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continued journey into  
fisheries management



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Gleaning the expanse: Gender  
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A woman carries tuna purchased  
at Auki market, Malaita Province,  
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## Editor's note

This 37<sup>th</sup> edition of the Pacific Community's (SPC) *Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin* has 19 original articles from the Pacific region. As borders opened, most organisations have quickly ramped up their work. As a result, there has been an astounding surge of work on gender in fisheries and aquaculture. We seemed to be making real progress on getting gender recognised as an integral part of the sector.

Jonathan Fisk shares work from American Samoa to document fishing practices of women and *fa'afafine* and their broader relationalities with the seas, and the value of taking a gender-intentional approach. Victoria Syddall writes on men's experience of gender-based violence, as she explores the roles and experiences of women and men in tuna fisheries in Fiji. Tarateiti Uriam Timiti describes fisheries management efforts of Tabonibara women in Kiribati. Cherie Morris provides details of the University of the South Pacific's new gender and environment tertiary educational programme. The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in Fiji has published a statistics rich report on their *Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative* that is worth a read. Lastly, I am proud to share some of my own work with Pacific Islands and Australian colleagues where we put forth some ideas on how to progress gender equality in fisheries by building strategic partnerships with development organisations.

There are many new projects, publications, and research in the Pacific region, and I am grateful to all our authors and their organisations who take the time to share their work. We welcome a number of new lead authors to the bulletin – Jonathan Fisk, Jill Houma, Zafiar Naaz, Nettie Thomas Sapa, Tarateiti Uriam Timiti and Alani Tuivucilevu.

## Sangeeta Mangubhai

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# Contributions of fisherwomen's indigenous fishing knowledge to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)

Salanieta Kitolelei<sup>1</sup> and Jokim Kitolelei<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Fisherwomen play a vital role in the retention and transmission of indigenous fishing knowledge (hereafter IFK) in Fiji. The daily in-field experiences of fisherwomen in marine and freshwater habitats equip them with the skills and an intimate knowledge of their resources and environment (Kitolelei et al. 2021). Often, fisherwomen and fishermen within indigenous Fijian (iTaukei) communities are restricted by their gender roles, and this is reflected in their fishing activities. Fisherwomen play an important role in nurturing their children, and are often seen taking their children fishing. On these fishing trips, fisherwomen not only teach children to fish, but these trips are also a way that

seasons, fish and crustacean aggregation locations, seasonality of fish, and knowledge about the lunar and diurnal responses of resources to nature. The IFK that fisherwomen possess is also linked to the iTaukei language and local dialects in which the knowledge is transmitted.

This article combines valuable insights from expert groups of fisherwomen, including shellfish gleaners, net fishing experts, crab gleaning experts, and hook-and-line experts, and these insights provide important information that can be used to fill knowledge gaps in fisheries science for the UN Decade of Ocean Science. The interviews quoted throughout the article are part of field research done by one of the authors of this paper (SK) for her PhD study on the Indigenous and local knowledge of fishers in Fiji. Although the data collection was not specifically part of the UN Decade of Ocean Programme, the ideas are aligned with it, and therefore the quotes are used as examples of women's contributions to knowledge for sustainable ocean management.

## Dauvivili contributions

An important role that women play is that of shellfish gleaners (*dauvivili*). This group of specialised fisherwomen have become rare in terms of their associated IFK on shellfish. Some shells that the *dauvivili* collect are identified as cultural keystones species, and include cowries (*buli*), triton (*davui*), pearl oyster shells (*civa*) and trochus (*tovu* or *sici*). Shell culture in Fiji was developed in the pre-colonial period where shells were used not only as ornaments, shell money and decorative items, but also as heralds and atonement or petition items in traditional temples.

Over time, fisherwomen who specialise in shellfish collection have developed knowledge of the best shell fishing locations, fishing methods, reactions of the shellfish to changing tides, lunar and diurnal phases, and their conservation status. A 70-year-old fisherwoman mentioned to SK that seashells usually “point out” where she could find the next shell by the way they are found lying on the intertidal areas. A 76-year-old fisherwoman said that mature bivalves will have a small crab found in them. An 80-year-old fisherwoman mentioned to SK that *bulibuli* (money cowries, *Monetaria moneta*) are usually abundant at low-tide in the afternoons. In addition to shellfish biological and ecological knowledge, fisherwomen across Fiji, mention that shellfish have decreased in abundance and size. The reason behind these reductions in population and size is due to a combination of several factors, including overharvesting, pollution, sedimentation due to soil erosion, and climate change.

## Dauqoli contributions

Net fishing is one of the most ancient fishing techniques that fisherwomen use (K. Bukarau pers. comm. to SK 25 December 2007), and this is reflected in a lullaby “*lai tei dalo*



Children in Batinivuriwai showing off the catch of the day, which will be sold. ©Salanieta Kitolelei

fisherwomen impart their knowledge to the next generation of fishers. Over time, the transmission of IFK between generations of fishers has declined, along with the ocean's resources and ocean health.

In an effort to reverse the cycle of declining ocean health, the United Nations declared 2021–2030 as the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The overall aim of the decade is to gather “the science we need for the ocean we want”.<sup>2</sup>

Fijian fisherwomen and their IFK provide important information that is closely linked to and complements “science”. Although not acknowledged as science, fisherwomen's IFK includes information about spawning

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://en.unesco.org/ocean-decade>



*ko tamaqu, lai qoliqoli ko tinaqu*” (father went to plant taro and mother went net fishing). In Fiji, net fishing is known as *qoli* and expert netters are called *daugoli*. Some fisherwomen still use specialised nets, such as the *taraki* to catch *moci* (mangrove prawns, *Macrobrachium equidens*) (U. Bukarau pers. comm. to SK 8 February 2021) or the *lawani-daniva*, which are specially made nets from vines to catch *daniva* (silver herring, *Herklotsichthys quadrimaculatus*) (J. Ratabua pers. comm. to SK 22 September 2020). Expert net-fishers know the exact location to place their nets to catch their target resource (N. Brown pers. Comm. to SK 26 February 2021). For example, a fishing method known as *vuvu* was used by women in Vunisinu, Rewa who made specialised nets from bamboo combined with coconut leaves and mangrove roots to capture *molisa* (Marquesan mullet, *Osteomugil engeli*) in tidal pools (T. Sole pers. comm. to SK 9 February 2021).

Understanding the behaviour of fish and other resources that can be caught using nets is what makes net fishing sustainable in Fiji (J. Veitayaki pers. comm. to SK 6 July 2022). In addition to this, the traditional nets used in some communities – woven by a group or individual traditional netmakers – give net fishers a chance to set smaller species free without killing them. Moreover, with changing times and priorities, fisherwomen have to make tough decisions between using their IFK to exploit or harvest resources sustainably, while still using their nets. This choice affects the custodianship of their resources because fisherwomen sometimes exploit IFK to meet growing obligations. For *daugoli* fisherwomen, the responsibility falls on them to choose catching and keeping smaller resources caught within their nets, or releasing them.

### Daucucuru contributions

Crabs play an important role for fisheries which women are involved in. Expert crab gleaners/collectors are known as *daucucuru* in parts of Fiji particularly those involved in the *qari* fisheries (green mangrove crab, *Scylla serrata*).

An 84-year-old fisherwoman passed on much-coveted knowledge of how to find and collect large crabs from within mangroves to her children (E. Taubuli pers. comm. to SK 9 February 2021). Her method ensured that only the largest *qari* were collected and sold. Her sons use that knowledge and are the most sought-after *qari* suppliers because of the size of their catch and the taste of the crabs they sell. The taste of the *qari* depends on how and where it was caught, which can either be hand-collected or speared in the mangroves, or by using nets at high tide to capture swimming crabs.

In addition to *qari*, *kuka* (red-clawed mangrove crabs, *Perisesarma bidens*) is also highly sought after. Fisherwomen of the Rewa Delta know that the *kuka* appears in abundance alongside the *manā* (mud lobsters, *Thalassina anomala*) straight after a storm and flooding. On the day after storms, fisherwomen and their children carry buckets and nets and walk along the sides of small streams or in mangrove areas where they can find crabs crawling up trees or along the grass that grows on stream sides in large numbers. This is a survival tactic used in the delta region over generations, where the influx of crustaceans feed people if they have limited access to store-bought food. *Daucucuru* fisherwomen’s IFK teach us that it is important to understand crab behaviour in order to be use this resource to the best of its potential.

### Dausiwa contributions

In every village we visited along the coast, the *dausiwa* are some of the most well-versed fisherwomen in fish behaviour that is influenced by the tide, weather and lunar cycle. The *dausiwa* are the expert hook-and-line fisherwomen who change their choice of baits to match the seasonal catch, and change their hook-and-line sizes according to fishing location and target species. Fisherwomen use a wide range of habitats – from the rivers, along the coast, blue-holes, corals to the reef edges – to catch fish. According to a 56-year-old fisher, fish are aware of the changing weather and they show this by



Women fishing and cleaning their catch on the foreshore with their children in Qoma. ©Salanieta Kitolelei





Women looking for ghost crabs along the coast to use as bait in Denimanu, Yadua. ©Salanieta Kitolelei

the way they nibble on the bait instead of actually biting on it (M. Biu pers. comm. to SK 3 November 2021). A 20-year-old fisherwoman knew which fish she was pulling up by the way the fish bit the bait (M. Brown pers. comm. to SK 4 November 2021). In some communities, fisherwomen sing or chant in order to bring the fish closer to their fishing lines.

Some fisherwomen mentioned to SK that nowadays, they take longer to catch decent-sized fish and have to travel farther away to capture fish. This is particularly true for many communities where they compete with licensed fishers or are closer to municipal markets. When asked to name 10 fish resources that they catch, in addition to all others, fisherwomen will always mention the *kabatia* (*Lethrinus* spp.), *kake* (*Lutjanus fulvivflamma*) and *ki* (*Upeneus* spp.). This means that these fish resources are ubiquitous in Fiji and found in many of the areas that fisherwomen visit. From the *dausiwa*, we draw lessons in patience in order to understand the behaviour of fish that are caught by fishing lines.

### Daububuru contributions

The *daububuru* are the experts in freshwater resources (e.g. freshwater fish and eels), which they catch by groping for them using their hands and feet. This is purely for subsistence fishing, and the fisherwomen share their catch with fellow fisherwomen and sometimes with their neighbors. *Buburu*, or groping, is a fishing method done in small streams and tidal pools where fisherwomen or children jump into the stream and block off a part of it before they start chasing fish or eels toward the nets or capturing them with their hands. Children or men who accompany women during these trips are usually given the task of chasing freshwater resources into the nets. An expert *daububuru* understands the behaviour of the fish in small streams, and uses their feet and hands to feel around the muddy substrates or along the streamside to find the hiding spots of freshwater fish.

### Conclusion

Through expert fisherwomen, we learn that knowledge of marine and freshwater resources not only comes from daily in-field experience, but also from knowledge passed down through generations. Locally, fisherwoman transmit their knowledge and in turn contribute to in-field science baselines, which the fishers they teach get to learn. As custodians of the environment, fishers (both women and men) possess knowledge of how to improve and sustainably manage the limited resources they have. As the main contributors to global challenges such as pollution, climate change, overfishing, loss of resources and the loss of languages, humans need to rethink their approach to sustainability. This article provides insights of fisherwomen who understand their environment and resources, and use their IFK to systematically exploit resources. Moreover, fisherwomen believe that the responsibility and burden falls on the shoulder of everyone who uses resources in order to contribute to creating a sustainable ocean.

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# Gleaning the expanse: Gender and invisibilised dimensions of fisheries in American Samoa

Jonathan Fisk,<sup>1</sup> Naomi Matagi<sup>2,3</sup> and Danika Kleiber<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

The role of gender and gendered social systems within fisheries is an understudied topic, limiting the scope of our understanding of fisheries and their overarching socioecological systems and perpetuating marginalisation along gender lines. To elucidate the dimensions of fisheries that are often invisibilised<sup>4</sup> under dominant approaches to studying fisheries, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 women and *fa'afafine*<sup>5</sup> in American Samoa about their fisheries practices and their broader relations and interactions with the seas. Four key themes from the interviews were: 1) the significance of intergenerational relationships for the perpetuation of fishing knowledges and practices; 2) the critical role of cultural subsistence in the form of locally caught fish for elder care; 3) the cultural prominence of fisheries-related practices that would usually be excluded from fisheries studies, particularly domestic labour, art, and design; and 4) the need for a more expansive understanding of, and engagement with, gender in order to include the experiences and insights of people of all genders, particularly those outside of the dominant binary categorisation imposed especially on Indigenous communities via colonialism.

## Introduction

Fisheries research tends to focus on fishing as it is predominantly understood, as a masculinised practice, and the men who fish in such ways (Kleiber et al. 2015; Weeratunge et al. 2010). Practices interpreted as feminine, such as gleaning and cooking, are often left out of analyses and subsequent management considerations (Kleiber et al. 2015; Weeratunge et al. 2010). These gendered biases perpetuate inaccurate depictions of socioecological systems by dismissing women from the narrative of who participates in fisheries, how fisheries function across geographies and time, and the complex relationalities people hold with the seascape. Such biases in research and management can leave women who participate in fisheries marginalised and underprioritised for management intervention and resource distribution. Furthermore, even when a gender-conscious approach is taken for studying fisheries, where the experiences and insights of women are sought and focused on, researchers and managers can impose and perpetuate an interpretation of gender that fails to consider or include the experiences and insights of people who do not conform to binary gender norms. Not only are these people excluded, but Indigenous cultural manifestations of gender are further invisibilised, thereby reinforcing colonial efforts of cultural erasure. Such erasure not only limits the breadth and accuracy of studies into fisheries and seascape relationalities, but also severely truncates the potential efficacy and equity of resulting management actions (or inactions). In this article, “seascape relationalities” refer to the varied and interconnected ways people relate to and interact with all aspects of the seas – tangible and intangible – and at all scales, from personal to societal, including the beliefs and values that inform and are informed by these relationships.

To gain a better understanding of how gendered dynamics intersect with, are informed by, and elucidate otherwise hidden dynamics of fisheries and their overarching socioecological systems, we focused our research on American Samoa. As a territory of the United States, colonialism and capitalism have transformed, and continue to transform, the socioecological seascape of the islands, particularly in regards to fisheries. Additionally, American Samoa, like other United States island territories and commonwealths, occupies a liminal political space where residents are not afforded the full rights of citizens living in a US state, but US federal regulations are applied to their surrounding exclusive economic zone. Territorial communities have been identified as underserved fisheries communities by the National Marine Fisheries Service Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy (in prep), in acknowledgement of the marginalisation of territorial fisheries research and management. Such marginalisation also manifests in the invisibilisation of subsistence and cultural fishing practices in research and management considerations. This work is part of a larger effort to devote more intentional and rigorous attention to American Samoa to ensure that cultural fishing practices flourish into perpetuity.

For this project, we interviewed women and *fa'afafine* in American Samoa about their fishing practices and the various ways they relate with the seascape, whether through certain cultural practices, beliefs or insights they hold about the seas, or anything else of particular interest to the interviewees. These interviews were conducted to help gather knowledge about the dynamics of gender and fisheries in American Samoa, both in terms of how gendered social systems affect seascape relationalities, and how focusing on gender groups often excluded from fisheries studies can reveal invisibilised aspects of fisheries and their socioecological systems.

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4 The term invisibilise means to marginalise or otherwise erase the presence, contributions or issues pertaining to an individual, group or phenomena.

5 *Fa'afafine* is a third gender within traditional Samoan culture. *Fa'afafine* are assigned male at birth, but do not identify as men, and some identify as trans women (McMullin and Kihara 2018).

Naomi Matagi interviewed 28 people between July and September 2022. Interviewees' experiences and locations of residence spanned much of the geography of the islands. Interviews were conducted in Samoan or English, depending on the interviewee's preference. Matagi translated Samoan interviews into English for analysis. In several cases, Matagi found that interviewees were more willing to speak when they were not being audio recorded; in those cases, interviews were documented via handwritten notes taken by Matagi during and after the interview.

The interviews were semi-structured, with several guiding questions pertaining to fishing practices in particular, such as who taught the interviewee to fish, which marine taxa they target, and how they like to prepare and distribute their catch. The interviews flowed conversationally based on interviewees' interests and individualities. Though focused on fishing practices themselves, the interviewees also touched on many interrelated subjects such as cooking and distributing catch, marine education, and the role of the ocean in art and design. From these interviews, four key themes emerged and are discussed herein: 1) the intergenerational perpetuation of fishing knowledge and practice; 2) the role of cultural subsistence for elder care; 3) the intersection of domestic labour and art with fisheries; and 4) the situatedness of *fa'afafine* within fisheries and seascape relationalities.

## Intergenerational knowledge perpetuation

The interviewees who knew how to fish revealed considerable insight into how fishing knowledge is passed on. Fishing along the shore for octopus and gleaning for clams were the most common practices that were mentioned, almost exclusively taught to interviewees by their grandmothers and other women in their family. There were very few, albeit notable, exceptions where the interviewee was taught by their father or uncle, and learned other styles of fishing such as shoreline rod fishing or forms of boat fishing. More so than the relationship between parents and their children, the relationship between grandmothers and their granddaughters served as the predominating nexus through which fishing knowledge and practices were passed on to the interviewees. In addition to emphasising the cultural importance of the relationship between grandmothers and granddaughters, these results highlight the gendered stratification of fishing practices and how fishing knowledge is passed down through generations.

Interviewees learned how to fish when they were young by watching older family members fish (learning through observation), or by fishing together (learning through direct practice). When time is available, the older generations share fishing knowledges and practices with younger generations, thus deepening the younger generations' relationships with the seas. This also reinforces social cohesion within families across multiple generations and ensures cultural perpetuation. However, because these teaching methods are so time-intensive, passing this knowledge from generation to generation is not always possible.

Several interviewees expressed regret for not learning how to fish, not teaching their children how to fish, or both. As one woman stated, "I am not going to lie, there are times where I regret not carrying on that skill my mom had. I could have passed [it] down to my children, especially my daughters because they love swimming at the wharf in front of our village." Similarly, a few interviewees noted a decrease in the number of people in younger generations who fished, as well as the generational decline of certain fishing practices. These declines were occasionally attributed to the changing interests of younger generations, but one prevailing theme was the lack of time and capacity needed to perpetuate fishing knowledges and engage in fishing itself. About a quarter of the interviewees mentioned working long hours and struggling to make ends meet, often leaving them with little time for fishing and teaching the younger generation how to fish. This has led to an overarching fear of the decline in interest for fishing as well as fishing as a cultural practice as the reliance on store-bought foods and imports increases in the islands. Maintaining these intergenerational relationships, particularly between grandmothers and granddaughters, plus prioritizing the time and resources necessary for teaching younger generations how to fish will be crucial for ensuring the perpetuation of fishing knowledges and practices.

## Cultural subsistence and elder care

Mirroring the theme of the intergenerational transmission of fishing knowledges and practices was that of caring for older family members. According to over a quarter of the interviewees, a key role of their fishing was to feed older generations, either directly within their family or by sharing in their communities. Attached to this practice of providing fish as sustenance for elder people in the community was the understanding that local fish are tastier, healthier, and all around more preferable and suited for venerated elders than imported fish or other foods. Several interviewees even distinguished between fish caught within particular waters across the islands, having clear preferences and discernment over what best suits them and those they feed. This underscores traditionally caught and harvested fish as a form of "cultural subsistence," "a holistic approach to cultivating or harvesting subsistence resources (i.e. crops, fish, cattle) resulting in cross-cutting spiritual, physical, mental, educational, and environmental benefits" (Pascua et al. 2017:472). For those fishers and the elders they feed, fish is far more than just a source of protein – it is a connection to their families, to the seas, to their ancestors, and to their culture.

This theme is both a complement and a direct contrast to the decline in fishing practices noted by interviewees. If people fish less often, and fishing decreases among the younger generations, then it stands to reason that there might be a reduced supply of preferred, holistically nourishing fish for feeding older generations. Given the precarity and insecurity of aging generations, as well as the cultural impetus of caring for elders in American Samoa, these results highlight the critical nature of the perpetuation of fishing knowledges and practices for the sake of elder care. Ensuring a stable and abundant supply of locally caught fish for older generations is imperative for upholding cultural values and cultivating communal welfare across generations.



## Hidden dimensions: Domestic labour and art

Most interviewees discussed practices surrounding cooking and distributing their catches or the catches of others. Interviewees were quick to share their favourite ways of preparing certain fish and marine fauna, as well as how they cook for their families and for the community, especially Sunday feasts. The frequency and enthusiasm with which interviewees discussed this highlights the significance of cooking and preparing of catches; for most marine taxa, it is the process through which we go from raw catch to cultural subsistence. The preparation of fish catches is an entire domain of fishery practices, requiring extensive knowledge and skill, as well as entailing hours of labour, often invisibilised and underplayed within socioecological systems. Such invisibilisation is facilitated and augmented by the gendered dynamics of cooking and related domestic labour. The interviews revealed that cooking for the families was predominantly done by women, regardless of whether or not the women themselves caught or gleaned the fish. Ensuring the perpetuation of fishing traditions and traditional seascape relationalities should entail paying attention to the aspects of domestic labour – in this case cooking – associated with fishing, as they are vital to the functioning of the system as a whole and the wellbeing of fishing communities.

Another oft-forgotten aspect of socioecological systems is how fisheries and the sea are pivotal to art and design, whether traditional, contemporary, or a blend of both. Several interviewees cited the seas as vital for providing inspiration for, or being a conduit of, their art and designs. The art may be expressed in crafting traditional wear, creating ocean-themed designs for community events, photographing the seas and the many flora and fauna found within the seas, or sharing songs, both new and old. The sea and fishing function as a focal point from which the art and design of these interviewees flowed. Some interviewees sourced materials directly from the ocean and shoreline for their works, particularly shells for the creation of *teuga fa'asamoa* (traditional jewelry and clothes). Such practices highlight the values of realms of fisheries beyond how we normally conceptualise it, beyond the acts of catching, sharing and selling for consumption.

## Fa'afafine and expansive genders

In striving for a more expansive and inclusive understanding of gendered relationalities with fisheries and the seas, we interviewed several *fa'afafine* about their experiences with, and insights into, fisheries and the seas of American Samoa. Although fishing itself was a theme in this subset of interviews, other relational aspects emerged. *Fa'afafine* tended to talk more directly about their relationship with the ocean and how they relate their identity (both individual and communal) and sense of self to the seas. “*Fa'afafine* are one of the keepers of genealogy, and the tall tales of the voyages and spiritual realm unleashed... If you look closely at these designs on anyone's traditional tattoo, it is designs that link back to the ocean and land, the seagulls, the ocean animals and land animals all represented on the human skin... Everything is intertwined with nature and especially our ocean.” The seas

and fishing are integral to their understanding of who they are as *fa'afafine* and as American Samoans. Additionally, *fa'afafine* were more likely than others to discuss how their relationships with the ocean inform art and design, whether it is their own art or the art prevalent within their communities. These interviewees also noted that the seas, and their intimate relationship with the seas, were pivotal for the proliferation of certain cultural practices and community experiences, particularly in regards to traditional stories and oral histories.

Several of the *fa'afafine* interviewed also explained various forms of social exclusion they face. While their labour and output are readily relied on by community members, their full selves are not valued, and their opinions and desires are often not considered. Several *fa'afafine* even expressed their appreciation to the interviewer for taking the time to seek them out since their thoughts and voices are rarely valued or sought after for consideration. These results highlight the importance of being intentionally expansive in our engagements with fisheries and seascape relationalities. By conventionally interviewing only those within the common, narrower conceptions of who qualifies as a fisher, we perhaps unwittingly exclude important members of communities whose experiences and insights are invaluable and vital for ensuring that management actions uphold the welfare of the entire community. This not only truncates the breadth and depth of our research and resulting management actions, but also perpetuates the exclusion of marginalised communities, whether marginalised along the lines of gender or other facets of identity or position within society. More expansive engagements with gender and a broader consideration of who is vested in fisheries, and has valuable insights into fisheries and their overarching socioecological systems, will foster more profound research and more equitable management.

