

Disaster risk management requires an understanding of gender equity and social inclusion

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Background

The Pacific islands are exposed to a range of hazards, including tropical cyclones, floods, storm surges, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. Pacific Islanders depend greatly on fisheries and aquaculture resources, and these hazards threaten people's livelihoods and change their resource-use patterns, leaving them quite vulnerable (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center 2018). Disaster risk is also linked to climate change. As the climate continues to change, disaster-prone communities will be forced to adapt their livelihoods and traditions, which are strongly tied to the land and sea.

Disasters can heavily impact the resilience of communities and countries, and set countries back in terms of economic and human development. For example, the World Bank (2018) estimates that the damages and losses from cyclones and earthquakes since 1950 have cost the region USD 3 billion, and that "10 countries in the Pacific are ranked as the top 30 countries in the world with the highest average annual losses as a percentage of gross domestic product" (World Bank 2018). Furthermore, about 5800 people, on average, are likely to be displaced during any given year by natural hazards (World Bank 2018).

There are often assumptions that all members of a population experience the impacts of disasters in the same way. However, natural disasters are not *neutral*, and research and experience have shown they affect women, men, girls and boys differently due to gender inequalities and social exclusion. These inequalities are a result of structures and practices that reinforce gender norms and unequal power relations (Mangubhai and Lawless 2021). The strength of preparedness, response and post-disaster recovery lies with how well it responds to the needs of both women and men through an *intersectional* lens. Disasters can also serve as a "window of opportunity" to transform negative gender norms and unequal power relations that contribute to gender-differentiated vulnerabilities.

There is an increasing need to integrate and streamline disaster risk reduction and risk management into key sectoral spaces, such as fisheries and aquaculture, to improve disaster preparedness, response and recovery. To do this, however, requires an understanding of how and why gender equity and social inclusion matter.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) project "Strengthening small-scale Fisheries in the Pacific Islands" (see text box on Canadapt 003) is assisting Fiji's Ministry of Fisheries with strengthening its capacity to lead and support gender-sensitive approaches to improved resilience of coastal fisheries and aquaculture. This

includes providing targeted training to ensure that the ministry is better prepared for the impacts of disasters and climate change, and has the capacity to apply the necessary tools to adopt gender-sensitive and socially inclusive approaches.

The training is being delivered through two in-person training sessions: one on gender equity and social inclusion, and the other on resilient coastal fisheries. The first training was delivered on 18-19 October 2022 in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) project Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP), and focused on building the confidence and technical capacity of officers in the Ministry of Fisheries to understand concepts and ideas of gender equity and social inclusion, and how these apply to coastal fisheries.

The second training is planned for February 2023, and will focus more on understanding how natural disasters impact the fisheries sector, and will provide approaches and tools to build resilient fisheries as a way to reduce disaster risk. There will be continued emphasis on how to incorporate social and human dimensions into disaster risk management in fisheries to make sure *no one is left behind*.

Gender equity and social inclusion training

The learning objectives of the first training were to ensure that participants were: 1) more gender aware and sensitive towards inclusive approaches; 2) better positioned to identify entry points for integrating gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) into disaster risk reduction in coastal fisheries; and 3) equipped with a number of GESI tools that they can use in coastal fisheries.

The training especially targeted senior fisheries officers and fisheries officers within the Ministry of Fisheries and across technical fisheries fields (i.e. inshore fisheries management, offshore, aquaculture, research) and geographic divisions (i.e. Central, Eastern, Northern, Western). In total, 23 individuals participated, including three local FAO staff who also benefited from the training. Of the 23 participants, 14 identified themselves as women and 9 as men. A representative from the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation attended in order to provide participants information on the Gender Transformative Institutional Capacity Development Initiative (Anon 2023, this edition)

An attitude survey was completed before the training to help understand participants' attitudes and perspectives on gender equality, prior to attending the workshop. The survey included 19 multiple-choice questions, each with three options. Each option was ranked from 1 to 3, with 3 being given to the response that most reflected gender equality values and principles. The maximum possible score was 57.

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While women scored slightly higher (average = 54.3) than men (average = 50.4), the difference was not significant, suggesting that attitudes were fairly similar (Fig. 1).

Some of the key concepts and insights emerging from the training session and the participants themselves, are highlighted in the sections below. These are shared to demonstrate how GESI training is being implemented in the fisheries and aquaculture sector in Fiji, and to illustrate the approaches that will underpin the second training session to help build resilient fisheries and reduce disaster risk.

Gender equality – a development goal and a human right, and why it matters in the fisheries sector

This session covered:

- gender equality and understanding the difference between sex and gender, and equality and equity (Fig. 2);
- gender perspectives in the fisheries sector, with a focus on what the issues are and why they matter;
- gender equality as a human right and development goal, and how it is considered nationally, regionally and internationally; and
- breaking common misconceptions about gender equality not being for women, or about women's issues, achieving equal numbers (50:50), or making men women, or women men.

