



Gender and fisheries in Vanuatu

Summary of key issues

June 2018



FAME

Fisheries,
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and Marine
Ecosystems
Division

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Introduction and purpose

This report is intended to inform gender-responsive approaches to fisheries and aquaculture programmes undertaken by the Pacific Community (SPC) in Vanuatu. It is an internal SPC product that is expected to stimulate discussion in the Social Development Programme and the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division of SPC.

The report provides a snapshot of available information and analysis about gender issues in fisheries. More research and analysis are, however, required to develop a comprehensive understanding of the multiple ways in which men and women participate in the sector across Vanuatu. Examples of how to mainstream a gender perspective into certain areas of the fisheries sector shown in this report. Recommendations relevant to SPC, the Government of Vanuatu and development partners are provided at the end of the document.

Analysis of gender issues in fisheries and aquaculture requires an understanding of commitments, laws and policy frameworks that support gender equitable management of fisheries and marine resources. It also requires clarification of how men and women:

- are involved in fisheries;
- influence decisions about the use of fisheries resources;
- access those resources; and
- share the work, benefits and risks of using fisheries resources for different purposes.

Identification of gaps in knowledge about these issues can guide future work and provide the rationale for research by government, development partners and communities.

Methodology

The material in this report is gathered from a desk review of the limited literature available on gender and fisheries in Vanuatu. This includes work done since the 1990s, supported by SPC, development partners and governments.¹ The report draws heavily on the SPC/FAO Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and Rural Sectors (CGA-ARS). Other research and reports from development partners and government were also scanned to assess the availability of additional information on gender and fisheries in Vanuatu.

The report provides a brief analysis of government commitments and policy frameworks that can support or constrain gender responsive fisheries and aquaculture development. It also summarises existing findings on the status, strengths and weaknesses of enabling environments for gender mainstreaming. This is relevant to the work of government, development partners and the private sector.

To inform further data collection, analysis and improved programming the report also identifies:

- gaps in knowledge and evidence;
- areas for further data collection and analysis;
- preliminary observations, lessons learned and good practice in gender mainstreaming; and
- recommendations for progressing gender mainstreaming in fisheries and aquaculture within SPC and the Government of Vanuatu.

¹ Note that an extensive technical report and assessment of ni-Vanuatu women's role in fisheries was done by FAO in 1996. It identified a range of issues and could be used as a baseline to measure change and progress. FAO. 1996. Technical Report: An assessment of the role of women in fisheries in Vanuatu <http://www.fao.org/docrep/X5195E/X5195e00.htm#TopOfPage>





Overview of gender issues in fisheries

While there is limited recent documentation of issues relating to women and fisheries in Vanuatu, it can be assumed from previous research and the results of the recent CGA-ARS that many women who live in coastal areas or near rivers are likely to be involved in near-shore or river fisheries and gleaning in some way. This may be for subsistence and or commercial purposes, depending on the availability and abundance of species and markets.

Gender roles influence men's and women's use of different resources and as a result, women may develop specific knowledge and skills related to, for example, how they catch and use fisheries products. In general, women have been less engaged with fisheries extension services due to their multiple roles, responsibilities and lack of time. This lack of engagement limits learning on both sides; government staff do not learn the extent of women's interests, knowledge and experience and women do not have a chance to access technical information and explore fisheries activities as a potential income generation activity.

A consistent issue that must be considered in all gender analyses is the time women and men spend on reproductive and caregiving work in the home and community and how this affects the time they have available to engage in development activities, community decision-making forums, and productive work. This information is basic but fundamental to effective design and implementation of gender-responsive programmes and projects.

Guiding frameworks that support gender equality in the fisheries sector

The Government of Vanuatu has made a number of commitments linked to gender equality in the fisheries sector.

At the international level, ratification of United Nations conventions means that Vanuatu has agreed to norms and standards for gender equality in decision-making and the economy. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women notes that rural women are often marginalised from control and management of natural resources and that, in some cases, special efforts are required to ensure that women benefit from resource conservation and development. Special measures may include design and implementation of strategies that “address discriminatory stereotypes, attitudes and practices which impede their rights to land and natural resources.”² At the national level, the government of Vanuatu has also endorsed the *Vanuatu National Gender Equality Policy 2015–2019*, which aims to promote equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities among men and women and to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. In order to achieve this, the Government of Vanuatu highlights gender mainstreaming across sectors of government as one of four strategic priority areas, and affirms the commitment of the government to take proactive steps to embed gender equality into its legislation, policies, programmes, organisational structures and operational procedures.

