

# Training on gender, social inclusion and human rights-based approaches at the University of the South Pacific

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## Background

A three-day training workshop on gender equity and social inclusion (GSI) and human rights-based approaches (HRBA) focused on the fisheries sector was held at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva, Fiji, in June 2019. The training was provided by the Project Management Unit of the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme. Eleven of the 16 participants were female. The participants consisted of USP research fellows and staff, postgraduate students, PEUMP USP project staff and a Women in Fisheries Network–Fiji representative.

The PEUMP programme has a total budget of EUR 45 million and is funded by the European Union and the Government of Sweden. The PEUMP objective is to assist 15 ACP countries in the Pacific to better manage their oceanic and coastal marine resources for food security and economic growth, while addressing climate change resilience and conservation of marine biodiversity. The PEUMP consists of six key result areas (KRAs), which are implemented by multiple regional partners including the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, the Pacific Community (SPC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the USP and other non-governmental organisations or civil society organisations.

A holistic approach is required to ensure PEUMP addresses cross-cutting topics on poverty reduction, social inclusion, equal access and benefits for women and men including HRBA, and participation for youth and marginalised groups. PEUMP therefore has an emphasis on the need to mainstream gender, social inclusion and HRBA in its design, implementation and outcomes.



Brainstorming session on how to improve the visibility of gender in fisheries. ©Debbie Singh, SPC

USP is the lead agency for PEUMP KRA6, which focuses on capacity building through education, training and research development for key stakeholder groups in fisheries and marine resource management. The primary activities under KRA6 are marine science applied research, postgraduate scholarships, technical vocational education training, tertiary education development such as undergraduate programme course material enhancements and the design of continuous professional development for career pathways and skills development.

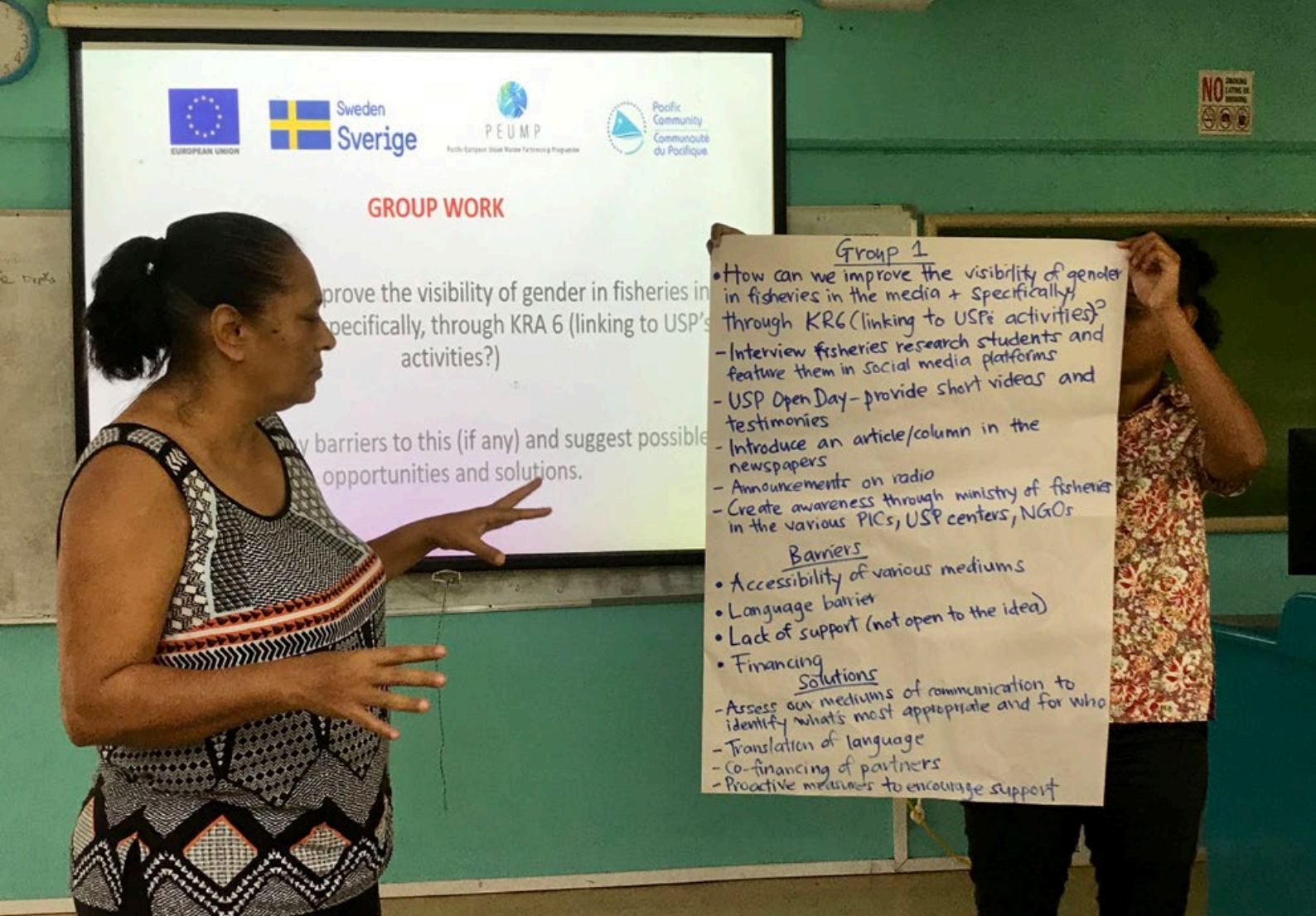
## Training purpose

The main training goals were:

1. Raise awareness on the GSI and HRBA dimensions of coastal and oceanic fisheries, including the presentation of key findings from existing research.
2. Build participant capacity to use both GSI/HRBA tools and guides, and to improve analysis skills and technical understanding of people-centred concepts in their various fields of study.
3. Identify GSI and HRBA entry points with a view to informing and influencing KRA6 activities through integration.

