

MUSIC FOR CHANGE: PACIFIC WOMEN WANTOK MUSIK



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Australian-based not-for-profit organisation, Wantok Musik Foundation (WMF) has for more than two decades engaged with artists, musicians and communities across the Pacific and Timor Leste to record, release and provide an avenue for the music, unique stories and traditional sounds of the Pacific to have a global platform.

Wantok Musik embraces the responsibility that art is also a driver of social change and can, and does influence attitudes, opinions and challenges unhealthy or harmful behaviours. The Foundation works to use music and art as a vehicle to challenge and disrupt stereotyping and give a platform and voice to communities who otherwise may struggle to be heard.

The equal representation of women in music and arts across the Pacific region is a bold, but achievable goal that must have a focus not just on the artist, but also in the upskilling of women and girls in all areas of performance, production, sound engineering, producing, songwriting and video/film production skills, alongside instrumentation and voice. This activity then has a flow on effect in providing an economic potential for women and communities to build a thriving business model.

Over the past decades WMF has completed projects in the Pacific that are designed to be durable and to continue to develop and forge success well beyond the duration of the on-the-ground-work. Capacity building is at the core of the Foundations values.

For this proposed project, the WMF's over-arching objective is to provide opportunities for women and girls in countries across the region to be mentored in performance, songwriting, sound engineering, producing, video editing, marketing and management. The projects will record and release songs written by women that aim to disrupt stereotyping, break down gender barriers and bring attention to campaigns to end gender-based violence.



A professional international song and video release will follow, and opportunities to perform live at national and international events will be embedded into the project's intended design. The WMF has a vision to bring all the artists (from each participating country) together to stage a Pacific Women live show, with the intention to tour this show to world music events across the Pacific and further (subject to funding).

Project Outline

A core aim of this project is to use art and music to drive social change, to build connections between families, communities and countries within the region who are facing similar challenges. By linking the projects together, it will allow for a Pacific wide social movement, through the medium of songs, shared on all social media platforms, ringtones, radio, MTV and further afield.

The WMF will ensure the opportunity allowed for diverse skills, backgrounds and abilities and actively encourages equity to ensure accessibility for women with diverse and complex needs.

Success is when all members of communities can see themselves represented and feel connection.

A brief high-level outline of the intended project is below:

- Identify likeminded organisations and individuals who are working to address gender norms and identify a partner/s on the ground to take on role of local project manager/producer. This first step will be to forge relationships, understand cultural protocols, and ensure a regional led approach in each country. The WMF artistic team enter into true co-design and participatory approach to all the work they do and ensure all intellectual property of songs or artworks are 100% owned by the artist/community.
- Wherever possible, the WMF will link in with women artists of the regions who already have a platform to allow for mentoring. The theme for the project will be consistent across all countries and centred in songs about and for women, and issues impacting women.
- WMF team will travel to the region and, working with local partners, set up temporary mobile recording studios, including travelling beyond the urban areas to capture voices, stories and songs, and provide mentoring and skills development to women who may also lack opportunity due to geographic location.

Outcome

The outcome we intend to achieve is:

- A full album to be released by Wantok Musik Label.
- Each artist will 100% their own copyright.
- Accompanying the album will be a website, social media presence, film clip and campaign to let these strong Pasifika women artists out into the music industry.
- To have placed our artist in a strongest position forge ahead with a successful music career



Image: K. Orell



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