

Reflections on integrating gender-sensitive facilitation techniques in fieldtrip reports

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Introduction

The use of gender-sensitive approaches in community-based fisheries management is important for inclusive decision-making. To use and adapt these approaches requires monitoring and evaluation protocols that include reflections on gender. The Pathways Project has integrated reporting and consideration about the use of gender-sensitive facilitation techniques in fieldtrip reports used by fisheries staff in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati. This analysis will examine the different methods of gender reporting used in Solomon Islands fieldtrip reports, reflections on how they have been used by staff, and how they might be improved in the future.

The pathways project is a response to the SPC Noumea Strategy (“New Song”), which recognises that women and youth are important in coastal fisheries management and their voices should be heard in decision-making (SPC 2015). This includes the gender-related goals of: 1) increasing recognition of women’s contribution to coastal fisheries, 2) enabling women’s engagement across scales of governance, 3) supporting fair livelihood opportunities and benefits for women and men, and 4) improving the nutrition of new born babies in their first 1000 days of birth (Kleiber et al. 2019a). Furthermore, WorldFish has committed to the Gender Fish Strategy where gender is to be integrated in all projects (CGIAR 2017). Guiding principles include: 1) all research involving humans should include a gender dimension, 2) research should be gender aware and at least accommodating (and moving towards transformative), and 3) research should be intersectional.⁵

Given the mandate to create gender-inclusive community-based resource management processes, the Pathways team developed a list of how to put this into practice through gender sensitive facilitation techniques that have been used or could be used in the field (Kleiber et al. 2019b). These facilitation techniques are designed to recognise barriers to gender equity in community meetings, and suggest facilitation practices that can increase inclusivity: before (such as understanding local norms and ensuring sufficient facilitation capacity), during (such as holding meetings for women and men separately), and after meetings (such as reflecting on the process). The use of these techniques, as well as reflections on their efficacy, are important to capture in monitoring and evaluation processes so that they can be improved and scaled appropriately.

Applying gender-inclusive facilitation in communities is the responsibility of all members of the Pathways team in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati although this review is based on field trips in Solomon Islands. To enshrine the gender reflections in the monitoring and evaluation process, the team fieldtrip reports have been updated to include documentation of the gender facilitation techniques used (Fig. 1), and open-ended questions that encourage team members to report any other gender-related observations they have during their trip. This has allowed Pathways to document an increase in the use of gender-sensitive facilitation techniques in the field (Table 1).

Building capacity and space for gender monitoring and evaluation

In 2017, the first version of fieldtrip reports captured some sex-disaggregated data and allowed for gender observations but not explicitly in a separate section. Fieldtrip reports included sex-disaggregated data on attendance to community meetings and activities. Sex-disaggregated attendance data were often collected during focus group discussions or smaller community meetings or activities but was less likely to be collected at community-wide events. There was a section for staff to provide observations, but not all staff offered reflections on gender dynamics. This was, in part, due to the fact that team members had not been exposed to

Gender Sensitive Facilitation Techniques as listed in field trip reports

- Not asking the women to cater
- Making the meeting time available for women and men
- Talking to the chief and women’s group leader before the meeting
- Active inclusive facilitation
- Having someone count how often women and men talk in the meeting
- Allowing children in the meeting
- Having single sex meetings with joint reflection
- Having single sex meetings without joint reflection
- Other

Figure 1. Gender-sensitive facilitation techniques used in fieldtrip reports. Source: WorldFish Solomon Islands fieldtrip reports

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⁵ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersectionality>

any gender training that would enable them to observe and reflect on gender dynamics in the community. For example, they did not take notes on how men, women and youth participated during a meeting, or on local social norms that can lead to exclusion. Thus, notes taken at that time were just for reporting purposes on what and why things happened in the field and did not explicitly identify gender dimensions.

Updating fieldtrip reports to improve gender monitoring and evaluation

Towards the end of 2018, two changes were made to fieldtrip reports to make gender observations easier, and more explicitly expected. First, a checklist of gender-sensitive techniques used in the field was included (Fig. 1). Second, fieldtrip reports added a section to report sex-disaggregated counts of men and women speaking in meetings (in addition to sex-disaggregated data on attendance). Finally, the reports included a discussion section that prompted gender-related observations and reflections, which was separate from the general discussion section.

Fieldtrip report findings

We analysed the gender data and interviewed staff from the updated fieldtrip reports (see Table 1). The most commonly used gender-sensitive facilitation techniques used according to reports from 2018 were: 1) making meeting times where both men and women are available, 2) using actively inclusive facilitation during meetings (such as calling on men and women to speak), and 3) allowing children in the meeting. In 2019, the most commonly used techniques shifted to: 1) talking to chief and women’s group leader before the meeting, 2) not asking women to cater meals at meetings, and 3) allowing children in the meeting. There was an overall increase in the reporting of gender-sensitive facilitation from 2018 to 2019.

