

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.

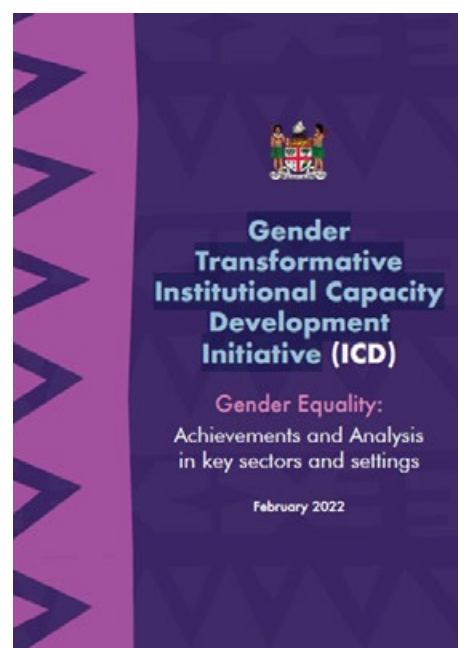
This requires upskilling extension officers in gender equality so they can identify and counteract gender biases and purposefully seek women's engagement in fisheries related activities. Support should be given to women and men fishers who are working in groups; and women led collectives, to seek opportunities 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.

Reference

Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. 2022. Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative (ICD). Gender Equality: Achievements and analysis in key sectors and settings. Suva, Fiji: Government of Fiji.