## Conclusion

Our interviews with women and *fa'afafine* in American Samoa revealed rich insights about fishing practices and broader relationalities with the seas in the region, many of which likely would have been missed had we not taken a gender-intentional approach. Overall, the findings highlight: 1) the importance of intergenerational relationships for the perpetuation of fishing knowledges and practices; 2) the pivotal role of cultural subsistence by way of fishing for the care of elders; 3) the prominence of cultural practices that overlap and are interconnected with fisheries that would normally be excluded from fisheries considerations, particularly domestic labour as well as art and design; and 4) the need for expansive engagements with gender as a construct and lived experience in regard to fisheries and seascape relationalities, particularly through the explicit inclusion of people of genders outside of the dominant, colonial binary. Even further, the results of this study illustrate how fisheries and the seas function as a nucleus through which people situate themselves and their identities as well as their communities and cultures, obtain sustenance both materially and emotionally, and facilitate their broader tapestry of relations and cultural practices. Fisheries manifest and implicate far beyond the bounds of the practice of fishing itself, and fisheries research and

management should recognise and consider this fuller scope of seascape relationalities in order to ensure efficacy and equity in our work. Such recognition includes:

- preserving and facilitating intergenerational knowledge transference opportunities, in terms of both time and capital;
- prioritising the accessibility of cultural subsistence in conjunction with meeting conservation and fisheries management goals;
- broadening internal conceptions of who counts as “fishers” to account for those who glean and harvest from, or otherwise relate with, the ocean beyond the act of fishing for consumption;
- updating methods for gathering demographics data to account for people whose genders exist outside of the binary; and
- explicitly seeking out women, trans people, and others of diverse genders for interviews and collaboration when surveying and engaging with communities.

## Acknowledgements

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# Progressing gender equality in fisheries by building strategic partnerships with development organisations

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*The fisheries sector has made exceedingly slow progress when it comes to valuing and implementing gender equality, which is relevant and integral to fisheries planning, management and development. While commitments, attention and approaches to address gender inequality in the sector are increasing, many policies, projects, programmes and data collection tools are still “gender blind”, thereby perpetuating harmful gender norms.*

## Introduction

Gender equality is a universal, agreed-to principle that has been widely adopted but implemented to varying levels in different sectors. In fisheries and aquaculture, global estimates of women's contributions are constrained by the lack of sex- or gender-disaggregated data along the value chain. In Oceania, about a quarter of all small-scale fishers are women. It is estimated that 25% of Pacific Island small-scale fishers are women, with 45% of these fishers in Melanesia, 31% in Micronesia and 19% in Polynesia (Harper et al. 2020). In aggregate, female workers comprise the majority of post-harvest workers, and post-harvest workers outnumber fishers by about two to one, resulting in women comprising 47% of the estimated workforce in the fisheries sector (World Bank 2012). Large numbers of post-harvest workers typically are engaged in processing in industrial factories, such as those who process tuna in Fiji and Solomon Islands (Barclay et al. 2022).

Increasing evidence suggests that gender inequality can limit the effectiveness of sustainable fisheries (Rohe et al. 2018; Thomas et al. 2021). For example, in Fiji, the exclusion of women from community-based fisheries management is leading to the overharvesting of some fish species from mangroves and seagrass nursery areas as more people engage in commercial fisheries to supplement household incomes (Thomas et al. 2021). In a remote village in Solomon Islands, male-dominated governance and decision-making has led to the placement of a traditional marine closure over an area where women fish for subsistence, without discussing it with them, thus leading to low compliance with the resource management rule (Rohe et al. 2018).

With limited gender knowledge, skills and capacity, fisheries practitioners who apply gender-inclusive approaches have set a low benchmark for acceptable gender practice and policy (Lawless et al. 2021; Mangubhai and Lawless 2021).

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Williams (2019:6) argued that “those interested in promoting gender equality need to develop strategies to motivate the mainstream actors to use a gender lens”, because fisheries institutions were unlikely to integrate gender into their work on their own. So, what is the way forward?

Development organisations have a long history of working on gender equality in the Pacific Islands region. This may provide a unique opportunity to build on and invest in partnerships and networks with development organisations in order to strengthen the capacity for gender inclusion in practice into individual sectors, including and especially, fisheries (Mangubhai and Lawless 2021). Fisheries organisations could both learn and adapt to their sector the development knowledge that is true to gender equality principles. In other words, when it comes to gender equity, the fisheries sector has the opportunity to avoid repeating the growing and learning pains of the development sector, and instead benefit from lessons of the past, and tap into the current knowledge on gender best practice that is already tailored to specific cultural and geographic contexts.

Our study aimed to provide guidance and recommendations on areas of strategic partnership or opportunities more generally, and to strengthen the capacity of fisheries practitioners and organisations to integrate gender best practice into the sector. To do this, we first compared the differences in how fisheries versus development practitioners and/or their organisations view and invest in gender. This was done by: 1) examining the different motivations for practitioners considering gender in their work; 2) assessing practitioners’ awareness of gender commitments (regionally and globally), and their organisations’ respective investments in gender focal points, gender training and gender networks; and 3) examining the approaches perceived as successful versus failures by the two sectors.

This helped set up a comparison between the fisheries sector (limited knowledge and experience in gender) and the development sector (decades of experience and learning). We then had development practitioners, and gender and fisheries experts describe the opportunities to meaningfully engage in gender within the fisheries sector. By reflecting on the differences in the way the two sectors viewed and invested in gender equity, and the opportunities (as well as the challenges or limitations), we provided guidance and recommendations on areas of strategic partnership between the fisheries and development sectors. This was done to mainstream gender and strengthen capacity in the fisheries sector, thereby fast-tracking decades of learning to make more meaningful progress towards gender equality.

We conducted key informant interviews with fisheries (n=68) and development (n=32) practitioners (including managers) in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu between 2018 and 2019. Practitioners came from a diversity of organisations, including government agencies, local and international non-governmental organisations, and regional and global



organisations engaging in issues that impact gender equality. Independent consultants and researchers (academic and non-academic) with expertise in fisheries or gender at the national and/or regional level were also interviewed and are referred to as experts.

## Key research findings

Drawing on decades of knowledge, learning and experiences from experts within the development sector, we discuss and recommend areas of strategic partnership or opportunities more generally to mainstream gender into fisheries and to strengthen capacity in the sector. Our analysis highlights divergence between fisheries and development practitioners and/or their organisations that can serve as pivot points to change the way gender is integrated into fisheries. In this context, a pivot point indicates an opportune point of reference to take fisheries organisations away from their current tinkering (gender exploitative) or tailoring (gender accommodative) pathways, and change to a transformative pathway and the long-term agenda of gender equality (Lawless et al. 2022; Mangubhai et al. 2022). These opportunities include:

- re-evaluating organisational motivations for working on gender and shifting values;
- investing in the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming;
- shifting understanding of what constitutes successful gender approaches; and
- investing in gender networks and strategic coalitions.

Below we describe the likely pitfalls that the fisheries sector can avoid, and how fisheries practitioners can progress commitments on gender equality if they embrace these opportunities. We argue that fundamental to the success of such a partnership is the ability and willingness of fisheries and development practitioners, and their respective

organisations, to work collaboratively towards gender equality in the fisheries sector.

## Shifting values

The primary motivation of fisheries and development organisations for considering gender in their work is quite different in terms of values, goals and ideas of what activities are considered to be successful. Development practitioners recognised and responded quickly that gender equality was a fundamental human right (inherent), while there was less consensus and more hesitancy among fisheries practitioners, who largely saw gender as a means for their organisation to achieve other outcomes such as fisheries sustainability, productivity and profitability (instrumental).

This is evidenced by fisheries practitioners who reported that their organisations considered gender in their work for multiple reasons, most notably “to increase the likelihood of sustainably managed fisheries” (28.8%) or “to increase the number of women participating in our programmes” (24.2%) (Fig. 1). In contrast, the primary reason for development organisations to include gender in their work was “because we recognise gender equality as a fundamental human right (78.1%)”.

These findings are consistent with a growing number of studies that suggest some sectors only value gender equality as an instrument to achieving or improving outcomes such as productivity, conservation, management or development, rather than as a fundamental human right (Lawless et al. 2021, 2022). While instrumental approaches or framing are easier for fisheries practitioners to understand and implement than trying to address complex issues of power and social justice in different cultural contexts (Kabeer 1999), these frames may be problematic. They can lead to inadequate interventions and investments to address the underlying causes of inequalities that exclude or marginalise women in decision-making, and may even

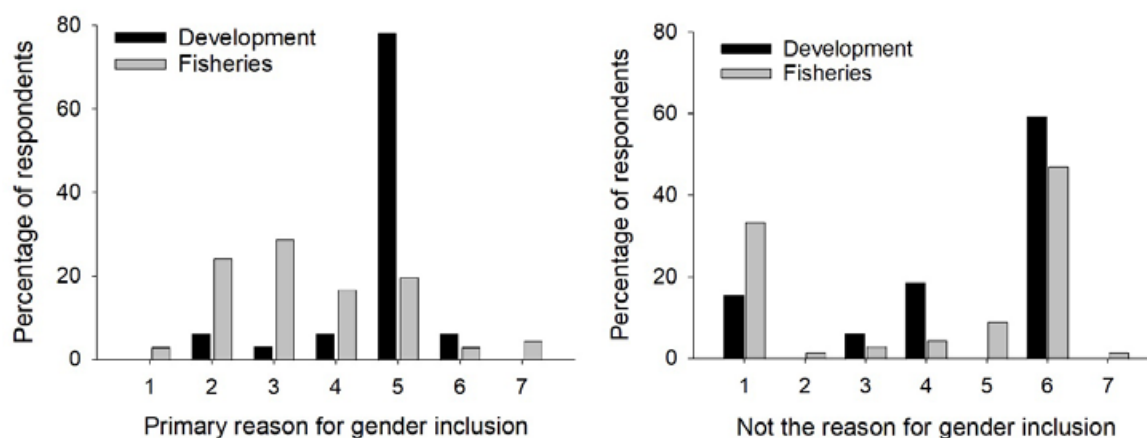


Figure 1. The main reasons fisheries and development organisations include gender in their work. 1 = To increase the number of women in our organisation, 2 = To increase the number of women participating in our programs, 3 = To increase the likelihood of sustainably managed fisheries/sustainable development, 4 = To increase the productivity and profitability of coastal fisheries/livelihoods, 5 = Because we recognise gender equality as a fundamental human right, 6 = Because it is something our donor requires us to do, 7 = Other.

strengthen negative gendered power dynamics that may be harmful to women and men (Nazneen and Hickey 2019).

Therefore, we argue that a strategic partnership between development and fisheries organisations may help the latter to understand the sectoral advancements that come – and the sectoral pitfalls that may be avoided – when gender equality is valued intrinsically and recognised as a fundamental human right. For example, gender equality will enable women to share and contribute their knowledge on fisheries to improve management (Vunisea 2008), or pass on moral and social values to the next generation to equitably improve marine stewardship (Ram-Bidesi 2015).

## Gender mainstreaming

“For me it took quite a while to be convinced on gender. A three-hour session on gender for the whole year is not enough to be convincing.  
Pacific Island government official

To improve gender integration within the fisheries sector, we asked practitioners working in the development sector if they perceived there were any opportunities in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu or the wider Pacific Islands region to encourage meaningful engagement on gender issues in coastal fisheries management. Their recommendations focused on the factors or enabling environments that underpin, and are critical to, the success of gender mainstreaming efforts.

These perceived opportunities fell into two broad categories: 1) institutionalisation of gender, and 2) gender inclusion approaches for the implementation of projects or programmes (Fig. 2). The practitioners recommended increased investments in six priority areas that are also reflected in national gender audits in the Pacific Islands region (Pacific Community 2016):

- political will (i.e. actions taken on gender equality commitments and formalised within systems);
- legal and policy frameworks (i.e. laws and policies to reflect international and national gender equality commitments);
- organisational culture (i.e. attitudes of staff, policies and systems in place to support gender equality);
- accountability and responsibility (i.e. monitoring and evaluation to track progress towards gender-equality impact);
- technical capacity (i.e. skills and experience of organisation to mainstream gender across projects and programmes); and
- adequate human and financial resources.

Currently, the responsibility for delivering on gender mainstreaming and gender equality commitments lies with the Ministry of Women (especially in Fiji and Vanuatu), which has little authority to influence other sectoral ministries, thus enabling fisheries ministries to abdicate their roles and responsibilities in addressing gender inequalities (Mangubhai et al. 2022; Pacific Community 2016). As a result, gender

is not widely communicated and mainstreamed into governance systems or across sectors in order to address the structures and relations of power and privilege that produce gender inequalities and discrimination. This in turn makes it challenging for fisheries organisations to address sectoral gender issues on their own, especially with their current low capacity for gender inclusion (Mangubhai and Lawless 2021).

Development practitioners in the Pacific Islands region can help with the institutional adoption of gender mainstreaming and addressing issues of power, discrimination and privilege in sectoral practices, particularly fisheries activities targeted at rural poverty, food and nutritional security, and livelihoods. Furthermore, a strategic partnership with development organisations, including the Ministry of Women within individual countries, may help ensure that gender is mainstreamed into fisheries, and there are increased investments at the household, communal and societal levels.

## Adopting gender best practice

“Most times when decisions were made women weren’t participating. In Fiji we have community-based management, which means ‘no take’ areas are often closest to the villages - and women are the most impacted, so we need to find a more inclusive way of managing fisheries.  
Pacific NGO representative

We contrasted the 15 most successful gender approaches identified by fisheries and development organisations, and found little overlap, with the exception of three approaches: 1) the use of rights-based tools, 2) gender sensitisation training, and 3) the application of multiple approaches (Fig. 3).



Figure 2. Opportunities identified by development practitioners to mainstream gender into the fisheries sector. Purple = institutional culture and practice, Green = practice for implementation of projects and programmes.

The approaches being enacted and perceived as successful diverged notably between development and fisheries practitioners. Development practitioners described investments in structural and systemic change (e.g. gender mainstreaming, behaviour change) as successful for achieving gender equality, whereas those in fisheries focused on “quick fix” approaches that reach women as individuals but do not ultimately benefit, empower or transform their lives (Mangubhai and Lawless 2021). The other notable difference was that development organisations focused on actions that addressed societal change, while fisheries organisations worked with women as individuals.

The differences in favoured approaches are not just a reflection of different motivations and values, but also of a greater understanding by development practitioners and their organisations that gender equality is a relational issue that will not be solved by simply empowering women as individuals, but also requires structural and systemic reform (Chant and Sweetman 2012) to be addressed by governments, development institutions, private sector, and society as a whole. Furthermore, the approaches used by development organisations: 1) avoid conflating gender with women, which is prevalent in the fisheries sector (Lawless et al. 2021; Mangubhai et al. 2022); 2) do not frame women’s positions as a disadvantage (i.e. men’s positions of power as the norm); and 3) do not make women solely responsible for addressing structural inequalities (Nazneen and Hickey 2019).

A partnership approach is strategic because development practitioners have more experience dealing with resistance to, or misalignments with, gender equality principles; for example, those stemming from religious interpretations (Rakau et al. 2019). According to national census data, Christianity is the dominant religion in the Pacific, including in Fiji (64% of the population), Solomon Islands (92%)

and Vanuatu (83%). Religion has a strong role in shaping gender ideologies and viewpoints on gender equality, and its interpretations – especially those promoting strong patriarchal doctrines – can be barriers to engaging in meaningful dialogue (Alexander 2018; Seguino 2011). Religion was highlighted by development practitioners (not by those in fisheries) as a barrier to gender inclusion, despite its dominant role in shaping social rules, cultural norms and behaviours in Melanesia. Development practitioners recognise the large influence that religion, religious institutions and their leaders have on their congregations and followers, and highlighted that working with faith-based organisations may help the fisheries sector address resistance to gender equality, and tackle more harmful gender norms (e.g. controlling access to fisheries resources).

## Investing in gender networks and strategic coalitions

Most fisheries practitioners and/or their organisations had few connections to development organisations with regards to knowledge of, and commitments to, gender equality. In contrast, development organisations had strong networks among themselves but were poorly connected to sectoral partners, including those in fisheries. This suggests that working separately may be preventing cross-learning, knowledge and skills transfer, and collaborations to mainstream gender into all sectors and facets of society.

The Pacific Gender Coordination Group (formerly the Pacific Gender Taskforce), established in 2017, may be one opportunity for fisheries organisations that are committed to gender equality to quickly broaden their gender networks. The group meets virtually every two months and provides exposure to Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific agencies, United Nations agencies, women-led and feminist civil society organisations, and broader groups of partners working on the advancement of gender equality across the

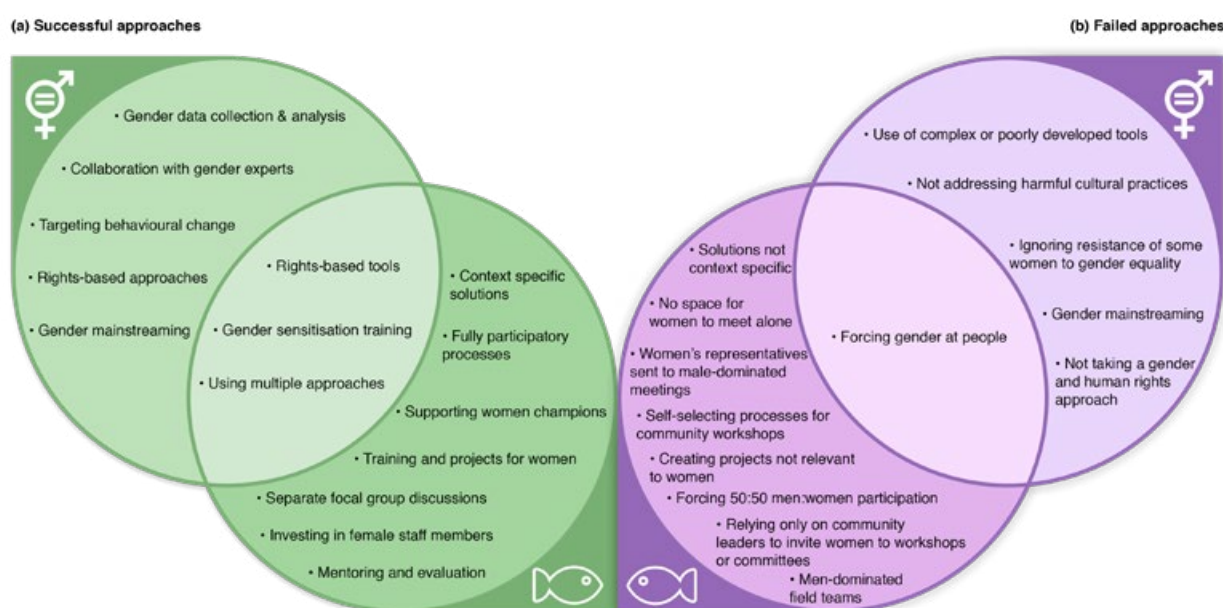


Figure 3. Contrasting the fifteen most (a) successful (green colour) and (b) failed (purple colour) approaches used by fisheries (fish symbol) versus development (female-male/gender equality symbol) organisations for gender inclusion. The overlap in the circles indicates approaches highlighted by both types of organisations.



Pacific. The mandate of the group is to ensure greater and continued collaboration, cooperation, and coordination between partners that are working on gender, recognising the different organisational mandates and values that each brings to the realisation of sustainable development, and the fulfilment of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Pacific”

Given that progress on gender equality is slow, building coalitions that purposely forge collaborative work between development and fisheries sectors on producing tangible outcomes in specific sectors may succeed in improving gender equality from the ground up. Coalitions between development organisations and those that work in specific sectors (e.g. fisheries) can strengthen social movements, and may have a higher likelihood of getting political commitments to change national structures and systems of governance that shape and influence gender equality aspirations and outcomes for society. Laurel Weldon and Htun (2013) highlighted that national feminist organisations are able to use regional and international conventions and agreements to leverage and advance gender equality. These coalitions may be especially strong if they are led by national organisations capable of overcoming political resistance to “outside” influence or labelling gender equality as “not the Pacific way”.

Although a number of non-governmental organisations that work on fisheries attend regional meetings, they mainly focus on environmental issues, and occasionally labour abuses at sea, ignoring gender inequality and women's fisheries issues. At present, women's collective voices are not represented in such regional forums. A strategic alliance between gender equality advocacy groups and ministries of women may help strengthen and increase the number of voices advocating for gender equality to be integrated into the fisheries sector. These voices, however, would need credibility in fisheries issues to succeed.

A full copy of the paper is freely available for downloading:

Mangubhai S., Lawless S., Cowley A., Mangubhai J.P. and Williams M. 2022. Progressing gender equality in fisheries by building strategic partnerships with development organisations. *World Development* 158:105975. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.105975>

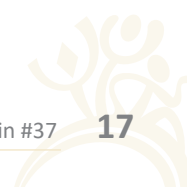
## Conclusion

We are interested in how development organisations can contribute to breaking through the resistance to gender in fisheries and increase the uptake of gender-focused action to become gender responsive and eventually gender transformative. We have discussed in detail what fisheries practitioners and their organisations gain by partnering development organisations with decades of gender experience. However, we have also addressed why development organisations would want to engage with a sector such as fisheries. We, therefore, conclude by speculating that the benefits to development organisations are threefold. First, the cooperation would help them break out of their own isolation and apply their knowledge and expertise in a key economic and food security sector for Melanesians. Second, progress at the sectoral level would contribute to progress at the whole-of-society level and welfare levels. Finally, lessons from fisheries – one of the hardest challenges in gender equality – could be valuable for development organisations tackling other sectors with renewed insights.

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# Men experience gender-based violence, too: Exploring the roles and experiences of women and men in tuna fisheries in Fiji

Victoria M. Syddall

## Introduction

Gender experts in the fisheries field herald the need to understand and take into consideration the role and experiences of women in fisheries management and practice. Women experience gender-based inequalities, including gender stereotyping and gender-based violence that stem from behaviours, roles, power relations, policies, programmes and services that differentially impact on the social, ecological, economic, cultural and political realities of people. My research reveals, however, that men also experience gender inequalities but receive less attention in recent gender-based research in fisheries. Moreover, there are gaps in understanding about how the compounding impacts of multiple identities (religion, nationality, gender, age) might make it difficult for policy-makers and researchers to tease out complex social issues in fisheries.

This research is a first step towards examining gender issues in the western and central Pacific tuna socioecological system (Fig. 1). Applying the methodology presented in Syddall et al. (2021), a mixed-method, place-specific, case study approach was applied to conduct research in 2018 to 2020, including a two-week visit in May 2019 to Suva, Fiji and two villages, Waiqanake and Kalekana. Research questions included: “What role(s) do women play in tuna fisheries in Fiji”, and, “How has the development of the fishery impacted these roles?” Particular attention was given to understanding who benefits from tuna fisheries development and associated policies, and what the unintended impacts are on women. Nineteen semi-structured interviews and a semi-structured focus group discussion were undertaken with representatives

of Fiji’s tuna fishery (interviews) and with six women from Kalekana Village (focus group discussion). Interview participants included industry representatives, independent consultants, regional fisheries managers, non-governmental organisations, academics, recreational fishers, and fishers in Waiqanake Village. Three key findings emerged: 1) traditional gendered roles remain, whereby women are marginalised in either invisible or low paid and unskilled roles, and violence is sanctioned; 2) gender mainstreaming of policy and practice remain simplistic and narrow, but are transitioning towards more equitable outcomes for women; and 3) failure to consider gender within the context of western and central Pacific tuna social-ecological system leads to unintended outcomes that undermine potential benefits of the fishery to broader society, especially to women. These findings are discussed in depth in Syddall et al. (2022). This article highlights one important feature that requires further enquiry. The role of men and an exploration of masculinity is given less attention, but the gender issues cause immense harm, particularly in the Fijian tuna fishery, and extend widely.

Fiji’s tuna fishery, targeting mainly albacore and yellowfin tuna, supports over 4000 jobs, from fisheries to exports, and contributes USD 48 million to the economy from pre-harvest through to post-harvest processing and exporting revenues. Importantly, Suva acts as a hub for the Pacific through its freight connections, infrastructure and labour force. Along the supply chain, Fijian nationals (both women and men) are involved directly and indirectly with this fishery. However, gender issues, including gender stereotyping and gender-based violence, are fraught throughout the socioecological system of Fiji’s tuna fishery.

