



Gender and fisheries in Fiji

Summary of key issues

June 2018



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Noumea, New Caledonia, 2019

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Original text: English

Pacific Community Cataloguing-in-publication data

Gender and fisheries in Fiji: summary of key issues

1. Gender – Fiji.
2. Gender mainstreaming – Fiji.
3. Aquaculture — Fiji.
4. Fisheries — Fiji.
5. Women in fisheries – Fiji.

I. Title II. Pacific Community

639.2099611

AACR2

ISBN: 978-982-00-1326-1

Cover picture: Sangeeta Mangubhai

Prepared for publication at SPC's headquarters, B.P. 98848 Noumea Cedex, New Caledonia, 2019

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Introduction and purpose

This report is intended to support gender-responsive programming approaches to fisheries and aquaculture in the work of the Pacific Community (SPC) in Fiji. It is an internal SPC product that is expected to stimulate discussion in the Social Development Programme and the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division of SPC.

The report provides a snapshot of available information and analyses about gender issues in fisheries. More research and analysis are, however, required to develop a comprehensive understanding of the multiple ways in which men and women participate in the sector across Fiji. Recommendations relevant to SPC, the Fiji Government and development partners are provided at the end of the document.

Analysis of gender issues in fisheries and aquaculture requires an understanding of multiple factors, including commitments, laws and policy frameworks that support gender-equitable management of fisheries and marine resources.¹ It also requires clarification of how men and women:

- are involved in fisheries;
- influence decisions about the use of fisheries resources;
- access those resources; and
- share the work, benefits and risks of using fisheries resources for different purposes.

Identification of gaps in knowledge about these issues can guide future work and provide the rationale for research by government, development partners and communities.

Methodology

This material in this report is gathered from a desk review of available literature. The review draws on work supported by SPC, development partners, and governments. This includes the SPC/FAO Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Rural Sectors (CGA-ARS), the SPC gender analysis of aquaculture in Fiji, older research published by SPC in *Women in fisheries* bulletins, and work done by the civil society organisation Women in Fisheries. Other recent research and reports from development partners and government were also scanned to assess the availability of additional information on gender and fisheries in Fiji.

The report provides a brief analysis of government commitments and policy frameworks that can support or constrain gender responsive fisheries and aquaculture development, and summarises existing strengths and weaknesses of the enabling environments for gender mainstreaming in the Government of Fiji.

To inform further data collection, analysis and improved programming, the report highlights:

- gaps in knowledge and evidence;
- areas for further data collection and analysis;
- preliminary observations on gender responsive approaches; and
- recommendations for progressing gender mainstreaming in fisheries and aquaculture within SPC and in the Fiji Government.

¹ Management of fisheries and aquaculture includes conservation and development, and covers freshwater and marine fisheries.



Overview of gender issues in fisheries and aquaculture

Gender roles vary across time, place and region according to changing values, practices and technologies. Gender roles and responsibilities are largely socially constructed and are the basis for the structure and organisation of women and men's differential relationships with their environments, the economy, their resource utilization patterns and strategies.²

In Fiji, a wide range of factors influence how women and men are engaged in fisheries and aquaculture, and in the conservation and management of their environments. Gender roles differ in rural and urban areas, and among *i-Taukei* and Fijians of other ethnicities. Gender roles may also vary based on age and education. For example, women and men with access to tertiary education may enrol in marine science, law or business. The discipline they choose will influence what issues they address, what they advocate for and what research or improved fisheries practices they initiate when they return to or visit their home communities.

Women often engage in fisheries in the context of their day-to-day responsibilities to provide food for their families and meet intermittent financial commitments within the family or community. Women in Fiji are engaged in fisheries in diverse ways: employment in canneries or other processing businesses, gleaning and gathering shellfish and other invertebrates for subsistence, fishing for fin-fish, participating in aquaculture ventures, and buying and reselling at the larger urban markets. Where women fish for subsistence purposes, or where their husbands are registered owners of a family aquaculture business, they may not self-identify as fishers or producers – rather they see that these activities are simply part of their work to feed and support their families. This means extra effort is required at the community level to ensure that all female fishers receive information about fisheries extension initiatives and development programmes.