Vanuatu has also ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity. Guiding bodies for these conventions have recognised that analysis of men's and women's roles in resource management, including management of rivers, reefs and oceans, is critical to making progress on the conventions.³

The *Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031* was developed with input from youth and women's groups. It recognises and promotes gender equality and the participation of vulnerable groups in fisheries in its guiding principles. The policy directive relating to stakeholders makes broad commitments to participation and inclusion but does not mention the involvement of women. The directive on equal opportunity does, however, assert the need to provide equal opportunities to all sectors of the community through encouraging: (i) fair participation of women in all positions in the Fisheries Department; (ii) open training opportunities to all community groups, including vulnerable groups; and (iii) participation of youth in training opportunities in fisheries, aquaculture and value-adding processes.⁴

A common assumption in sectoral policies is highlighting women as a vulnerable group. It should be noted that the association between women and vulnerable groups is problematic when it comes to gender mainstreaming. Assuming women are vulnerable can contribute to paternalistic project approaches that disempower women. The *Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031* recognises women as an important stakeholder group and includes targets and activities to increase the number of female staff in the Vanuatu Fisheries Division and ensures women's participation in provincial fisheries associations. Beside this, however, there is little evidence to demonstrate how gendered perspectives are integrated across the policy strategic objectives.

Despite some analytical and semantic weaknesses, recognition of gender in the *Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031* is a positive step and provides a clear starting point for implementation of gender mainstreaming. Evidence based on data and analysis can in turn inform the design of programmes that more accurately match the realities of all stakeholder groups, including women.

2 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. 2016. General Recommendation #34 on the Rights of Rural Women. http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_7933_E.pdf

3 CBD 2015–2020 Gender plan of action pocket guide: Summary and examples. <https://www.cbd.int/gender/doc/CBD-GenderPlanofAction-EN-WEB.pdf>

4 Department of Fisheries, 2016, <http://www.nab.vu/node/26753>, *Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031*, p.10

Meaningful participation in decision-making and management and use of fisheries and marine resources

Meaningful participation involves environments where individuals may actively contribute to decisions, where their ideas are heard and considered, and where they can take part in leadership or decision-making (Care, 2012⁵)

Although some areas are matrilineal, land tenure in Vanuatu is mostly patrilineal. However, in all of Vanuatu's land tenure systems, the different types of rights to land depend on gender. For example, men are typically described as having the primary rights to land, i.e. the decision-making rights over land, while women generally have predominantly secondary rights, such as access and use, without the right to make decisions (Naupa & Simo 2008⁶). This may become problematic for ni-Vanuatu women, as fishing rights are usually held by clan or family heads, who are mostly male.

Social norms and practices in Vanuatu discriminate against women and girls. These norms are particularly rigid in rural communities, where traditional customs and practices remain strong. Discriminatory social norms reinforce men's ability to control women's behaviour, and stigmas are associated with women and girls who try to exercise their rights to decision-making and full participation in development. These social norms also allow violence against women as a way for men to control women's behaviour. All of these factors limit women's ability and confidence to express their needs, talk about their own fisheries experiences and knowledge, and share their views on how fisheries should be managed.

Research has shown that women who are involved in the fisheries sector have less understanding of coastal resource management than men, hence the need for their (meaningful) inclusion in programmes on sustainable marine resource management (Nimoho et al. 2013).⁷ Women's active and meaningful participation in management and use of fisheries resources is important as their concerns and priorities can often differ to men. For example, research into community-based fisheries management (CBFM) activities in Vanuatu, in particular, reasons for wanting to increase fishery stocks found that women wished to protect fish stocks and resources for future generations. Men however wanted to attract tourists to the village to enable income and felt that marine managed sites should be used for students to develop their knowledge about marine resources.⁸

Community based fisheries management (CBFM) is defined by SPC as "a management system under which communities take a leading role in managing fisheries and adjacent coastal areas in partnership with, or with support from, a promoting agency".⁹ The very fact that this system draws from community systems and knowledge makes it critical that activities, projects, research and interventions take into account gender perspectives. CBFM is also a good entry point to ensure the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes.

Table 1 derives from the report of a gender analysis of a baseline survey of coastal villages in Vanuatu. It was undertaken in 2012 to support effective practice of community-based coastal resource management in the country.¹⁰ Some components of a good CBFM system have been drawn from this report and highlighted in the first column. The second column shows entry points for gender perspectives that could have been included to ensure women's participation and gendered perspectives integrated into the survey.

5 Care, 2012. Good Practices Framework – Gender analysis (p.6)

6 Naupa, A & Simo, J. 2008. Matrilineal land tenure in Vanuatu. In Land and Women: The matrilineal factor. The cases of the Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

7 Nimoho G., Seko A., Linuma M., Nishiyama K. and Wakisaka T. 2013. A baseline survey of coastal villages in Vanuatu. In Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge information bulletin. Issue 32. SPC. <http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/InfoBull/TRAD/32/Trad32.pdf>

8 Tavue Baereleo R., Neihapi P., Cohen P.J., Raubani J., Bertram I. 2016. What influences the form that community-based fisheries management takes in Vanuatu? SPC Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge Information Bulletin 37:22–34

9 Gereva S.R., Vuki V. 2010. Women's fishing activities on Aniwa Island, Tafea Province, South Vanuatu. SPC Women In Fisheries Information Bulletin 21:17–22.