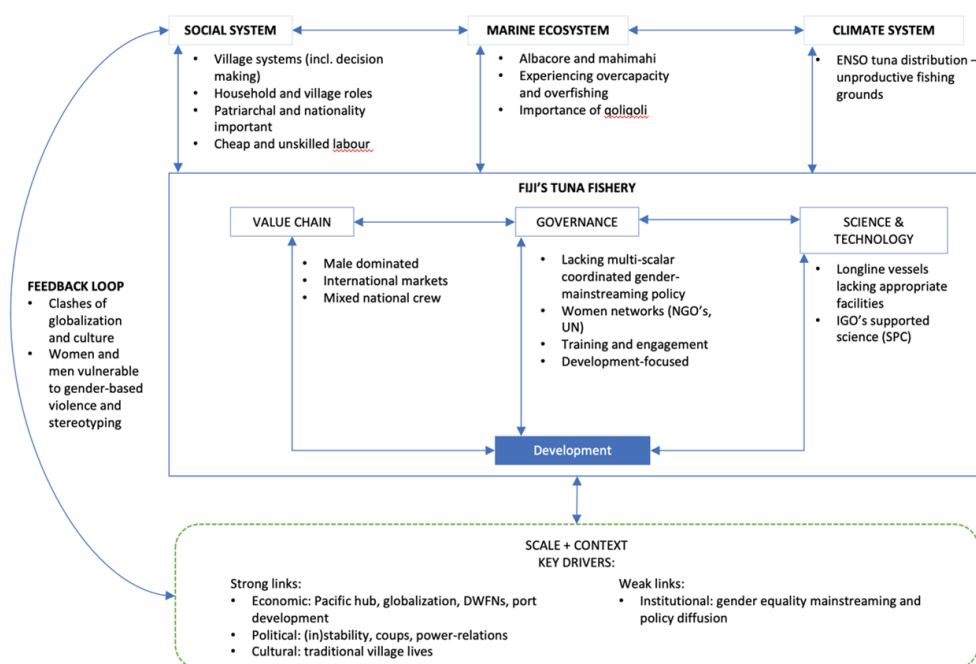


Figure 1. Fiji's tuna fishery socioecological system.



## Gender-based violence at sea

Fiji's tuna fishery is "women intensive but male dominated", meaning female workers are consistently overrepresented in low skilled, poorly paid and undervalued positions, while men dominate more powerful (i.e. higher skilled, better paid, more valued) positions. The trend looks to be changing, where more and more women are being included across the board from fishing to policy-making and in leadership roles, although progress is slow and met with its own challenges. For example, while women are becoming trained to go on boats, boats may not be well equipped materially (e.g. separate facilities) and culturally. Meanwhile, men at sea have, and continue to experience, gender-based issues onboard fishing vessels. The mothers, wives, daughters and sisters to crewman are often neglected when considering fisheries economies and supply chains, despite being impacted by their family members' long ventures away from home and the village. These women were the focus of this paper and research. I reframe issues generally considered "slavery at sea" on "risky" and "violent" tuna fishing foreign vessels as gender-based violence.

Violence is an ambiguous term (Stanko 2003) that is context driven (Kaladelfos and Featherstone 2014), and involves acts resulting from power relationships, including threats and intimidation, neglect, physical, psychological, sexual acts or acts of omission (including inadequate sanitation, water, food, and medical attention) (Bott et al. 2005; World Health Organization 2022). Gender-based violence is prominently and commonly associated with violence against women and girls. If used in the context of acts against men in the fishing industry for men, research centres on sexual violence or military violence (Carpenter 2017; Christian et al. 2011; Peretz and Vidmar 2021). Research has adopted a wider more inclusive definition for gender-based violence to discuss a range of harms that are not currently understood within the fisheries industry community: "violence that is targeted at women or men because of their sex and/or their socially constructed gender roles" (Carpenter 2006:83).

Violence onboard fishing vessels has included murders and injuries, but also the everyday violence that precedes these

most violent acts, and which have been documented as "slavery at sea" in the literature but not tagged as gender-based violence. In my research, this is considered to be gender-based due to the strong gender divisions of labour in the value chain being either highly masculine or highly feminine (Barclay et al. 2021). As characterised and reported in our paper, violence by men against men tends to take on the hegemonic masculinity position (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 2006), but these assumptions about men and masculinity are taken for granted, and suppress variations and differences in power relations and social interactions. Understanding the fluidity of power, culture and historical workings on masculinity helps reshape how violent acts onboard fishing vessels between men can be "gendered". The concept that men with social differences and unequal power are driven by economic, social, and racial or ethnic factors, which can condition social interactions and be used to justify violent acts, is critical and a more nuanced (intersectional) exploration is warranted.

### Case study: Josaia and the women's group

My research in Fiji revealed that men who had been working onboard foreign (e.g. Chinese, Fijian, Korean or and Taiwanese) tuna fishing vessels had been mistreated and/or injured and, therefore, unable to work, or worse, they had been murdered or died while on the job. In 2019, Human Rights at Sea showcased the experiences of Josaia Cama from the fishing village of Waiqanake who was a crew member on a CKP Fishing Company (south Korean) tuna longline vessel (Human Rights at Sea 2019). Josaia was also a participant of this study. His experience of forced labour, which led to the loss of all his fingers, is instructive for this study. Josaia's account of his experiences draws attention to the ways in which power and social constructions of gender condition affect interactions:

*"We finish the fishing aye ... we on the upper deck yeh ... They [Taiwanese boatman/supervisor] said for us to go down again into the bottom freezer ... you unload and you the job is finished aye ... they pull up the ladder, like this aye ... this is the second time, I was forced two hours ... I was a cold ... they give us gloves but the cotton gloves to make the work easier ... the rest who, the older ones see they have experience in, because ... Vaseline and they drink rum to keep them warm, but we had none ... the other Fijian boy he was a big man aye, he didn't want to go in the freezer, he was hiding from the boss ... they put the ladder down again and the thing finished. And I start eating I can't feel my fingers aye so they all numb and it was like someone was banging a hammer ... very painful."*

These physical injuries not only had an impact on his ability to support his family, but also his perception of his masculinity and status as a man: "Because of my disability I cannot help care for my family as a man should, so Virisila [wife] has had to take on that task as well as doing the jobs women do in a family" (Josaia Cama interview, also reported in Human Rights at Sea 2019).



Figure 2. Josaia and his family, Waiqanake, Fiji. ©Victoria Syddall





Figure 3. Josaia outside of his home with village children. ©Victoria Syddall

Women who participated in the focus group and interviews in Kalekana Village in 2019, commented on the poor work standards the men had endured onboard these fishing vessels, including a lack of access to clean water, food and adequate sleep. Josaia shared his experience of feeling that his company had taken advantage of him and not paid him properly “because maybe my appearance and my looks, I was discriminated, aye” (Josaia Cama, Waiqanake Village, 2019).

Gender intersects with other identities such as race and class, which can amplify the risks of gender-based violence onboard vessels. All of the women interviewed in this research had lost someone to the tuna fishery, or relied on men that had been injured and were unable to contribute to the household income or village activities. Onboard fishing vessels, power relations are unequal and in favour of fishing companies (owners and vessel captains). Intersectional subjectivities and a risk-taking culture tied to performances of masculinity onboard vessels, often amplified by excessive drinking and sexual promiscuity, is confirmed by Allison (2013), who explored masculinity in shipside culture. Moreover, while Fijian-owned longline vessels with national crew are family oriented in which no instances of brutality were reported during this study, international vessels with mixed nationality crew are predatory.

## Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study show that, despite recent attempts to improve gender equality, women and men directly and indirectly involved in the tuna fishery continue to be affected by gender-based discrimination, thus leading to disadvantage and ongoing inequality (O'Neill et al. 2018; Prieto-Carolino et al. 2021). Masculinities and femininities in Fijian villages are continually constructed, performed and negotiated through culture but also, as the research reveals, intersect with wider global and ideological structures of the western and central Pacific tuna socioecological systems (Presterudstuen 2019; Underhill-Sem et al. 2014). Male domination and masculine-self identities have often been centred on men's assigned roles as bread winners in families and tribal communities, and in modern societies, the ability to make money (Presterudstuen 2019). The belief that men are strong heads of households revealed in this research has been identified in other studies that note how cultural values, including strength and humility, are explicitly taught to all Fijian men (Presterudstuen 2019). Cultural values linked to the male body contribute to a complex social order and ethos of authority and hierarchy, and have been influenced (modified) by Western or modern culture and norms to generate gender-based stereotypes. Within the western and central Pacific tuna socioecological system, these stereotypes can lead to discrimination and violence. For Josaia, his



eagerness to support his family by crewing onboard a tuna longline vessel was ultimately met by forced labour, and led to the loss of his fingers. In this example, alternate conceptions and performances of masculinity that recognise cultural differences and power differentials were not possible or were deemed undesirable because of the persistence of hegemonic masculinity (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 2006).

A new approach to the empowerment of women in fisheries is urgently needed. But, a deeper understanding of men and gender is also critically needed, and needs to be positioned into gender equality spaces, rather than slavery at sea.

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# The significance of traditional practices in the Lau Islands, Fiji, and their importance to women for sustainable protection and production

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## Introduction

Traditional knowledge is an important background foundation that refers to the knowledge, innovation and practices of Indigenous peoples and local communities around the world. Turner and Berkes (2006) define traditional knowledge as a body of knowledge rooted within a group of people across generations of close contact with nature and, including, beliefs held by local people. This connectivity evolves by adapting to local environmental circumstances and is handed down through generations by different forms of cultural transmission (Berkes 2009; Berkes and Berkes 2009). Traditional knowledge includes knowledge and practices concerning food, medicine, hunting, fishing, agriculture, home gardening, handicraft making and other skills developed to sustain the local population (Veitayaki 1997; Siwatibau 1984; Luetz and Nunn 2020).

On the same note, biocultural diversity comprises the variability of biological species and ecosystems, and the distinctiveness of cultural groups that interact with these resources (Cocks 2006; Berkes 2009; Berkes and Berkes 2009). In fact, traditional knowledge and biocultural diversity are interwoven and are essential components to ensure the sustainable development of communities living in traditional settings (Braton 1989; Agrawal and Gibson 1999).

Despite the importance of traditional knowledge, its erosion has been observed in many communities across different countries due to sociopolitical changes and development pressures, marketisation and commodification (Pilgrim et al. 2007; Turner and Turner 2007; Singh et al. 2009). It is important to assess the value of biocultural diversity and associated traditional knowledge in relation to learning and conservation (Berkes 2009; Berkes and Berkes 2009) while protecting the intellectual property rights of communities (Singh et al. 2009; Singh and Srivastava 2009). The growing need to conserve traditional knowledge and biocultural diversity is now widely recognised and of growing concern (Pretty 2003, 2007; Pilgrim et al. 2007).

In Fiji, women in most rural regions are the major subsistence producers and small-scale marketers of food and handicrafts. Fijian women do most of the day-to-day subsistence fishing (one of the two highest fisheries sector contributors to gross domestic product) in most coastal and riverine areas (Gillett 2009). Women are also significant contributors to non-fish capture and marketing within the small-scale commercial fishing sector (Thomas et al. 2021). Improvements planned for rural infrastructure will benefit women, but pressure on inshore marine resources due to overexploitation and destructive fishing methods threatens the sustainability of

women's fisheries and, therefore, household food security. Most Fijian handicrafts, especially those produced by women, cannot compete in terms of price with imported or local factory-made souvenirs sold in tourism centres, thus depriving Fijian women of an important economic opportunity.

The women of Lau Province are well known throughout Fiji for their rich cultural and traditional practices that have sustainably supported their livelihoods. In addition, Lau women are committed to maintaining their traditional obligations and upholding their general commitment to preserving sustainable livelihoods. With the underpinning goal of integrating traditional knowledge with biocultural diversity, the Lau Seascape Initiative – through Conservation International – has engaged directly with Lau women to document the diversity of their traditional cultural practices and recording and documenting these practices for the purpose of economic and social benefit.

This article reports on the outputs and outcomes of the Gender Inclusion Consultation with women of the four districts that the Lau Seascape team in Ono, Vulaga, Kabara and Moce covered from 4 to 18 December 2021.

## Background

In 2013, Conservation International began working with the traditional leaders of Lau Province (*Masi ni Vanua o Lau*) to protect the ecosystems of Fiji's Lau Islands. The Lau Seascape is now a multi-partner initiative, comprising the Lau community and Indigenous representatives, the Government of Fiji, the private sector, and non-governmental



Women of Kabara with their handicrafts. ©Isimeli Loganimoce

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Women's group, Doi Village in Ono. ©Isimeli Loganimoce

organisation stakeholders. The Lau Seascope focuses on both terrestrial and marine resource management and highlights the importance of achieving effective governance across all sectors and at all levels (local, national, and regional) in order to improve natural resource governance in Lau. The Lau Seascope Strategy (LSS), is a twelve-year strategic work plan (2018–2030) that clearly identifies a detailed set of activities necessary to fulfil the objectives, targets and vision of the Lau Seascope Initiative.

Generally, the LSS has achieved various accomplishments, including the development of 17 village-based resource profiles, and the establishment of 13 integrated district management plans. It has also worked on: socialising the Vanua o Lau Deed of Trust within Lau communities; sociocultural mapping surveys in each village; capacity building and awareness of community members on the ridge-to-reef conservation approach; and climate change adaptation and spatial mapping surveys within the Lau Seascope communities.

As one of the key objectives of the LSS, a coordinated “gender inclusion consultation” was conducted to support and revive proper management coordination and implementation targeting women representatives from each village. The theory of change emphasises that applying a gender mainstreaming strategy is key to achieving positive and productive outcomes, in particular the uptake of the LSS awareness, reviving cultural and traditional practices, connecting traditional values to achieve LSS priorities, and supporting traditional leadership in the coordination of all development responsibilities within the community or *vanua*, the Church and the government.

Lau Seascope – through Conservation International’s gender program – conducted a profile assessment of four districts

in Lau to assess and document traditional knowledge and the biocultural diversity in use, and further explore benefits that will accelerate women’s active engagement in advertising their products, and further enhancing their community’s livelihood opportunities.

### Gender inclusion consultations

Gender inclusion consultation promotes the participation of women and men in the formal and informal policy-making process to ensure that their voices are heard, and that their priorities are reflected in formal and informal policies, programmes and projects.

Gender inclusion consultation promotes evidence-based and participatory decision-making, which takes into consideration the different priorities and needs of women and men, including the most marginalised groups and those that are traditionally excluded from decision-making processes.

Women’s participation and inclusion in the Lau Seascope work is vital because local women are in contact daily with both terrestrial and marine resources. Recent research by Waqairatu-Waqainabete et al. (2019) highlights the critical role that fisherwomen play in the Lau Seascope as well as their relative lack of representation in decision-making related to natural resource management. The gender inclusion consultations focused on the Gender Mainstreaming Plan toward the LSS, thus enforcing and reviving traditional practices and ensuring that women’s voices are heard, and their priorities are reflected within the Lau Seascope Initiative. Women are the immediate household mentors and coaches that keep cultural integrity and heritage intact for a community, mainly within a family unit.





Women of Vatoa with the "Gatuvakatoga". ©Isimeli Loganimoce

## Methodology

In a concerted effort to encourage women's leadership and influence in implementing the LSS, Conservation International actively engaged all women from the four districts within Lau Seascape Initiative to identify culturally appropriate opportunities for women to engage in and effect change by motivating traditional leaders to deliver equitable and sustainable conservation benefits for all community members. The gender inclusion consultations focused on women's observations, perceptions of change and women's current traditional practises and their significance. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and through targeted focus group discussions. Discussions were conducted in the Lau dialect in a semi-informal process in order to encourage women to feel comfortable voicing their views. All comments made, whether relating to the questions or not, were noted.

## Results

### Gathering baseline information about the district and its traditional practices, and the significance of those practices

#### Ono District

The District of Ono is well known for its handicraft work called *tabu kaisi*, a traditional Lauan mat originating from Ono, where the tapa fibre is known as *gatu vakatonga* and *gatu vakaviti*. The women are well connected traditionally, and are well respected in the community and supported by the men from their families and other associated groups within the village. Most of the villages have an association

that is registered with the Ministry of Women and are well connected and supported. There is a women's resource centre in the district. The main fishing methods the women use are handlining, net fishing, gleaning and other traditional fishing methods.

#### Vulaga District

The District of Vulaga is well known for its handicrafts, referred to as *sivisivi*, and a well-known seafood delicacy, *kaikoso*, which is a kind of clam (*Anadara antiquata*). The main handicraft product is the well-known bowl used in western Polynesian and Fijian for kava. This product is carved from a hardwood called *vesi* (*Intsia bijuga*). Women are well respected in the community and are supported by the men from their family and other associated groups within the village. The women have an association that is registered with the Ministry of Women, and have organised weekly programmes for their association, and as individuals. The main fishing methods the women practice are handlining, net fishing, gleaning and other traditional fishing methods. The main sources of income for women are selling fish, selling woven mats and selling coconut palm leaf hats. Other sources of income for the women's association is through fundraising events, such as like Buzzar.

#### Kabara District

Kabara women are also well known for their handicraft work on mat weaving called the *bati ni Kabara*, and other traditional mats. Nakeleyaga, the chiefly village of Kabara District, is the leading village within the district, whereby the women support the traditional practices and obligation.. Women



are well respected in the community and are supported by the men from their families and other associated groups in the village. There is a women's association in Kabara that is registered with the Ministry of Women. The main fishing methods the women in this district use are handlining, net fishing, gleaning and other traditional fishing methods. The Kabara women's association is very active socially and economically at the district level.

### Moce District

Nasau Village is the paramount village of Moce District, and is well known for its tapa cloth *masi* making. The district is also known for its unique *masi* design. The women's main source of income is selling *masi*. The women are well connected traditionally. The women are well respected in the community and supported by the men from their families and other associated groups within the village. The women's club is registered with the Ministry of Women. The women are engaged in a project of planting the trees from which tapa cloth is made, which is a major source of income for women and their club. The women have been well supported by the Ministry of Women with handicraft-making accessories and resources. The main fishing methods practiced by the women in this district are handlining, net fishing, gleaning and other traditional fishing methods.

### Identifying common gender activities and alternative livelihoods practices

It should be noted that the above roles are generalised, and that variations can be found based on a range of influencing factors, including age, geography, culture, ethnicity and whether one is residing in one's original village or in the village of one's spouse. These differences in roles result in knowledge and skillsets that tend to be assigned to either women or men. Therefore, women and men tend to notice different indicators of stress or change in the environment, and have different ideas about using agricultural and fisheries products. This means, in turn, that women and men can

be distinctly valuable and complementary resource people when managing natural resources, adapting to climate change, managing for disasters, and sustainably engaging in economic development. Despite the critical role that women play in food production, they often face barriers to accessing agricultural land, training opportunities, credit and services. The agricultural production that women and girls perform also tends to be considered part of women's household responsibilities and not "real" work.

Increasing women's economic empowerment through improvements to sustainable livelihoods and value chains, presents challenges such as "the burden of extra work, difficulties finding childcare, problems accessing markets, and increased demand from husbands and relatives for money" as well as disagreements on "household expenditure, marital conflict and violence".

### Conclusion

The Lau Seascope Initiative is building on years of dedicated work by Conservation International, the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, and all 12 parties of the Lau Seascope memorandum of understanding to understand and design value-adding economic projects that are currently comfortable against women's position in communities. The strategy is committed to an inclusive approach to project planning and implementation, and promotes and amplifies the participation of women and vulnerable groups throughout the project cycle. Gender mainstreaming within these projects has enabled natural resource management to become increasingly influenced by the importance of the role of women within their communities and the knowledge and perspectives they hold. At the end stages of project cycles, the engagement of women in sustainable production pathways is key to enabling women's ability to carry out profitable economic alternative projects to support the well-being of their families and the community at large.

Sector	Men	Women
<b>Fisheries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fishing from vessels inside and outside the reef</li> <li>Fishing from canoes and boats with lines or nets</li> <li>Wading with nets</li> <li>Day and night spearfishing</li> <li>Harvesting and processing catch</li> <li>Boat captains with crews</li> <li>Trawling with fishing rods and lines</li> <li>Illegal fishing activities such as poaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wading with handlines</li> <li>Fishing from bridges and promontories with lines</li> <li>Reef gleaning for invertebrates, octopus and shellfish</li> <li>Diving in the sea for saltwater mussels (kaikoso)</li> <li>Collecting crabs</li> <li>Sea grape harvesting and marketing for sale</li> <li>Collection of speciality products such as beche-de-mer and trochus</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearing gardens and burning of land</li> <li>Maintaining large root crops</li> <li>Using machines or tools to plough, cut bush or harvest farms</li> <li>Planting and tending to cash crops such as coconuts, kava, cocoa, coffee, taro, tree fruits</li> <li>Raising livestock</li> <li>Transporting products to markets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weeding and maintenance of market and subsistence gardens and cash crop plantations (taro, cassava)</li> <li>Processing subsistence crops, coconut oil, honey</li> <li>Market sales</li> <li>Cash crop and market garden post-harvest processing</li> <li>Raising poultry and small livestock (pigs and sheep)</li> <li>Niche agricultural ventures in floriculture, vanilla, bees</li> <li>Handicrafts (mats, baskets, sewing, niche products such as masi)</li> </ul>



Women of Ogea in the consultation. ©Isimeli Loganimoce

The economic portion of the project – documented from the four islands – is adequate for structuring sustainable production pathways and to position the women's group to enter into formal streams of economic development and The commitment by women in taking part in sustainable economic development in order to improve the quality of life and environment, which will be beneficial for the local community but mainly for the women's group in fulfilling its commitments towards environment, social and economic responsibilities.

Women from the southern Lau islands have really embraced the LSS. These women have discussed, identified and confirmed the importance of their roles and responsibilities traditionally in strengthening and reviving the culture and traditional practices of their *Vanua*, especially their required support to the *Masi ni Vanua o Lau* overall. In addition, the LSS will leverage the value of women's contribution to the project, and develop a women's economic empowerment approach to reduce gender inequities in priority sites and in many activities throughout the project. This will help address existing gender inequities that may impact the outcomes of the programme but will also influence the continued success of the outcomes post-project.

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# Tabonibara women's continued journey into fisheries management

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and Iutita Karekennatu<sup>1</sup>

*From strategy to implementation, the women of Tabonibara, North Tarawa in Kiribati, pave their way in the battle for effective fisheries management.*

From 6 to 7 September 2022, the women of Tabonibara came together to discuss and agree on a strategic plan that would guide them on their quest for effective fisheries management. At the request of the Women's Association of Tabonibara, the community-based fisheries management (CBFM) team (Nei Tengarengare team) organised a two-day workshop, with women from every household in Tabonibara invited to participate. Being mindful of the important commitments that women have to their families, the CBFM team discussed arrangements to allow for maximum participation. The workshop was held after lunch and ran for three to four hours, finishing just before sundown. This timing allowed women to attend to their family needs in the morning, prepare their kids for school, cook lunch and return before dinner. The women were compensated for their time and given a meal allowance to assist with their dinner. The workshop was designed to *leave no one behind* and to give every participant the right to engage and express her views. The CBFM team facilitated; in a respectful and inclusive way, accounting for stronger and more outspoken voices, as well those of quieter participants, and respecting those who just wanted to listen, learn and understand what is being discussed and agreed to in the meeting.

When the Women's Association of Tabonibara was first established on 15 May 2021 (Nikiari et al. 2021), the women understood how to contribute to fisheries management; however, they were unclear as to how to move forward. The purpose of the association was to improve women's involvement in fisheries management. During the launch of the programme in 2021, women presented aspects of fisheries management rules, such as banning the fishing for silver biddy (*Gerres* sp.) during its spawning aggregation, and fishing for undersize fish, to name a few. This time, the workshop identified key needs and issues that women face, and to develop the association's strategic plan based on those identified issues.

The workshop was designed to be flexible and informal, focusing on women's opinions and views rather than on presentations. Women were divided into three groups according to their village sector. Group 1 consisted of women from the northern sector of Tabonibara, Group 2 from the central sector, and Group 3 from the southern sector. Women from the same area could identify and discuss their common issues. Women from the different groups then reported in a plenary setting so that the whole group could reflect on priority actions.

## Priority issues identified

Five priority issues were identified by the women following their group discussions.