A related issue that must be considered in all gender analyses is the amount of time women and men spend on reproductive and caregiving work in the home and community and how this affects the time they have available to engage in development activities, community decision-making forums and productive work. This information is basic but fundamental to gender analysis of fisheries development initiatives and care must be taken to consult with women and ensure they have time to benefit from development at a pace they can manage.

Guiding frameworks that support gender equality in the fisheries sector

The Government of Fiji has made a number of commitments linked to gender equality in the fisheries sector.

At the international level, Fiji's ratification of United Nations conventions means that Fiji has agreed to norms and standards for gender equality in decision-making and the economy. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women notes that rural women are often marginalised from control and management of natural resources and that in some cases special efforts are required to ensure that women benefit from resource conservation and development. Special measures may include design and implementation of strategies that “address discriminatory stereotypes, attitudes and practices which impede their rights to land and natural resources.”³ Fiji has also ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity. Guiding bodies for these conventions have recognised that analysis of men and women's roles in resource management, including management of rivers, reefs and oceans, is critical to making progress on the conventions.⁴

Fiji's *5-Year & 20-Year National Development Plan: Transforming Fiji* instructs all government ministries to consider, analyse and address a number of cross-cutting issues, including climate change, the environment and gender equality.⁵ Based on that plan and the *Fiji National Gender Policy*, the Ministry of Fisheries has identified strategic actions to:

- more proactively collect and analyse information on women in fisheries and aquaculture;
- target specific initiatives to women; and
- engage with civil society and technical specialists with gender and fisheries expertise.

The Ministry of Fisheries includes gender as a component of its *Annual Corporate Plan Aug 2017/Jul 2018* in line with national directives. The plan specifies that it will work to the following performance indicators and targets, and highlights two specific strategies.⁶

2 Williams, S.B., Hochet-Kinbongui, M. and Nauen, C.E. (2005). Gender, fisheries and aquaculture: Social capital and knowledge for the transition towards sustainable use of aquatic ecosystems. EU: Brussels, 32 p.

3 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. 2016. General Recommendation #34 on the Rights of Rural Women. http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_7933_E.pdf

4 CBD 2015 – 2020 Gender Plan of Action Pocket Guide: Summary and Examples. <https://www.cbd.int/gender/doc/CBD-GenderPlanofAction-EN-WEB.pdf>.

5 Government of Fiji. 2017. 5-Year & 20-Year National Development Plan: Transforming Fiji. <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/15b0ba03-825e-47f7-bf69-094ad33004dd/5-Year---20-Year-NATIONAL-DEVELOPMENT-PLAN.aspx>

6 Government of Fiji. Ministry of Fisheries. 2017. Ministry of Fisheries Annual Corporate Plan Aug 2017/ July 2018. <http://www.fisheries.gov.fj/images/Publications/MoF20172018ACP.pdf>

Strategy 1: Revival of the programme Women in Fisheries

- Make an inventory of women's participation in fisheries in offshore, inshore, aquaculture, research and administration of fisheries (one inventory per division)
- Increase the number of women who own and operate fisheries SMEs (small and medium size enterprises) to 20%.
- Make a centralised database on Women in Fisheries within the planning section of the Ministry.

Strategy 2: Increase the number of women on boards⁷ and committees

- There should be at least 30% of women on boards making strategic decisions.

The ministry's commitment to revive the Women in Fisheries programme is based on collaboration with the CSO Women in Fisheries as an implementing partner. This planned partnership has significant potential to enhance gender mainstreaming, build capacity within the ministry, and raise the profile of gender equality issues within government.

