

Inclusion takes central stage during CBF3

Aurélie Delisle¹, Natalie Makhoul², GESI session participants (Teri Tuxson³, Siueli E. Mone², Mele Weilert⁴, Dua Rudolph⁵, Tarusila Veibi⁶, Leisavi Joel⁷, Rose Gere⁷ and Esther Umu²)



The coastal environment has long shaped Pacific people's sense of belonging and identity. Marine resources and ecosystem services are vital for women, men, children, youth, or other social groups of each and every community in so many ways.

A fisherman's catch of the day is a community's asset and a woman's full fish basket is a family meal with a wide reach to the extended family.

Knowing that one's social identity and gender can determine access to, and use of marine resources makes it crucial to shift attention to better understand these social categories that shape people's roles and behaviour in the fisheries sector. Women and men occupy different marine spaces, use different gear and techniques, hold different traditional knowledge, and target different species – but how do we factor this into community-based fisheries management (CBFM)?

The *Pacific framework for scaling up CBFM (2021–2025)* introduced a people-centred approach aiming to assist community leaders, community representatives and fisheries of-

ficers to achieve the most desirable outcomes for all in community fisheries management.

The Framework has been implemented for a few years across the region. But what have been the strategies used by communities and countries to ensure equity and inclusion in the scaling-up efforts?

As part of the 3rd Community-based Fisheries Dialogue held in Noumea from 14–15 November, a special session titled “Casting nets of inclusion” endeavoured to get participants to reflect on inclusion in national CBFM initiatives.

The session was a blend of short presentations and videos to set the scene, followed by a panel study and talanoa session to allow Pacific voices and experiences to be shared. The panel was facilitated by Teri Tuxson from LMMA Network International and allowed participants from across the three Pacific sub-regions to share their experiences and reflect on risks, and opportunities for inclusion into CBFM processes. Four panel participants – Siueli Mone and Mele Weilert from Tonga, Dua Rudolph from the Republic of Marshall

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The CBF3 provided an opportunity for Pacific voices to be heard at an international forum. Image © Josaia Nanuqa (SPC PEUMP)

Islands and Tarusila Veibi from Fiji – gave an honest account of their stories, the struggles they faced or witnessed along the way, but also their wins and their hopes.

During a talanoa session, participants heard from ni-Vanua-tu ladies Leisavi Joel and Rose Gere who discussed concrete examples from their lives in Vanuatu, moving from being fish vendors to advocating for inclusion and consideration of women’s roles in supporting community fisheries management initiatives. The session felt so real, and Leisavi and Rose’s activities showed how much women in the communities can progress, move and lead if we acknowledge them, lift them up and give them the recognition, space and support.

The entire ‘Casting the nets of inclusion’ session was charged with emotion and the audience listened with intensity. Words were spoken from the heart and rang true for everyone. A strong positive experience was felt by all participants of this special session and their audience.

Overall, the special session on ‘Casting the nets of inclusion’ emphasised for CBF3 participants and the audience from

RTMCF6 that there is still much to do to achieve inclusive CBFM processes, but that progress is happening around the region, and advocates are present in communities, civil society organisations and national agencies. Allowing sessions such as this one to take place in main regional and national fora on fisheries allows further recognition of these efforts and provides a space to share lessons and devise national and regional strategies to support inclusion of marginalised groups.

Further recognition was acknowledged by participants of the 6th Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries, who noted the following items in their final outputs:

- The CBF3 acknowledged the challenge of including women, achieving equal representation of marginalised groups, and considering women’s voices in decision-making for fisheries resource management.
- The CBF3 acknowledged the role of women in fisheries management advocacy, as they play a crucial role as teachers in their families and communities, influencers in local women’s groups, and leaders in the communities.
- The CBF3 noted and agreed on the following:
 - The need to include marginalised community groups in fisheries management committees, to empower them to actively participate and to contribute to the decision-making process.
 - The inclusion of women enforcement officers to encourage reporting of offences committed by women and other marginalised groups.
 - Conducting more awareness and capacity development training on gender and social inclusion in the communities, including targeted empowerment initiatives for GESI advocates and champions in the communities.
 - Encouraging more women and youth champions to advocate for fisheries resource management.
 - Encouraging programmes in communities for livelihood diversification and supplementation to increase resilience and ensure equal benefit-sharing among women, youths, and people with special needs, with the special intention to reduce poverty and hardship for people relying heavily on marine-based livelihoods.

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