### Water

Identified by all groups, the availability of fresh and clean water is a huge problem for households. An overhead tank built close to the village *maneaba* (meeting house) was installed, drawing on water from one source and distributing it throughout the village. Outlet taps were installed to serve four to five households each. This water has now become brackish and is becoming unsafe for consumption, especially for young children and elderly people. The three groups expressed a need for a solar-powered, micro-distillation plant to provide the village with pure and safe water.

### Waste

Waste is still a persisting issue for Tabonibara. A large amount of non-biodegradable waste is dumped in coastal areas and around the village, including plastics and diapers. In addition, many households do not have access to a toilet and, therefore, practice open defecation in mangroves, on the beach and other open areas. Some women reported that they are now reluctant to catch crabs due to the presence of human faeces in mangrove areas, and they feel disgusted to consume them. The need for every household to have access to a toilet was raised as a priority to ensure residents live in a healthy environment.

## Increasing price of groceries and short supply of important staple goods

The prices of store-bought goods have become increasingly high. Women noted that this was an important concern given that they heavily rely on imported goods for their daily needs. As such, they identified that the community needs to be more resilient in times of few supplies and in doing so, must have sources of food readily available in their backyard and in the sea. Some examples of important plants that each family have planted include pandanus, breadfruit and coconut trees. Similarly, they believe their marine resources must be well protected to enable them to continue obtaining seafood.

### Limited income opportunities

The limited income opportunities available to women of Tabonibara is a challenge that prevents them from becoming resilient in the face of environmental and economic shocks, such as food shortages. Women depend on pandanus for making thatch, and coconut is used as a form of money. The value of one coconut is around AUD 0.40, which people can use to purchase groceries without cash. Similarly, people can use bundles of pandanus thatch (valued at AUD 8 per bundle) to make purchases without cash.

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However, pandanus trees do become old and when they do, they no longer produce enough quality leaves to make thatch, which is in high demand from South Tarawa, and a good source of income. An issue highlighted during the discussion is the lack of pandanus and coconut trees that are being replanted. This means that people are relying too heavily on old trees, which produce much lower yields. Women decided to be more proactive and to replant pandanus and coconut trees to ensure they are able to continue making thatch for income. The income from thatch was also reported by the women's group to be low compared to the hard labour that goes into making thatch. As a solution, women decided to explore options to diversify livelihood opportunities through the sale of local products in South Tarawa. This was further highlighted during the discussion about the impacts of community closures, including in the Tabonibara management plan. Seasonal closures during the silver biddy (*Gerres* sp.) spawning season, have affected the livelihoods of those who heavily rely on it. For instance, one woman said that "before the seasonal closure of silver biddy was imposed, [people] used to make a lot of money, approximately AUD 1000 for every fishing event during spawning aggregation, but now they've lost that." Hearing this issue indicates the need to diversify income opportunities to make up for losses following community fisheries management decisions, but also the need to raise awareness about the fishing rules and regulations.

Lack of market access is another constraint. Women discussed potential solutions to improve their access to the market and decided to apply for a grant with the assistance of the CBFM team to purchase an outrigger with an outboard motor. The community also requested assistance from the CBFM team to reach out to the relevant national ministries about the possibility of making a channel for small boats, which would improve access at low tide.

### Lack of support from husbands

Kava is now commonly consumed by many I-Kiribati people and has become a popular form of entertainment by, mostly, men. In Tabonibara, the consumption of kava is high as reported by many women during the meeting. Women mentioned that they continue to experience a lack of support from their husbands to carry out activities, especially those around the house. Kava drinking can carry all night long, with men sleeping during the day and unable to help or work. Women declared that "most men are not performing their duties as husbands at home and tend to put most of the responsibilities on their wives". Women are left to take care of all family matters, including cooking, preparing children for school, as well as making a living from thatch or coconut collection. Drinking kava is not good for one's health and clearly has effects on the family. Cultural norms are strong and men see their role as income provider (for instance through fishing) and do not see childcare and household chores as tasks they can help with. Many women observed this phenomenon but feel they cannot do much to change their husbands, and believe it makes things easier to let them to carry on with their own business.





## From planning to action

Soon after the meeting took place, there was a strong momentum among the women to take immediate action. In their respective sectors, the women developed plans to first tackle the issue of pollution. One of the sectors was very active and empowered the other two sectors to follow suit. Women started cleaning up around their homes, bush and coastal areas, and competition among the three sectors has kept the activity going. Apart from cleaning, one of the sectors started addressing the lack of sanitation by putting together their money every fortnight in order to buy two toilet bowls. The activity would carry on until all members of the sector have their toilets. Gardening has also been initiated by many women, particularly in planting flowers and other decorative plants. Women are also interested in planting vegetables and root crops for a healthy diet and for income generation.

## Inauguration of Tabonibara women's group

On 14 October 2022, the Tabonibara women's group became an incorporated society registered with the Ministry of Women, Youth, Social Welfare and Sports Affairs, and took on the name "Ueen Ngaon Te Tangira Community". By becoming incorporated, the group can now apply for small grants to assist them with their development plans. The group's missions include:

1. maintaining the cleanliness of Tabonibara village;
2. assisting and supporting fisheries management and enforcement;
3. economically empowering families in Tabonibara; and
4. enhancing the health and wellbeing of all members of Tabonibara community.

Following the incorporation, the women organised an inauguration ceremony to mark the significance of this achievement. The celebration was held on 5 November and a number of guests were invited. Attendees included two members of Parliament from North Tarawa, the island council clerk, extension officers from the Ministry of Fisheries and Ministry of Women based in North Tarawa, and the CBFM team.

The women of Tabonibara dressed similarly. It was surprising to see the three sectors wearing their distinctly coloured materials. The northern sector went even further by having their husbands wear the uniforms too.

It was a touching moment to see the big change in women in how they look, dressing up so beautifully, putting on beautiful flowers and earrings. It is something that women in villages rarely do because it may be awkward to dress up or that they are confined to their traditional role.

Husbands were treated as guests among the distinguished guests. The support of the husbands was great during the event. The front row was filled with men, and the preparation also involved men.

The ministers of parliament were quite surprised with how Tabonibara Village had been transformed within a short period of time, the cleanliness of the village, the activity of women in their new institution, and the huge support rendered by their husbands were all noticeable.

Harry Teikaiti, one of the members of Parliament, expressed his gratitude to the CBFM project for the continued support given to North Tarawa and the expansion of the work of CBFM project from fisheries to land-based activities and in guiding the women of Tabonibara. He also recognised the critical role that women play in society and strongly encouraged them to remain active. The inauguration of the group has now opened many opportunities for the women such as applying for small grant programme to assist with their economic development.

The other member of Parliament also commended on the wonderful initiative of the women of Tabonibara, and added that with being inaugurated comes a responsibility. The women of Tabonibara have solidified their commitments to helping with the Kiribati Government's development goals within their village. He strongly encouraged the women of Tabonibara to stay committed.

The celebration was a great way to communicate the message of the women of Tabonibara and to boost the visibility of women and their important role in enhancing the community's well-being and development.



Tabonibara women performing a garland dance. ©Tarateiti Uriam Timiti



## Invaluable lessons

Involving women at a much deeper level is a very important way to allow their full participation. Previously, the CBFM team tried to be socially inclusive when developing fisheries community management plans. Reaching women as participants is a good way to ensure that diversified views and concerns are taken into account in the development of management plans. However, to take women to the next level, there needs to be special support.

With this new initiative, the CBFM team reflected after a number of years of experience that to have more effective and sustainable outcomes, gender dimensions needed to be well considered. The team realised that women's roles tend to become unclear after the development of fisheries community management plans. More engagement with women is necessary to get them strongly empowered. By making their actions visible and working with men in the communities we can transform gender norms.

Therefore, at the societal level, women need to be given a greater voice so that they can influence decisions at the community level and take action. Tabonibara is still a traditional village where men have the power to make decisions at the village level; however, in cases where women are the heads of households, they are part of the village council. Having an established institution has boosted the confidence of women to work towards their goals and to take action.

The women's association is not intended to displace traditional governance; however, it was established to enhance contribution and support of women to achieve the overarching goal of the village especially towards their fisheries management goal.

The women of Tabonibara will continue to need the support and guidance from the CBFM team to facilitate government

assistance and provide advice.

## Future activities

On the last day of the workshop, the team announced that there will be a women's day celebration in March 2023, and on this day, a competition will be held on the cleanliness of homes and the village, and there will be a farming competition. This idea of a competition has strongly motivated women into working hard to fulfil their plans.

The CBFM team meanwhile will make connections with relevant ministries to look for training opportunities on financial literacy, business management, farming and repurposing rubbish.

Other major requests to be addressed include the issue of brackish drinking water and the need for an outrigger, and both of these will be submitted as request to the Disaster Risk Management Department under the Office of the President and in a small grant programme, respectively.

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Women of Tabonibara doing their morning routine clean up. ©Tokaimoa Tonganibeia

# Analysing the roles of men and women in the Marshall Islands' fisheries sector: Supporting opportunities to mainstream gender

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## Abstract

A gender and fisheries analysis was conducted in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to address the information gap regarding gender in their coastal fisheries sector. It was observed that at the community-level, traditional beliefs inhibiting women's active participation in certain fishing activities still exist, but over time Marshallese women are gradually partaking in fishing activities that were previously the domain of men. While men's fishing activities are usually for food and income, women's are mainly for household consumption. Across the coastal fisheries value chain, women are active in post-harvest processing activities, including preparing seafood and making shell craft jewellery, with the latter being an important income earner for the women involved. Several fisheries livelihood initiatives have been undertaken to support outer island communities, although these unconsciously engage more men than women due to traditional gender-delineated roles around fishing. Both men and women partake in community aquaculture ventures and community-based fisheries management, but their levels of participation and influence remains ambiguous and needs further investigation. Within the formal fisheries sector, women are now occupying senior leadership positions and technical roles within state and non-state institutions, but no formal mechanism exists to align their operations and programmes with RMI's gender equality commitments and policies. Enhancing collaboration between these institutions and the women's division within government and women-focused civil society organisations, and women's groups is needed to effectively mainstream gender across the RMI's fisheries sector.

## Introduction

Fisheries is a key economic driver in the Pacific Islands region, with the offshore fisheries sector providing a lifeline for the economies of some Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). While offshore fisheries, especially the tuna industry, is often recognised for its economic contributions at the national level, coastal fisheries and aquaculture remains vital for a majority of PICTs whose communities are fisheries-dependent. Coastal fisheries provide the primary or secondary source of income for up to 50% of households in the region, and 50–90% of animal-sourced protein (SPC 2015).

Women partake in, and are vital contributors to, the fisheries sector, although most management and development ventures have traditionally focused on commercial fisheries, which are usually dominated by men, while less attention is given to subsistence fisheries and post-harvest processing where women are most actively involved (Mangubhai and Lawless 2021). This is further reflected in the scarcity of literature that properly quantifies the contribution of women to this sector, and therefore, their contributions largely remain invisible and undervalued (Thomas et al. 2021).

A desktop study commissioned by the Pacific European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme identified the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) as one of the PICTs with no or very little information on gender issues in coastal fisheries (Laqeratabua unpubl.), thereby warranting a gender and fisheries analysis to address this information gap. Additionally, RMI participated in a regional workshop on gender and human rights issues in coastal fisheries and aquaculture organised by the Pacific Community (SPC) in 2020, in which RMI also identified the need for a gender and fisheries analysis to be conducted for the country.

## Methodology

A variety of published information and data sources from government, non-government, intergovernmental agencies, as well as peer-reviewed studies spanning across different disciplines such as fisheries, gender, legislation and policies, human and national development, marine resource management, marine ecological studies, and nutrition and health were consulted in this research. For areas where published information was unavailable, unpublished information or information from key informants was sought.

Past gender and fisheries country assessment reports were also used to inform this process. Additionally, SPC's methodology for gender mainstreaming stocktakes at the country level was adapted to inform the sections on institutional and capacity analysis, including the review of policy frameworks.

## Results and discussion

### Socioeconomic and sociocultural aspects

Fish remains a vital food and income source for many Marshallese due to the country's limited land mass, but large exclusive economic zone of 2.1 million km<sup>2</sup> (MIMRA 2019). In RMI, fisheries is a key driver of economic development, contributing USD 31.3 million to the gross domestic product in 2020 (MIMRA 2020). This revenue is mainly derived from the tuna fishery, including both offshore and land-based activities, with Majuro being the world's busiest tuna transshipment hub (FAO 2021). There is, however, an increasing reliance on imported, processed food to sustain the population of 54,388<sup>3</sup> (EPPSO 2022), most of whom reside in the urban centres of Majuro (56%) and Ebeye<sup>4</sup> (19%), with the remaining 25% living in RMI's outer islands (RMI Government 2022). While the urban economies in Majuro

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3 Population is based on the 2019–2020 Household, Income and Expenditure survey (see EPPSO 2022).

4 Ebeye is the urban centre of Kwajalein Atoll.



and Kwajalein are mostly driven by government bureaucracy and Kwajalein military base (RMI Government 2021), outer island communities continue to rely on fishing and agriculture for food security while earning a living from copra and handcraft production coupled with limited commercial fishing and farming activities (RMI Government 2021).

In the past, there were strong culturally gender-delineated roles governing women's and men's fishing activities. For instance, Marshallese women's fishing activities were limited to the lagoon and inner reef areas as it was culturally considered taboo for women to go in boats or to engage in diving, netting, trapping, pole-and-line fishing or longlining (Tuara 1998). In contrast, men were not subjected to these limitations (Lambeth et al. 2014; Tuara 1998). Some explanations regarding these limitations on women's fishing activities included: 1) they were believed to bring bad luck and prevent a good catch; 2) they did not possess the required strength needed for more physical activities when fishing from boats; and 3) family obligations prevented them from joining fishing ventures.

In present day RMI, both men and women harvest fish and invertebrates, with women's fishing efforts still largely concentrated within the inshore areas (Pinca et al. 2009). A number of women are also engaged in clam farming, with some periodically involved in bottom fishing during recreational fishing competitions (Tuara 1998), or trolling from boats. According to Pinca et al. (2009), women fish in sheltered coastal reefs and lagoons, while men target a variety of habitats, including inshore areas and seaward to outer reefs and passages. For invertebrate collections, women gleaned on the reef tops and intertidal flats while men tended to dive for lobsters, clams or octopus (Pinca et al. 2009). While women do not dive for fish or invertebrates, they at times extend their invertebrate collections to deeper areas by wading out to ankle- and shoulder-depth waters. Men fish more frequently than women, with their catch designated for both food and income, while women's catch is mostly for household consumption (Pinca et al. 2009).

In line with regional trends, Marshallese women are active in the area of post-harvest processing across the fisheries value chain, including with seafood preparation and the making of shell-craft jewellery. The shell-craft sector provides an important income source not only for the women involved, but also for their households. Interestingly, women's gross earnings from fisheries were higher than that of men in 2017 (RMI Government 2018). Despite women's important financial contribution, several economic coastal fisheries development interventions in RMI's outer island communities are unconsciously biased towards men, with little or no participation by women. This is attributed to limitations governing women's fishing activities, and these will be discussed in the subsequent section.

### Fisheries economic development and management initiatives

To develop its coastal fisheries sector, RMI's national fisheries agency – the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA) – has undertaken several development interventions with outer island communities. This started in the late 1980s through the deployment of fish aggregating

devices (FADs), which later diversified to include the Outer Island Fish Market Centres (OIFMCs), aquaculture and other initiatives such as community-based fisheries management (Edwards 2021; MIMRA 2020; Pinca et al. 2009).

The OIFMCs programme involves MIMRA buying fresh fish (from fishers) which are then stored on ice and transported to urban centres to be resold to consumers in Majuro and Ebeye (MIMRA 2020; Pinca et al. 2009). This programme generated USD 124,182 across five atolls in 2020 for local fishers who have no reliable income source (MIMRA 2020). Given that men are usually the ones engaged in commercial fishing and accessing FADs, they are also most likely to directly derive an income from this programme compared to women. Although there have been anecdotal accounts of women selling fish caught at FADs, it is unclear whether this is a reliable source of income for the women involved, and needs to be ascertained.

Aquaculture production consists of a relatively steady but small production of giant clams, hard and soft corals for the aquarium trade, sporadic production of black pearls (Gillett 2016), and, more recently, moi (*Polydactylus sexfilis*) (MIMRA, 2020). The giant clam *Tridacna maxima* is the main species cultivated by outer island communities (Edwards 2021; MIMRA 2020), supporting 260 farmers who collectively earned over USD 6000 in 2019 from sales to Majuro-based export companies (MIMRA 2019). Further, clam farmers on Likiep Atoll have established an association whose membership includes women and men (Edwards 2021). While MIMRA has been expanding its work in the area of aquaculture, the participation of women, men and youth is not clearly indicated, particularly for the outer islands. Therefore, there is scope to explore women and youth participation in this area.

### Management and decision-making

Control and access of natural resources – including fisheries resources and management – is influenced by Marshallese cultural values and traditional governance mechanisms. Traditionally, the Marshallese observe a matrilineal system of land ownership, which still exists in most islands, that granted women a high status in their community (Stege 2008). Land ownership through land parcels, called *wato*, encompasses both land and adjacent coastal areas, including the natural resources within these spaces (Stege 2008). Despite the matrilineal inheritance system, women now have limited authority to control and exercise their land rights (including marine areas rights), which have gradually been delegated to men (RMI Government 2015a). Thus, their once vested powers as landowners, decision-makers, peace-keepers and leaders have gradually been diluted and passed on to their brothers or other male relatives (Curtis 1992). Women, especially younger ones, are now less aware of their land rights and clanship relationships. This is further compounded by the disconnectedness they have with their *wato* due to outmigration from the outer islands to urban areas or to the United States.

Despite the presence of *watos*, decision-making powers regarding access to and use of coastal resources, including fisheries prohibitions, are no longer solely determined by

this. Local governments now have jurisdiction over resources within five nautical miles of their shores, with decisions being made under the guidance of traditional leaders, or *iroij* (Baker et al. 2011). Given that positions within RMI's local governments and chiefly roles are predominately held by men, few women participate in these higher-level, decision-making processes although they are impacted by the very outcomes of these decisions, including on coastal fisheries.

Sustainable coastal fisheries management is imperative to RMI due to the population's high reliance on fisheries resources coupled by its vulnerability to climate change impacts. The Reimaanlok National Conservation Area Plan (hereafter Reimaanlok Plan) was developed with an accompanying eight-step framework to support community-based resource management and to garner assistance from RMI's Protected Areas Network (Hess et al. 2012; Reimaan National Planning Team 2008). The Reimaanlok mechanism supports local governments in formulating fishery management plans and ordinances, as well as in harmonising efforts to streamline the effective implementation of community fisheries management programmes across the country (Baker et al. 2011; Hess et al. 2012). A key principle of the Reimaanlok process is to empower local communities – including men, women and youth – in sustainably managing their ecosystem by having representatives of these different social groups within each community's Local Resources Committee, with the most vocal women usually nominated into these committees. However, it needs to be further substantiated whether committee diversity equates to diverse voices and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, and does not unintentionally reinforce social norms that are disadvantageous.

### Women in the formal fisheries sector

The fisheries sector is pivotal to RMI's economy, employing 10% of workers in the country (FAO 2021). While the focus of this study is on the coastal fishery, this section will also discuss the offshore fishery because it is the largest driver of formal employment in RMI's fisheries sector. MIMRA and private enterprises are the main stakeholders within this sector with the latter pre-dominantly engaged in the tuna industry.

As of April 2021, MIMRA employed 94 national staff, of which 78 are men and 16 are women, and 2 subnational staff who are both men (MIMRA unpublished data – April 2021). There are seven senior positions at MIMRA, employing three women and four men (MIMRA unpublished data – April 2021), and includes the director (a man) and two deputy directors (both women). More women undertake clerical work than men but there has been progress in the technical areas, with women engaged as observers on industrial tuna fleets and as scientific divers and expeditions leaders in the area of coastal fisheries. MIMRA also has community outreach programmes, including outer island fish-bases that are all managed by men, while their Ebeye and Majuro fish markets are staffed by both men and women. Some of the senior and technical positions that women occupy were previously only held by men.

Further, MIMRA has an internship programme that provides practical experience, and has proven to be a career

pathway for both women and men with an interest in fisheries. While MIMRA has the willingness and political will to mainstream gender, there is no formal mechanism to align its operations and programmes to RMI's national gender equality commitments and policies. MIMRA's organisational structure does not clearly define roles and responsibilities under current job descriptions, nor is there a clearly identified focal point for gender matters. Reporting mechanisms do not include specific gender reporting sections, and sex disaggregated data are only collected for certain activities (e.g. Reimaanlok process) but would benefit from a more systematic data collection approach.

Published information on gender relating to RMI's fisheries stakeholders in the private sector is scarce. It is understood that while men are employed in both land-based and offshore activities, including onboard fishing vessels, women are primarily engaged in land-based activities such as at fish processing factories. A study by Tuara and Passfield (2012) revealed that women dominate within tuna processing factories, working as unskilled labourers. One factory reported that 65% of its staff comprises women who are mainly responsible for loining tuna. Some women are involved in laboratory work to conduct quality control tasks (e.g. water quality, histamine levels, hazard analysis and critical control points), but the majority of these positions are filled by overseas recruits because few locals have the required skills (Tuara and Passfield 2012).

Other RMI-based institutions that engage directly with the fisheries sector include the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), which is the secretariat responsible for managing the world's largest sustainable tuna purse-seine fishery. PNA's current chief executive officer is a woman, and several other women are part of the senior management team. The local non-government organisation, Marshall Islands Conservation Society, works closely with coastal communities and collaborates with MIMRA to support the Reimaanlok process. Its current executive director is also a woman.

### Policies and commitments supporting gender equality across the fisheries sector

RMI continues to take steps towards progressing gender equality through various gender policies and commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) (2012), and the Pacific Platform for Action and Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (2018–2030). The platform has 13 critical areas of which one is on agriculture and fishing and is aligned with the PLGED, a high-level declaration that reinforces the commitment of Pacific leaders to progress with gender-responsive government programmes, including fisheries.

At the national level, there are two key gender equality instruments: the National Gender Mainstreaming Policy (2015) and the 2019 Gender Equality Act. The Gender Mainstreaming Policy calls for a strategic action to “identify markets and support the development of value-chains for agriculture and fisheries outputs produced by women”, in order to enable “women's equitable participation in, and benefit from, economic development” (RMI Government 2015b). The policy further states that women's and men's



contributions to fisheries requires promotion and support because their gendered roles enhance food security and rural development.<sup>5</sup> While the policy has not been renewed due to the adoption of the Gender Equality Act, its content is still being referred to in national strategic documents.

The Gender Equality Act promotes gender mainstreaming across all sectors, and at all levels. A strong theme in the act is the call for the adoption of special measures to counterbalance the underrepresentation of women and girls in public, political and economic realms, especially in decision-making processes. The act also acknowledges additional needs for women in the informal economy and calls for the promotion of women's economic empowerment through a range of support services. Despite the Gender Equality Act's progressive agenda, its implementation is weak and the procedures for its enforcement through additional regulations are vague and open to interpretation. Further, there is also no reference to the use of, access to, and control over natural resources, nor does it cover more specific fisheries-related topics.

Aside from gender-specific policies and commitments, other existing sectorial instruments that promote gender equality to RMI's fisheries include:

- National Strategic Plan 2020–2030, which has the overall objective of “sustainable, equitable and measurable development;
- MIMRA Strategic Plan, which supports the empowerment of local communities in sustainable resource management through community-based consultations using the Reimaanlok process;
- Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling up CBFM, 2021–2025, Objective 5.2 focuses on inclusivity and equitability in decision-making and benefits;
- New Song for Coastal Fisheries: The Noumea Strategy (2015) emphasises the underrecognised contributions of women and youth, and calls for their greater participation in decision-making regarding coastal resources and more equitable access to those resources;
- Reimaanlok Plan and Framework is a mechanism whereby both men and women participate in community consultations and as members of their respective Local Resources Committee; and
- Convention on Biological Diversity recognises the vital role women play in sustainable biodiversity management and affirms their need to fully participate at all levels of policy-making and implementation concerning biodiversity conservation.

For fisheries stakeholders, there is a high uptake on gender commitments and policies associated with fisheries and biodiversity outcomes such as the MIMRA Strategic Plan and the Reimaanlok Plan and Framework because these are the ones that stakeholders are most familiar with, and which is closely aligned with their sector deliverables.