10 Nimoho G., Seko A., Linuma M., Nishiyama K. and Wakisaka T. 2013. A baseline survey of coastal villages in Vanuatu.. In Traditional Marine Resource Management and Knowledge information bulletin. Issue 32. SPC. <http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/InfoBull/TRAD/32/Trad32.pdf>

Table 1: Gender analysis of a baseline survey of coastal villages in Vanuatu

Components of a community-based fisheries management system	Potential entry points for gender considerations
Information on the target site Background on the community and current trends in fishing Observations and perceptions of fishermen (e.g. increase/decrease of species group/changes in size and/or species consumption)	Document how women have also been involved and benefited from previous fisheries projects Document women's role in fishery activities (do they fish, glean, sell produce?) How do women perceive change in the size and/or species of fish and marine life in their community? If there is a case of overfishing and depletion of resources, get the perspectives of women separately. (For example, if resources within the reef where most women might fish are depleting faster than resources beyond the reef, their reasoning might be that women are fishing more because men are seeking full-time employment elsewhere or most of the men in that community are migrating for work, etc.)
Use of coastal resources i.e. species targeted; fishing gear used; current level of utilisation; processing, marketing and pricing	In addition to documenting the range of species available within that community, talk to men and women separately to find out who utilises those species the most. Utilising not only means who catches that species but what it is used for. (If it is for subsistence consumption, find out who prepares the food, who cleans it; and if it is for income generation, find out how it is processed, who sells it and where, who sets the price). If there is a pattern for sale of species, document this (for example, do the women go in groups to sell in the market? How do they get there? Or is this task performed on a family unit basis? If so why?) If women do gleaning and other fishing activities, find out if this is for subsistence or for selling. Who controls income for the sale of any species? Do women make handicraft or jewellery from any of the shells? Do they do this as well as fish? Where do they sell their crafts? In the absence of a CBFM, who has access to and who controls fisheries resources? How are decisions made? Are there women's groups/faith-based groups, etc. that are involved in income generating activities relating to fishery resources?
Characteristics of the fishing community Social characteristics Disputes in the community Participation in community activities Contribution to community activities Pursuit of community interest and personal interest Subsistence vs. commercial Types of livelihood engaged by the fishing community	If possible, get the number of men and women in the community (separated by age categories because people of different ages of the same sex will have different needs and aspirations). How do groups of people in that community mobilise themselves? (For example, are there women's groups? Church groups? Youth groups?) What are these groups involved in? Do they have representation in community gatherings and/or traditional community systems? Can your CBFM project involve these groups? How are disputes in the community handled? If there is a traditional system of reconciliation, find out how women are part of this process? Have there been disputes and allegations against women? How have these been handled by traditional systems? In your analysis, are women marginalised in these systems? If yes, how can your CBFM project empower women? What are some of the community activities and who engages in them? Men/women/youth/the elderly? How much time is spent on these community activities compared to how much time one might spend on productive and reproductive work? (Analyse men and women separately.) If people do not participate in community activities, are they marginalised? Is there pressure within the community to participate? Are activities purely subsistence or semi-subsistence? What are the roles of men and women in these categories? Who controls resources? (E.g. fishing gear, land, fishing grounds). Do women have any control? If not, does this affect their desire to move into commercial activities? Do men and women aspire to move into commercial activities? What are their reasons? What other livelihoods are men and women in the community engaged in? (Document the full range and whether income is generated or not. This can include agricultural farmer, village nurse, teacher, pastor, community counsellor, government worker, factory worker, shop worker.)

Women make up the majority of market vendors in Vanuatu's markets. Market associations are an entry point to ensure women's meaningful participation in processes that govern their place of work. Women make up about 90% of the newly formed Silae Vanua Market Vendors Association, which represents more than 1,000 market vendors from Efate and other off-shore communities.



These associations now work hand in hand with market managers and municipal councils in charge of the Port Vila Central Market to engage in decision-making and agree on improvements and operating conditions. However, not all market associations actively aim to recruit women or consider the needs of women market vendors. For this reason, UN Women, through the Markets For Change Project, supports the setting up of associations specifically to help market vendors organise themselves to ensure stronger participation in market governance processes.¹¹

Decision-making in the Fisheries Department is also male dominated but the policy commitment to increase numbers of women in senior positions is positive. Fifteen of the 52 permanent and contract staff (30%) in the department are women, and the majority of clerical positions are held by women.¹² It is important to note, however, that women do not automatically understand or know how to do gender analysis and gender mainstreaming. Having women on the staff and promoting them to senior positions is a positive step, but training and capacity development in gender responsive policy and programme design is still needed for both male and female staff at all levels.