Decision-making about management and use of fisheries and marine resources

Traditional governance of near-shore fishing grounds, or *i-qoliqoli*, is aligned with *i-Taukei* resource management systems under the chiefly system of each *yavusa*, or tribe. However, near-shore fisheries are owned by government and managed under the Fisheries Act, which can be used to supersede traditional *i-Taukei* fisheries rights. In practice, the right to enforce the law is often given to fisheries wardens, who may be from the group to whom the *i-qoliqoli* is registered.⁸

Gender balance in rural *i-Taukei* governance systems is frequently skewed in favour of men. Despite the fact that women have the right to hold positions of power and have extensive local knowledge of subsistence and food fisheries, they are often marginalised from:

- making decisions about traditional rights;
- consultations about commercial exploitation of fisheries; and
- equitable benefits from commercial fisheries within their *i-qoliqoli*.

Research on rural women's engagement in fisheries is relatively well developed in Fiji⁹ so the information base is relatively strong in terms of the work women do in harvesting, processing and using fish and marine products for both subsistence and commercial purposes. The focus on women in fisheries in Fiji is largely due to:

- regional programming on women's roles in fisheries;
- gender specific academic research in fisheries by the Marine Studies Programme of the University of the South Pacific (USP); and
- the existence of a Fiji-based civil society organisation (CSO) focused on women in fisheries.¹⁰

The Women in Fisheries CSO has conducted primary and secondary research on gender and fisheries and is currently working with the Ministry of Fisheries to implement part of its annual plan. Since the 1990s, SPC and USP have also invested in research and provision of technical support to women in coastal management, and commercially viable small-scale fisheries and/or aquaculture.

Women in Fisheries' members work at USP and SPC and as consultants for regional agencies and international conservation NGOs. These women are well placed to influence decisions, build a critical mass of awareness and knowledge, and advance gender responsive fisheries programmes through multiple entry points.

⁷ Boards under the purview of the Ministry of Fisheries

⁸ Sloan J and K. Chand. 2015. A review of near shore fisheries law and governance in Fiji. <https://womeninfisheriesfiji.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A-Review-of-Near-Shore-Fisheries-Law-and-Governance-in-Fiji.pdf>

⁹ Note that regional research on women in fisheries has been ongoing from the 1990s with technical support from SPC. Citations for work not available online can be found in Vunisea, Aliti. 2014. The role and engagement of women in fisheries in Fiji. <http://womeninfisheriesfiji.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Role-Engagement-of-Women-in-Fisheries-in-Fiji.pdf>.

¹⁰ Regional programming on gender and fisheries has been done by SPC, as well as with funding to CROP agencies from the Canadian South Pacific Ocean Development Program (1996–2002).

Women and men's roles in fisheries and aquaculture

Fisheries in Fiji encompasses marine, coastal and river habitats and there are clear gender roles in fisheries activities. While fishing outside the reefs tends to be a very male domain, women and men both fish in coastal areas and rivers. However, men and women often fish for different species and/or with different equipment. For example, women generally fish using simple tools such as hand lines, collecting shellfish, octopus, and fresh water mussels. Men also fish in coastal areas, wading with nets or fishing from bridges or promontories or small boats using nets or lines.

In 2009, women who were engaged in artisanal fisheries were surveyed to clarify the scope and profitability of their commercial activities. The survey identified many variations in the way women work, how often they work, what they fish for and how much they earn. Women worked on a continuum from full time to seasonal to a casual basis. Those working full time were involved in some combination of fishing, marketing and reselling the catch of others. They operated out of the large market centres of Lautoka, Nausori and Suva. Women working seasonally tended to be focused on specific species that were more abundant – or legally harvestable – at a specific time of year. These species included land crabs, octopus and seaweed. Casual fisherwomen were generally engaged in reef gleaning or fishing intermittently to meet specific needs for cash, such as school expenses, funerals, community or family events.¹¹

With Ministry of Fisheries' extension support, rural women are beginning to participate as lead actors in raising pearl spats, farming pearls, farming tilapia and milkfish, and managing and harvesting mud crabs. They are also engaged in family and/or community programmes to grow giant clams, farm prawns and maintain marine reserves.