## Harnessing institutional support and applying approaches to mainstream gender and enhance women's participation in decision-making on coastal fisheries

To effectively mainstream gender across RMI's fisheries sector, policy implementation and harnessing support from state and non-state institutions is vital. This includes fostering stronger collaborations between MIMRA and the women's division within government and women-focused civil society organisations, and other groups to meaningfully engage women in fisheries and/or enhance their interest in fisheries. Some institutions (formal and semi-formal) that can further support gender mainstreaming in fisheries include:

- Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs, which is responsible for matters pertaining to culture, local communities and women;
- Women's United Marshall Islands, a local women-led non-governmental organisation whose goal is to advance the causes of, and improve the lives of, Marshallese women and their families;
- Locally based higher education institutions such as College of the Marshall Islands and the University of the South Pacific RMI Campus that provides a platform to train women and men to join the formal fisheries sector through marine-related and fisheries courses;
- Jo-Jikum, an advocacy group whose work centres on awareness raising of crucial issues facing Marshallese Islanders such as climate change and environmental pollution; and
- Marshall Islands Billfish Club, which conducts annual fishing competitions.

While working with the above-mentioned institutions is a progressive initial step, other approaches need to be applied to encourage women's equitable participation in decision-making on coastal fisheries. Apart from engaging the women's division within government and women-focused non-governmental organisations, some inclusive practices that MIMRA employs during community consultations for the Reimaanlok process include:

- using inclusive terminology – the word “fishing” in traditional Marshallese language has gender connotations and is usually associated with men's fishing activities;
- setting up women's stakeholder groups – this is undertaken at the beginning of the consultation process to provide a platform for women's participation at important community fisheries discussions; and
- timing of consultations – to accommodate women's busy schedule during the day, consultations with women's groups are planned for the evenings.

To help inform the Reimaanlok process, MIMRA also collects baseline information through ecological and socioeconomic surveys. The socioeconomic surveys contain

5 See page 14 of RMI's National Gender Mainstreaming Policy, Priority Outcome 4.

certain sex-disaggregated information related to a household or community, but with limited gender-related information on marine resource usage and/or associated management. Currently, the survey includes over-arching questions on marine species important to a community, which is usually associated with charismatic species caught by men, including their proposed management. Information on women's handicraft activities is also collected, including the species used for shell craft, but this information is not often used to inform community fisheries management interventions. Therefore, incorporating information on, and management measures of, species that are important to women would increase their interest in participating in the Reimaanlok consultations, thereby garnering their buy-in.

To boost community engagement, MIMRA has been logging information on the communities they have worked with, and are exploring effective tools that communities can use to collect and send relevant information to MIMRA. A consulting firm has also been engaged to develop a Reimaanlok monitoring toolkit, mainly focusing on marine resources. Incorporating social dimensions into this toolkit will improve the monitoring of any progress made through the Reimaanlok mechanism using a gender lens.

## Conclusion and key recommendations

While there is a willingness to mainstream gender across RMI's fisheries sector, there is limited technical capacity within MIMRA and among fisheries stakeholders to undertake this. Several key recommendations to support MIMRA and associated fisheries stakeholders to mainstream gender across the fisheries sector include strengthening collaborations with the women's division within government agencies and women-focused civil society groups, as well as government line ministries, including the Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs and Women United Together Marshall Islands. Stronger relationships with educational institutions to enhance the promotion of fisheries as a career pathway for women, men, girls and boys is also imperative.

Additionally, there needs to be an investment in gender and social inclusion (GSI) training for MIMRA's coastal fisheries and aquaculture teams to increase their understanding of GSI and provide basic skills for GSI mainstreaming.

There is also a need for MIMRA to identify potential, complementary or alternative livelihood ventures to promote outer island women's economic engagement, including aquaculture options, and for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Commerce to enhance women's economic empowerment in the handicraft sector (shell craft). Further assessment of the existing OIFMC programme and how it can be improved to adopt a GSI lens is needed. Additionally, to improve women's economic empowerment—especially in the areas of post-harvest handling, processing and value-adding of marine resources—their training needs should be identified.

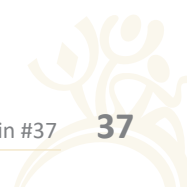
In conclusion, there needs to be an improved understanding of site-based implementation of the Reimaanlok framework from a GSI lens, including costs and benefits; governance structures; operational processes; and conflict resolution systems. Applying inclusive participatory approaches by incorporating information on species management that are important to women during Reimaanlok consultations, will help to garner women's support and buy-in. Finally, it is critical to ensure meaningful engagement with both young women and men, particularly in the outer islands, so that they understand that they are valuable environmental stewards of their community.

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# Coastal community perspectives on key issues concerning gender equality and social inclusion in Western Province, Solomon Islands

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## Background

The development of a new gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) strategy to guide the Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) has been in the works for a while. The purpose of the strategy is to address inequalities and to ensure gender and inclusion are mainstreamed and applied as a way to achieve equitable benefits for everyone. The importance of expanding the consultation process to the community level was identified as crucial step, given the strong emphasis of community-based fisheries management activities and an increased focus on livelihoods support. The development of the new GESI strategy follows a review process of the MFMR Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender in Fisheries 2011–2013. The review process is currently being conducted by a Technical Working Group (TWG), with members from various MFMR divisions, and headed by the Deputy Director for Policy and Planning, and supported by the Pacific Community, WorldFish, and the Ministry for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs. The TWG identified two provinces for community consultations: Western and Makira-Ulawa.

## Western Province consultations

Community consultations in Western Province took place from 5 to 7 October 2022. Four selected members from the TWG, including the provincial officer based in the province's capital (Gizo) formed the facilitation team supported by two staff members from the Pacific Community. Two community consultations in Western Province took place, one in Munda and the other in Noro. The Wildlife Conservation Society office, based in Western Province, provided crucial support in the identification and selection of diverse community representatives, mainly from Munda-based communities and a few from nearby islands. MFMR's Noro-based office assisted with the selection and invitation of community representatives from eight different island communities from and around Noro, which allowed a wide geographical representation. Advisory support for the development of a facilitation guide for the consultation process was provided by WorldFish gender experts.

## Munda consultations

Munda participants included a diverse group of women and men fishers, youth fishers, market sellers, and those active in conservation, management and/or compliance (e.g. some were community rangers or part of coastal resource management committees). In total, 27 community representatives attended the consultations: 12 women, 15 men, of whom 6 were youth fishers (i.e. aged < 35 years).

MFMR began the consultations by explaining the idea for a new GESI strategy to support inclusive and equitable services and benefits for coastal communities. MFMR described the need for gender mainstreaming as a to better tailor services for women and men, depending on their different roles and needs. The importance of capturing community voices and views to inform the new strategy was highlighted. MFMR's expectations from the consultations were outlined, namely that community members would gain an increased understanding of GESI issues that concern people's fishing roles and activities, including subsistence fishing and fishing for income, including post-harvesting and marketing. The objective of the consultations was to learn from and understand community needs, and the dynamics of gender and social inclusion. MFMR provided a brief outline of the outdated strategy from 2011 to 2013, and concluded that the new strategy will have a stronger community focus by reflecting key GESI issues that the communities themselves identify. MFMR also explained that the consultations would not only focus on identifying challenges and barriers, but also discuss opportunities and future social change strategies needed for more prosperous fishing.

During consultations, SPC provided definitions of gender, sex, equality, the difference between equality and equity, social inclusion and exclusion, and social factors that determine people's exclusion or inclusion. In addition, the relevance of GESI in fisheries was discussed by presenting facts, figures and examples. In brief, the bigger picture on where GESI principles sit within the national frameworks was outlined, referring also to the Western Province Women's Empowerment and Transformation Policy for Development (2018–2022). The purpose of SPC's session was to ensure that participants were familiar with the basic definitions and ideas in order to eliminate misunderstandings, misconceptions and bias, and to set the scene for the group work that would follow the consultations. Unfortunately, staff from the Ministry for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCA) were unable to join the consultations as initially planned, although they did provide feedback and advice that helped design the content and set the tone for this session. Efforts were made to tailor the session to the community groups working with MWYCA and MFMR in order to understand GESI within the context of fishing communities.

The core part of the consultations was conducted through group work activities facilitated by MFMR staff. For these purposes, a facilitation guide was developed with support from WorldFish gender experts and MFMR. The group work activities included the identification of benefits and challenges for specific community members, such as women who were market sellers or youth fishers. This group work

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helped community representatives identify various benefits for different groups while also assessing GESI barriers for themselves. In a second group session, participants were asked to take a look into the future and discuss solution-based ideas that could improve the identified challenges and their GESI dimensions. The interactive nature of these activities allowed for good engagement and were an opportunity for discussions between participants. In some instances, the group work needed a stronger focus on key topics and a better focus on the GESI dimensions, to avoid answers that were generic or too broad. It was agreed to tweak the group work exercise by adding in specific work topics around livelihood, management, decision-making and food security.

## GESI perspectives identified

### Challenges and issues

The focus of men was clearly on harvesting-related issues although they also noted that they experience fewer challenges than women and youth fishers. Due to their focus on harvesting, the key challenges identified by men were the depletion of fish stocks and environmental threats impacting on their harvests. Women mentioned more challenges in total, and identified a more diverse range of challenges that were socioeconomic and environmental in nature in both harvesting and post-harvesting activities. Men's needs were mainly being trained in new fishing techniques, and having access to improved cold storage capabilities (especially when they go to sea for long periods). Both women and men, including youth fishers, feel an increasing pressure to harvest fish and other seafood order to maintain food security for the community due to growing populations. They also noted that climate change has affected their fishing.

Women feel they have to fish more often than they did in the past (gleaning and inshore fishing), especially when the weather is bad and men are unable to fish beyond the reefs.

At the same time, women lack the support of their husbands to undertake fishing activities because men expect women to attend to household and childcare duties. The lack of spousal trust, jealousy and controlling behaviour from husbands were also mentioned as restricting women from undertaking fishing activities and limiting their ability to expand and venture into new, different and/or extended fishing activities.

In this context, women mentioned the lack of recognition and respect by men for their profession as women fishers, and the blame placed on them by men if they do not catch enough fish. Women also highlighted their dependence on men to repair their canoes, often facing challenges to convince men to do so because men often do not recognise women's fishing activities as being important or valuable enough. Canoe maintenance, therefore, becomes a greater burden on women who also rely on the canoes for transportation to markets. Women pre-dominantly mentioned challenges around post-harvesting and marketing, and cold storage issues were mentioned by both women and men. Women stressed that cold storage is important for marketing to ensure freshness, hygiene and quality of their catch.

Women's traditional environmental knowledge came out during discussions on specific bait fish they use for their fishing activities. Environmental changes have already shown negative impacts on certain bait fish, but women discussed the different types of bait they can use, depending on changing weather patterns. This shows women's constant adaptation and building resilience to climate change impacts, and demonstrates gendered environmental knowledge. The use of destructive fishing methods was also discussed as a challenge from a GESI angle, namely the identification of certain groups of people who use these methods, such as poisonous leaves, vine fishing, gill nets or poaching. Further consultations are needed to find out why and women and youth use some of these methods, which may be because of limited access to information, training and awareness.



Participants in Noro. ©Tupe Samani



Youth fishers fish for more diverse reasons such as food, income, physical exercise, friendship and bonding, or to contribute to communal events. The perceived lack of interest by youth (raised by community representatives) in management and conservation may be a result of their lack of agency in the community set-up and would require stronger efforts to enable meaningful participation and improved intergenerational dialogue in the communities.

Young fishers mentioned numerous challenges such as:

- the lack of boat access and control, which makes them highly dependent on family permission, and they tend to be given the least priority;
- limited funds available for fishing gear and fuel, and most youth do not have any income source at all;
- limited decision-making powers on fishing-related activities within the village hierarchy of male elders, and running the risk of getting punished or disciplined harshly if they do not follow an elder's advice;
- being excluded from processes such as setting up fisheries management measures (e.g. community-based fisheries management), which can impact their fishing activities such as by losing their well-known fishing spots and having to fish somewhere farther away, thus having to pay more for fuel prices; and
- overharvesting.

#### Opportunities and solutions

Community representatives in Munda identified a range of solutions and opportunities to address and foster GESI in their fishing communities. It is worth mentioning here that youth fishers expressed the most positive and innovative thinking when identifying solutions and opportunities,

including diversifying livelihood options; mitigating weather-related impacts through weather apps or education and awareness programmes that target them as resource users; and becoming active players and agents of change in discussions of sustainable management that often exclude them. Other opportunities and solutions that were mentioned include the following:

- A stronger involvement of women and youth in management activities is needed, including in monitoring and decision-making, coupled with increased community awareness campaigns on the importance of marine resources and management, including conservation in order to foster community support for CBFM and suitable management tools (e.g. size limits).
- Awareness campaigns should strongly discourage destructive methods, and should target all fishing groups, including women and youth, because the use of such methods is linked to GESI roles. Awareness also needs to highlight the diverse benefits from sustainable marine resource management linked to livelihoods, employment and income, tourist activities and more.
- Education and awareness campaigns should target youth on issues such as conservation and the consequences of littering and polluting. This could be done through ocean literacy programmes and reviewing school curricula.
- Youth-focused fisheries projects would help to foster interest in fishing as a career.
- An improved image of fishing as a career for youth fishers may also empower them to speak up and engage in decision making and in CBFM.
- An increased understanding of GESI roles in fishing (who does what and where, or who holds what specific



Participants in Munda. ©Tupe Samani



“gendered” traditional knowledge), including further investigation on age and other social categories, especially investigating migrant fishers’ situations will inform policy and projects on CBFM or livelihoods support, for example.

- Access to ice machines and coolers for both fisherwomen and fishermen is needed for marketing purposes and for fishing trips to keep the fish cool and allow fishers to stay out longer on trips.
- To address harmful masculine behaviour (jealousy, control, blame and lack of support), women fishers suggested awareness training for men on gender equality, with a focus on time burdens, need for shared responsibilities for household and childcare duties, support for women fishers, and recognition of their contributions to food security, livelihoods and family and community well-being.

## Noro consultations

The same selection criteria and agenda as described for Munda were applied and followed for Noro community consultations. In total, 22 participants attended; 16 were men, 6 were women, and of these 6 were youth (< 35 years). The Noro group was less diverse than the Munda group, and men dominated the consultations, which included participants from a wider geographic scale, coming from eight different island communities (some very remote islands). The Noro group had four additional non-community representatives: two MFMR fisheries officers (one male and one female) based in Noro, and two female industry representatives, one from SolTuna (tuna processing plant) and one from NFD (fishing company).

### Challenges and issues

Fishing in Noro is done by both women and men to contribute to household consumption and communal gatherings such as birthdays or wedding occasions or other community events that require feeding big numbers of people. Youth fishers, especially, are called upon to provide quantities of fish for community activities, although they often feel that their “free labour” is expected of them without being valued for their contributions to communal benefits. A stronger need for subsistence fishing was identified by women and men in Noro compared to Munda, which could possibly be linked to the fact that participants came from more remote island communities and must travel greater distances to reach the main markets. Compared to men, women fishers raised more and greater challenges all together and across a wider range of areas mirroring the findings from Munda. Key challenges raised by women fishers were 1) their reliance on men to take them fishing in the face of limited access to and control over boats, and 2) the lack of proper fishing gear, and challenges to accessing (better) gear, as well as a lack of training opportunities to learn about different gear types, fishing styles and techniques to diversify fishing for better and more efficient outcomes. Both, women and men expressed a need to learn more about diversifying their bait and to learn more about hook sizes for more effective fishing results. Increasingly more severe weather events place greater pressure on women to provide food through

their fishing activities because the species and spaces (crabs, shellfish, mangrove fruit) where they fish are more protected and less impacted by bad weather. However, mid- and long-term impacts from climate change on natural habitats are likely to further exacerbate this growing pressure on women to provide food.

The need for cold storage facilities, improved market infrastructure, and additional market centres were mentioned by men and women market sellers. However, there were less vigorous discussions on gendered issues related to marketing due to the small number of women who participated in Noro compared to Munda. Young market sellers need to be promoted because marketing is often not seen by youth as a lucrative way of earning a livelihood or as a first step to gain business experience for learning, which they need in order to further develop business ideas and enhance business skills. Youth fishers and sellers felt that their entrepreneurial skills were not acknowledged or invested in, while they show more resilient adaption strategies to cope with fluctuating market prizes through the diversification of business options. Both women and men market sellers highlighted the importance of market spaces to exchange goods when products do not sell, emphasising the importance of market centres beyond just selling goods.

During discussions on marginalised groups, community representatives identified the following risk groups as facing additional hardship in their fishing communities (listed by priority):

- female-headed households, in particular those headed by widows;
- persons with disabilities and those with limited access to health services;
- people who lack ownership rights, in particular land ownership; and
- people from different ethnic backgrounds, especially migrants and those from minority groups.

Challenges associated with being marginalised were:

- being treated as an outcast and thus rejected by the community;
- being seen as a hindrance and burden in the community;
- lack of opportunities;
- insecurities; and
- an increase in dispute potential.

In this context of social exclusion, the disruption of family structures was mentioned as a challenge impacting on fishing activities. Noro is the country’s hub for commercial fishing and fish processing, which attracts locals from all the different provinces as well as foreign workers. They often leave their families behind to seek employment in Noro, and this has caused disruptions in social structures such as a greater number of family break-ups and increased single parent households, especially female-headed households. Locals from different provinces have their own traditions and cultural practices, and these can clash in a small place like Noro. Those looked down on as minority groups are more likely to suffer from exclusion. At the same time, fishing was

highlighted as a security asset for marginalised groups by creating employment opportunities in an otherwise scarce labour market.

Industry representatives during the consultations highlighted the challenges they face with regard to GESI, including biased recruitment processes, particularly for casual work opportunities. Initiatives have been taken by the industry to provide employment for persons with disabilities, tackle sexual harassment, provide financial literacy training, address childcare needs, and diversify career opportunities for women and girls in typically male-dominated areas. The importance of investing in a GESI-friendly work environment with a zero-tolerance policy for gender-based violence is taken seriously through the Waka Mere programme to advance workplace gender equality.

### Opportunities and solutions

The importance of market centres was highlighted by men, women and youth for various reasons. Investing in upgrading or adding more markets or fisheries centres (e.g. a fisheries centre in Vonavona Lagoon was suggested), supporting better access to cold storage facilities, and promoting fish marketing as a career pathway for young sellers were all seen as opportunities that would benefit all community members, especially for people from islands farther away. To tackle social exclusion and support marginalised groups, a set of targeted initiatives were suggested, including awareness raising, capacity building, financial support schemes, and inclusive policies with the potential to influence rigid governance structures for inclusive decision-making. Stronger involvement on the part of MFMR and civil society organisations in providing training opportunities and other means of empowerment and/or capacity building initiatives (especially those targeting women and marginalised groups), would further build on past and existing efforts and lessons learned, was suggested by industry personnel during the consultations.

### Conclusion and common themes

Gendered issues in the fishing communities consulted are diverse, concerning environmental, socioeconomic, governance and cultural aspects to harvesting, postharvesting, and marketing activities, with women and youth facing more challenges than men. Women's limited access to and control over boats; the lack of spousal support for household and

childcare while also confronting emotional stress due to men's controlling behaviour and jealousy when spending time out fishing; the growing pressure on food security felt more by women; and their unheard voices in decision-making concerning resource access, use and management due to culturally influenced governance structures, continue to impact women and their ability to undertake fishing activities. Youth fishers and sellers face similar challenges, if not more, with regard to access to and control over boats, and participating in decision-making, due to their low social status in a hierarchy of male elders. In the consultations, youth raised strong concerns about the lack of recognition of their fishing activities for communal benefits, and the lack of investment in their entrepreneurial skills and talents, even though they showed more innovation, flexibility and adaption than their elders when they discussed benefits and opportunities from a youth fisher's perspective. Projects that target youth fishers and youth sellers, and support their economic empowerment, are seen as an opportunity to address these challenges and to boost their self-esteem as valued members in their fishing communities.

A common concern raised by men and women fishers and market sellers was the lack of cold storage facilities such as ice machines, solar freezers and coolers. Investing in cold storage infrastructure for fishers and market sellers will benefit a wide range of people, but needs to be further investigated to design a sustainable and equitable solution. Involvement of MFMR and civil society organisations to support the industry's efforts in tackling GESI inequalities, not only at the workplace but with wider community outreach objective, can help address some GESI concerns. Successful training initiatives by the industry were, for example, fish handling, financial literacy and saving techniques that benefited women, in particular, with knowledge and skills trickling down to the community level. Women fishers also highlighted their training on new fishing styles and techniques, diversifying the bait they use, and knowing what hook to use. These types of training that target women specifically are important because training workshops typically target men because they are seen as the main fishers. However, many women's interest in accessing these training opportunities will help them adapt better to the changing environment and other climate change-related impacts on their marine habitats, including increased resilience to cope with increasing food security demands.



# New opportunities to mainstream gender into regional tertiary educational programmes

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## Background

The University of the South Pacific (USP) is one of four key regional partners currently implementing the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme. USP's responsibility within PEUMP is to build capacity through education, training, research and development for key stakeholder groups involved in fisheries and marine resource management. The education component encompasses the review, revision and development of tertiary-level qualifications, and provides support to postgraduate students. In addition, technical vocational education and training, and continuing professional development, provide opportunities to address existing and emerging issues in the Pacific.

The three main principles on which the overall approach of the PEUMP programme is based, include sound ocean and coastal governance, with a focus on biodiversity protection and sustainable use of marine resources; mainstreaming human rights and gender equality through a rights-based approach; and mainstreaming climate change and the environment in the context of biodiversity. Supported by

recommendations from USP's Institute of Marine Resources (IMR 2019), opportunities arose for integrating gender equality into USP programmes. Initially, the entry point for mainstreaming gender equality was through the courses of USP's Marine Studies programme. However, as time passed, another opportunity came about through USP's postgraduate diploma in Gender Studies. USP staff have received training on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, and Human Rights Based Approach to build in-house capacity to identify and apply gender socialisation. Following this training, and discussions with the USP Gender Studies programme coordinator, a Gender and Environment course was developed.

## Gender and Environment course

Discussions with regional experts and existing initiatives on the subject of gender and the environment have strongly influenced and shaped this course. In alignment with PEUMP's key principles, the Gender and Environment course provides a forum to critically examine and understand how gender plays out in environmental issues, particularly focusing on the Pacific Islands region. The course explores how the environment shapes gender roles, norms and relationships, and how these in turn affect the use, management and conservation of resources, as well as social responses to climate change. The course also highlights gender inequalities and issues of women's empowerment, examines ecofeminist theory, and looks at the relationship between gender justice and environmental justice. Students who take the course are taught how to apply a gender lens when analysing environmental issues in the region.

The first part of the Gender and Environment course covers feminist theories, and notions and debates that inform the subfield of gender and environment. The second part explores gender-related issues with regards to specific environmental areas and concerns. Although particular attention is paid to the context of fisheries and aquaculture, consideration is also given to the gendered dimensions of issues within other areas such as agriculture, forestry, biodiversity and climate change.

The Gender and Environment courses require students to use a handbook (Barclay et al. 2021) developed by the Pacific Community (SPC). The handbook provides case studies and gender analyses specific to fisheries and aquaculture for students and practitioners. The

**“** The Gender and the Environment post graduate course supports PEUMP's objective to enable gender mainstreaming as well as USP's own vision to integrate gender and more broadly social inclusion and human rights-based approaches into their courses.

I am confident that this course will support environmental science students to look through their work from a gender lens. **”**

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upcoming edition of the Pacific handbook – which will address human rights, gender equity and social inclusion in tuna industries – will add to the pool of resource materials used in this course. It is anticipated that professionals who take this course will apply what they learn to research, policy-making and development practices that take into account the interplay between gender inequality and environmental exploitation.

Future plans include offering the Gender and Environment course as an elective in other disciplines, thereby providing a pathway to integrated studies. The course will also be modified to have a fisheries focus and be delivered as a Gender and Fisheries micro qualification by the end of 2024.