The importance of meaningful participation of women in management of fisheries resources is illustrated in the excerpt below. The excerpt is taken from the 2007 socio-economic survey of Crab Bay villages in Vanuatu. It relates to Malampa Market, where Fisheries Division staff, concerned at the unsustainable rate of catching land crabs by the women, put in place a catch limit in consultation with the chief. As highlighted in Table 1, this excerpt further emphasises that, whilst taking into consideration traditional decision-making structures, management of marine resources needs to recognise the role of women in fishery activities and therefore consult with them on interventions required to manage these resources.

Out of concern that the harvesting rates of *Cardiosoma* spp. were unsustainable, staff of the Fisheries Department discussed with village chiefs a commercial catch limit. The limit agreed to by the chiefs is 50 crabs per woman: 5 sets of 10 crabs. Standard presentation of *Cardiosoma* spp. in bundles of 10 crabs and standard pricing (200 VUV per bundle) was also encouraged by staff of the Fisheries Department. Surveyors believe these agreements are mostly adhered to, but several exceptions were noted. A few women were observed with more than 10 crabs in their bundles: no doubt a marketing strategy to attract consumers. As one vendor at the market often sold crabs on behalf of several other village women, it could not be confirmed they adhered to the 50 crab limit.¹¹

Gendered roles in fisheries and aquaculture

Work permeates all parts of people's lives, both in the public and private sphere. In many societies, gendered norms dictate the types of work people do and who is expected to perform certain tasks. These specific duties of types of work may in turn provide specific opportunities, constraints and status for individuals. (Care 2012)¹⁴

Fish and seafood are mainstays of food security throughout Vanuatu and while fishing appears to be a predominantly male activity, women are engaged in subsistence, artisanal and commercial fisheries. Women fish from canoes; they collect fish, shells and invertebrates from mudflats; they do reef gleaning and participate in aquaculture activities.¹⁵ The 1996 FAO in-depth assessment of women in fisheries found that women did not always identify themselves as fishers if they harvested products for subsistence purposes only. The report also stressed that, in some provinces, women were engaged in fishing activities that were mostly performed by men, such as fishing with droplines or trolling in deep water from canoes and diving for shellfish. It is equally important to note that, even when women are engaged in fishery activities for the purpose of income generation, they still do not readily identify as themselves as farmers.¹⁶

Global research reveals this is not a phenomenon specific to the Pacific region. In fact, women the world over do not readily identify as farmers or fishers for the same reason as Pacific women. Society's perception of women and the socialisation of men and women into gendered roles from a young age affect men and women because it socialises people and communities into thinking and viewing what types of jobs are acceptable for men and women – and farming and fishing are not considered 'jobs' for women. In the box below are commonly held beliefs of men and women in agriculture and fisheries, slightly adapted for this report.¹⁷

11 See: https://unwomen.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/M4C_regionalbrief_17Feb16_email.pdf

12 SPC and FAO, 2018. Country gender assessment of agriculture and the rural sector: Vanuatu.

13 SPREP. 2007. Socioeconomic study of the Crab Bay villages of Central Malekula, Vanuatu. Volume II: Detailed findings. Vanuatu Environment Unit. See: https://www.sprep.org/att/publication/000555_IWP_PTR47.pdf

14 Care, 2012. Good Practices Framework – Gender analysis (p.6)

15 Unisea, A. 2007. Women's changing participation in the fisheries sector in the Pacific. Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin #16. SPC. ; and FAO. 1996. Women Agriculture and Rural Development in Vanuatu.

16 SPC, Women in Fisheries Network – Fiji, and the Ministry of Fisheries, Fiji. 2018. Gender analysis of the aquaculture sector in Fiji: Community-based tilapia farms in Viti Levu. SPC: Noumea, New Caledonia.

17 Aslin, H.J., Webb, T. and Fisher, M. 2000. Fishing for women: understanding women's roles in the fishing industry. Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra. See: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.74.2078&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Commonly held beliefs about women which can affect women's identity as fishers

- it is 'the fisherman at sea'
- 'a woman's place is in the home' or in the individual family business where she can work at home
- women have primary responsibility for the care of children, the disabled and the elderly
- the physical and technical aspects of farming are at the core of agriculture and fisheries
- women in general lack competence or are not interested in technical matters
- any woman 'worth her salt' can overcome barriers without special help
- sons are the natural successors to the farm (and fishing) business
- women are not interested in farming (or fishing)
- women do not own the farm (or boat) or form part of the industry
- there is an over-emphasis on physical strength
- service providers and tradespeople do not accept women as the ones to do business with.

