

Impact of the Collective Call to Action: Voices of Women in Fisheries in Fiji

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In March 2023, the Fiji National Women in Fisheries Forum convened for its second gathering, continuing a dialogue first launched in 2018 to amplify the voices of women fishers across Fiji. Organised by the Women in Fisheries Network – Fiji (WiFN), this forum created a space for over 37 women fishers from 10 provinces, as well as 46 representatives from partner organisations, to share experiences, challenges, and needs directly with policy-makers and development partners. Participants spoke about four critical themes: 1) women’s role in the blue economy, 2) the value of indigenous knowledge, 3) governance challenges, and 4) women’s resilience in the face of pandemics and environmental shocks. These discussions culminated in a powerful Call to Action (C2A) document – a concise list of priorities reflecting the voices and needs of women fishers (Morris and Tuivucilevu 2024).

C2A quickly became a vital tool in WiFN’s advocacy efforts, as Alani Tuivucilevu from WiFN shared in a 2024 follow-up by Tupeope Samani, the Pacific Community’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Specialist. The follow-up served to evaluate the impacts of the Call to Action. For Alani, C2A transformed the way she communicated the issues faced by women fishers. Previously, she would share her knowledge along with extensive WiFN reports, which could be dense and time-consuming for stakeholders to read. C2A, however, offers a clear, concise list of issues and needs, making it an effective conversation starter with partners. The support of prominent organisations such as FAO, the European Union, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and the Wildlife Conservation Society whose logos feature on the C2A document – adds credibility to its message, positioning C2A as a resource that resonates with and mobilises stakeholders.

The impact of C2A has extended globally. Social media coverage of the forum drew the attention of major CROP³ agencies and media outlets, including the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction releasing a video highlighting these women fishers’ plights, ultimately shedding light on their roles as solutions to disaster readiness and preparedness and building community resilience.⁴

Additionally, a podcast produced with Justice Studio Sessions examined the lives of women working in Fiji’s fisheries section and brought the story of women fishers to a broader audience.⁵ Alani further promoted C2A during a fellowship in Washington DC, elevating the conversation around women fishers to an international platform.

Inspired by Fiji’s forum, Vanuatu held its own Women in Fisheries Forum in March 2024, underscoring the ripple effect of C2A as it continues to inspire and strengthen the voices of women in fisheries across the Pacific.

C2A’s impact has extended into concrete funding and projects. Projects that provide support for women fishers in WiFN’s membership base, including nine villages in Fiji’s Ra Province, with a Gender Equity and Social Inclusion training led by the Pacific Community in January 2024 marking the project’s kick-off. This funding enables communities to address the priorities highlighted in C2A, and will enable training and resources specifically designed to assist women fishers.

The traction generated by C2A also led the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation shooting the first of its kind documentary titled “Her catch – collecting women fisher stories from across Fiji”, which aired in August 2024 during the peak hour of 6 pm.⁶ The forum’s impact has also been felt at the grassroots level, as women who heard about the forum from others have subsequently reached out to join WiFN.

C2A has, thus, not only created a platform for advocacy, but has also driven real-world actions and alliances, enabling women fishers to gain visibility, support and resources to address their needs.

Reference

Morris C. and Tuivucilevu A. 2024. Fiji National Women in Fisheries Forum 2023. Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin 39:25–26. <https://fame.spc.int/publications/bulletins/womeninfisheries/39>

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³ CROP is the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific

⁴ Link to the video by UNDRR: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TLdmBmd7Qct

⁵ Women in Fisheries in Fiji podcast Justice Studio Sessions: Justice Studio Sessions - 9. Women in Fisheries in Fiji | RSS.com

⁶ FBC story on HerCatch documentary release: <https://www.fbcnews.com.fj/news/hercatch-series-to-highlight-womens-role-in-fisheries/>