### **Diploma in Fisheries Investigation and Prosecution**

This programme has recently been developed in conjunction with the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, based in Solomon Islands, and is ready for delivery following endorsement by the University Council in May 2022. The overall goal of the Fisheries Investigation and Prosecution programme is to cover the key fisheries compliance and enforcement skills and competencies required for both investigation and prosecution of fisheries-related offences. The programme will address the need for advanced fisheries monitoring, compliance and surveillance skills and competencies through the enforcement process. This programme encompasses the key fisheries skills and competencies of monitoring, compliance, surveillance and enforcement that are required for both investigation (understanding legislation, legal power, evidence identification and management) and prosecution (evidence analysis, transition from investigation, case file preparation and prosecution delivery) skills. It is designed for fisheries officers or other authorised persons in a designated investigative and regulatory role, thus enabling a successful prosecution for fisheries offences.

Having qualified fisheries officers prepare fisheries criminal case files would lessen the burden for public prosecutors, and address non-compliance issues. Gender equality issues are applied in appropriate sections of the course. It is anticipated that this programme will be offered in 2023.

### **Certificate IV in Pacific Ocean Finance**

The Certificate IV in Pacific Ocean Finance is a new programme that is being developed to improve the collective regional understanding of ocean finance and its challenges, and identifies which ocean finance solutions are best suited for the Pacific. It is aimed at those who may already be working in ocean management and finance-related activities, those with relevant work experience who wish to pursue a career in ocean finance, and governance-related work, or those who fulfil the entry requirements for a certificate programme at USP's Pacific Technical And Further Education unit.

The programme will raise awareness of those associated with the financial sector on how social and environmental factors can influence their investment decisions and affect investment returns. It is also intended for those working in the areas of marine studies, fisheries, conservation, and tourism to better understand financial concepts and how they work to fulfil

their objectives and roles. The programme outlines policy pathways to direct capital and grants towards ocean activities that support sustainable development goals. In general, it equips policy-makers, managers and those interested in ocean-related activities with the tools and techniques they need to positively change people's mindsets about improving ocean health and creating long term economic and social sustainability. Gender equality aspects are embedded in case studies that form part of the assessments. As with the Diploma, this Certificate will be offered in 2023.

### **Micro qualifications**

Two regional micro qualifications, with the aim of improving the capacities of fisheries practitioners and trainers in the region, work towards sustainability for food and livelihood security in a changing climate context, while also ensuring that gender equality is being developed. These micro qualifications are titled "Scale-up Community-based Fisheries Management in the Pacific" and "Analyse the Agricultural and Fisheries Value Chains in the Pacific Islands". Graduates will advance their career pathways in their various professions in national or regional fisheries agencies, non-governmental and civil society organisations, small and medium scale agricultural and fisheries entrepreneurship, quality assurance, domestic and international trade, and agribusiness research.

### **Future plans**

PEUMP will continue to strengthen the capacity of the Pacific Islands region by supporting more professionals with tuition fees for relevant TVET programmes, micro qualifications, non-formal training and professional short courses. There is a need for more Pacific-relevant micro qualifications to better equip local communities with the knowledge and skills they need to take ownership of and manage their coastal resources more sustainably. It is also a practical option for fisheries professionals who work full time to undertake specific technical upskilling through shorter and more targeted micro qualifications that are flexible and can be taken at one's own pace.

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## Accessing markets – Women Fishers Market Day

Adi Alani Tuivucilevu<sup>1</sup>

“The economic empowerment of women is therefore not an issue of social justice alone but also important for sustainable economic growth within fisheries.” (UN Women 2020:1)

Fisherwomen are the overlooked user group in the coastal fishery sector; their voices are often not heard, yet they are the mainstay for family subsistence and well-being.

Through its various training workshops with its members, the Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji (WiFN-Fiji) identified a recurring call for help among women fishers for easier market access. Women fishers have repeatedly highlighted the difficulties they face when trying to access markets for their products.

Repeatedly, researchers have mentioned the need to facilitate easier access for women fishers to markets. A report on *The critical contribution of women fishers to food security and livelihoods in Fiji*, recommended that opportunities to diversify the markets that women fishers have access to should be explored (Thomas et al. 2020).

In addition, a baseline report – Women’s Economic Empowerment in Fisheries in the Blue Economy of the Indian Ocean (UN Women 2020) – argues that unfettered access to resources is a prerequisite for women’s economic

empowerment. The report states that resource access should include new and improved technology that improves women’s participation in the processing and marketing of fish.

WiFN-Fiji hosted a Women in Fisheries Market Day on 22 October 2022. The market day was a first of its kind, bringing together 13 women fishers and their products from the provinces of Rewa, Tailevu, Ra and Nadroga, and aimed at addressing the barriers, challenges and opportunities for new or existing markets. The goals of the market day were to provide a way to get produce to markets and identify buyers for at least three women fisher suppliers.

WiFN-Fiji hopes to learn from Women Fishers Market Day, and in the future, will look at ways of including assessments of potential formal and informal markets, providing more ways for women to showcase their products, and facilitating ways for women fishers to gain a stable income.

Lanieta Kaikadavu from Vutia in Rewa Province was one of the women fishers who attended the Women Fishers Market Day, showcasing her farmed mangrove oysters in the hopes of finding a stable buyer for her village women’s group.

Lanieta, or Qei as she is known among the network members, is a 64-year-old mother of three. Qei attributes



Lanieta Kaikadavau talks about farmed mangrove oysters to a purchasing officer of a local eatery as fellow WiFN Board member, Shirlene Bala looks on. ©Lore Crocker

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her sons' successes to her selling at the market to afford their educational expenses. She has served as the school manager for Vutia District School for eight years and has recently been appointed as a WIFN-Fiji board member.

**“** *I am thankful that there is an organisation of this type that I can join. In July, the organisation took us [its members] to Leleuvia Island for a Resilience Training Workshop, which is where we started to really express our need for assistance for access to markets.*

*I am hopeful that with the returns from today's sales, I will be able to contribute to some of my grandson's school items. Secondly, some responsibilities in the village such as church soli's, school fundraising and soli ni marama or women's group levy can hopefully be covered in today's sales. Thirdly, today's returns would cater especially to my family's daily sustenance. Moreover, a share of the returns would make up a part of my contributions to the lotu (church), vanua (land) and kei na matanitu that we iTaukei consider the pillars of our societies under which we serve.*

Four fisherwomen were able to connect directly with and foster interests from local eateries. Talks are underway on how the women can directly supply their products to these businesses.

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Lanieta Kaikadavau and her grandsons at the Women Fishers Market Day. ©Lore Crocker



Women fishers with their display of products at the Women Fishers Market Day. ©Lore Crocker



# Disaster risk management requires an understanding of gender equity and social inclusion

Sangeeta Mangubhai,<sup>1</sup> Natalie Makhoul,<sup>2</sup> Zafiar Naaz,<sup>3</sup> Mere Vere<sup>3</sup> and Margaret Fox<sup>2</sup>

## Background

The Pacific islands are exposed to a range of hazards, including tropical cyclones, floods, storm surges, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. Pacific Islanders depend greatly on fisheries and aquaculture resources, and these hazards threaten people's livelihoods and change their resource-use patterns, leaving them quite vulnerable (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center 2018). Disaster risk is also linked to climate change. As the climate continues to change, disaster-prone communities will be forced to adapt their livelihoods and traditions, which are strongly tied to the land and sea.

Disasters can heavily impact the resilience of communities and countries, and set countries back in terms of economic and human development. For example, the World Bank (2018) estimates that the damages and losses from cyclones and earthquakes since 1950 have cost the region USD 3 billion, and that "10 countries in the Pacific are ranked as the top 30 countries in the world with the highest average annual losses as a percentage of gross domestic product" (World Bank 2018). Furthermore, about 5800 people, on average, are likely to be displaced during any given year by natural hazards (World Bank 2018).

There are often assumptions that all members of a population experience the impacts of disasters in the same way. However, natural disasters are not *neutral*, and research and experience have shown they affect women, men, girls and boys differently due to gender inequalities and social exclusion. These inequalities are a result of structures and practices that reinforce gender norms and unequal power relations (Mangubhai and Lawless 2021). The strength of preparedness, response and post-disaster recovery lies with how well it responds to the needs of both women and men through an *intersectional* lens. Disasters can also serve as a "window of opportunity" to transform negative gender norms and unequal power relations that contribute to gender-differentiated vulnerabilities.

There is an increasing need to integrate and streamline disaster risk reduction and risk management into key sectoral spaces, such as fisheries and aquaculture, to improve disaster preparedness, response and recovery. To do this, however, requires an understanding of how and why gender equity and social inclusion matter.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) project "Strengthening small-scale Fisheries in the Pacific Islands" (see text box on Canadapt 003) is assisting Fiji's Ministry of Fisheries with strengthening its capacity to lead and support gender-sensitive approaches to improved resilience of coastal fisheries and aquaculture. This

includes providing targeted training to ensure that the ministry is better prepared for the impacts of disasters and climate change, and has the capacity to apply the necessary tools to adopt gender-sensitive and socially inclusive approaches.

The training is being delivered through two in-person training sessions: one on gender equity and social inclusion, and the other on resilient coastal fisheries. The first training was delivered on 18-19 October 2022 in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) project Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP), and focused on building the confidence and technical capacity of officers in the Ministry of Fisheries to understand concepts and ideas of gender equity and social inclusion, and how these apply to coastal fisheries.

The second training is planned for February 2023, and will focus more on understanding how natural disasters impact the fisheries sector, and will provide approaches and tools to build resilient fisheries as a way to reduce disaster risk. There will be continued emphasis on how to incorporate social and human dimensions into disaster risk management in fisheries to make sure *no one is left behind*.

## Gender equity and social inclusion training

The learning objectives of the first training were to ensure that participants were: 1) more gender aware and sensitive towards inclusive approaches; 2) better positioned to identify entry points for integrating gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) into disaster risk reduction in coastal fisheries; and 3) equipped with a number of GESI tools that they can use in coastal fisheries.

The training especially targeted senior fisheries officers and fisheries officers within the Ministry of Fisheries and across technical fisheries fields (i.e. inshore fisheries management, offshore, aquaculture, research) and geographic divisions (i.e. Central, Eastern, Northern, Western). In total, 23 individuals participated, including three local FAO staff who also benefited from the training. Of the 23 participants, 14 identified themselves as women and 9 as men. A representative from the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation attended in order to provide participants information on the Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative (Anon 2023, this edition)

An attitude survey was completed before the training to help understand participants' attitudes and perspectives on gender equality, prior to attending the workshop. The survey included 19 multiple-choice questions, each with three options. Each option was ranked from 1 to 3, with 3 being given to the response that most reflected gender equality values and principles. The maximum possible score was 57.

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While women scored slightly higher (average = 54.3) than men (average = 50.4), the difference was not significant, suggesting that attitudes were fairly similar (Fig. 1).

Some of the key concepts and insights emerging from the training session and the participants themselves, are highlighted in the sections below. These are shared to demonstrate how GESI training is being implemented in the fisheries and aquaculture sector in Fiji, and to illustrate the approaches that will underpin the second training session to help build resilient fisheries and reduce disaster risk.

## Gender equality – a development goal and a human right, and why it matters in the fisheries sector

This session covered:

- gender equality and understanding the difference between sex and gender, and equality and equity (Fig. 2);
- gender perspectives in the fisheries sector, with a focus on what the issues are and why they matter;
- gender equality as a human right and development goal, and how it is considered nationally, regionally and internationally; and
- breaking common misconceptions about gender equality not being for women, or about women's issues, achieving equal numbers (50:50), or making men women, or women men.

Some of the ways in which the fisheries sector is not *gender neutral* and why gender matters in fisheries were discussed. The gendered roles and responsibilities that fishermen and fisherwomen play in their families were also talked about, and it was highlight that the barriers they face (e.g. lack of market access, decision-making) tended to be gender specific. A core message was that *fisheries development* needs to go hand-in-hand with *human development*.

The session also provided examples of why gender equality was not making progress in fisheries, including: 1) the sector is still perceived as being male dominated (attitudes and stereotypes); 2) there is a lack of data for gender analysis (qualitative and quantitative); 3) biased thinking that women's fishing activities are of low economic value; 4) focus is on harvesting, with little attention to post-harvesting activities; and 5) little attention is given to understanding gendered roles along the supply and value chain.

Gender matters when it comes to natural disasters, mainly because men tend to be more at risk of injury after a disaster because they are likely to be the ones to rebuild homes or fish for food when it may still be risky to do so. Women may play key roles in preparing for disasters (e.g. preserving food, rationing food, packaging), or after a disaster, such as collecting shellfish to feed the family. The session also highlighted that women and children are more likely to experience gender-based violence during and after disasters when stress levels are high.

## How does social inclusion or exclusion impact people's lives?

This session covered the meaning of "social inclusion" – Who is excluded? How are people excluded? And what happens when people are excluded? Participants learned that gender inequality is the social process by which men and women (or other identities) are not treated as equals and are often excluded. Exclusion is understood as happening at the *system level* – within formal and informal institutions that structure human interactions (our society). Exclusion also depends on context, culture, nationality and region, and leads to certain individuals, or groups of individuals, becoming marginalised. By using the "power walk" exercise, participants also learned that people do not have just one identity, and that different social identities (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, economic status) intersected to give individuals advantages or disadvantages in life. Social inclusion recognises and values diversity, and acknowledges that people have different experiences, knowledge, concerns and needs.

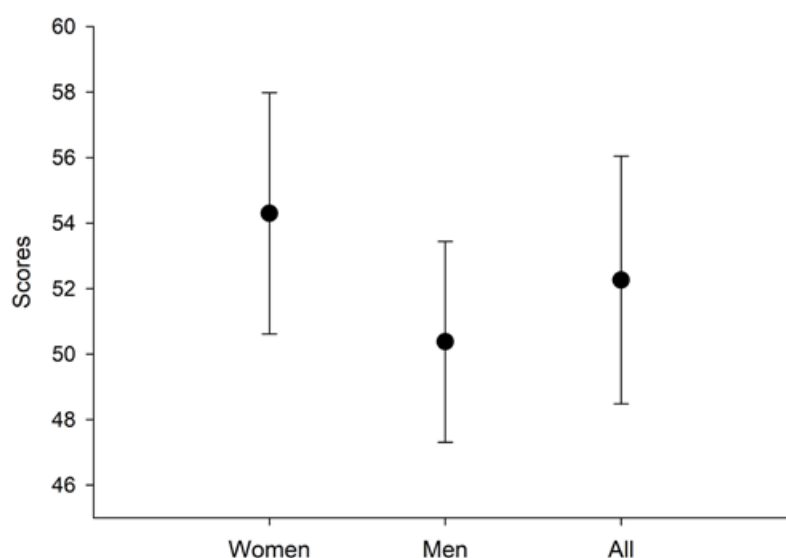


Figure 1. Average scores of participants (n = 20) who completed the pre-workshop attitude survey.





Figure 2. Illustrations explaining the difference between equality (left) and equity (right).  
©Sangeeta Mangubhai/Wildlife Conservation Society

The session encouraged participants to go beyond project design for the “majority”, and to consider those that are typically left out. This means that fisheries extension staff should consider themselves as equal opportunity providers, taking active steps to facilitate the participation and inclusion of various groups for equitable outcomes.

### Gender stereotypes

A gender stereotype is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are, or ought to be, possessed by women and men, or the roles that are, or should be, performed by men and women. This session was highly interactive and focused on what gender stereotypes are, how and when they are formed, what impact they can have on women, girls, men and boys, and how they relate to and impact fisheries.

During group work, participants reflected on the gender stereotypes that applied to or matched them as individuals, and those that did not. Participants then broke up into groups to discuss examples of gender stereotypes in fisheries, and decide whether these stereotypes were problematic. They were also asked to consider if there were stereotypes relating to other identities (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, economic status).

Examples of gender stereotypes in fisheries that were identified by participants included:

- Harvesting is more labour intensive and, therefore, better suited to men.
- Men are better at negotiating and, therefore, better at marketing fisheries products.
- Fisheries is a male-dominated sector that assumes men are better suited to being fish farmers or observers on fishing boats.
- Women are largely present in processing, value-adding and sales.
- Women are better suited to feeding fish in the aquaculture ponds that they also clean.

Many participants highlighted that gender stereotypes can be reinforced by institutions or systems in Fiji. One example is land ownership, which is registered under men's

names, posing a challenge for women to set up and operate aquaculture ponds as they need to get permission or support of men. They are not automatically entitled to the land and do not have a strong say in how it is used.

Participants highlighted a number of problems with gender stereotypes in fisheries:

- When roles change, it can create confusion and may impact the sustainability of a project or business.
- Women may lack the confidence and experience to take on large projects.
- Women's capabilities are undermined by gender stereotypes.
- There are challenges for women farmers who want to own or manage aquaculture businesses, and these challenges may require the ministry to have different application processes for women (than men) who want to set up aquaculture farms.
- Institutional systems, including the Ministry of Fisheries, can reinforce stereotypes in the sector or help to break them.

### GESI analysis tools

GESI analysis is critical for understanding sociocultural, socioeconomic and socioecological constructions where men and women inhabit different spheres and hold different powers. A GESI analysis should be done at the start of a project as part of the planning phase, in order to map gender differentiated needs, and assess the potential social (especially gender) impacts of the project. This session was designed to introduce participants to several tools that could be used to conduct or contribute to a GESI analysis for fisheries, such as:

- gender division of labour;
- time-use survey;
- examining access to and use of natural resources through a gender lens; and
- GESI-sensitive value chain analysis.

The findings can then be mainstreamed into project cycles, including monitoring, evaluation and learning systems, and the design of activities and interventions. The training

encouraged participants to consider ways to integrate these tools into their current approaches, and to see these tools as adding value, and helping them deliver more effective projects and programmes.

### Inclusive community engagement methods

This session focused on teaching participants how to apply gender and socially inclusive approaches in community engagement activities. Specifically, participants learned:

- the key GESI considerations when interacting with a community;
- misconceptions around community engagement; and
- understanding which GESI barriers hinder the participation and engagement of marginalised people.

A checklist from the Pacific Handbook for Gender Equity and Social Inclusion in Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture (Module 6, Delisle et al. 2021) was provided to the Ministry of Fisheries to aid staff in reflecting on and identifying facilitation techniques they could adopt to promote better gender and social inclusion approaches when conducting community meetings or workshops (Fig. 3).

### Practical ways to implement GESI-sensitive fisheries research

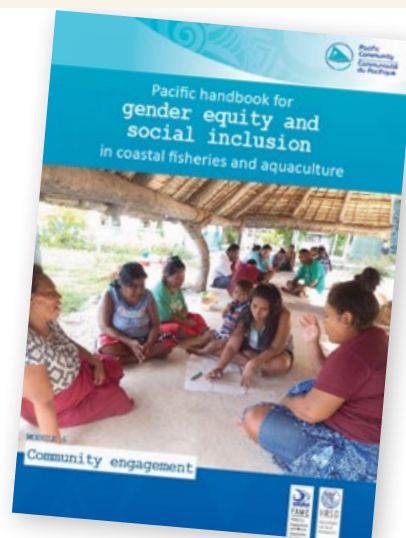
Gender-sensitive research aims to capture the similarities and differences in the experiences of both men and women. This session explored GESI-sensitive research and why it matters, and some practical ways to implement GESI-sensitive fisheries research in Fiji.

Participants learned that gender-sensitive research considers gender at every step of the research – from the initial idea to sharing findings and recommendations – thereby giving equal value to women's and men's unique perspectives (Fig. 5). Gender norms and gender relations are context specific and can vary at different governance levels (e.g. national, subnational, community), and the inclusion of gender considerations in the planning and implementation of socioeconomic research is a critical step to understanding individuals' needs, roles, vulnerabilities, opportunities and

contributions to society. A checklist of gender considerations was shared with participants for them to use when designing and implementing their own socioeconomic research (Mangubhai et al. 2022).

### PEUMP

Funded by the European Union and Government of Sweden, the PEUMP programme promotes sustainable management and sound ocean governance through a holistic and multi-sectoral approach, thus contributing to social, economic and environmental development in the Pacific, as well as biodiversity protection and promoting the sustainable use of fisheries and other marine resources. The PEUMP programme focuses on equitable benefits for all Pacific Island countries, while recognising the diversity of resources, needs and opportunities among its 15 Pacific countries of work – the Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste and Vanuatu.



Module 6, Community engagement. ©SPC



Attendees of the training. ©Ministry of Fisheries, Fiji





Figure 5. Four key stages to research where gender should be considered.

### ***CANADAPT003 – Strengthening small-scale fisheries in the Pacific Islands***

Funded by the Government of Canada, the Strengthening Small-scale Fisheries in the Pacific Islands project has been designed with a long-term vision of improving the resilience of coastal communities in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu through the improved capacity to adapt the management of nearshore resources to climate change, and by reducing vulnerabilities, including through a focus on gender equity. The intended impact of the project is increased resilience of fishers (both women and men) in coastal communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. FAO is working through national and regional partners and experts in the Pacific Islands region, in close coordination and partnership with the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, and the Vanuatu Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity. The training is Activity 1.1 of the Letter of Agreement with Ministry of Fisheries, which ensures that key fisheries staff have improved capacity on gender equity and social inclusion for climate change adaption and disaster resilience.

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Participants at the training. ©Zafiar Naaz

# Resilience training for fisherwomen in climate change, disaster risk reduction and climate justice

Adi Alani Tuivucilevu<sup>1</sup>

Women are often disproportionately impacted by climate change and natural disasters. Women have different priorities and needs, and face different challenges than men in both responding to disasters and coping with the impacts. Unfortunately, women are missing as key stakeholders in climate negotiations, and gender considerations in decision-making is still not a priority for some governments. It is important to incorporate gender considerations and gender-responsive approaches in planning and implementing climate change resilience and disaster risk reduction.

Climate change represents one of the biggest threats to sustainable development. According to Fiji's National Climate Change Policy (Government of Fiji 2019), global



Women fishers gauging the level of vulnerability of their communities using the Community Integrated Vulnerability Assessment toolkit while Ms Teresa Powell (standing) looks on. ©WIFN-Fiji

sea level rise will more than double by the end of the century. Since 1993, Fiji has recorded a 6 mm increase in its sea level per year, larger than the global average (ABM and CSIRO 2011). The rapid rise in sea level, and the resulting saltwater intrusion, have made portions of the island nation uninhabitable (Government of Fiji 2021).

In Fiji, destructive weather patterns have hindered the island's economy and uprooted thousands of people across the country. In February 2016, Cyclone Winston ravaged Fiji, taking the lives of 44 Fijians, destroying homes, uprooting families and inflicting serious damage on the Fijian economy (Government of Fiji 2016). The estimated value of disaster effects resulting from TC Winston is FJD 1.99 billion (USD 0.9 billion), including FJD 1.29 billion (USD 0.6 billion) in damages (destroyed physical assets), and FJD 0.71 billion (USD 0.3 billion) in losses (Government of Fiji 2016).

In 2014, residents of Vunidogoloa, a village on the shoreline of Fiji's second-largest island, Vanua Levu, became the nation's first community to relocate due to climate change. The village's 26 homes were located mere metres from the coast, but with four decades of higher tides and heavier rainfall, Vunidogoloa – and its homes, gardens, crops and trees – found itself at the mercy of relentlessly encroaching seawater. Migrating to higher ground offered the only remaining option for the community.

A three-day training workshop on building community resilience to climate change, disaster risk reduction and climate justice was organised by the Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji (WiFN-Fiji), hosting 22 fisherwomen from the seven provinces of Rewa, Tailevu, Ba, Ra, Nadroga, Kadavu and Cakaudrove.

The purpose of the workshop was to provide participants with training on climate change, disaster risk reduction concepts, activities and approaches, and to equip them with relevant knowledge and practices for improving their resilience.

Specific objectives of the workshop were to build the capacity of fisherwomen to:

- describe basic concepts of climate change, including causes and effects, impacts at a global scale and in Fiji, and incorporate relevant elements into community life;
- identify adaptation activities and support other community members to incorporate adaptation and mitigation activities within their communities' institutions through a gender lens for resilience; and
- share climate impact stories and exchange information on solutions.

The workshop was opened by the Acting Executive Director for Women's Fund Fiji, Menka Goundan, a feminist activist who has worked in research, advocacy and training for women's rights in Fiji and the Pacific. In her opening address, Ms Goundan highlighted the importance of climate justice by stating, "the climate crisis not merely an environmental problem but also a complex social justice problem placed in the center of a population that is particularly vulnerable to its impact, including women who are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change".

