

## Kiribati undertakes a gender analysis of its fisheries and aquaculture sector

Sangeeta Mangubhai,<sup>1</sup> Margaret Fox,<sup>2</sup> Tarateiti Uriam Timiti,<sup>3</sup> Kamaua Enari,<sup>3</sup> Atanimango Korotu,<sup>3</sup> Natalie Makhoul,<sup>2</sup> El-Jay Neneia,<sup>3</sup> Rennie Raymond,<sup>3</sup> Brandon Lokeijak Tabane,<sup>3</sup> Karibanang Tamuera,<sup>3</sup> Ren Teetimwa,<sup>3</sup> Tooreka Temari<sup>3</sup> and Bwakura Metutera Timeon<sup>3</sup>

*The Kiribati Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource Development, in partnership with the Pacific Community, led the country's first gender analysis of the fisheries and aquaculture sector.*

### Background

Globally, the roles that women and men play in fisheries and aquaculture is strongly shaped by gender norms and relationships (FAO et al. 2023). In fact, gender, social and cultural norms, and power relations, influence individuals' access to resources and services, participation, decision-making, and opportunities in fisheries and/or aquaculture, as well as their overall well-being (Barclay et al. 2021). A gender analysis can help managers and practitioners consider these gender norms, relations and dynamics when designing their projects or programmes, to ensure they are gender responsive and socially inclusive.

A gender analysis should be conducted at the very beginning of a project or program during the planning phase (Leduc et al. 2021; Mangubhai and Cowley 2021). It should help inform the program design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning *during* and *after* the project or program.

Between October and December 2023, the Kiribati Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource Development (MFMRD) – in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) and the University of Wollongong ANCORS Pathways Project – conducted a gender analysis to better understand the gender dimensions and dynamics in fisheries and aquaculture in local communities and within relevant government institutions. This work is part of MFMRD's commitment to ensuring gender equity and social inclusion are better integrated and mainstreamed into all aspects of its work.

### Approach

An *institutional analysis* of MFMRD was done by adapting the SPC Stocktake of Gender Mainstreaming Capacity survey instrument. The survey instrument covered five

main areas: 1) political will and commitment to gender mainstreaming in government; 2) organisational culture that supports or does not support gender mainstreaming; 3) accountability and responsibility mechanisms to support gender mainstreaming; 4) technical capacity to do gender mainstreaming; and 5) availability of adequate resources to finance gender mainstreaming.

A focus group discussion (FGD) survey instrument was designed for the gender analysis. FGDs were held with six groups: young women (aged 18–29 years), young men (18–29 years), older women (>30 years), older men (>30 years), women elders (*unaine*) and men elders (*unimwane*).<sup>4</sup> Where possible, FGDs were generally led by two same-sex staff from MFMRD – meaning, women interviewed women, and men interviewed men. All interviews were done in I-Kiribati (Gilbertese language). The survey instrument was reviewed by MFMRD staff who were trained in socioeconomic surveys that were piloted in Banraeaba Village on South Tarawa. Adjustments were made to the questionnaire as needed. FGDs were divided into seven thematic areas:

- 1 Amount of time women and men spent on productive work;
- 2 Gender roles, responsibilities and traditions;
- 3 Selling and marketing;
- 4 Decision-making and access to, and control over, resources;
- 5 Access to capital and financial institutions;
- 6 External impacts; and
- 7 Access to support and external opportunities and aspirations.

<sup>1</sup> Talanoa Consulting, Suva, Fiji. sangeeta@talanoa-consulting-fiji.com

<sup>2</sup> Pacific Community, Nabua, Fiji

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource Development, Tarawa, Kiribati

<sup>4</sup> Community elders are persons who are the oldest (in age) in the village – usually 60 and older, or if they have white hair. In certain communities, however, where there are not enough older people (e.g. over 60 years old), those who are slightly younger but of mature age (<60 years but not yet showing white hair) can assume the role of elders.

For example, the questions were designed to look at the roles of women and men of all diversities (e.g. age, abilities or disabilities) in coastal fisheries and aquaculture, the different ways they use marine resources and the impacts of their activities on the marine ecosystem and vice versa. Field research aimed at investigating how different people benefited from fishing or aquaculture (e.g. income, food, cultural, social), and asked if and how these benefits differed between the six social groups in order to reveal gender and age-related differences. Questions also examined access to, and control over, resources, and specifically how social interactions – including relations between women and men, social rules and hierarchies, and the power imbalances these social constructs create – affect people’s roles in coastal fisheries and aquaculture, and the opportunities and benefits they gain from the sector. The surveys were undertaken in 10 communities on the atolls of Tarawa, Maiana, Nonouti and Kiritimati.

### Why is gender analysis useful?

We asked staff from MFMRD what they thought of the gender analysis, as a tool to help them with fisheries management. Below are some of the responses.

