The Platform for Action, adopted at the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, offers a defining policy framework and roadmap for achieving gender equality and women’s rights. It has stimulated unprecedented political energy and social mobilisation globally, with governments, civil society and others using it to take steps to end inequality and discrimination. UN Member States have repeatedly reaffirmed its normative force.

Twenty years after its adoption, UN Member States are reviewing the implementation of the Platform for Action, a process that has required changes in values, attitudes, practices and priorities at all levels. This review process comes at a critical time, when a global dialogue is taking place to determine a framework to achieve sustainable development.

The Beijing Platform for Action recognises women’s essential role in sustainable development: “Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace.”

Sustainable development requires a renewed focus on people-centred development that prioritises the expansion of capabilities, the eradication of poverty and the reduction of all types of inequalities, and that promotes the rights and agency of women.

KEY MESSAGES

- The Beijing Conference in 1995 is the cornerstone for women’s rights in recent history. The Beijing Platform for Action is considered the defining framework for the achievement of gender equality and women’s rights and remains deeply relevant today.

- Much has been achieved in the past 20 years including social, political and economic rights and reforms for women and girls worldwide, but there is a long road ahead to fulfill the promise of the Beijing Agenda.

- The 20-year anniversary of the Beijing Conference is a key milestone. It is an opportunity to renew commitments and garner political and public mobilisation to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action, and to ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment are central to the Post-2015 framework.

- Beijing+20 provides an important opportunity to engage youth in women’s empowerment. As the achievement of gender equality is key for any development agenda to succeed, the engagement of younger generations, who will be responsible for determining the future of their societies, is pivotal.

This brief is part of UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office’s series on the links between climate change, gender, and a number of development issues including women’s economic empowerment, health, food security, and energy. UN Women would like to acknowledge contributions from Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era and Secretariat of the Pacific Community in drafting these publications.
PACIFIC ENGAGEMENT AT BEIJING

Participants to the Beijing Conference included 189 governments, as well as representatives from 12 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) – Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Pacific governments were actively engaged in the Beijing Women’s Conference. Prior to attending the Conference, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) coordinated the Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, a platform that formed the basis of the Pacific region’s contribution to the Beijing Conference. The PPA was endorsed in 1994 at the Fourth Regional Conference of Women and the First Ministerial Conference on Women and Sustainable Development.

The PPA identified 13 critical areas that provided additional contextual information and recommendations for action specific to the Pacific. The 13 critical areas included: health, education and training, economic empowerment, agriculture and fishing, legal and human rights, shared decision-making, environment, culture and the family, mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, violence, peace and justice, poverty and indigenous people’s rights. These 13 areas are similar to the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action (listed below).

In 2004 the PPA was reviewed at the Ninth Triennial Conference of Pacific Women. The review included an in-depth look at national and regional achievements, challenges and obstacles to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. A revision of the PPA was undertaken, and ministers re-clustered the 13 critical areas into four strategic themes:

- Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women;
- Women’s legal and human rights;
- Women’s access to services; and
- Economic empowerment of women

The resulting Revised Pacific Platform for Action (RPPA) on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (2005-2015) was adopted in 2004 and has been reviewed at subsequent Triennial Conferences.

12 Critical Areas of Concern

The Beijing Platform for Action requires all governments to develop strategies or national plans of action to implement the Platform locally. The national plans of action for each country outline specific activities that the national governments will undertake to improve the situation of women.

The Platform is not a binding treaty. It does not provide a mechanism for redress of wrongs, nor is there any enforcement mechanism. Nevertheless, it is a consensus document, and it is the most comprehensive statement about the issues concerning women the world has seen. It addresses a range of problems from human rights abuses to poverty. It recognises the lack of gender perspective from governmental decision-making to educational systems.

The 12 critical areas of concern are:

- Women and Poverty
- Education and Training of Women
- Women and Health
- Violence against Women
- Women and Armed Conflict
- Women and the Economy
- Women in Power and Decision-making
- Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
- Human Rights of Women
- Women and the Media
- Women and the Environment
- The Girl-Child
PACIFIC RESPONSES TO BEIJING

All but two PICTs have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and all have adopted the PPA and the Millennium Declaration, 2000, which together established state responsibility to ensure all appropriate measures to address pervasive gender disparities are taken. Some governments responded by advancing legislation, policies, temporary special measures (TSM), and national action plans on ending violence against women and girls.


Some other recent/notable achievements by Pacific countries:

- Samoa passed a constitutional amendment bill to allow for 10% reserved seats for women in parliament.
- Vanuatu passed an Act to allow TSM for municipalities (30% reserved seats for women).

Evidence of Pacific Leaders’ commitment to gender equality was apparent with the issue of a Gender Equality Declaration (GED) during the 2012 annual Pacific Island Forum Leaders meeting where dialogue identified how progress on all MDGs is contingent on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. Leaders agreed that “gender inequality is imposing a high personal, social and economic cost on Pacific people and nations, and that improved gender equality will make a significant contribution to creating a prosperous, stable and secure Pacific for all current and future generations”.

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40% of the Pacific population that lives below the National Basic Needs Poverty Line.

85\(^{\text{per} \%}\) The adolescent fertility rate in Republic of Marshall Islands, highest in the Pacific.

75% The estimated percentage of women who suffered some form of direct personal trauma, including rape, armed violence, threats of armed violence and the death of family members between 1998 and 2003 in Solomon Islands.

2 The number of countries in the Pacific that have not ratified CEDAW.

26% The percentage of television news stories that were presented by women in the Pacific in 2010.
## BEIJING +20 TIMELINE

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<tr>
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<td>Pacific Partnerships to Strengthen Gender, Climate Change Response and sustainable Development</td>
<td>Nadi, Fiji</td>
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<td>18-20 August 2014</td>
<td>ESCAP Committee on Social Development (CSD)</td>
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<td>1-4 September 2014</td>
<td>UN Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS)</td>
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<td>October 2014</td>
<td>Rural Women’s Day (15 October)</td>
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<td>November 2014</td>
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<td>16 Days of Activism to End Gender-based Violence campaign (25 November -10 December)</td>
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<td>Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing +20 Review (17-20 November)</td>
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<td>March 2015</td>
<td>Comission on the Status of Women 59</td>
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1 Beijing Platform for Action, 1995
2 Forum Communiqué 43rd, Pacific Island Forum, Cook Islands, 28-30, August 2012 (PIFS)
3 http://www.pacwip.org/women-mps/national-women-mps/
5 http://www.ipc.int/hp/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=211&Itemid=4
7 Population and Development Profiles: Pacific Island Countries, UNFPA, April 2014
9 Who Make the News? Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010

Photos
Front Cover: Women’s Conference Palau, 2013. Credit: UN Women/ Olivia Owen
Page 3: International Women’s Day Solomon Islands, 2014. Credit: UN Women/ Marni Gilbert

*Note: The table and text contain links to various resources and documents related to gender, climate change, and development, which provide further information on the topics discussed.*