

New chapters for the Pacific handbook on gender equity and social inclusion in coastal fisheries and aquaculture

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Background

In March 2019, the Pacific Community (SPC) launched the “Pacific handbook on gender equity and social inclusion in coastal fisheries and aquaculture”² during the Heads of Fisheries Meeting in Noumea, New Caledonia. The handbook was developed by SPC’s Social Development Programme (SDP) in collaboration with SPC’s Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) Division and independent gender and fisheries experts.

The main purpose of the handbook is to provide practical guidance to fisheries managers, national fisheries officers and broader fisheries practitioners in the region to integrate gender and social inclusion (GSI) into planning, programming and implementation. The current handbook topics have been chosen are in line with Pacific governments’ workflows in the area of coastal fisheries and aquaculture. The five existing modules provide an introductory overview of concepts as well as programme planning processes, government and policy cycles, and monitoring and evaluation. The handbook also supports the “bigger picture” of Pacific Island Leaders’ commitments to achieve equal benefits and outcomes for women and men, boys and girls and others who are excluded from accessing and benefiting equally from marine resource access and use as a basis for subsistence, their livelihoods and beyond. These overarching goals are outlined in various international, regional and national commitments by Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) and are highlighted in the handbook.

New chapters developed to complement the handbook

While developing the handbook, authors and consulted stakeholders decided on key topics that should be covered to assist a non-GSI audience apply a GSI lens into a fisheries and aquaculture practitioner’s daily work. By doing so, the handbook takes into consideration the context specific challenges of fisheries practitioners in PICTs. The introduction (Module 1) covered key basics to understand the conceptualisation of GSI while providing Pacific case studies to illustrate GSI issues in the context of fisheries and aquaculture. An emphasis has been placed on de-mystifying existing gender bias and misconceptions to eliminate misunderstandings and to provide a solid understanding of what these often-abstract sounding concepts mean in a simplified way. Acknowledging that GSI analysis is a key step to enable a sector mainstreaming process in fisheries and aquaculture, the handbook provides a guide to undertaking

gender analysis, including practical analysis tools (Module 2). Having in mind fisheries and aquaculture practitioners from the national fisheries public sector and those who provide assistance to them such as fisheries and aquaculture experts from development agencies, the handbook provides a mix of guidance on government processes (Module 4) and policy formation (Modules 5), and programme management-related issues such as monitoring, evaluation and learning (Module 3). The first edition of the handbook also lays the foundation for an improved understanding of the purpose, benefits and building blocks (the why and how) upon which the additional future chapters will draw from.