Women are involved in all aspects of the seafood supply chain but where they dominate is as sellers or market vendors. According to UN Women, approximately 80% of all market vendors in the Pacific region are women, and their earnings make up a significant portion of income for many poor households. Women market vendors in Vanuatu mobilise either through formal or informal market associations or as a network of women from the same village. The findings of the socio-economic survey of Crab Bay villages show that women often sell *Cardiosoma spp.* (land crabs) on behalf of the informal group they were part of. Women reported that this was convenient for all those involved in the long run because it gave the rest of the group the opportunity to do other work.¹⁸

The marketplace is also a critical space for women to build networks and knowledge around leadership, empowerment and governance, as well as collectively participate in discussion about disaster management and preparedness.

Women's work is often undervalued in Melanesia and the fact that ni-Vanuatu women do not identify themselves as fishers – if they perceive fishing to be only part of their reproductive role – suggests an area where planning and project design need to be adapted.

Promoting the value of women's work and identifying the potential for women to access extension services – regardless of the type of fishing they do – can improve women's fisheries knowledge and skills and support improved food security. This can also lead to women becoming more economically active in fisheries, thereby increasing their contribution to family and community well-being.

The 2016 mini-census shows that some 27,000 or 49% of households engage in fishing activity (including aquaculture) annually.¹⁹ Fish consumption for subsistence was 2800 metric tonnes in 2015²⁰, which is equivalent to 16 kg and 26 kg per capita for inland and coastal populations respectively, given that inland populations consume less fish than coastal groups.

The 2016 mini-census reveals that nearly all households in coastal villages were involved in coastal fishing activities at different levels of intensity; 32% of all households in Vanuatu were engaged in marine fishing; 26% are engaged in fishing solely for subsistence; and 6% of all households were engaged in marine fishing for both subsistence and sale purposes. The most common fishing gear in order of quantity are fishing lines, hand- spears, spear guns and gill nets (19%).²¹ Household data on fishing are not sex-disaggregated. Conducting provincial level surveys on women's and men's roles in fisheries and how they are involved in fisheries management and conservation is an area for further research.

Government extension services

The purpose of the Fisheries Department is "to ensure sustainable management, development and conservation of fish resources in order to achieve maximum social and economic benefits to Vanuatu for the present and future generations".²²

The Fisheries Department support services came into being during the early 1980s to support the Village Fisheries Development

18 SPREP. 2007. Socioeconomic study of the Crab Bay villages of Central Malekula, Vanuatu. Volume II: Detailed findings. Vanuatu Environment Unit. See: https://www.sprep.org/att/publication/000555_IWP_PTR47.pdf

19 Vanuatu National Statistics Office, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. 2016, Vanuatu 2016 Post-TC Pam: Mini Census Report. <https://vnso.gov.vu/index.php/component/advertising/?view=download&filed=4542>

20 Gillett, R.D. 2016. Fisheries in the economies of Pacific Island countries and territories. SPC. p.303.

21 Whitfield, S., July 2015, Situation analysis: Food security and livelihoods. CARE International, p.8

22 Vanuatu Department of Fisheries Website. <https://fisheries.gov.vu>

Programme. They include provision of extension services to rural people to engage in fisheries and aquaculture activities in a sustainable and productive manner. They provide training and local back-up in villages to help people maintain their vessels and engines and to market fish locally or nationally.

Currently, the Fisheries Department has five fishery management and development plans that reflect types of extension support available to fishers in both rural and urban communities.²³ These plans are for marine aquarium trade, coconut crabs, aquaculture, sea cucumber and snapper. Of the five plans, only the aquaculture plan mentions women or gender. However, it should be noted that the plans were developed approximately ten years ago. The inclusion of women and the government's commitment to engaging communities and different stakeholder groups as stated in the *Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031* is a reflection of national awareness that government services need to benefit women and that gendered perspectives must be integrated into government policy. Much more, however, is required to address the gender issues in the fisheries sector in Vanuatu. At the extension services level, gender perspectives and the potential roles and needs of women, men and families in generating income from fisheries activities need to be considered. This will ensure the effective development of community fisheries resources into viable businesses.

The aquaculture plan mentions women in two places, noting that women can be successfully engaged in tilapia farming and that women should be involved in aquaculture because of the important role they play in community food security.

Development partner initiatives

Development partners, including SPC, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and the Forum Fisheries Agency have provided significant technical and financial support to the Vanuatu fisheries sector to build capacity and develop policies and fishery management plans. Over the past 20 years, a number of articles have been published jointly by Fisheries Department staff and development partners on human development and coastal fisheries in Vanuatu. A few such articles include some research and analysis on the social impact of fishery projects and gender perspectives in relation to fisheries and aquaculture, but it is difficult to ascertain how gender perspectives trickle down into fishery sector programmes and ways of working within in the Fisheries Department. This is an area for further mapping and analysis that will likely require consultations and collection of unpublished research and programme documents. The table below is a sample of publications to date.