A pre-workshop evaluation informed the facilitators of participants' expectations, which included finding solutions to issues such as the lack of representation of women in leadership platforms, conflict resolution, climate change and development issues, and issues relating to food security and livelihood.

Discussions covered a range of topics, including natural hazards and disasters; causes of climate change and its impacts and responses; climate change adaptation; gendered nature of climate change; and climate justice.

Aliti Vunisea spoke about climate change and its implications on fisherwomen before explaining the links to climate justice. Ms Vunisea is an expert on women in fisheries and has



Menka Goundan opening the Resilience Training Workshop. ©WIFN-Fiji

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Makereta Vulituranaganivalu of Narikoso Kadavu sharing her experiences at the Resilience Training Workshop. ©WIFN-Fiji

extensive work experience advising government bodies and non-governmental entities in natural resource management planning, as well as fisherwomen's roles in nation building. Ms Vunisea began with a graphical explanation of the concept of global warming and the shifting changes to climate, and pointed out that anthropogenic activities are accelerating the rate at which the climate is changing. She defined climate justice as "something that is good for everyone" before going on to explore the dynamics of an *iTaukei* village to emphasise the challenges faced in trying to achieve gender or climate justice, given the nature of the *iTaukei* systems of governance and decision-making. Ms Vunisea described the barriers that limit women's participation, including their traditional status, which limits women's participation in decision-making spaces and their access to land. A woman who marries into a clan does not have a say in decisions pertaining to clan land. She also highlighted the fact that in terms of climate change, the increasing intensity of cyclones have a domino effect on soil, erosion and flooding, and these then impact ecosystems downstream (e.g. coral reefs and marine life), which in turn translates to less seafood in women's catches. Diminished catches can lead to a number of social issues.

The second guest speaker was Teresia Powell, a respected authority on climate change adaptation, who introduced the participants to the community vulnerability and adaptation assessment toolkit. This enabled community representatives to understand the level of vulnerability of their respective communities by assessing the community's level of food security.

Gathering information during group discussions provided insights on topics and issues that were important to participants. Some of the information collected during discussions included the complexities of shared fishing grounds – a system used by village clans to demarcate fishing boundaries, protocols and channels in the various districts (*tikina*) in the province, and when seeking the assistance of traditional leaders regarding the current status of fishing grounds, issues affecting the environment, destructive fishing practices, and fishing policy enforcement in the respective areas.

This workshop drew out the major knowledge base of the participants. Fisherwomen have expertise to better manage fisheries and practices, and women are able to influence decision-making regarding their local environments.

Outcomes of the workshop included: 1) increased awareness and understanding of climate change concepts, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and climate justice; and 2) documentation of traditional fisherwomen knowledge,

and determining how this knowledge base can be better utilised to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Not involving women in policy, planning and decision-making in the fisheries sector has ecological and social repercussions. Fisherwomen shared stories of first-hand experience of the impacts of climate change, particularly on their livelihoods and food security, as well as how their health is at risk through extended fishing hours and increased distance to access fishing area. This makes fishing strenuous and laborious, and upsets women's daily norms, particularly for the relocated villagers of Vunidogoloa and Narikoso.

Recommendations from the workshop included making sure resilience workshops explain and give adequate attention to the gender dimensions of climate change and natural disasters, as well as climate justice. One recommendation was to conduct a series of "Women in Leadership" workshops for our members where existing women in community leadership positions are present to share their experiences; and conduct follow-up training sessions for the vulnerability and adaptation tool kit. This ensures that women at the grassroots level are able to gauge the level of vulnerability of their communities and address it accordingly.



Adi Sivo Yabakitolu of Vunidogoloa, Cakaudrove, receiving her certificate from WIFN Chair Cherie Morris after completing the Resilience Training Workshop. ©WIFN-Fiji

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# Women in fisheries profiles

## Jill Houma

Fisheries Officer, Ministries of Fisheries and Marine Resources

Jill Houma<sup>1</sup> and Chelcia Gomeze<sup>2</sup>

“My name is Jill Houma and I was born and grew up in Auki Town in Malaita Province in Solomon Islands. My mother is from Suholo Village in Makira-Ulawa Province, and my father is from Palasuú Village in South Malaita Province. My father is Senior Revenue Officer at Malaita Provincial Office and my mother takes care of the family home.

I started my early childhood education at St Paul's kindergarten for three years (1999–2001). I went to Auki Primary School and was the Class Captain for Grades 2, 4, 5 and 6, and served as a school prefect in my final year. In 2009, I attended Auki Community High School in Auki Malaita Province where I completed most of my secondary school education before I moved to St Stephen Pamua Community college in Makira-Ulawa Province to complete Form 6. During my secondary school years, I was a school prefect and in my spare time I volunteered and served as the secretary for the Palasuú Village Committee.

I completed a Certificate of Environment and Applied Science at Solomon Islands National University (2016–2017). Following graduation, I joined Save the Children, doing data analysis and was an enumerator for a survey on justice for youth. I also worked with the Department of Environment Health in Auki as a food health inspector.

In 2019, I approached the Malaita Fisheries Office in the hope of building up my capacity of knowledge and skills, gaining more work experience, and receiving training in fisheries, especially the sustainable harvesting of marine resources. After volunteering for six months, I successfully applied and got the position of Research Fisheries Officer under the Malaita Provincial Government. I am proud to say I am the first woman to work in the Malaita Provincial Fisheries Office. Recently, I accepted a position as Fisheries Officer with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in Malaita.

### What is your current role? What do you do?

My current role as Fisheries Officer is to provide information to Malaita Provincial Government on fisheries development, resource management, and the operations of the provinces' fisheries centres. I often work closely with organisations that are implementing projects in Malaita Province. For example, I joined the Provincial Fisheries Office and WorldFish to visit 100 coastal communities around Malaita to collect information on the awareness of community-based fisheries management, and helped interview groups of women as part of developing community profiles. I supported a team from the Ministry of the Environment, and the Ministry of Fisheries who were leading consultations on ocean spatial planning in the four regions of Malaita (i.e. Northern, Southern, East Kwaio, and Central Kwara'ae). During the COVID-19 pandemic, I assisted with the deployment of fish aggregation devices (FADs) around Malaita funded by Malaita Provincial Government, to support the food security and livelihood needs of the three communities of Kwai, Tawahaule and Uhu. During my visits to communities, I also interviewed fisherwomen about how they experience marine resource scarcity and its impacts to food and household income.

### Why are you passionate about your work in fisheries?

I am passionate about working with community resource owners to improve the sustainability of marine life, help enforce laws, and provide awareness to resource owners, women, children, youth, the elderly and those living with disabilities on best harvesting practices to ensure there are resources for income and livelihoods for future generations. I especially enjoy working with fisherwomen to share my knowledge on how to monitor the sustainability of their harvests, and have inspiring conversations on why marine resources are so important to manage.

### What are some challenges working in a male-dominated workplace?

The challenge is that women are underrepresented at every level, starting from entry-level jobs to senior positions, and women often receive salaries that are less than their male counterparts. Decision-making for each programme is always done by male colleagues. I share my ideas but the ideas are not

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often considered. Another challenge that I face is how jobs are divided up between men and women – men get to do fieldwork, while women are expected to look after the office. Many people I meet do not value women's contributions to decision-making or their ideas for programme implementation.

**What advice can you give other women who are interested in working in fisheries?**

*Small-scale fisheries is an interesting sector that most women, young girls and the elderly contribute to through the collection of shells, processing fish using motu (a traditional Solomon Islands method of cooking), drying fish, or selling fish to the market. Many contribute through a diversity of roles such as seaweed harvesters or workers in processing plants, or doing value adding to marine products, like marking shell money for valuable uses. We need more women in the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources who can work with women in the fisheries sector. I encourage more young women to come onboard the fisheries team so that we can demonstrate the valuable role women can play, and can all do our part to empower more women in rural areas who play critical roles in food security and livelihoods for their families and communities.*



This picture was taken in July 2021 during the review of the Community Based Resource Management Plan for the Kamage community in Isabel Province that my work colleague and I facilitated, with the CBRM Section of the Ministry of Fisheries and WorldFish. ©Alick Konimalefo



This picture was taken in July 2021 during the review of the Community Based Resource Management Plan for the Kamage community in Isabel Province that my work colleague and I facilitated, with the CBRM Section of the Ministry of Fisheries and WorldFish. ©Mathew Ishanua





## Women in fisheries profiles

### Nettie Thomas Sapa

Vanua Tai Resource Monitor/Vice Chair – Kwamera CBFM Committee

By Nettie Thomas Sapa and Vasemaca Malverus<sup>1</sup>

Nettie Thomas is a middle-aged mother who is originally from the village of Lapatua in South Tanna, Vanuatu. She has been a volunteer for the Vanua Tai Network as a Resource Monitor for almost 10 years. She is the wife of the late Mafio Sapa, who was the chief of Kwamera Village in South Tanna, Tafea Province. She is a leader in her community, serving numerous roles such as leader of the women's church group, chairperson of World Wide Vision Savings group, vice Chairman of the Kwamera community-based fisheries management (CBFM) committee, and a member of the Produce Cooperative of the South Tanna Area Council.

#### How long have you been involved in fisheries activities?

*I started bamboo fishing a year after I got married into Kwamera Village and I used to sell my catch at the Lenakel market. My husband would dive and also help generate income for our family. From that income, we were able to build our family home, purchase a solar freezer system and a boat to use for fishing. Our fishing business has helped a lot of young people in the community to gain income. After Tropical Cyclone Pam, the Vanuatu Fisheries Department donated another solar freezer and another boat, as part of the recovery programme due to our family's efforts in fisheries activities in our village.*

#### How long have you been involved in community-based fisheries management (CBFM) in your community? What was your role and how did it impact women in your community?

*I joined the Vanua-Tai Resource Monitor's Network in 2013 as a volunteer, visiting communities around Tanna Island. I was involved in awareness programmes and disseminating information materials on environmental protection. As part of this volunteer work, we organised beach clean-ups and the re-planting of coconuts and other plants to protect the coastline from soil erosion. So when the Pathways<sup>2</sup> project came to Kwamera to introduce CBFM, my late husband was the chief;*

*therefore, I was automatically involved since I was already an active member of Vanua-Tai in the community. For the first three years of the community managing our resources, I was a member of the CBFM Committee. This year (2022), was the third year of our marine protected area [MPA] and the whole community was overwhelmed with the harvest. The whole community and especially the women came to understand their roles in supporting the CBFM Committee, and the importance of being involved in such activities. The Pathways project helped us reviewed our management plan and our MPA is set for another three years and I was promoted to vice chair of the CBFM Committee this time.*

#### What is your perspective on the importance of involving women in community-based fisheries management?

*Because women are the caretakers of their households, they are involved in fisheries to earn money and support their homes. So, they need to be involved in fisheries management so that they understand fully and support fisheries management in the community. Women working together with men in a community can boost moral for the whole community to be part of such important activities that the whole community benefits from. It also portrays a great example for other communities to follow the same path in respecting their own community decisions in protecting their marine resources.*

#### What do you want to see in the future in terms of showcasing women in fisheries, especially at the community level?

*I want to see more women participating in and taking up important roles to support fisheries and resource management in their communities. I also want to help other communities to have similar activities like Kwamera to manage their marine resources at the community level. This is because they will benefit from it by being able to support their families in providing fish and income for their households.*

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<sup>2</sup> The Pathways project is the shorthand name for a series of consecutive Australian government-funded initiatives to strengthen community-based fisheries management in the Pacific, and is led by the University of Wollongong (Australia) through ACIAR projects FIS-2016-300 and FIS-2020-172. In Vanuatu, the project is implemented in partnership with the Vanuatu Fisheries Department and with support from the Pacific Community.





Nettie Thomas Sapa, vice chair for the Kwamera Community-Based Fisheries Management Committee. ©Douglas Koran

“Women are the caretakers of households so they are involved a lot in fisheries to earn money and support their homes. So, they have to be involved in fisheries management so that they'll understand fully and support fisheries management in the community” – Nettie Thomas



Nettie in her element, bamboo fishing off of Kwamera Village. ©Douglas Koran





# Women in fisheries profiles

## Saras Wati Sharma

Principal Fisheries Officer, Fiji Ministry of Fisheries

By Saras W. Sharma<sup>1</sup> and Sangeeta Mangubhai<sup>2</sup>

Saras Sharma was born in Suva, Fiji. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree (Geography and Marine Affairs) from the University of the South Pacific (USP) in 2006, and a Post-graduate Diploma (Marine Management) in 2016. She was appointed Principal Fisheries Officer for the Ministry of Fisheries Inshore Fisheries Management Division in 2021. She has worked for the ministry for 16 years serving in a number of roles: Senior Fisheries Officer (2020–2021), Executive Support Officer to Deputy Secretary (2019–2020), Acting Principal Research Officer (2018–2019), Fisheries Technical Officer (2012–2017), Fisheries Research Assistant (2011–2012) and Officer in Charge of the Makogai Mariculture Research Project (2007–2010). She has worked on a diversity of issues from science, including community-based management, policy and compliance.

Saras is currently an Appointed Sessional Committee Member of the Scientific Council for the Oceania region, of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Scientific Council and the CMS Alternate Scientific Councillor for Fiji. She is passionate about the conservation and management of endangered species, and species of special interest (especially cetaceans) and their habitats, and working with and supporting community protects and managing coastal fisheries. She enjoys networking and sharing ideas with diverse groups and individuals at the national, regional and international levels.

### Why did you choose to work in fisheries?

*During Careers Day I visited the Marine Campus at USP, and saw a small demo and fell in love with everything that was happening in the ocean. I made up my mind to find out more and be involved. The vastness of the ocean has always fascinated me. After completion of my studies I wanted to work for the Ministry of Fisheries because I wanted to know what was being done in Fijian waters.*

### What has been some of your greatest highlights of your career so far?

*Being the first female to lead the Makogai Mariculture Station. Being chosen as the youngest sessional committee member for Oceania at CMS [Convention on Migratory Species].*

*However, each day brought something new; new to learn, new experiences or just meeting new people. I have loved every bit of my career, from living in remote islands, to traveling to remote areas, meeting people from different places and backgrounds, exploring the beauty of the environment and the people, and attending and representing my country or region nationally and internationally. Opportunities to learn and experience Australian cetacean surveys from Stradbroke Island or a two-week boat trip to the Great Barrier Reef. There are just so many highlights. From spawning giant clams to tagging sea turtles, collecting DNA from dolphins around Fiji to implementing the national legislation. Conducting compliance operations in Fiji fisheries waters. Getting together and forging a network in the enforcement space.*

### Why are you passionate about women in fisheries (or gender and fisheries)?

*Women are breaking traditional barriers. I would like to acknowledge the women who steered this process and have created the enabling environment for other women to flourish in this environment as well as the many men that have supported this process and created a healthy and productive environment. There is still so much more to do to ensure there is a balance between equity and equality needs. Like any other sectors, women are making progress by unleashing their hidden potentials; they need to be given an equal chance to make this breakthrough. They have always contributed to the running of a household although they have only been recognised and appreciated a lot later on for their significant contributions. The fisheries sector has its own sets of challenges and opportunities, and it's vital that we ensure that this is well tapped into. The marine environment needs to be a healthy and safe working environment for fisherwomen.*

### What message do you have for inspiring young women early in their career?

*You are only limited by your imagination. Every step in the right direction is a significant progress. It's a different terrain but one that is worth pursuing with your heart and mind. You don't have to be better than anyone, but be better of your earlier version each passing day – pursue excellence, success will follow.*

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<sup>2</sup> Talanoa Consulting, Suva, Fiji





Strengthening collaboration with enforcement agencies in the coastal fisheries sector. @Ministry of Fisheries



Saras with fellow fisheries officers in the coastal fisheries sector.  
@Ministry of Fisheries

“Each day and each action is equally important, be better at every opportunity. You are only limited by your imagination. Every step in the right direction is significant progress.”  
Saras Sharma

## Strengthening small-scale fisheries in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - A project roundup

Zafiar Tasmeen Naaz,<sup>1</sup> Mere Judith Vere,<sup>2</sup> Sylvester Diake,<sup>3</sup> Georgina Kalsing,<sup>4</sup> Saurara Gonelevu,<sup>5</sup> Philippe Brewster,<sup>6</sup> Sangeeta Mangubhai<sup>7</sup> and Anne-Maree Schwarz<sup>8</sup>

*Funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Strengthening Small Scale Fisheries in the Pacific (Canadapt 003) project (2021–2023) was designed to contribute to a long-term vision of improving the resilience of coastal communities in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Through Canadapt 003, FAO has partnered with the national fisheries agencies in each country: the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, the Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, and the Vanuatu Fisheries Department.*

### Context

People living in the Pacific Islands rely on fish and fisheries for nutrition, employment and economic growth. Around half of the total fisheries contribution to gross domestic product is sourced from coastal fisheries (SPC 2015). Achieving good management and governance of coastal fisheries is critical as the population increases and the production of fish from coastal fisheries decreases and is exacerbated by climate change and the impacts of natural disasters.

Men and women participate in both subsistence and income-generating activities along the coastal fisheries value chain. Traditionally, women's fishing activities were confined to coastal areas, mainly harvesting (e.g. reef gleaning), seafood processing and food preparation for home consumption). Women are, however, increasingly taking up economic opportunities such as in marketing or small businesses that involve marine resources. Nevertheless, the role of women in fisheries is not often recognised, documented or well-understood. This, in turn, contributes to the overall poor engagement of women in fishing activities and decision-making processes in coastal fisheries management.



Fiji Ministry of Fisheries staff from different divisions attended the disaster risk management stakeholder consultation held in Suva. ©Zafiar Naaz

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- 2 National Project Assistant, FAO, Fiji
- 3 National Project Assistant, FAO, Solomon Islands
- 4 National Project Assistant, FAO, Vanuatu
- 5 Food safety consultant, FAO, Fiji
- 6 Disaster Risk Reduction consultant, FAO, Fiji
- 7 Gender consultant, Talanoa Consulting, Fiji
- 8 Lead Technical Advisor, FAO, New Zealand



Recognising the role of women in fisheries and fisheries management has gained momentum in the region. This is in line with regional and leaders' commitments to inclusive, equitable and human rights-based approaches (SPC 2021) to ensure that women and youth have a greater role in decision-making processes and more equitable access to benefits from coastal fisheries. Project Canadapt 003 is aligned with these regional commitments and with FAO's strategic objectives to: make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable; reduce rural poverty; enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems; and increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises (FAO 2015). The project aims to achieve impact through the improved capacity to adapt the management of nearshore resources to climate change, and by reducing vulnerabilities with a focus on gender equity.

## Project modality

Canadapt 003 activities have been codesigned with the national fisheries agencies in each project country in order to align these with national policy and agency work plans. Funds are accessed directly by the agencies for implementation, which is supported by an FAO national project assistant in each of the three project countries, a project manager based in Fiji, gender and disaster risk and reduction advisors, and FAO-recruited consultants for specialised tasks.

### Activities fall under three project outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** Strengthened national and local management capacity in small-scale fisheries for climate change adaptation through a gender-sensitive approach.

**Outcome 2:** National and local stakeholders are better prepared for natural disasters and climate change impacts, resulting in reduced vulnerability.

**Outcome 3:** Resilient fisheries value chains developed that reduce the vulnerability of fishers and women in coastal communities to climate-related changes, extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks

### Three intermediate gender outcomes have been identified in the project's gender strategy:

- Increased ability of the government to conduct gender-based analysis;
- Improved policies and procedures requiring and enabling a gender-sensitive lens to be applied to all activities of the fisheries agency; and
- Increased ability of women to participate in autonomous income-generating activities.

Partnerships are an essential component of the project's approach. By implementing through the national fisheries agencies, activities are aligned with related small-scale fisheries projects housed within the agency. For example, in Vanuatu this includes the University of Wollongong's ACIAR<sup>9</sup>-funded community-based resource management projects, the FAO project for Enhancing Livelihoods and Food Security through Fisheries with Nearshore Fish Aggregating Devices in the Pacific Ocean, and JICA's<sup>10</sup> Promotion of the Grace of the Sea in Coastal Villages project. Particularly, but not exclusively, for activities related to gender outcomes, the Pacific Community, WorldFish, UNWomen, Talanoa Consulting, the Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji, the Fiji's Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, and the Auki Market Vendors Association (Solomon Islands) are all playing roles in the planning and implementation phases of the project.



Participants from the stakeholder consultation held at Port Vila in Vanuatu contributed to a Disaster Risk Management Standard Operating Procedure for Vanuatu Fisheries Department. ©Georgina Kalsing

<sup>9</sup> ACIAR = Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research

<sup>10</sup> JICA = Japan International Cooperation Agency

## Project activities at a glance

### Some key project activities include:

- A focus on disaster risk reduction, management and recovery for the coastal fisheries sector through the development or completion (as relevant) of national level standard operating procedures. (Also see the article titled Disaster risk management requires an understanding of gender equity and social inclusion, this issue).
- After the development of standard operating procedures, fisheries staff are trained in its application, including the collection of gender-sensitive data that inform interventions to mitigate and respond to natural disasters and climate change impacts.
- Gender-sensitive analysis of small-scale fisheries value chains in which women have a relatively high level of participation. This includes smoked and dried fish, which are important sources of income, livelihood and food security for Ontong Javans from Malaita's outer islands and for Shortland Islanders in the Western Province of Solomon Islands.
- Support for small-scale aquaculture opportunities in which women have a relatively high level of participation, such as the mangrove oyster in Fiji (Kinch et al. 2019). This work includes conducting gender risk assessments at specific sites, the development of a checklist of social and environmental selection criteria to assist the Ministry of Fisheries in not only selecting locations with suitable environmental conditions for scaling but also to assist in effective community engagement.

These activities are being supported by training in improved food safety, training in value-adding opportunities and development of food safety guidelines and information materials. Opportunities for sharing lessons and experiences among community members participating in the activities have been identified with project partners and will be facilitated through joint workshops during 2023.

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Women from the Auki Market Vendors Association with fisheries officers, participating in the gendered value-chain analysis survey in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. ©Sylvester Diake



## Fiji's Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative

*Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation*

The Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative is a “whole-of-government” initiative with an emphasis on strengthening technical knowledge, skills, competence and resources on Transformative Gender Analysis/ Mainstreaming and Gender Responsive Budgeting and Planning across government institutions along with the establishment of effective coordination and accountability mechanisms. A gender-transformative approach tackles the social norms, attitudes and social systems that are often the root causes of gender inequality in a society, and strives to reshape and transform gendered power relations and structures.

### Background

In 2021, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA), in close partnership with the Ministry of Economy, launched its Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development (ICD). The ICD is funded by the governments of Fiji, New Zealand and Canada, and supported technically by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement along with a team of international and local experts whose services will be rendered in parallel.

The overall goal for the ICD is to create an enabling environment to ensure integration of all women and girls' needs, interests, concerns, contributions and perspectives into policies, strategies, programmes and budgets across government institutions with the establishment of effective coordination mechanisms as well as enhancing technical knowledge, skill, competence and resources.

The ICD is expected to support: (a) strengthening capacity, knowledge and skill on Transformative Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB); (b) effective coordination and accountability for gender equality outcomes with the formation of Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) and the development of the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans across government institutions and agencies; and (c) development of series of sector/context specific knowledge products and tools.

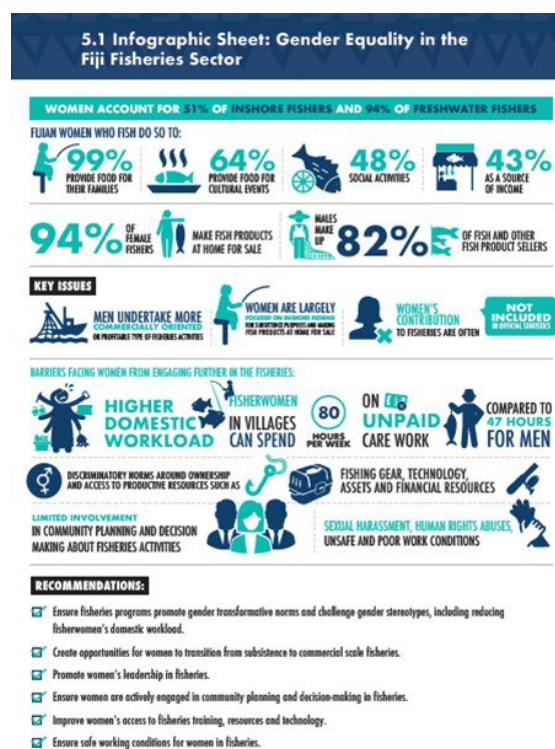
GMAGs are led by a Permanent Secretary and include members from all the line departments

(Directors/Principal level staff) of respective government institutions. GMAGs are expected to work together, with the support of the MWCPA to:

- act as “catalyst” to assist the process of transformative gender mainstreaming + GRBP across Government institutions
- progress, coordinate and support the implementation, monitoring and reporting on national, regional and international gender equality commitment;
- develop and support the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans and the budget statement; and
- identify and advocate for strategies that will enable and build further technical capacity to integrate gender concerns into policies, programs and budgets.