Aquaculture is increasing in Fiji and SPC has facilitated research on women's roles in inland tilapia farming. Research conducted in 2017 closely examined work and gender roles on a small sample of twelve farms around the country. The findings help fill gaps in information and knowledge about gender roles in a growing industry – there are an estimated 500 tilapia farms of various sizes currently operating in Fiji.¹² Women are also active in collection and post-harvest processing of species for export. These are primarily beche-de-mer, trochus and ornamentals for the aquarium trade.¹³ The extent to which women and men receive training and services is not clearly documented and collated. In some cases, family aquaculture businesses may be registered to men, and women may not be primary contacts when information is circulated about extension services. This is a concern, as women are often actively engaged in family businesses, cleaning finfish ponds, feeding them and doing all the post-harvest processing.

Gender-related specialisations in fisheries results in women and men developing different knowledge and skill sets. It follows that, given their different ways of focusing on the coastal and river environments, women and men will notice different indicators of stress or change in the environment and have different ideas about using fisheries products. This means, in turn, that women and men can be distinctly valuable resource-persons in management of coastal and marine resources, climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, and sustainable economic development.¹⁴

Table 1 provides information on gender roles in fisheries-related activities.

11 J. Verebalavu. 2009. Women in artisanal and commercial fisheries in Fiji. Women in Fisheries Bulletin. No 20. Noumea. Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

12 SPC. 2018 forthcoming. Gender analysis of the aquaculture sector: Fiji. Suva.

13 Vunisea, 2014. Role and Engagement of Women in Fisheries. <http://womeninfisheriesfiji.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Role-Engagement-of-Women-in-Fisheries-in-Fiji.pdf>.

14 Swedish International Development Agency. 2016. Gender and the Environment. Gender Toolbox Brief. https://www.sida.se/contentassets/0b57532e-484543199b0485c0984d731a/gender_and_environment.pdf

Table 1: Fisheries-related gender roles

Note that these delineations are generalised for all of Fiji and there may be some variation by province and/or district

Activity	Mainly men's roles	Mainly women's roles	Men and women both
Fishing from vessels outside the reef	X		
Fishing from canoes with lines or nets	X		
Fishing from bridges and promontories with lines			X
Wading with nets	X		
Wading with handlines		X	
Reef gleaning for octopus and shellfish		X	
Diving in rivers for freshwater mussels (kai)		X	
Collecting crabs		X	
Farming tilapia or milkfish – digging ponds, piping water, heavy maintenance, harvesting	X		
Farming tilapia or milkfish – pond cleaning and maintenance, harvesting, processing		X	
Prawn farming			X
Collection of speciality products such as beche-de-mer and trochus			X
Raising pearl spats and pearl farm maintenance		X	
Post-harvest processing of fisheries products			X

Sources: i) Vunisea, A. 2014. Role and engagement of women in fisheries in Fiji. <http://womeninfisheriesfiji.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-Role-Engagement-of-Women-in-Fisheries-in-Fiji.pdf>; ii) J. Verebalavu. 2009. Women in artisanal and commercial fisheries in Fiji. Women in Fisheries Bulletin. No 20. Noumea. Secretariat of the Pacific Community; iii) the Pacific Community. Forthcoming. Gender analysis of the aquaculture sector in Fiji.

Services and support for women and men engaged in fisheries and aquaculture

Implementing gender-responsive programmes in rural areas is complex and constrained by social norms about women's rights to engage in decision-making. Careful programme design is required to ensure engagement with, and buy-in from, communities, working within the existing socio-cultural context, avoiding increasing women's workloads, and ensuring there is no backlash. Programmes that aim to increase incomes should also empower women and widen their opportunities.

Fisheries and aquaculture support services to rural areas are provided by the Ministry of Fisheries and include provision of extension support, some in-kind assistance with tools and equipment and, in some cases, involvement of communities in monitoring and research activities.

Government extension services

The Ministry of Fisheries - In-shore Fisheries Management Division supports men and women engaged in fishing and aquaculture in the effective and sustainable use and management of their resources. As well as gender differences in fishing and gleaning, in roles within the household and community, and in the available time and ability to participate, there are also differences in how men and women access and benefit from support provided by fisheries officers. Understanding women's roles, interests and skills in specific areas helps target service provision, and inviting women as well as men to participate in consultations and training can increase women's involvement and access to information.

