abuse of power. Accounts were heard of police seeking sexual acts from victims in order to gain assistance. Within the Women's Caucus it was identified that there are specific challenges faced by women, particularly silence within Pacific communities about lesbians, and violence towards lesbian women, often in the family sphere or domestic sphere. We remind Governments of Pacific Island Countries and Territories that they have responsibility to protect LGBTQI communities from human rights abuses like physical and sexual violation, and discrimination.

Recommendation: Delegates identified police sensitization about LGBTQI and SOGI human rights as an immediate priority.

Movement Building

It is vital to have Pacific-focused and Pacific-led dialogue about local LGBTQI human rights abuses and discrimination. The Pacific LGBTQI Human Rights Conference enabled delegates from PICTs to discuss regional issues, the human rights mechanisms that are available to them, and culturally-relevant strategies for addressing homophobia and transphobia and the associated impacts on their communities. To this end, it's important that this regional work in promoting SOGIE human rights within the Pacific continues to be

supported by all stakeholders; Governments from Pacific Countries and Territories, Regional and International NGO's, UN bodies, LGBTQI and Fa'afafine communities, and donors.

The conference revealed some of the complexities of SOGIE human rights issues in our region, where different ideas, understandings and priorities emerged amongst diverse voices. Leiti from Tonga and Fa'afafine from Samoa and American Samoa talked about how cultural recognition gave them a sense of belonging and connectedness. Both Leiti and Fa'afafine emphasized the importance of 'serving' family and community. And while they still struggled with discrimination in their respective countries, they were able to receive support from high profile patrons. The Fa'afafine delegation also expressed disappointment that the conference did not formally address them by their cultural name, instead using the English term "transgender" in documentation. Loss of recognition of the cultural role that Fa'afafine have in families and communities is likely to impact negatively on their sense of belonging and wellbeing. In the struggle for human rights recognition as sexuality and gender diverse people, we must remember that we are also entitled to recognition of our cultures.

The situation is different in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Fiji where there is not cultural recognition of gender diverse people. And across the board, in all PICTs, lesbian, bisexual and trans-masculine identities are invisible and have not been included in some of the broader movement work. LBT women are working actively in other spaces around development, climate change, women's rights, etc., but need stronger input in to an LGBTQI movement.

***Recommendation:** PSDN and delegates from the Cook Islands need to work with international partners and donors to organize a follow-up convening in 2017 in the*

Cook Islands, and consider assisting with a smaller convening for LBT women before 2017. The convening should address the following points:

- *Longer, in-depth workshops on key aspects, such as human rights framework. Key terms and acronyms should be explained and a glossary provided.*
- *There should be translators for non-English speakers.*
- *Attention to some of the logistical challenges that are common for first-time convenings, but should be addressed for future convenings.*
- *Delegates give country presentations on the status of SOGIE rights within their country.*
- *Cultural identities like Fa'afafine and others be addressed in culturally appropriate ways, not just LGBTQI.*
- *Ensure accessibility and inclusion of disabled members of the community.*
- *Protecting health of delegates by including safe-sex aides in conference packs.*

As PSDN considers expanding into a representational voice for SOGI human rights in the region, i.e. it represents the viewpoints of regional CSOs to other institutional bodies, it signals a need for capacity building around governance. Part of this would be a review of the constitution and an examination of board diversity and representation.

Recommendation: *New and returning PSDN board members or the board as a whole undertakes governance training or engages with a partner organization to up-skill in this area. PSDN should also develop a strategy for meaningful engagement with French-speaking PICTs.*

A priority in moving forward awareness and acceptance of SOGIE and our movements is both internal capacity building around communications and building the capacity of mainstream media in their coverage of LGBTIQ people and issues. Media sensitization was identified as a priority in the 'Way Forward' Matrix generated by delegates. Communication and public awareness strategies were broadly discussed during the conference.

Recommendation: *Training for PSDN and other LGBTIQ activists on internal and external communication strategies.*

Recommendation: *Training days for regional journalists and others in media about SOGIE human rights issues and LGBTQI communities.*

Monitoring and Research

Delegates identified the need to monitor human rights abuses towards LGBTQI in the region and produce region-specific research. While some participants suggested monitoring human rights abuses within CSOs in the short term, it's important to recognise that this would be very demanding on community resources and that monitoring human rights abuses is an obligation of states, following the Paris Principles. Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (2009) has also concluded:

“in accordance with the Paris Principles national human rights institutions have many functions that would contribute to the promotion and protection of the human rights of persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, including monitoring compliance with international human rights treaty and domestic human rights law, investigation of complaints of violation of human rights, national inquiries into systemic patterns of human rights violation, human rights education, review of laws and raising awareness of human rights and human rights obligations”

Delegates wanted their governments to engage with the recent Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on “Discrimination and Violence against Individuals based on their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” (A/HRC/29/23) and documents like the Yogyakarta Principles as tool for monitoring their progress.

Recommendation: *More data is needed on the health needs of LBT women, including an analysis of violence experienced by LBT women.*

Recommendation: CSOs in the region need support from all partners to further their training on documenting and monitoring the human rights situations in their countries.

Recommendation: Governments must be pressured to consider and implement recommendations in the OHCHR report and Yogyakarta Principles.

In Memory....



Just a short time after the conference, we were extremely saddened to hear of the death of our dear friend, Daniella Bronhill (the First Lady of PNG), who is seen in this picture conducting conference participants in a sing-along during the Rainbow Market. Daniela was the President of Friends Frangipani Inc - the only national sex workers organisation in Papua New Guinea. As noted on the Pacific Free and Equal Facebook page, "She was a very strong vibrant leader in advocating for the rights of transgenders in sex work and all transgenders in general, she believed in equality for all, better health services for transgenders and also protection from law enforcers. She was also vocal and took part in the first National Dialogue for the Decriminalisation of same sex act and sex work in 2009."

Her presence had a great impact on conference delegates and was specifically noted in a final evaluation form.

- "grateful for the humour of the First Lady from PNG"

Rest in Peace, dear sister.