	Title	Author(s)	Date published
1	A baseline survey of coastal villages in Vanuatu	G. Nimoho; A. Seko; M. Linuma; K. Nishiyama; T. Wakisaka	2013 SPC
2	Nearshore fisheries and human development in Vanuatu and other parts of Melanesia	F. Hickey	2008 SPC
3	What influences the form that community-based fisheries management takes in Vanuatu	R. Tavue; P. Neihapi; P. Cohen; J. Raubani; I. Bertram	2016 SPC
4	Women's fishing activities on Aniwa, Tafea Province, South Vanuatu	S. Gereva; V. Vuki	2010 SPC

Fisheries-based employment, small-scale business and income generation

Vanuatu has no major fisheries businesses or processing facilities but plans related to the marine aquarium trade, coconut crabs, aquaculture, sea cucumber and snapper fishery indicate that families and individuals work in these areas. Collection companies, brokers and intermediaries work with local communities in the marine aquarium trade and in the hatching, production and collection of species such as beche-de-mer, trochus and giant clams. There is little available data on volume of product or the gender breakdown of groups involved in the community side of these businesses. Further research and gender analysis of this sector can clarify links between this sector, women's economic empowerment, and family-based business development.

²³ Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries and Biosecurity website. <https://malffb.gov.vu/index.php?id=3>

Gender responsive approaches to fisheries and aquaculture

Gender-responsive approaches to fisheries and aquaculture activities are those that reflect and respond to men's and women's gender roles, their interests and the constraints they experience. Development of gender-responsive fisheries interventions requires information and evidence about what men and women do and what resources they control and have access to. Building an evidence base and sharing that evidence among stakeholders is a critical step.

Gender-responsive approaches seek to ensure that women and men share and control decision-making and benefits in an equitable manner. Such approaches must also recognise and analyse contextual issues, such as socio-cultural norms and workloads, to ensure that interventions do not cause harm to anyone. Understanding that women carry a higher burden of reproductive and caregiving work than do men is important when designing effective and inclusive projects.

In Vanuatu, the Fisheries Department has made some policy commitments to support the inclusion of women in its work and promote gender equity in its workforce. Comprehensive implementation of these commitments will require additional gender analysis and strengthened technical capacity.

Accurate assessment and monitoring to track implementation of gender objectives in fisheries policies will show the extent to which gender-responsive approaches are being used and how they are affecting women and men. It is currently unclear what gender indicators are being used within the Fisheries Department and how qualitative commitments – such as encouraging male provincial fisheries officers to be gender champions – are being promoted. It is often difficult for men in rural areas to contradict prevailing social norms held by their peers and advocate for gender equity measures or women's empowerment. If fisheries officers do not have training and support to champion gender equity and inclusion of women their tasks will be difficult to accomplish.

Table 2 is an excerpt from the Implementation Framework of the *Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031* and provides examples of how gender perspectives could be integrated into the framework (**in bold**). Recommendations on how to further gender mainstreaming in the fishery sector, which is also in line with the *Vanuatu National Gender Equality Policy 2015–2019*, are highlighted as recommendations at the end of the report.

Table 2: Excerpt from the implementation framework of the Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031

Strategic Objective 1: INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND GOVERNANCE				
Sustained resources and resourcing that strengthen the fisheries institution in promoting and ensuring good governance, capacity building, training and technical service delivery				
Strategic policy action	Target	Proposed activities/directives	Indicators	Partners
Strengthen institutional and administer and enforce the fisheries sector policy and regulations that promote good governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the organisational structure by 2017 and implementation by 2018 Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) strategy for coastal fisheries by 2017 Crewing policy and regulations completed by 2017 Guidelines on access to finance and soft loans by 2018 <i>Gender-sensitive institutional strengthening is undertaken in at least two activities</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the organisational structure, create new positions, <i>with at least two positions having gender sensitive key result areas in the job description</i> Increase budgetary support, up-skill staff Facilitate access to finance and soft loans Improve MCSEnact, review and enforce regulatory framework Implement recommendations in the ISP report <i>At least 60% of fisheries staff to undergo gender analysis of fisheries sector policies training by 2018</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Vanuatu Fisheries Department (VFD) organisational structure completed and implemented with <i>at least two new positions having gender-sensitive key result areas in their job description</i> MCS strategy on coastal fisheries approved for implementation; Crewing policy and legislations approved for implementation; <i>60% of fisheries staff have undergone gender analysis training by 2018</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VFD, Other government line ministries and departments Regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), SPC, Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) NGOS
Strategic Objective 2: FISHERIES INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH				
A strong fisheries sector generating maximum economic growth, increased employment, food security and livelihood development at the same time ensuring sustainability of fish stocks, healthy ecosystems and environmentally sound practices				
Strategic policy action	Target	Proposed activities/directives	Indicators	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake research and development in wild fisheries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2020, over 60% of the relevant biological and socio-economic research and fishing trials completed and reports also completed. Results will be used for formulating or revising resource plans at least by 2026. Exploratory fishing to determine full potential of new fisheries completed by 2020 Research into development of recreational fishing in the provinces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trials on capture fisheries and recreational fishing Explore fishing on small long-line fishing boats Conduct biological research on reef resources and invasive species, <i>including traditional knowledge and management practices of reef resources and invasive species</i> Collect accurate fishery data, <i>including the roles of men and women in the fisheries value chain</i> 100% coverage in port sampling <i>Conduct socio-economic surveys from a gender perspective</i> Establish research protocols for visiting scientists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of research projects, surveys and fishing trials completed over time Reports and publications from results of surveys and trials An increasing number of standard farms established in the provinces Reseeding of degraded ecosystems such coral reefs and nursery areas, including mangroves and other wetlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VFD Fishing industry Donor partners, FFA SPC