Currently extension services are supporting freshwater aquaculture, gleaning, inshore fishing, *kai* fishing, pearl and prawn farming, pearl spat raising and mud crab harvesting. A number of these are areas where women are lead actors. Aquaculture is a developing area and the ministry targets families and women to build capacity in business and farm management.

While government extension services are making progress in involving women and men equitably in the management of fisheries resources, information on numbers of women working in different areas is still lacking. Additionally, the extent to which women are active managers or owners of small fisheries-related enterprises is not clear. Building an information base, an objective articulated in the ministry's annual plan, will strengthen delivery of more effective services.

There is scope for fisheries extension initiatives to improve data collection by tracking women's and men's participation in different activities – including the types and quality of their participation, but where women are involved only to provide meals and serve tea to training groups, they cannot benefit from the substantive content of training. Similarly, if women are marginalised in the training space and are not confident enough to voice their views and questions, they will not benefit fully from development opportunities.

Development partner initiatives

A small number of development partners are supporting aquaculture and resource management initiatives in Fiji. Projects are largely aimed at increased food security and the inclusion of women and children in fisheries value chains. Focal species include beche-de-mer, sea grapes, tilapia and milkfish, all of which can be used for both subsistence and commercial purposes.¹⁵ Other organisations working in fisheries and cross-sector areas are promoting awareness of environmental issues relevant to river, reef and marine fisheries. The initiatives target men, women and children in communities, providing educational material and conducting research on the consequences of overuse of resources.¹⁶ More extensive research is required to:

- develop an inventory of development partners working in all areas of coastal management, fisheries and aquaculture; and
- identify promising, gender-responsive approaches.

Fisheries-based employment, small-scale businesses, and income generation

Tracking women's and men's employment in fisheries and aquaculture is challenging, as neither the government nor the private sector consistently collects sex-disaggregated data about employment or business ownership. The Ministry of Fisheries has identified collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data relating to fisheries-based small businesses as an objective for their 2018 work plan.

Post-harvest processing of tuna has historically been the area with the highest concentration of female employment and an area where data are available. Women make up the majority of workers in the only remaining tuna cannery in Fiji and their earnings enhance their ability to support their families. As canneries in other areas of the country closed, women lost their employment or turned to smaller scale processing of in-shore products that they can sell at local markets.¹⁷ Gender aspects of these value chains have not been fully explored, documented or analysed.

15 Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research. 2015. ACIAR Fisheries Program Project Profiles: 2015.

16 Live and Learn Website. <http://www.livelearn.org/locations/fiji> (accessed 4 June 2018); see also Conservation International Website, Fiji Webpage. <https://www.conservation.org/where/Pages/Fiji.aspx> (accessed 4 June 2018).

17 ADB. 2015. Country gender assessment: Fiji. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/210826/fiji-cga-2015.pdf>

Gender-responsive approaches to fisheries and aquaculture

Gender-responsive approaches to fisheries and aquaculture initiatives are those that reflect and respond to men's and women's gender roles, their interests and the constraints they experience. Developing gender responsive approaches requires collection and analysis of information and evidence about what men and women do and what resources they control and have access to. Building an evidence base and sharing that evidence among stakeholders is a critical step.

Gender-responsive approaches also seek to ensure that women and men share and control decision-making and benefits in an equitable manner. Such approaches must also recognise and analyse contextual issues, such as socio-cultural norms and workloads, to ensure that interventions do not cause harm to anyone. Understanding that women carry a higher burden of reproductive and caregiving work than do men is important when designing effective and inclusive projects.

In Fiji, the government has made policy commitments to increase the gender responsiveness of fisheries programmes. Implementation of these commitments requires improving the enabling environment and increasing collaboration across sectors to ensure that accurate gender analysis informs action. Currently, there are some gaps in terms of technical capacity and organisational culture within the Ministry of Fisheries, and the Department of Women does not have enough staff to work with the ministry to fill the capacity gaps. Table 2 and Table 3 below show the strengths and weaknesses in the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Fisheries and the Department of Women respectively.