Some of the ways in which the fisheries sector is not *gender neutral* and why gender matters in fisheries were discussed. The gendered roles and responsibilities that fishermen and fisherwomen play in their families were also talked about, and it was highlight that the barriers they face (e.g. lack of market access, decision-making) tended to be gender specific. A core message was that *fisheries development* needs to go hand-in-hand with *human development*.

The session also provided examples of why gender equality was not making progress in fisheries, including: 1) the sector is still perceived as being male dominated (attitudes and stereotypes); 2) there is a lack of data for gender analysis (qualitative and quantitative); 3) biased thinking that women's fishing activities are of low economic value; 4) focus is on harvesting, with little attention to post-harvesting activities; and 5) little attention is given to understanding gendered roles along the supply and value chain.

Gender matters when it comes to natural disasters, mainly because men tend to be more at risk of injury after a disaster because they are likely to be the ones to rebuild homes or fish for food when it may still be risky to do so. Women may play key roles in preparing for disasters (e.g. preserving food, rationing food, packaging), or after a disaster, such as collecting shellfish to feed the family. The session also highlighted that women and children are more likely to experience gender-based violence during and after disasters when stress levels are high.

How does social inclusion or exclusion impact people's lives?

This session covered the meaning of "social inclusion" – Who is excluded? How are people excluded? And what happens when people are excluded? Participants learned that gender inequality is the social process by which men and women (or other identities) are not treated as equals and are often excluded. Exclusion is understood as happening at the *system level* – within formal and informal institutions that structure human interactions (our society). Exclusion also depends on context, culture, nationality and region, and leads to certain individuals, or groups of individuals, becoming marginalised. By using the "power walk" exercise, participants also learned that people do not have just one identity, and that different social identities (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, economic status) intersected to give individuals advantages or disadvantages in life. Social inclusion recognises and values diversity, and acknowledges that people have different experiences, knowledge, concerns and needs.

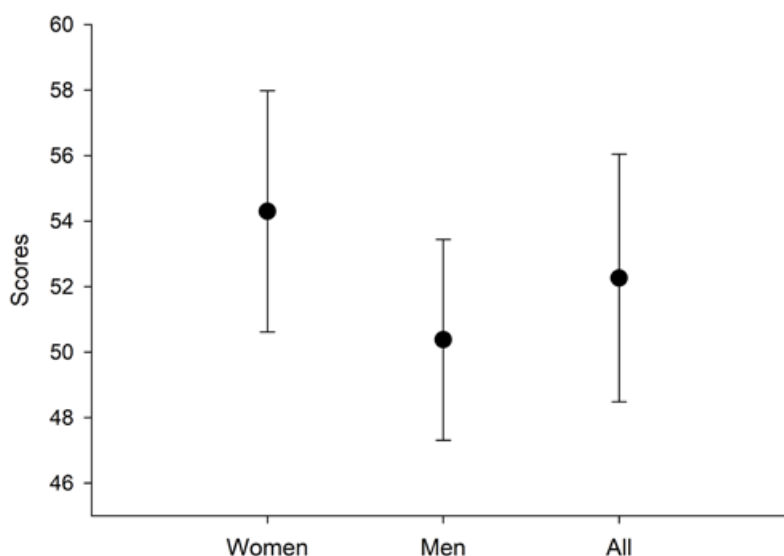


Figure 1. Average scores of participants (n = 20) who completed the pre-workshop attitude survey.



Figure 2. Illustrations explaining the difference between equality (left) and equity (right).
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The session encouraged participants to go beyond project design for the “majority”, and to consider those that are typically left out. This means that fisheries extension staff should consider themselves as equal opportunity providers, taking active steps to facilitate the participation and inclusion of various groups for equitable outcomes.

Gender stereotypes

A gender stereotype is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are, or ought to be, possessed by women and men, or the roles that are, or should be, performed by men and women. This session was highly interactive and focused on what gender stereotypes are, how and when they are formed, what impact they can have on women, girls, men and boys, and how they relate to and impact fisheries.

During group work, participants reflected on the gender stereotypes that applied to or matched them as individuals, and those that did not. Participants then broke up into groups to discuss examples of gender stereotypes in fisheries, and decide whether these stereotypes were problematic. They were also asked to consider if there were stereotypes relating to other identities (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, economic status).

Examples of gender stereotypes in fisheries that were identified by participants included:

- Harvesting is more labour intensive and, therefore, better suited to men.
- Men are better at negotiating and, therefore, better at marketing fisheries products.
- Fisheries is a male-dominated sector that assumes men are better suited to being fish farmers or observers on fishing boats.
- Women are largely present in processing, value-adding and sales.
- Women are better suited to feeding fish in the aquaculture ponds that they also clean.

Many participants highlighted that gender stereotypes can be reinforced by institutions or systems in Fiji. One example is land ownership, which is registered under men’s

names, posing a challenge for women to set up and operate aquaculture ponds as they need to get permission or support of men. They are not automatically entitled to the land and do not have a strong say in how it is used.