Improving the enabling environment and increasing collaboration across sectors will support alignment with national gender commitments and create synergies with *Vanuatu 2030, the people's plan: Vanuatu national sustainable development plan 2016–2030* and with the work of development partners promoting gender equality.

In consultations for the SPC/FAO country gender assessment of agricultural and rural sectors (forthcoming), the Fisheries Department described its own capacity to mainstream gender into their work as a high priority. This was based on a clear policy commitment and an understanding of need. Staff noted that there was an organisational culture supportive to gender mainstreaming, internal willingness to address gender issues to increase effectiveness, and targets for gender inclusion. The department also noted that they do some gender analysis and collect some sex disaggregated data on gender balance in training sessions. Some staff have had gender training and it was acknowledged that training and awareness raising about gender mainstreaming will benefit all staff.

Table 3 highlights strengths and weaknesses in the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming in the Fisheries Department. These findings are a result of consultations with selected staff in the department during the development of the SPC/FAO country gender assessment of the agriculture and rural sectors in February 2018. They are not necessarily representative of the views of all department staff.

Table 3: Enabling environment assessment for the Fisheries Department²⁴

Enabling environment criteria	Indicative findings
Commitment at leadership level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031 was developed with input from youth and women's groups and recognises and promotes gender equality and the participation of vulnerable groups in fisheries. In its guiding principles, it promotes inclusivity and ensures inclusion of relevant stakeholders in decision-making on fisheries and aquaculture (guiding principle iv). In guiding principle v, it mentions recognition of gender equity and vulnerable groups. The policy directs provision of equal opportunities to all sectors of the community through encouraging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fair participation of women in all positions in the Fisheries Department; open training opportunities to all community groups, including vulnerable groups; and participation of youth in training opportunities in fisheries, aquaculture and value-adding processes. The director met with the assessment team to discuss the gender issues, indicating a strong commitment to gender equality. <p>There is no specific gender policy for the department, which makes the implementation of the policy directives difficult.</p>
Organisational culture and internal willingness to address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although gender is addressed in the Vanuatu National Fisheries Sector Policy 2016–2031, implementation of the policy is slow. There is a greater awareness of and sensitivity to gender in the department at senior level than at junior level. Some staff had gender training, although none has been provided within the department. An increase in the number of female staff has influenced the understanding and appreciation of the capacity of women to participate in all levels of the department. The department involves female staff in engagement of women at the community level. This has had a positive influence on the behaviour of male staff towards female staff. There is a commitment to building an environment where women and men are treated equally. There is also recognition that cultural constraints need to be addressed to improve women's participation in training and programmes. Respondents indicated that they are open to discussing any gender issue that may be raised in the department. <p>Respondents said that the main barrier to gender responsiveness was linked to the expectation that women staff must travel to undertake stock and marine surveys – not all women are able to leave their caregiving and home-based responsibilities.</p> <p>There was also some concern about requirements for male staff to travel frequently and for extended periods, leaving their families at alone.</p>
Accountability mechanisms and systems to enforce commitments to gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department uses data from the National Statistics Office, provincial and area councils and fisheries officers on the ground. They indicated that they also collect some sex-disaggregated data. Gender analysis is done prior to developing programmes. Workshops and separate male/female group discussions are used to assess needs. This helps people take ownership of programmes. There are specific milestones/targets for women's engagement identified in the fisheries sector policy, including at least one female in each fisheries management advisory committee, at least one female in all provincial fisheries associations and at least 20–30% of women and young people participating in training. The department indicates that all staff have the right to speak during discussions and in decision-making sessions. <p>No specific accountability mechanisms to enforce the commitment to engage women in the future work of the department were cited.</p>
Technical capacity to identify and address gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department assessed its own ability to integrate a gender perspective into its programmes as high. There is an understanding of the different roles women and men play, their different priorities, and the different benefits the fisheries programmes bring. Several staff, especially senior staff, have participated in gender-related training and there are plans to send more staff to gender training. One male staff member is currently enrolled in a JICA gender training programme in Japan. <p>There are no gender focal points but the staff suggest that the six male staff based in the provinces are gender champions, as they are working closely with communities.</p>
Adequate financial and human resources to implement gender mainstreaming	<p>The department staff said they consider gender in the allocation of resources but did not say if they allocated financial resources to gender mainstreaming specifically. Resources are allocated to organised groups such as those engaged in aquaculture or running rural fish markets.e.</p>
	<p>No human or technical resources are allocated to gender mainstreaming.</p>