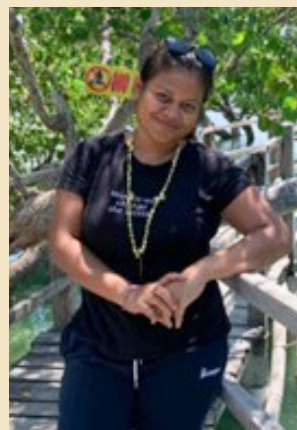


Tarateiti Uriam Timiti,  
Community-based  
Fisheries Management  
Coordinator, MFMRD

*This gender and fisheries analysis provided me with a deeper understanding about our cultural ways of living and how we, as I-Kiribati, associate ourselves with our ocean and our marine resources.*

*From our consultations with communities, we gathered interesting and important information that they (and we) often take for granted. However, it is important that this information is used to inform decision-making at the community level, island councils and at government level, so that our work is more impactful and meaningful to the people of Kiribati.*

*Further, we also noted that fisheries play a vital role to the food security and livelihoods of the i-Kiribati people and fishing is everyone’s role irrespective of whether they are men, women or children.*



Kamaua Enari,  
Research Officer, MFMRD

*It is a fascinating opportunity for me to participate in this gender analysis of fisheries and aquaculture being undertaken in some pilot islands in Kiribati to learn more about our own culture and traditional knowledge on fisheries, as well as how our people invest in fisheries and aquaculture activities.*

*Before I joined this team, my understanding of a gender analysis was limited to evaluating men and women in communities according to their respective responsibilities. However, this survey went much deeper than I expected because it covers cultural ways of life, traditional knowledge on fishing with aquaculture activities, and marketing, which I believe will be very useful to communities in thinking about how they can improve their food security and add value to their fisheries products, and generate more income to support their family. After engaging with the communities by doing focus group discussions separated by gender and age, I discovered that there are significant differences between different social groups; our elders know more about traditional fishing techniques and beliefs than the young and middle-aged women and men. This discomforts me to know that our people, particularly the younger generations, have failed to acquire such unique fishing skills from our elders, which is part of our identity as an I-Kiribati; instead, they depend on imported food supplies and fishing tools for a living. But I am inspired to learn more about our traditional knowledge and to support communities in maintaining the traditional knowledge passed down from our elders to keep our identity.*

*Not to mention, I am grateful to SPC for carrying out this survey and studying the areas where we are deficient so that we can make the necessary improvements before it is too late.*

El-Jay Neneia, Fisheries Assistant, MFMRD

*This gender and fisheries analysis made me understand the different knowledge and skills that existed across different age groups in our I-Kiribati communities, which was very interesting. I also learnt about some fishing methods and practices that I’ve never heard of before. Further, it was a wonderful opportunity to interact with the communities across Kiribati, including all the way to Kiritimati, which I very much enjoyed!*



Ren Teetimwa, Fisheries Officer, MFMRD

*The traditional knowledge was very interesting, and this was the first time we learnt about some of these traditional fishing practices. I also learnt that in some areas*

*across Kiribati, women also are more engaged in fishing, and fish more frequently, compared to men. This was very surprising and unexpected and provides the basis of why a gender analysis of the fisheries sector is so important.*

Rennie Raymond, Fisheries Technician, MFMRD

*This gender analysis of the fisheries and aquaculture sector was a new and good learning experience for me. It took me out of my normal field of work (which is aquaculture), and provided me with the opportunity to learn about how local coastal communities use their fisheries resources and the roles that men and women play in their communities including the impacts of how it has changed over time.*



Margaret Fox, Adviser (Gender and Social Inclusion: Fisheries), SPC

*A gender analysis is important as it helps us to understand the knowledge, roles and responsibilities that women and men have within their families at the community level and also their engagement across the fisheries and aquaculture sector. This will help inform how fisheries and aquaculture development are tailored to the skills and needs of different groups in a community, so they can benefit equitably.*

## Acknowledgements

This work was funded by the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership Programme (PEUMP), and is a collaboration between MFMRD, SPC and University of Wollongong's ANCORS Pathways Project.

## References

- Barclay K., Leduc B., Mangubhai S., Vunisea A., Namakin B., Teimarane M. and Leweniqila L. 2021. Module 1: Introduction. In: Barclay K., Mangubhai S., Leduc B., Donato-Hunt C., Makhoul N., Kinch J. and Kalsuak J. (eds). Pacific handbook for gender equity and social inclusion in coastal fisheries and aquaculture. Noumea, New Caledonia: Pacific Community. 20 p. <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/momx3>
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), Duke University, and WorldFish. 2023. Illuminating hidden harvests: The contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development. Rome, Italy: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Duke University, and WorldFish. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4576n>
- Leduc B., Barclay K., Kunatuba J., Danford M. and Rakuro M. 2021. Module 2: Gender and social inclusion analysis. In: Barclay K., Mangubhai S., Leduc B., Donato-Hunt C., Makhoul N., Kinch J. and Kalsuak J. (eds). Pacific handbook for gender equity and social inclusion in coastal fisheries and aquaculture. Noumea, New Caledonia: Pacific Community. 20 p. <https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/yp77p>
- Mangubhai S. and Cowley A. 2021. Gender equity and social inclusion analysis for coastal fisheries. Suva, Fiji: Wildlife Conservation Society. <https://doi.org/10.19121/2021.Report.40304>