

## Accessing markets – Women Fishers Market Day

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“The economic empowerment of women is therefore not an issue of social justice alone but also important for sustainable economic growth within fisheries.” (UN Women 2020:1)

Fisherwomen are the overlooked user group in the coastal fishery sector; their voices are often not heard, yet they are the mainstay for family subsistence and well-being.

Through its various training workshops with its members, the Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji (WiFN-Fiji) identified a recurring call for help among women fishers for easier market access. Women fishers have repeatedly highlighted the difficulties they face when trying to access markets for their products.

Repeatedly, researchers have mentioned the need to facilitate easier access for women fishers to markets. A report on *The critical contribution of women fishers to food security and livelihoods in Fiji*, recommended that opportunities to diversify the markets that women fishers have access to should be explored (Thomas et al. 2020).

In addition, a baseline report – Women’s Economic Empowerment in Fisheries in the Blue Economy of the Indian Ocean (UN Women 2020) – argues that unfettered access to resources is a prerequisite for women’s economic

empowerment. The report states that resource access should include new and improved technology that improves women’s participation in the processing and marketing of fish.

WiFN-Fiji hosted a Women in Fisheries Market Day on 22 October 2022. The market day was a first of its kind, bringing together 13 women fishers and their products from the provinces of Rewa, Tailevu, Ra and Nadroga, and aimed at addressing the barriers, challenges and opportunities for new or existing markets. The goals of the market day were to provide a way to get produce to markets and identify buyers for at least three women fisher suppliers.

WiFN-Fiji hopes to learn from Women Fishers Market Day, and in the future, will look at ways of including assessments of potential formal and informal markets, providing more ways for women to showcase their products, and facilitating ways for women fishers to gain a stable income.

Lanieta Kaikadavu from Vutia in Rewa Province was one of the women fishers who attended the Women Fishers Market Day, showcasing her farmed mangrove oysters in the hopes of finding a stable buyer for her village women’s group.

Lanieta, or Qei as she is known among the network members, is a 64-year-old mother of three. Qei attributes



Lanieta Kaikadavau talks about farmed mangrove oysters to a purchasing officer of a local eatery as fellow WiFN Board member, Shirlene Bala looks on. ©Lore Crocker

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her sons' successes to her selling at the market to afford their educational expenses. She has served as the school manager for Vutia District School for eight years and has recently been appointed as a WIFN-Fiji board member.

**“** *I am thankful that there is an organisation of this type that I can join. In July, the organisation took us [its members] to Leleuvia Island for a Resilience Training Workshop, which is where we started to really express our need for assistance for access to markets.*

*I am hopeful that with the returns from today's sales, I will be able to contribute to some of my grandson's school items. Secondly, some responsibilities in the village such as church soli's, school fundraising and soli ni marama or women's group levy can hopefully be covered in today's sales. Thirdly, today's returns would cater especially to my family's daily sustenance. Moreover, a share of the returns would make up a part of my contributions to the lotu (church), vanua (land) and kei na matanitu that we iTaukei consider the pillars of our societies under which we serve.*

Four fisherwomen were able to connect directly with and foster interests from local eateries. Talks are underway on how the women can directly supply their products to these businesses.

## References

Thomas A., Mangubhai S., Fox M., Lalavanua W., Meo S., Naisilisili W., Ralifo A., Veitayaki J. and Waqairatu S. 2020. The critical contribution of women fishers to food security and livelihoods in Fiji. Report No. 02/20. Suva, Fiji: Wildlife Conservation Society. doi.org/10.19121/2019.Report.34717

UN Women. 2020. Women's economic empowerment in fisheries. New York, New York: UN Women.



Lanieta Kaikadavau and her grandsons at the Women Fishers Market Day. ©Lore Crocker



Women fishers with their display of products at the Women Fishers Market Day. ©Lore Crocker