



# Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR): Empowering community action for ecological and social justice

## Centre for People, Place & Planet Research Impact Case Study

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

Researchers at the Centre for People, Place and Planet are leading Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) with community partners. Around the world, it is often the most marginalised groups who have the most to gain from grassroots activism to address environmental and social inequities. However, such groups are typically excluded from spaces of social and political power. FPAR provides a bridge between grassroots activism and policy decision-making.

From 2020-2023 our FPAR work has empowered community action for ecological and social justice through a range of activities delivered in Australia and internationally.

- We have collaborated with Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Plan International Australia, and Kiribati Climate Action Network to train and support over 60 women in Asia and the Pacific to lead evidence-based advocacy for climate justice.
- A project co-funded by Climate Justice Union WA has enabled community-led social justice analysis and action for a just transition from coal-fired energy production in Collie on Wilman Boodja in the southwest of Western Australia (WA).
- With funding from Oxfam, we trained 26 water rights defenders in the Mekong (Asia) to lead participatory action research for water justice.

- We captured stories and developed leadership resources with the Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Council to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to form feminist groups to promote their human rights.
- We are working with community service organisations in WA to develop a toolkit that helps organisations integrate climate justice across their operations and practice, with a program of collaborative applied research.
- More than 50 training workshops on FPAR and activism have been delivered to hundreds of community members, activists, and academics.

The work has been funded by over \$419,000 from Lotterywest, WA Council of Social Service, Rise Network, Anglicare, Mercycare, Jesuit Social Services Centre for Just Places, Climate Justice Union WA, Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Council, Plan International Australia, and Oxfam.

## **OUR RESEARCH IMPACT**

Across Australia and the Asia Pacific, FPAR activities have strengthened the ability of communities to undertake participatory research and collective action to address ecological and social injustices in communities and organisations, and drive improvements in public policy. FPAR processes have generated social, economic, and environmental impacts.

### **Increased knowledge and skills**

Over three years and across **7** FPAR projects in **16** countries, thousands of women, men, and young people have gained knowledge about environmental change, human rights and gender justice, and skills in participatory research, community organising and evidence-based advocacy.

### **Stronger community leadership**

Through FPAR, grassroots community members in **10** countries have formed more than **50** new feminist groups and alliances to collectively demand their rights, bringing lived experiences to activism. This has enhanced civil society networks from local places such as Collie (WA) to the feminist movement in Asia. A young woman in Myanmar says, "FPAR has given more space to women who are not traditionally favoured to be in leadership positions".

### **Improved public policy**

FPAR has supported community-led movements to gain more evidence, skills, and confidence to advocate for themselves, influencing government policies, procedures, and expenditure. For example, a district government in Nepal established a women's advisory committee for river protection, while community infrastructure of roads, health facilities and a school were developed in a remote area of Cambodia. Research findings have been translated through community-led advocacy, and participation in policy development with agencies such as the Australian Prime Minister's Office and the WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation. In Collie, community-led advocacy by Wilman Indigenous people directly informed Federal Government policy regarding transitions to net zero emissions.

### **Better social justice infrastructures**

These FPAR projects are benefitting people who often experience disadvantage and marginalisation, including Indigenous peoples, women, young people, low income earners, and rural communities. FPAR activities have been evaluated to measure impacts; for example, an evaluation of a Climate Justice-FPAR programme with Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development found that FPAR was highly successful in enhancing grassroots women's activism through capacity building, producing new knowledge, tools, and resources, undertaking impactful advocacy, and strengthening the feminist movement. New knowledge about effective FPAR processes have transferred into resources and training for activists.

## **CPPP RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT PATHWAY**

The Centre for People, Place and Planet enabled this research through fostering collaborations between academics of diverse disciplines and community partners. This was done through co-leadership, mentoring, seed funding and Research Assistance. The CPPP's intellectual environment supported methodological innovation. Community stakeholders are engaged as partners, co-researchers, co-authors and in Steering Committees.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Through strong, ongoing partnerships, this work is continuing. Future research will explore how civil society implements co-produced resources to enhance collective action for ecological and social justice.