Participants highlighted a number of problems with gender stereotypes in fisheries:

- When roles change, it can create confusion and may impact the sustainability of a project or business.
- Women may lack the confidence and experience to take on large projects.
- Women’s capabilities are undermined by gender stereotypes.
- There are challenges for women farmers who want to own or manage aquaculture businesses, and these challenges may require the ministry to have different application processes for women (than men) who want to set up aquaculture farms.
- Institutional systems, including the Ministry of Fisheries, can reinforce stereotypes in the sector or help to break them.

GESI analysis tools

GESI analysis is critical for understanding sociocultural, socioeconomic and socioecological constructions where men and women inhabit different spheres and hold different powers. A GESI analysis should be done at the start of a project as part of the planning phase, in order to map gender differentiated needs, and assess the potential social (especially gender) impacts of the project. This session was designed to introduce participants to several tools that could be used to conduct or contribute to a GESI analysis for fisheries, such as:

- gender division of labour;
- time-use survey;
- examining access to and use of natural resources through a gender lens; and
- GESI-sensitive value chain analysis.

The findings can then be mainstreamed into project cycles, including monitoring, evaluation and learning systems, and the design of activities and interventions. The training

encouraged participants to consider ways to integrate these tools into their current approaches, and to see these tools as adding value, and helping them deliver more effective projects and programmes.

Inclusive community engagement methods

This session focused on teaching participants how to apply gender and socially inclusive approaches in community engagement activities. Specifically, participants learned:

- the key GESI considerations when interacting with a community;
- misconceptions around community engagement; and
- understanding which GESI barriers hinder the participation and engagement of marginalised people.

A checklist from the Pacific Handbook for Gender Equity and Social Inclusion in Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture (Module 6, Delisle et al. 2021) was provided to the Ministry of Fisheries to aid staff in reflecting on and identifying facilitation techniques they could adopt to promote better gender and social inclusion approaches when conducting community meetings or workshops (Fig. 3).

Practical ways to implement GESI-sensitive fisheries research

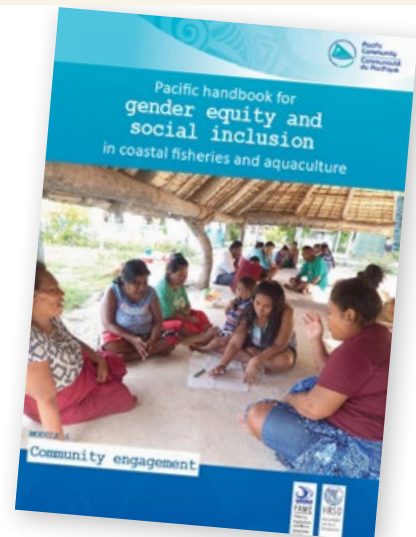
Gender-sensitive research aims to capture the similarities and differences in the experiences of both men and women. This session explored GESI-sensitive research and why it matters, and some practical ways to implement GESI-sensitive fisheries research in Fiji.

Participants learned that gender-sensitive research considers gender at every step of the research – from the initial idea to sharing findings and recommendations – thereby giving equal value to women’s and men’s unique perspectives (Fig. 5). Gender norms and gender relations are context specific and can vary at different governance levels (e.g. national, subnational, community), and the inclusion of gender considerations in the planning and implementation of socioeconomic research is a critical step to understanding individuals’ needs, roles, vulnerabilities, opportunities and

contributions to society. A checklist of gender considerations was shared with participants for them to use when designing and implementing their own socioeconomic research (Mangubhai et al. 2022).

PEUMP

Funded by the European Union and Government of Sweden, the PEUMP programme promotes sustainable management and sound ocean governance through a holistic and multi-sectoral approach, thus contributing to social, economic and environmental development in the Pacific, as well as biodiversity protection and promoting the sustainable use of fisheries and other marine resources. The PEUMP programme focuses on equitable benefits for all Pacific Island countries, while recognising the diversity of resources, needs and opportunities among its 15 Pacific countries of work – the Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste and Vanuatu.



Module 6, Community engagement. ©SPC



Attendees of the training. ©Ministry of Fisheries, Fiji



Figure 5. Four key stages to research where gender should be considered.

CANADAPT003 – Strengthening small-scale fisheries in the Pacific Islands

Funded by the Government of Canada, the Strengthening Small-scale Fisheries in the Pacific Islands project has been designed with a long-term vision of improving the resilience of coastal communities in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu through the improved capacity to adapt the management of nearshore resources to climate change, and by reducing vulnerabilities, including through a focus on gender equity. The intended impact of the project is increased resilience of fishers (both women and men) in coastal communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. FAO is working through national and regional partners and experts in the Pacific Islands region, in close coordination and partnership with the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries, Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, and the Vanuatu Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity. The training is Activity 1.1 of the Letter of Agreement with Ministry of Fisheries, which ensures that key fisheries staff have improved capacity on gender equity and social inclusion for climate change adaptation and disaster resilience.

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Participants at the training. ©Zafiar Naaz