Table 2: Enabling environment summary assessment for the Ministry of Fisheries¹⁸

Enabling environment criteria	Indicative findings
Commitment at leadership level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High commitment in terms of statements in <i>Annual Corporate Plan 2017–2018</i>, ministry objectives and staff interested in promoting women and addressing gender issues Gender issues outside planning objectives are not identified/prioritised because they are not seen as part of the ministry's core business
Organisational culture and internal willingness to address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is gender balance at the level of heads of divisions in HQ; and half of field divisional offices are led by women Executive positions held by men – women staff perceive a glass ceiling Most management and staff interpret gender issues as outside their core functions and do not see their relevance to programme effectiveness Perception that the Department of Women should support links with women's organisations constrains independent action. Lack of opportunities for collaboration undermines multiple entry point approach.
Accountability mechanisms and systems to enforce commitments to gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Annual Corporate Plan 2017–2018</i> objectives to inventory women's involvement in fisheries will provide information to inform programming and create a baseline for monitoring and evaluation purposes Perceptions that systems are improving to increase accountability The ministry collects sex-disaggregated data but are not consolidated or used to do any analysis of men's and women's needs or how they benefit from programmes
Technical capacity to identify and address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry has a gender focal point but the role is not widely known The Department of Women has done awareness training about the <i>Fiji National Gender Policy</i> with some ministry staff Planned work with the Women in Fisheries Network will bring technical capacity into some areas for research and programming It is unclear if any ministry staff have had gender training Staff are good at core business but not comfortable doing qualitative assessments on the social side of technical issues The lack of gender training for staff inhibits work in field divisions, as male staff do not feel comfortable taking on gender issues
Adequate financial and human resources to implement gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on the budget allocated to achievement of gender objectives in the <i>Annual Corporate Plan 2017–2018</i> is not available No resources allocated to gender mainstreaming as a general area of work Staff training on gender is not available through internal channels

¹⁸ Note that the information in Table 2 is indicative only. It is based on an interview with officers in the Ministry of Fisheries (Principal Inshore Fisheries, Research and Planning) and a review of the 2017–2018 Annual Corporate Plan.

Table 3: Enabling environment summary assessment for the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation¹⁹

Enabling environment criteria	Indicative findings
Commitment at leadership level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existence of the <i>Fiji National Gender Policy</i> and the Department of Women demonstrates government commitment to gender equality. The stated strategic planning expectation that gender equality should be incorporated into corporate plans of all ministries and linked to the <i>Fiji National Gender Policy</i> indicates specific commitment to gender mainstreaming Government has located the Department of Women in a social welfare line ministry rather than in a central agency like the Prime Minister's Office or the Ministry of Finance. This limits the authority, reach and effectiveness of the Department of Women and inhibits gender mainstreaming efforts
Organisational culture and internal willingness to address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Women staff have specific roles linked to implementation of the <i>Fiji National Gender Policy</i> Low staff numbers, high staff turnover, a limited budget and competing priorities create challenges for effective management of the Department of Women's mandate
Accountability mechanisms and systems to enforce commitments to gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Women accountability mechanisms do not extend to authority over gender mainstreaming work of other ministries. Consequently, its ability to catalyse change is limited
Technical capacity to identify and address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Women staff have the capacity to address immediate responsibilities Staff lack skills for gender analysis of issues across sectors. Neither do they have the experience required to influence transformational change and facilitate 'whole of government' mainstreaming
Adequate financial and human resources to implement gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a budget for some of the work required to implement <i>the Fiji National Gender Policy</i> The operational budget of the Department of Women is low and restricts implementation of cross-sector activities. Budgets for staffing are also low and consequently the department is understaffed and has limited ability to achieve the stated goals of <i>the Fiji National Gender Policy</i>.

¹⁹ Note that the information in Table 3 is indicative only. It is based on an interview with Ministry of Agriculture Directors of Research and Extension and a review of the 2018–2022 Strategic Development Plan.