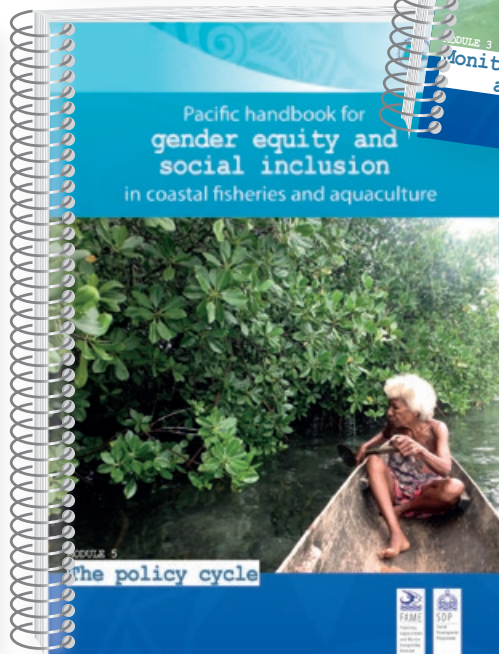
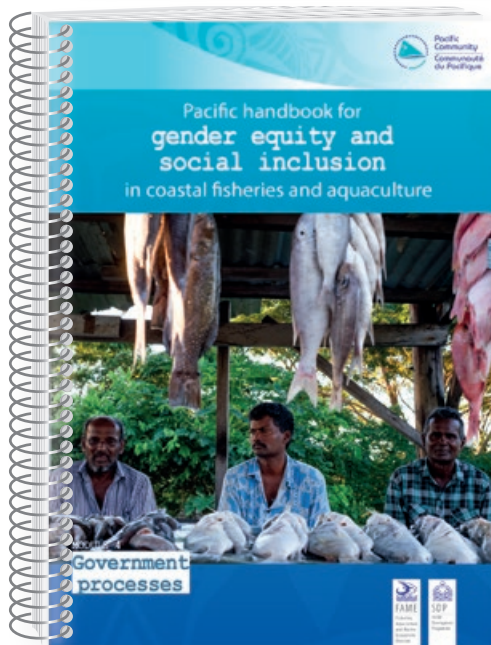
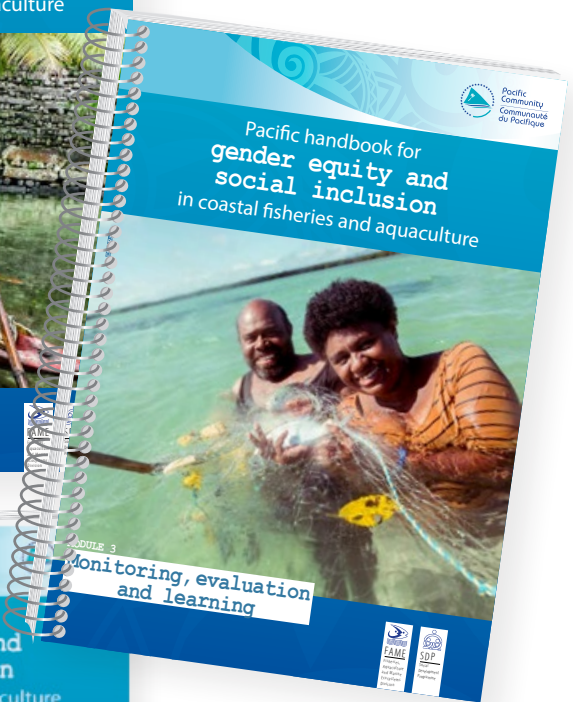
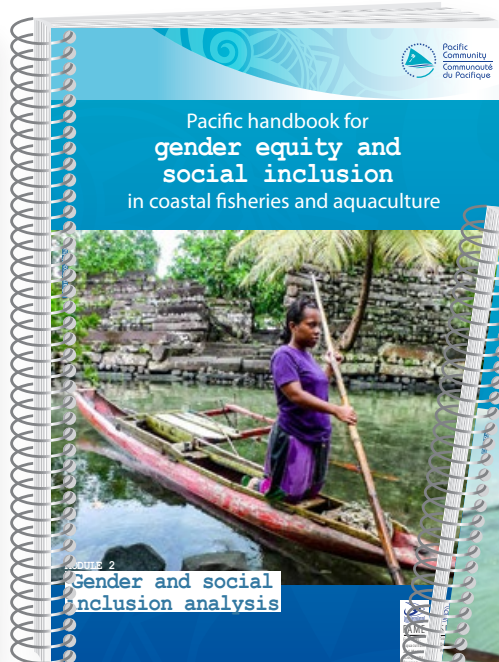
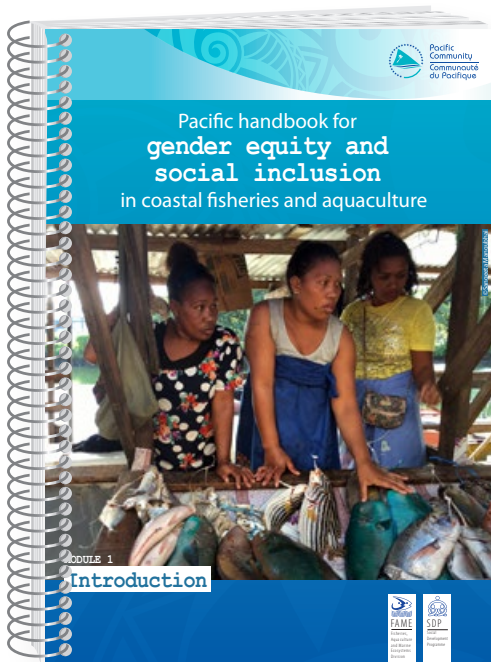
In order to complement and build on the existing handbook, three additional modules were identified. These areas explore fisheries and aquaculture themes from a more hands-on and practical angle such as field work-related interventions at the community level. Moreover, the relevance of occurring fisheries themes for the region was taken into account, as well as current Pacific priorities and recent regional policy objectives such as the New Song for Coastal Fisheries (The Noumea Strategy), which calls for a strengthened community-based ecosystem approach to fisheries management (CEAFM) and more equitable access to benefits and decision-making within communities including women, youth and marginalised groups. Three additional modules were identified as follows:

1. Coastal fisheries management with a focus on community-based management forms, in particular looking at CEAFM through a GSI lens.
2. Marine resource-dependent livelihoods, with a focus on sustainable livelihoods and women’s economic empowerment.
3. Community engagement in its broadest sense to illustrate best GSI practices.