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Brainstorming session on how to improve the visibility of gender in fisheries. ©Debbie Singh, SPC



Participants to the three-day workshop on gender equity and social inclusion and human rights-based approaches, USP, June 2019. ©Debbie Singh, SPC

## Training sessions

Session content for GSI was developed using the 2019 Pacific Handbook for Gender Equity and Social Inclusion in Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture. Two participants had prior GSI training, while none had GSI training specific to the fisheries context.

Gender equality was presented from two different angles: (1) as a fundamental human right with reference to the regional and international human rights frameworks; and (2) as a development goal with reference to Sustainable Development Goal 5, linking oceans and the environment.

### Lessons learned 1

The recent upsurge of gender equality and human rights as instruments to achieving sound and sustainable management of small-scale fisheries ecosystems has created a need for marine science education to keep abreast with reality needs as well as regional and global priorities. This trend has also called for a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach, targeted at equitable income distribution with a view to reducing poverty and building resilience. The gender equality goal in fisheries needs to be understood from a development perspective in the context of women's contributions towards food security, livelihoods and, more broadly, Pacific social care, well-being and share systems. As a human right, gender equality needs to be elevated beyond just recognition of women's daily economic and social roles. The training placed emphasis on understanding gender equality as a human right and clarified a common misconception that the two concepts were mutually exclusive. Special care was taken in explaining how they both complement one another. By employing a human rights-based approach, the training was able to amplify and reinforce that progressing gender equality is a human rights driven concept.

Human rights issues in the Pacific's oceanic fisheries were reported in a recent case study (Chiao Lee et al. 2018). The study highlighted several human rights violations at sea such as various workers' rights abuses and claims of forced labour. The study also discussed the triggers and enablers of at-sea human rights abuses, flags of convenience, transshipment and their links to human trafficking and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

### Lessons learned 2

Fisheries scientists, and more broadly fisheries practitioners, often struggle with the human rights concept and its application as an approach, admitting it felt too theoretical and used rhetoric that lacked a practicality lens. Utilising a relevant case study resulted in effective engagement, particularly while covering human rights abuses, consequences for Pacific Island countries (PICs) from diplomatic, economic and social viewpoints, and exploration of concrete solutions for PICs at national/regional level while applying a HRBA framework.

For coastal fisheries, human rights discussion focused on marine tenureship rights versus the right to property and the

state's interest in using marine areas for a "common good" – the former protected under human rights framework covering indigenous people. Displacement and forced evictions were also discussed; international human rights law that sets minimum procedural standards for compensation was presented. Broader human rights issues such as access to information, access to participation and active roles in decision-making processes at local and national levels were covered from a human rights angle.

### Lessons learned 3

For coastal fisheries, discussing and understanding human rights issues tend to aggregate around the right to food and the rights of indigenous people to fishing and access to traditional fishing grounds. Further, it was found critically beneficial to present a broader and holistic view on human rights issues such as the right of fishing communities to education, information, health and infrastructure in order to combat narrow understanding. Through this action, the training was able to clearly illustrate the interconnectivity of various human rights.

## Outcomes of the training

USP identified a need to review current marine science programmes in light of incorporating GSI and HRBA into existing courses and planned new courses across education levels. The need to mainstream GSI and HRBA into courses was also identified in the USP training needs and gaps analysis (Chapman 2019), suggesting the development of a social science course.

Stereotypical thinking of gender roles continues to reinforce strong associations of a male-dominated fisheries sector, further exacerbating inequalities with regard to gaps in research, investment and interventions that could possibly assist women and other marginalised marine resource users. Thus, GSI and HRBA integration in education is seen as a key strategy to change such stereotypes and to avoid misconceptions of the gender equality principle, which is often influenced by cultural norms.

Postgraduate students in particular identified the lack of social science aspects in postgraduate research and suggested that components on GSI be included through gender-integrated or gender-focused research. In addition, more support and mentorship to shift the science focus towards the social dimension was emphasised. Thus USP lecturers at the Institute of Marine Resources need to be better trained in applying GSI and HRBA as cross-cutting themes

## References

- Chiao Lee J.Y., Croft S. and McKinnel T. 2018. Misery at sea. Human suffering in Taiwan's distant water fishing fleet. Taipei, Taiwan: Greenpeace East Asia. 36 p. [also available at: [https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-new-zealand-stateless/2018/05/9fd-f62aa-greenpeace\\_misery\\_at\\_sea-report-lowres.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-new-zealand-stateless/2018/05/9fd-f62aa-greenpeace_misery_at_sea-report-lowres.pdf)]
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