Use of the report

Even in 2019, 42% of the filed fieldtrip reports did not use the new template, so in these cases only sex-disaggregated attendance data were collected, and while gender observations in the open discussion area could be included, they were not explicitly requested. The reasons for this was that staff thought certain sections of the new form was not applicable; for example, a report on a general assembly within a community or a high school field trip to the WorldFish station. Another reason is that some of field trips were conducted with the provincial fisheries office and, therefore, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources’ template was used instead.

While reporting sex-disaggregated attendance data was fairly consistent, there were only three reports that documented sex-disaggregated data on who spoke during meetings. It is possible that when all staff are facilitating, there is no one who is able to count who speaks during a meeting. Some trips involved activities where counting the proportion of men and women speaking was not needed. For example, a lot of recent trip reports involved surveys, therefore, counting contributions by gender at a meeting was not applicable.

There is a section at the end of the fieldtrip report that asks staff to provide other gender reflections they have seen in the field. Most of the reflections were based on observations and the responses they received from men, women and youth. Before the gender-sensitive facilitation techniques were adopted, most gender observations were written as part of the general discussion in the report and from trip highlights. With the new template, gender reflections can be shared in a specific space. This review showed that not all newly submitted reports have any gender reflections in this space: only 38% of fieldtrip reports had such entries.

Table 1. Percentage of meetings where gender-sensitive facilitation techniques (GSFT) were used over three years (n=58).

GSFT used	Year		
	2017 (n=23)	2018 (n=16)	2019 (n=19)
Not asking the women to cater	0%	13%	42%
Making time available for both men, and women	0%	19%	53%
Talking to chief and women’s group leader before the meeting	0%	13%	47%
Active Inclusive Facilitation	0%	19%	16%
Having someone count how often women and men talk in the meeting	0%	6%	11%
Allowing children in the meeting	0%	19%	42%
Having single sex meeting with joint reflection	0%	6%	0%
Having single sex meeting without joint reflection	0%	13%	16%
Other techniques used	43%	56%	11%
Proportion of men and women talking	-	6%	11%
Number of people impacted	-	13%	58%
Other gender reflections	43%	31%	42%



Reflections on the use of the updated fieldtrip reports

Having gender-sensitive techniques specified in field report template guides and supports team members to critically observe gender-sensitive aspects in the field. The template has a specific section for gender findings, so that team members are guided to look at these different aspects of their work as they write-up the trip report. Staff highlighted some important observations related to the use of particular gender-sensitive techniques and monitoring techniques.

For example, asking women not to cater the food for meetings can be difficult. Village leaders are usually our first point of contact, and they usually decide who does the catering. Communities sometimes organise different groups in the communities to cater to allow for benefit sharing. It is normal in communities for women to be responsible for providing the food for any occasion requiring many people to be fed. There are exceptions, however; for instance, if communities are exposed to some training, such as training on gender roles, it helps them understand why men and youth are also capable of catering for these functions.

There were also barriers to collecting data on how often women and men spoke during meetings. Having to count who is talking during a community meeting can be quite difficult. Sometimes, even though we designated someone to do this, when everyone is contributing to a discussion, the person often forgets to count. This is an area where additional staffing would be needed in order to record gender and contributions. Another way of recording this with needing additional staff is requesting volunteers to do the counting using different coloured stickers to indicate when a man or woman is speaking, and counting the stickers afterward. The section of the report for counting contributions is used only when there is a community meeting, otherwise it is left blank.

It has been quite helpful to have a section in the report template dedicated to gender observations. This pinpoints readers directly to the gender notes. However, WorldFish staff who travel with government staff or a provincial officer must use the Ministry's or provincial office template. Like the old WorldFish trip report template, the Ministry's template does not explicitly show where general gender observations can be incorporated, but it does record other gender observations such as the number of participants, including a breakdown on the numbers of males, females and children. Discussions have started between WorldFish staff based in the community-based resource management section of Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource and the Ministry's officers to begin incorporating the new gender section in the template that community-based resource management officers are using, but this has not been fully integrated yet.

Some key issues have been pointed out with the use of the gender-sensitive techniques in fieldtrip reports. These include staff time and training, use of different templates, and community norms such as catering being difficult to change. In order to increase gender reporting in future fieldtrip reports, we share the following recommendations:

1. Provide enough staff for trips. In order to capture the number of times men and women speak during meetings, a designated staff member should record this. With limited staff, it is quite difficult for staff to do multiple roles at the same time; asking for volunteers in the community is another option.
2. Staff training. Training on the importance of recording gender-specific observations should be provided for WorldFish staff, including those from MFMR in order to capture gender observations during any field trip. A refresher training should be given to WorldFish staff who have had some gender training in the past.
3. Adapting to cultural norms but recognising that these norms can change. It is important that staff are aware of local cultural norms in communities. Sometimes gender (and other) norms can change within a community, such as the expectation that women always have to do the catering. In the cases where women in the communities really want to do the catering because they want to earn some income, they may support restrictive gender norms and be resistant to change, even if this limits their ability to participate in meetings. Therefore, in cases where women have to (or want to) cater, alternative options can be given so that information from the meeting can be passed on to them.

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