

New study to inform financial assistance for women in the fisheries sector affected by COVID-19 in Fiji

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The global COVID-19 crisis has impacted multiple sectors since its first confirmed case in March 2020. The Women in Fisheries Network – Fiji (WiFN-Fiji) – recently assessed the impact of COVID-19 on women who sell fisheries products at local markets. In total, 100 market vendors were interviewed on Saturdays from 9–30 May 2020 at Suva, Nausori and Laqere seafood markets. Women vendors in these markets are from the provinces of Tailevu, Rewa and Ra. The findings from the assessment are likely to be representative of other markets, which faced similar short-term lockdowns and national-scale COVID-19 restrictions. The findings of this research will inform a financial assistance project to be implemented by the WiFN-Fiji.

The study found that women vendors experienced a decrease in their sales, decrease in seafood and freshwater products, and incurred extra transportation costs. The women explained this was due to the COVID-19 restrictions, such as curfews, that limited their fishing activities, including in areas they could travel to. Lockdowns resulted in women paying extra transport costs to transport their seafood and freshwater products from Nausori, and selling at a lower price due to market saturation.

WiFN-Fiji is implementing a project to provide financial assistance to women fishers who are dependent on their fisheries for local livelihoods. The funding is helping women with transportation costs to sell their products at markets, as well as buying essential items such as food for their households. The financial assistance was specifically

requested by most of the women fisher vendors interviewed, who needed the assistance to assist cope with the impact of COVID-19 on their livelihoods.

The project is also providing financial assistance to women fishers affected by COVID-19 by targeting communities that WiFN-Fiji has worked with, and networking with community members and other women fishers in Fiji. The project's objectives are to:

- financially assist women who rely on fisheries products for their livelihood;
- be a part of the partners and government effort to assist those affected by COVID-19 in Fiji;
- document both the impact of COVID-19 on women, and the impact of the financial response; and
- contribute data collected from this project will to a database on women in fisheries, which is being developed in the network.

Baseline information will be collected from key informants, including village headmen and provincial office to help guide investments by WiFN-Fiji. Monitoring will also take place to assess and document the impact of the financial assistance project on women fishers. The project's duration is from 1 October 2020 to 31 May 2021.



Fazlin Mohammed, one of the women fish vendors at Bailey stall.



A woman fish vendor sells shrimp at the Suva Fish Market. She earns FJD 90 a day from sales.