Potential for strengthening gender mainstreaming

Achievement of the Ministry of Fisheries' current operational planning objectives for gender will contribute to knowledge about women's activities in different aspects of fisheries. Collection of sex-disaggregated data on women's economic participation in fisheries is incomplete, and understanding the extent of women's engagement in fisheries businesses will be useful. However, because the majority of women seem to be engaged in the informal sector, additional surveys will be required to show how women integrate fisheries-related work into their other economic and subsistence roles. Analysis of such survey data can provide information on women's multiple and overlapping roles, as well as women's and men's relative access to and control of resources. This type of analytical information can then be used to inform policy, budgeting and programming.

Despite the work of members of the Women in Fisheries Network and academic researchers in the region, knowledge gaps still exist about women's roles in subsistence and commercial fisheries and in fisheries management. Gender analysis and data collection on:

- decision-making relating to user rights for communal coastal fishing grounds (*i-qoliqoli*);
- policy frameworks and government systems that have successfully increased women's access to and participation in fisheries;
- economic support programmes for fishermen and fisherwomen;
- access to formal, informal markets; and
- financial services to support enhancement of the fisheries-based economy are all areas where increased knowledge can inform more equitable approaches to fisheries management, sustainable livelihoods and community well-being.

Implementation of the Ministry of Fisheries' annual plan priorities for gender, including collaboration with the Women in Fisheries Network, will advance this work and further strengthen existing commitments to gender mainstreaming within the ministry. Facilitating collaboration and information sharing with the Department of Women will increase the number of policy implementation entry points for empowerment and engagement of rural women in fisheries.

The Ministry of Fisheries *Annual Corporate Plan 2017/2018* highlights actions that will enhance gender mainstreaming by collecting more data on women's roles and increasing women's participation in decision-making boards and committees. Budget information for gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Fisheries was not made available, so it is not possible to assess how investment compares to stated plans, nor to understand if there are budgets in other areas that could be used to advance gender equality (such as a budget to start up pearl spat farms targeting women or women's groups). Budget analysis of how gender is, and could be, integrated into the ministry's outcome areas to accelerate achievement of positive results is an area for further work.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to support gender-responsive approaches to fisheries conservation, development and management. They are relevant to a range of development actors including government, multilateral and regional agencies, CSOs, donors and international conservation non-government organisations.

- Include discussion and analysis of gender mainstreaming on the agendas of high-level fisheries meetings. This will increase understanding about gains that can be achieved through equitable engagement of women in fisheries.
- Assess and strengthen sex, age and rural/urban disaggregated data collection and analysis to facilitate cross-referencing of data on women's roles in fisheries with socio-economic statistics on work, earnings, caregiving, health, education and decision-making. This will support more informed and effective budgeting and planning for fisheries interventions by both government and development partners.
- Improve qualitative information collection on gender-specific fisheries activities, ways of working, knowledge sets, motivations for working, preferences for formal or informal sector work, and the quality of women's participation in formal and informal decision-making settings. This will support more accurate and appropriate design and targeting of fisheries initiatives.
- Increase gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation of fisheries initiatives by:
 - ensuring monitoring categories identify gender indicators; and
 - that gender indicators are directly linked to outcomes. This will increase the relevance and efficiency of interventions and enhance effectiveness of investments.



- Document evidence and lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation of gender aspects of any intervention to clarify what works and what does not work. This will support adaptive and cost-effective programme designs and achievement of intervention outcomes.
- Encourage shared funding of extension and outreach programmes to facilitate collaboration between the Ministry of Fisheries, the Department of Women and regional agencies. This will enhance the effectiveness of government extension services, support capacity development for gender mainstreaming, and improve the quality and sustainability of outcomes.
- Assist non-governmental environmental organisations to: (i) build capacity for gender analysis of fisheries as a component of environmental management; and (ii) develop more gender responsive programmes for their work with rural communities. This will support these organisations to advance national objectives for sustainable and gender-responsive development.
- Build on existing work to identify feasible mechanisms to involve CSOs and/or regional agencies as intermediaries/brokers for women and communities in rural (and especially remote) areas. CSOs can support collection of information and help communities develop models for more gender-equitable decision making and resource management in *matiqali* and *i-qoliqoli*.



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ISBN 978-982-00-1326-1



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