Despite the handbook modules being stand-alone chapters, it has been acknowledged that these thematic areas are cross-cutting, and respectively, references and synergies between new chapters and the existing ones have been made and highlighted to connect various elements of a holistic approach when integrating GSI elements across the whole range of presented topics. For example, the livelihoods and coastal fisheries management modules make references to analysis tools presented in the existing handbook chapter on GSI analysis and how these can be used to inform specific work aspects under coastal fisheries management or livelihoods development. In addition, the community engagement module presents processes, strategies and tips to integrate

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² Referred to as ‘The Handbook’ <https://coastfish.spc.int/en/component/content/article/494-gender-equity-and-social-inclusion-handbook>



The current Handbook consists of five modules:
 Module 1: Introduction
 Module 2: Gender and social inclusion analysis
 Module 3: Monitoring, evaluation and learning
 Module 4: Government processes
 Module 5: The policy cycle

GSI, which have been referred to in specific consultation or community communication steps needed for coastal fisheries managers or those working on livelihoods.

Moreover, all new chapters will provide practical tools and methods that are easy to apply for practitioners such as checklists for GSI integrative resource mapping or livelihood assessments to complement the descriptive nature of the chapters. The need to make the handbook more practical by presenting more hands-on tools in each module was stressed during gender and fisheries trainings for regional implementing agencies (e.g. SPC's FAME). In doing so, the authors were encouraged to draw from existing tools while bringing in a GSI focus. It was found that although a numerous number of tools for coastal fisheries management and livelihoods practitioners with Pacific relevance existed, most of these were either silent on GSI, or integrated some GSI elements but not adequately enough to allow for a more in-depth understanding of GSI issues.

The recent three modules have also been designed to explore a human rights-based approach (HRBA) – where deemed meaningful – in order to illustrate the social dimension of coastal fisheries and aquaculture by highlighting the connection to fundamental rights of fishers such as the right to food, the right to a livelihood, and the right to participation. Adopting a HRBA was also investigated as a way of highlighting GSI issues because they often have a human rights dimension that is likely to be overlooked if the human rights nature is not identified. The intention behind this is to illustrate that GSI derives from and is an integral part of human rights, although it is often looked at as a separate concept and missing the crucial link that GSI and HRBA are complementary and equally important to draw attention to a people-centred way of working. In addition, the recent shift in coastal fisheries international and regional policy dialogues towards the application of a HRBA calls for a more active way of exploring what this means, what it may look like in the fisheries sector by pointing out the human rights

that are likely to be impacted, as well as focusing on those rights-holders who have less means, access or opportunities to benefit from fisheries development initiatives because of GSI-related barriers. However, a HRBA was carefully mainstreamed rather than discussed as a separate topic without shifting the general focus on GSI.

Writing workshop

The development of the existing handbook was conducted in a collaborative manner with opportunities for knowledge exchange. Writing workshops were crucial to allow a wide stakeholder engagement and to collect stories and case studies from the field. Thus, this successful approach has been followed in the development of the additional modules.

A writing workshop was held from 9-10 March 2020, in Suva, Fiji to support the development of the additional chapters. The workshop, which followed International Women's Day on 8 March 2020, was organised and facilitated by SPC through the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme, funded by the European Union and the Government of Sweden. A range of key stakeholders from selected national fisheries agencies, non-governmental and civil society organisations, academic experts and researchers attended the workshop to share their on-the-ground experience, case studies, examples and lessons learned to ensure that the additional chapters are contextualised to Pacific realities and responsive to the needs of the handbook's audience. PEUMP's implementing agencies – the University of the South Pacific, Secretariat of the Pacific

Regional Environment Programme, and partners such as the Wildlife Conservation Society, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the Women in Fisheries Network–Fiji attended and participated in the workshop.

The workshop provided an opportunity to seek local knowledge and expertise from a pool of stakeholders to ensure that all modules are strongly reflective of traditional knowledge and local expertise. In addition, the workshop provided an excellent opportunity to present constructive feedback, identify additional case studies, and build on lessons learned from those who had used the handbook for GSI training. For example, the need to highlight more success stories and positive examples was stressed because it was found that an over-representation of failed GSI-sensitive initiatives or GSI discriminatory behaviour could dominate and create a negative connotation, which is not appealing to motivate target audiences in using the handbook in order to make a change. To support this thinking, highlighting positive cultural norms and ways that are people-centred, take account of a care-and-share culture and cater for socioeconomic disadvantages was strongly encouraged.

Despite the active engagement of a range of stakeholders during the writing workshop, only a limited number of fisheries practitioners from Pacific national fisheries agencies were able to attend due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions in various PICTs. The promotion and socialisation of the handbook among the target audience will, therefore, be a very crucial step to take once a completed version is available to assist national fisheries agencies, development partners and fisheries practitioners from broader backgrounds to integrate GSI across their work. The additional modules will be launched by the end of 2020.

Participants at the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme Writing Workshop in March 2020. © Debbie Singh, SPC