The ICD will be implemented initially with the ministries of Economy, Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport, Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Education, Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; Youth and Sport and the Fiji Police Force. The lessons learned from the implementation of the pilot phase, will be used to guide the roll out to the remaining government agencies.

The Government of Fiji recognises that ICD contributes to the successful implementation of Fiji's National Development Plan, National Gender Policy, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets and 2030 Agenda while ensuring no one is left behind.



A report was launched on the 1st of June, 2022 as part of ICD's knowledge product series. The report provides a rapid gender analysis of gender equality in the fisheries, with key priorities for the Ministry of Fisheries to address in the sector. It is designed to provide GMAGs, leader gender trainers, and government officials in particular with relevant information and gender analysis across selected sectors and settings while showcasing Fiji's significant achievements, highlighting the remaining challenges and presenting key recommendations.

### Priorities for addressing gender issues in the fisheries

The following priorities are taken directly from the Fiji Government's ICD report "Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative (ICD). Gender Equality: Achievements and analysis in key sectors and settings".

**1 - Ensure women are actively engaged in community and policy consultations, planning and decision-making processes relating to fisheries.**

For example, participation of women fishers should be prioritized in the development of the National Fisheries Policy; and other Ministry of Fisheries efforts in sustainable fisheries management, particularly in inshore fisheries and habitats where women are the primary users.

**2 - Activities aimed at increasing women's engagement in commercial fisheries value chains should be with activities which encourage families to identify, negotiate and redistribute household responsibilities.**

Specific actions to help address this include continued partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs) such as Women in Fisheries Network Fiji (WIFN-Fiji) who bring technical knowledge in fisheries and gender equality and can help support work in this area, building on existing analysis they have done on women and care work in remote and rural villages in Fiji. CSOs can also support data collection and help communities develop models for more gender-equitable decision-making and resource management in customary fishing grounds (*goliqoli*). Public information campaigns should be rolled out that target attitudinal biases regarding women's roles. Information and imagery should show men and women working together to share domestic work, including cooking, cleaning, caring for children and the elderly or ill, and supporting women fishers as leaders.

**3 - Improve women's access to fisheries related education and training by actively targeting women during extension services and ensuring their access to technological support and extension services currently available to male fishers, in addition to supporting specific women-focused interventions.**

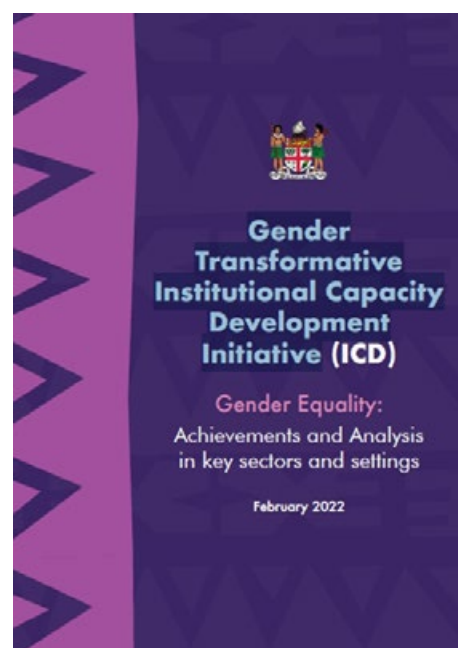
This requires upskilling extension officers in gender equality so they can identify and counteract gender biases and purposefully seek women's engagement in fisheries related activities. Support should be given to women and men fishers who are working in groups; and women led collectives, to seek opportunities where these groups can be more formalised into associations or cooperatives. This support should include provision of fishing gear, seed funding to help women value add fish products; and also facilitate access to suitable financing mechanisms and basic financial literacy training needs to improve women's access to credit.

**4 - Strengthen the collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data to continuously assess the effectiveness of interventions that seek to increase women's engagement in fisheries.**

Current recommendations relating to establishing a database of women fishers, including women owned/led fisheries enterprises should be implemented, supported with robust monitoring frameworks to track women's and men's employment in fisheries and aquaculture; and areas currently under-researched such as women's role in processing, post-harvest activities, marketing, and distribution to better understand women's roles and provide an accurate enumeration of women's involvement, their needs and entry points for support in Fiji. The Ministry of Fisheries should continue to prioritise collection and analysis of disaggregated data relating to fisheries-based small businesses as an objective in corporate workplans. As majority of women are engaged in the informal sector, analysis should also show how fisheries related activities are part of women's economic and subsistence roles.

**5 - Consider developing a gender policy for fisheries encompassing key areas to improve women's representation, participation and contribution in the sector.**

Specific gender equality objectives could be included in the existing Ministry of Fisheries Strategic Development Plan; and the current draft Fisheries Policy. However, there is considerable opportunity for the ministry to mainstream gender equality and position women's issues more strategically through the development of a stand-alone policy. A multi-stakeholder approach is required and collaboration with stakeholders including civil society, private sector, academia, and other government agencies such as collaboration and information sharing with Department of Women can help further strengthen gender mainstreaming commitments.





#### 6 - Design and implement programmes that promote women's leadership roles in fisheries.

Programmes should target women who are engaged in formal and informal fisheries activities. Collaborate with civil society organisations and the private sector to profile women fishers, including documenting their stories and experiences. Support women's formal leadership in the sector by establishing and supporting dedicated leadership and mentoring programmes. This should be designed in consultation with women and leverage existing initiatives that demonstrate promising practice.

#### 7 - Continue to progress safer work conditions in the sector.

Raising awareness about gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. Encourage workplaces and organisations to allocate resources to support female staff who are impacted by gender-based violence and ensure greater enforcement of sexual harassment policies. Programmes should be linked with and support implementation of the upcoming National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against all Women and Girls. Consider education and awareness training on gender issues at all levels of the sector such as gender sensitisation training with seafarers, skippers, crew members, and integrating gender training in marine/ocean training curriculum of tertiary institutions. Include gender equality training as part of the personal safety and social responsibility certification process conducted by the Fiji Maritime Academy. This can cover specific topics on how to promote safer working conditions for female seafarers when out at sea.

#### 8 - Promote women's entrepreneurship in the sector.

Support can be targeted to women in the in-shore fisheries area to enable them to gain greater economic returns and transition their activities from subsistence to commercial scale: Provide targeted upskilling and training to women in areas such as post-harvesting, and value adding processes, packaging and retailing. Consider alternative business models for women such as the limited liability partnership, to encourage women to transition from the informal economy to the formal economy and support women fishers to form cooperatives so that they are able to collectively sell at a larger volume to meet market demand. Creating spaces for women to come together as part of formal or informal groups can help build their confidence and leadership skills, and collective action can support women's economic activity and rights. Support women fishers to connect with a diverse range of buyers, including those that can purchase directly from women, without them having to travel long distances to market to sell their produce. This can also help with a regular access to market for women such as local restaurants, hotels and resorts which may be able to offer more competitive prices for produce.

#### 9 - Proactively seek to improve women's access to the range of technological support and extension services currently available to male farmers, in addition to supporting specific women-focused interventions.

This requires training agricultural extension workers in gender equality so they can identify and counteract gender biases and purposefully seek women's engagement in activities. Expanding the Women in Agriculture initiative to provide targeted skills training, alongside farming materials to individual women and cluster groups may also help to overcome the barriers that women face to accessing productive resources. This activity could also be better integrated with other activities supporting farmer clusters.

#### 10 - Proactively seek to improve women's access to credit and finance.

This requires government officers at the divisional level collaborating with state banks and the private sector to conduct awareness raising campaigns that target female farmers to promote services such as establishing bank accounts, and services that can support women to obtain credit. The use of movable assets such as equipment, inventory, accounts, crops, and livestock as collateral for accessing loans should also be promoted as per the Secured Transactions Framework and Personal Property and Securities Registry. Private sector partnerships with programs that are demonstrating gender-responsive ways of supporting women's economic growth would help improve outreach and effectiveness of skills training and development. Skills development and training should also provide adequate care support and subsidies so that women with caring roles are able to effectively participate in programmes.

#### 11 - Actively include women in the design, delivery and ongoing monitoring of fisheries conservation and sustainable management programmes.

Women possess traditional ecological knowledge that can help strengthen the design and implementation of conservation, climate change mitigation and disaster resilience activities to ensure programmes address the specific experiences and priorities women face regarding fisheries, and impacts of climate change and disasters, and promote their leadership role and contribution to fisheries.

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## Ethical and inclusive:

### New guide provides practical tips on communicating about small-scale fisheries

Kate Bevitt<sup>1</sup>

The contributions of small-scale fisheries in the Pacific Islands region are immense and diverse. Yet inaccurate or problematic messages can result in small-scale fisheries being seen (incorrectly) as weak, poor, primitive and exploitative. In turn, this influences the ideas and views of decision-makers about how small-scale fisheries should be governed, thereby influencing outcomes.

To combat this, a new guide has been released to provide simple and practical guidance on how to communicate about small-scale fisheries in an inclusive and ethical way. Ensuring communications are responsible and aligned with best practices will contribute to well-informed, strong and viable small-scale fisheries.

**Who is the guide for?** It is for people and organisations working to raise awareness of small-scale fisheries and influence policy and practice. This could be at the level or on a global scale.

**How was the guide developed?** It draws on inputs from groups from different regions and contexts that represent or work in support of small-scale fisheries; for example, the social contract developed and used by the Locally Managed Marine Area Network for more than 20 years.

#### What is in the guide?

- **Accurate messages.** The guide busts some problematic messages and highlights how small-scale fisheries encompass a wide range of activities, catches are made up of diverse aquatic foods, and communities hold deep knowledge to manage and govern small-scale fisheries.

For example, small-scale fisheries are sometimes seen as too hard to manage because they are diverse, dynamic and spread out. But, as is customary in many Pacific Islands, small-scale fisheries can be effectively managed by local communities.

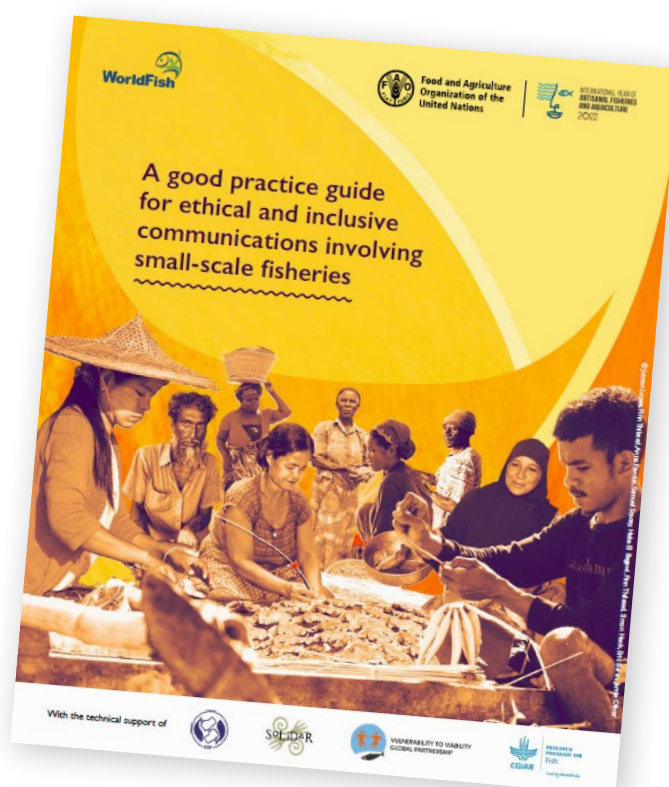
- **Good communication practices.** A range of communication practices must be upheld to ensure communications about small-scale fisheries are ethical and inclusive. These include collaboration, legitimate representation, accurate messaging and language, diverse voices, respect all knowledge types, accurate photos, and wide access.

For example, when organising an event, ensure diverse representation among speakers in relation

to sexes, geographies, affiliations, and ages. Or when talking about women in small-scale fisheries, ensure they are presented as equal contributors in terms of their roles, skills and knowledge. Avoid using the word “fishers” as this typically refers to men, resulting in women being overlooked.

- **Positive examples.** We can learn much by looking at outstanding communication examples. For example, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers has prepared local language versions of the Voluntary Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. Another example highlights how the World Forum of Fisher Peoples has interpretation available in up to 10 languages for its member meetings.

*A huge thanks to all contributors and reviewers of the guide, including those bringing a Pacific perspective and experience – Sangeeta Mangubhai, Stacy Jupiter, Anouk Ride, Patrick Smallhorn-West and Hugh Govan.*



Download the free guide:  
<https://digitalarchive.worldfishcenter.org/handle/20.500.12348/5269>

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# Policy, practice and partnership progress for gender equality in Pacific Island fisheries

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*Gender equality is critical for effective and equitable conservation and development outcomes in coastal countries. Commitments to gender equality have surged, yet the depth and effectiveness of these commitments are unclear.*

Gender equality is a core principle of good environmental governance and sustainable development. Progress toward gender equality in the fisheries sector is critical for effective and equitable conservation and development outcomes in coastal countries. Commitments to gender equality have surged at the global, regional and national levels, yet there is a lack of convincing evidence to suggest that conservationist and environmentalist agendas are achieving gender equality outcomes. A joint research venture by the authors sought to understand and assess progress toward gender equality using the case of small-scale fisheries in the Pacific Islands region.

Key informant interviews were conducted with practitioners and managers engaged in small-scale fisheries (n = 74), and gender and development (n = 26) sectors in the Pacific to understand organisational values, approaches and barriers that affect the adoption and implementation of gender equality commitments. We combined these data with a systematic analysis of 76 influential gender and fisheries policy instruments used in the region to understand the rationales

and priorities for such commitments. Here, we summarise the findings from our four scientific publications.

Within fisheries policy, the concept of gender tended to only focus on women, rather than diverse social identities, norms and relations. Rationales for pursuing gender equality were predominately instrumental (i.e. as a means to achieve ecological goals and/or shallow project performance targets), rather than intrinsic (i.e. because of an inherent value in fairness) (Fig. 1). Our findings illustrate that gender equality commitments and investments are largely rhetorical, narrow and outdated (Lawless et al. 2021).

We examined the gender approaches applied in fisheries practice, including potential barriers to their implementation. Although fisheries organisations approached gender inclusion in diverse ways, when critically evaluated according to gender best practice we found 76.2% of approaches were designed to “reach” women, and very few “benefited”, “empowered”, or “transformed” women’s lives (Johnson et al. 2018; Mangubhai and Lawless 2021).

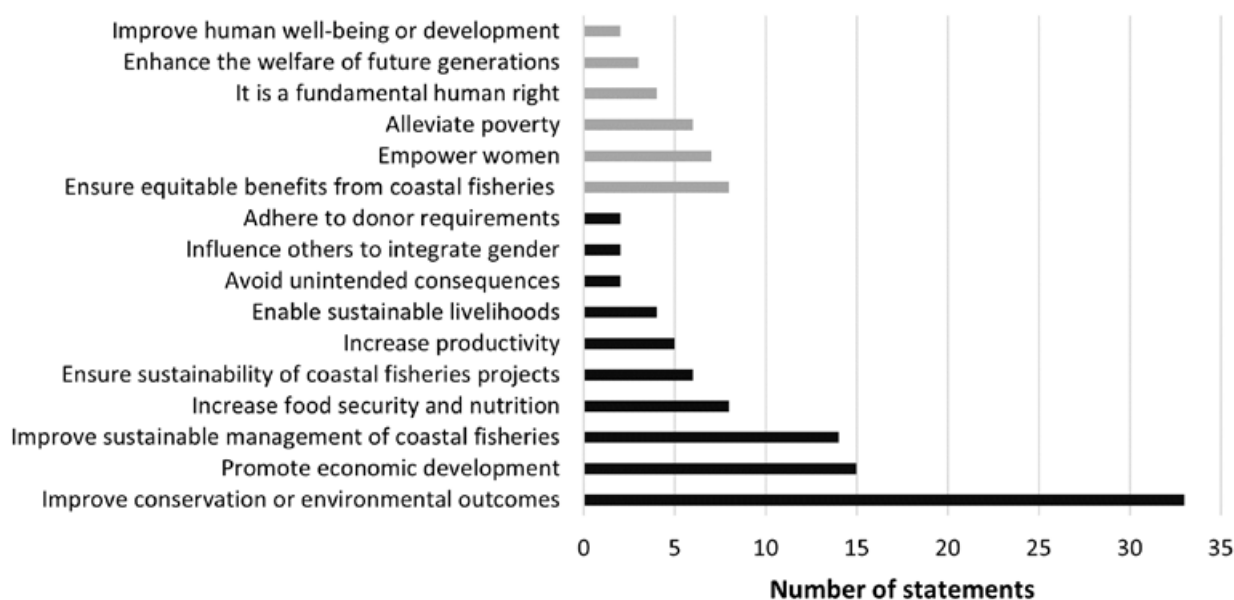


Figure 1. Number of statements (n = 121) indicating the dominant reasons for why gender equality was pursued as a governance principle in, with and alongside, small-scale fisheries. Reasons are organised according to whether they were intrinsic (grey bars, n = 30) or instrumental (black bars, n = 91).

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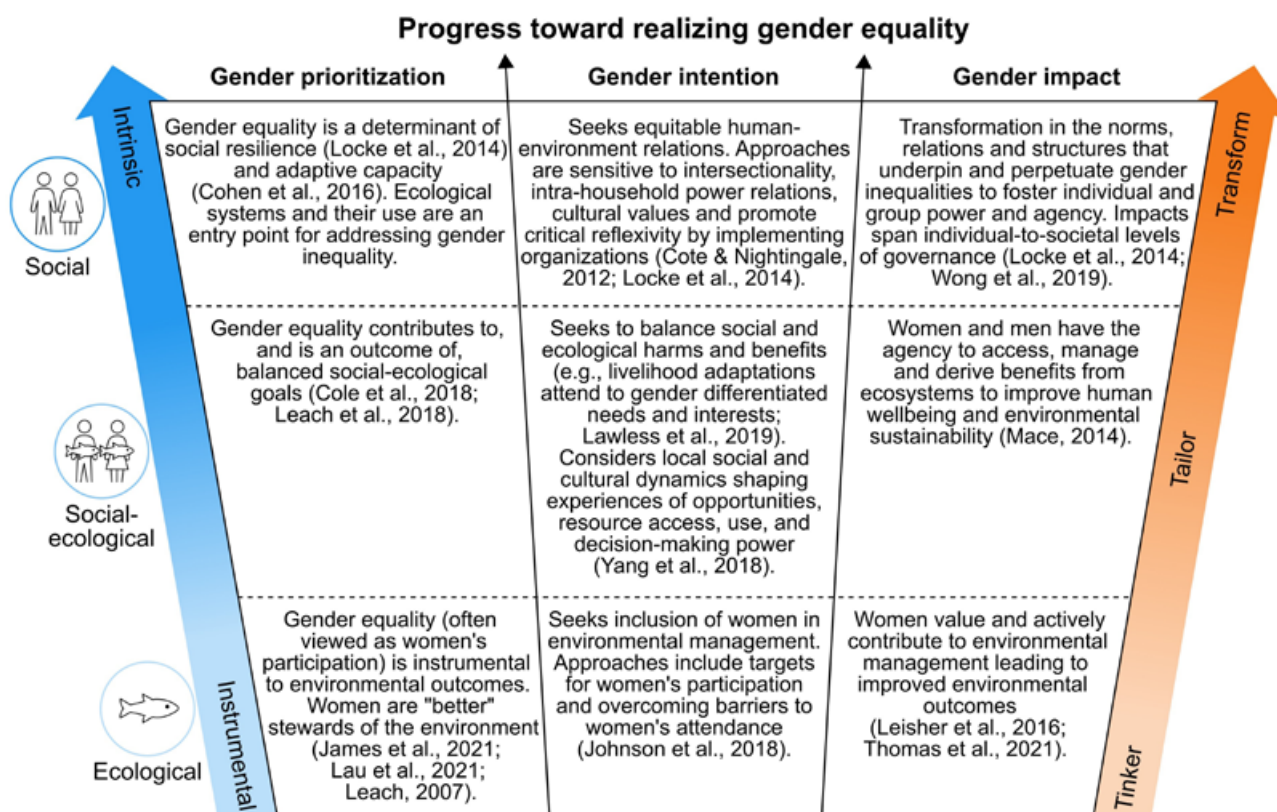


Figure 2. Our proposition based on: 1) three social-ecological narratives about the relationship between humans and the environment; 2) their intersection with organisational priorities, intentions and impacts for gender equality; 3) their alignment with instrumental (i.e. non-gender) and intrinsic (i.e. socially just and fair) goals; and 4) the type of impacts they are likely to achieve (tinker-tailor-transform) (Source: Lawless et al. 2022).

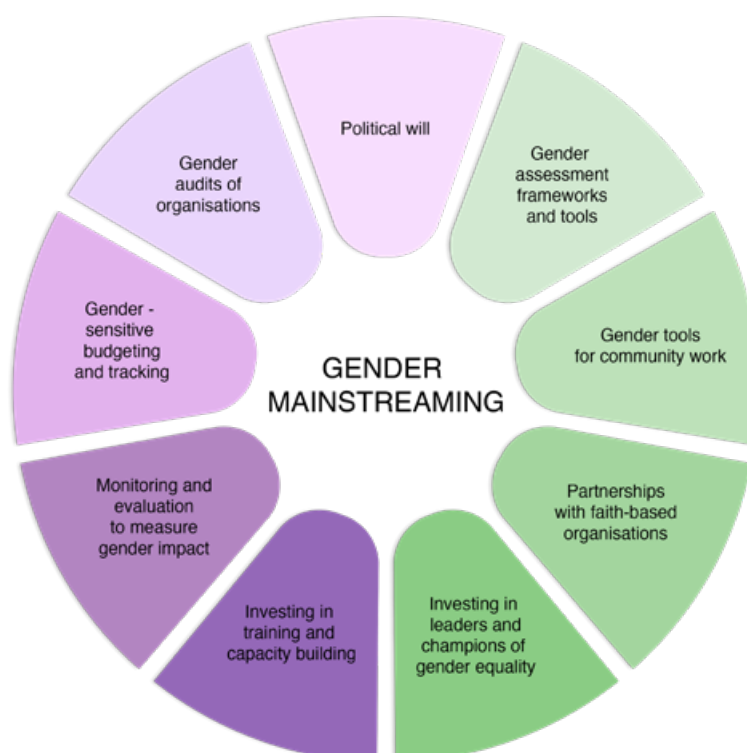


Figure 3. Opportunities identified by development practitioners to mainstream gender into the fisheries sector. Purple = institutional culture and practice, green = practice for implementation of projects and programmes (Mangubhai et al. 2022, this issue).



To understand the narratives underpinning these narrow gender approaches, we developed a novel “tinker-tailor-transform” gender assessment typology to understand the desired intentions and impacts of fisheries organisations (Fig. 2). We found that fisheries organisations tended to “tinker” with gender equality (e.g. include more women in spaces dominated by men such as fisheries meetings or projects), rather than actively address or transform differences between women and men (Lawless et al. 2022).

We found that the “low benchmark” for acceptable gender policy and practice was, in part, due to fisheries practitioners having little to no access to qualified gender focal points and training, and limited networks with gender experts. Our final study explored opportunities for the fisheries sector to build on decades of knowledge, learning and experience from the development sector. We suggest four strategic partnership areas: 1) shifting values, 2) gender mainstreaming (Fig. 3), 3) adopting gender best practice, and 4) investing in gender networks and coalitions. We argue that fundamental to the success of such a partnership is the ability and willingness of fisheries and development practitioners and their organisations to work collaboratively towards gender equality in the fisheries sector (Mangubhai et al. 2022, this issue).

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