24 Stocktake interview, Fisheries Department, 14th February 2018.



Potential for strengthening gender mainstreaming

Gender equality and equity have not to date been high on the agenda of the Fisheries Department although there is interest and scope to advance this work. Developing a clear gender analysis of policy issues will clarify practical next steps. Identification of data and analysis gaps will result in more evidence to support change. Work to change attitudes and social norms at the community level will need to be done carefully and in collaboration with the Department of Women and civil society organisations. Due to the high levels of violence against women in Vanuatu and women's heavy workloads, it is important to undertake risk analysis and mitigate risks, work with families, and design approaches that will demonstrate the value and benefits of engaging women in fisheries management decision-making and in fisheries activities.

The SPC/FAO country gender assessment of agriculture and rural sectors (in preparation) provides extensive recommendations for promoting gender responsive approaches in communities in Vanuatu. In addition, some recommendations in the 1996 technical report on women in fisheries in Vanuatu remain relevant.²⁵

Global studies have shown that more women than men tend to reinvest income into family well-being. This may be a rationale for targeting more fisheries outreach to women stakeholders. It may also be an opportunity to link women to financial inclusion programmes, sources of market information, training, information on advanced post-harvest processing techniques, and business development services.

²⁵ FAO. 1996. Vanuatu – Technical Report: An assessment of the role of women in fisheries in Vanuatu. FAO. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/X5195E/X5195e00.htm#TopOfPage>

Recommendations

The following recommendations summarise issues and potential actions to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector at national policy and community programming levels.

- Use annual Fisheries Department gatherings/planning or programming retreats to hold discussions about enhancing and building on its gender mainstreaming commitments. Topics could include: (i) clarification of a core set of gender indicators; (ii) regular monitoring and reporting on women's engagement in village level and other training opportunities; and (iii) provision of gender analysis training to headquarters and provincial staff in the context of programme implementation and extension activities.
- Develop policy and protocols to ensure that all outreach to communities includes preliminary public awareness on the benefits of engaging women and men as stakeholders in fisheries. Ensure that all interventions take a 'do no harm' approach and stress women's roles as valuable community members who support their families' well-being. Building understanding of the underlying rationale for gender mainstreaming can help reduce the incidence of backlash and violence against women as they expand their involvement in fisheries.
- Assist extension services to work with development partners engaged in rural development to collect qualitative and quantitative information on women's and men's subsistence and artisanal fisheries activities. This will improve targeting of training programmes.
- Develop training programmes to engage women stakeholders. This should be done in consultation with villages to ensure that women are able to attend during the times training is offered and that families understand the purpose and value of women's engagement. Wherever possible, training involving women should be held in villages, as expecting women to travel to main centres can inhibit their participation.
- Support data collection on the use and control of income from household artisanal fisheries. This can generate evidence about the extent to which different households and different household members reinvest in fishing activities or use the income for other purposes.
- Conduct provincial level sample surveys on women's and men's fishing to clarify gender roles and the extent to which women are able to influence decision-making about fisheries management and conservation.
- Monitor and document how different strategies to include women stakeholders affect community decision-making and outcomes of marine resource management and conservation initiatives. Women and men often have different interests and knowledge and are well-positioned to monitor different indicators linked to climate change and adaptation strategies.
- Work across sectors with ministries responsible for health, education, commerce and gender equality to ensure that fisheries information and examples are incorporated into outreach on: (i) nutrition; (ii) food safety; (iii) environmental management; and (iv) women's rights to participate in and benefit from development.
- Support mapping of gender and fisheries initiatives by development partners, the private sector, civil society and government.
- Encourage all organisations that engage rural women in natural resource management and use to share lessons learned and outcomes. Document and summarise information on what works and what does not work in gender mainstreaming in fisheries and marine conservation.



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