



Women in fisheries profiles

Shaunalee Katafono

Co-Director for TraSeable Solutions

Reimagine: Transforming Pacific fisheries and agriculture through collaborative, transparent, traceability

Shaunalee Katafono¹

Shaunalee Katafono is originally from Satufia Satupaitea and Tufutafoe in Samoa. She has a Bachelor and Postgraduate Diploma in Marine Science from the University of the South Pacific, and a certificate IV in fisheries enforcement and compliance. Shauna worked for the Samoan Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as an Offshore Fisheries Compliance Officer from 2015 to 2016.

In 2017, Shauna moved to Fiji where she set up, with her husband Ken Katafono, a Fijian company called TraSeable Solutions. The company's core competencies are in digitalisation, traceability, large-scale surveys and data collection in Fiji and other Pacific Islands, and working primarily in the fisheries, agriculture, forestry and technology sectors. The company supports businesses and organisations in these sectors to meet quality standards, access new markets, and earn greater revenue for their products and services. Shauna is both the co-founder of the company and the operations manager.

Shauna's day-to-day work at TraSeable is diverse and keeps her busy. She advises on the strategic direction of the company, helps develop and maintain business relationships, and provides administration oversight with regards to payroll, bookkeeping, staff recruitment, and contracting. She also supports research, development and implementation of agriculture and fisheries-related digital tools and services to farmers and fishers across the Pacific region.

Shauna also serves as their gender focal point and provides in-house capacity building training for TraSeable staff as well as for external stakeholders, including fishers and farmer organisations. In between running a company, she also works as a consultant to support those working on inshore and offshore fisheries, gender and climate change.

What inspired you to set up TraSeable Solutions?

Growing up in Samoa surrounded by the ocean and coastal communities, I grew a passion for the ocean early in life and later in fisheries as I got more involved in it from my university days. I've always had a desire to contribute to fisheries and the communities that depend on it and so through our business I find ways to do this.

Having worked in fisheries and settling back in Fiji, my husband and I saw an opportunity in the seafood traceability space in the Pacific and took the chance to utilise our skills, knowledge, and connections in fisheries and technology. We saw digital seafood traceability as an opportunity for communities and countries in the Pacific to better account for and understand what is taken from the ocean to ensure the future sustainability of our fish. That vision and opportunity has broadened to other resource-based sectors but fisheries holds a special place for our company because it is where we started. This is reflected in our logo, which depicts a fish and name, TraSeable.

What aspects of your work inspires you?

The thought of being able to help others succeed in their efforts is what really inspires me. And being able to see how technology, data, and our digital tools and services supporting fishing companies, fishers and their communities to reach their goals is exciting. Working alongside my husband on things we're both passionate about has always been a positive, with some challenges, of course.

As a consultant, I've partnered and worked with mostly women who are experts on gender, climate change, fisheries, and agribusinesses and that is a huge inspiration for me as a "newbie" in the consulting space.

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What are some of the challenges or hurdles you have had to overcome to get to where you are?

A lot of the challenges I faced had to do with my self-confidence and a severe case of “imposter syndrome”. I started a company not long after university with very limited experience and business know-how, so I often felt like people around me weren’t taking me seriously, or they’d rather speak to my husband instead. Working in the fisheries industry, which is very male dominated, was often intimidating, having to liaise with mostly men at the helm of companies who have been there for decades.

Overcoming my fears of public speaking and being put in the spotlight to talk about our work has also been something I’ve needed to continuously work on and motivate myself for because I preferred to be in the background. So, stepping out of that comfort zone and overcoming my shyness to be able to network with various stakeholders in the fisheries sector has been something I’ve learned along the way with the support of my husband.

I also understood what my weaknesses were and so took the opportunity to invest in personal development coaching, which helped me work through some of those challenges.

Why have you been doing increasing work on gender and fisheries?

I’ve always loved working in the fisheries space, whether it’s training crew members on a fishing vessel, in processing facilities, or meeting with government and industry leaders. Since learning more about gender prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I realised the importance of applying a gender lens

to all aspects of our work to develop relevant digital solutions that catered to the different needs of our clients. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities presented itself to do more work in the gender space.

I think failure to account for gender considerations in the design, implementation and monitoring of any intervention often leads to missed opportunities, and I hope to be able to support other fisheries practitioners in building their capacity to apply a gender lens to their work for more equitable participation and opportunities for all. That’s why I’ve taken more interest in working in those areas.

What suggestions would you give other women who are aspiring to set up and run their own companies?

Women can do anything they put their hearts and minds to! If there’s something you’re passionate about that you think could be turned into a business, then research it, talk to your families, friends and professionals in your circles to bounce your ideas off them. If it makes business sense and you think you can do it, then just go for it.

Don’t be afraid to network with people in your sector or industry – I was always too shy to approach people at first but forced myself to try and over the years that has opened a lot of doors for me and our business.

