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Integrating Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion in Nature-based Solutions for Climate Resilience in the Pacific Island Region

Lessons Learned

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Introduction

The Kiwa Initiative is a multi-donor programme that aims to strengthen the climate change resilience of Pacific Island ecosystems, communities and economies through nature-based solutions (NbS), that is to say by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring biodiversity¹. It is founded on an easier access to climate change adaptation and NbS funding for national and local authorities, civil society, international and local NGOs and regional organisations in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).

The integration of Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) and broader human rights and rights-based approaches into NbS for climate adaptation are key priorities of the Kiwa Initiative. The Kiwa Initiative is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly, goals 13 on Climate Action, 17 on Partnerships and 5 on Gender Equality. Pacific Island Leaders have made specific commitments to gender including the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration 2012², the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016-2025³, and the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018-2030⁴.

Within the Technical Assistance programme of the Kiwa Initiative, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) are responsible for providing technical support and assistance to build capacities and strengthen cooperation through the development of Kiwa regional projects and policies and ensure that GEDSI principles and best practices are integrated into the design and delivery of Kiwa Initiative-funded regional projects. To deliver this support, SPREP contracted NbS, gender and human rights experts at Talanoa Consulting to support three main activities:

- 1) build awareness and develop capacities on human rights including GEDSI issues under Kiwa project beneficiaries;
- 2) build a community of practice (CoP) around GEDSI in NbS for Kiwa project partners; and
- 3) develop lessons learned from GEDSI activities.

SPREP and Talanoa Consulting worked with eight recipients of regional Kiwa Initiative grants (i.e. Kiwa beneficiaries) to provide technical assistance on GEDSI and broader human rights in NbS - BirdLife International, Conservation International, Live and Learn Environmental Education, Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), OneReef Worldwide Stewardship, SPC, SPREP and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), covering 15 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) (Figure 1, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), French Polynesia, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon

¹ Kiwa Initiative: <https://kiwainitiative.org/en/about-kiwa-initiative>

² Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration: <https://forumsec.org/publications/revitalised-pacific-leaders-gender-equality-declaration>

³ <https://forumsec.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/PFRPD.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.spc.int/sites/default/files/wordpresscontent/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PPA-2018-Part-I-EN2.pdf>

Islands, Samoa, Timor Leste, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna). Partners such as BirdLife International, WCS and OneReef Worldwide Stewardship subgranted to a number of country-specific NGOs to deliver work, including the Samoa Conservation Society, Polynesian Ornithological Society (SOP Manu), NatureFiji-MareqetiViti, Palau Conservation Society, Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS), Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organisation, Conservation Society of Pohnpei, Nauru Fisheries and Maritime Resource Authority, and Kolombangara Island Biodiversity Conservation Association (KIBCA).

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the types of investment and modes of delivery used to promote knowledge and strengthen capacity on integrating GEDSI and broader human rights and right-based approaches in NbS for climate adaptation in PICTs. The report summarises the work undertaken, main outcomes and lessons learned under each of the six types of investment made, and key recommendations to further these efforts.



Figure 1. Map of the Kiwa Initiative’s projects in the Pacific.

Supporting GEDSI integration into NbS

This section provides an overview of the types of GEDSI support and modes of delivery to NbS practitioners, focusing on what was done, what was achieved, and the main lessons learned. Briefly, the support includes the development and dissemination of toolkits on human rights, GEDSI and NbS, online learning events, co-creating a GEDSI CoP, and capturing broader learnings to enhance the implementation of gender-responsive and socially inclusive NbS for biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation in the PICTs.

1. Toolkits

In 2022, under an earlier contract with SPREP, Talanoa Consulting reviewed the types of GEDSI and human rights-based approaches (HRBA) guides and training materials in use in the Pacific, looking specifically at participatory processes, community consultation, decision-making, GEDSI and human rights analysis, and monitoring, evaluation and learning. This review included consultations with practitioners who shared their feedback and experiences using such tools and resources in the Pacific. The review examined 80 guides and toolkits, of which 10 were highlighted as most relevant to NbS practitioners implementing NbS projects. The review also identified a number of gaps. To address these gaps, one guide, two tools and a training package were developed to support practitioners wishing to integrate GEDSI and broader human rights into the design and delivery of their NbS projects (Figure 2). Links to the existing guides and tools were also provided to practitioners implementing regional Kiwa Initiative grants. A summary is provided below and the links to these resources are available on the Kiwa Initiative website⁵.

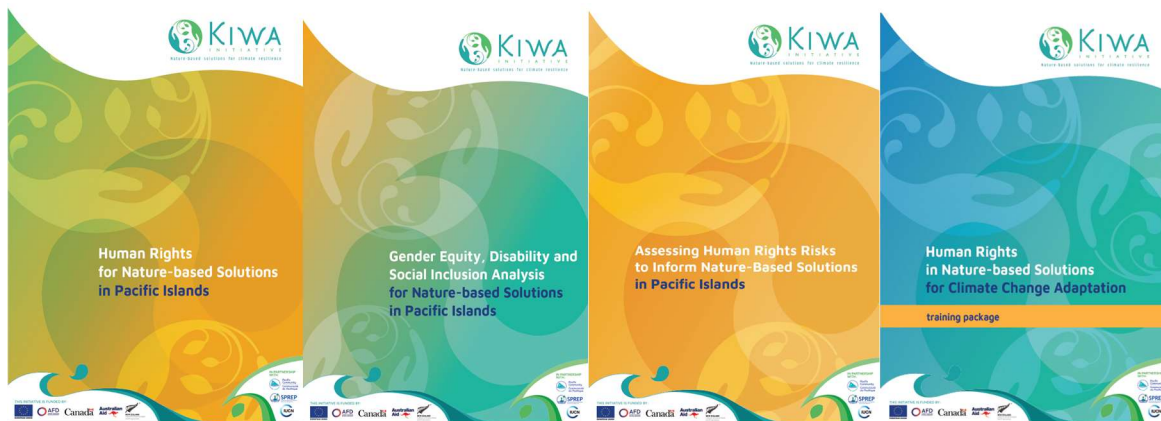


Figure 2. Guides and tools developed for the Kiwa Initiative.

The **Human rights booklet** highlights 12 human rights relevant to designing and implementing NbS for advocates, policymakers and practitioners to promote human wellbeing and biodiversity benefits. These were rights to non-discrimination and gender equality; rights of persons with disabilities; rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; right to clean water; right to healthy food; rights to adequate shelter, housing and secure tenure; right to health; rights to and at work; rights to inclusive, participatory and democratic governance; rights of Indigenous peoples; rights to live free of conflict and violence; and intergenerational rights, equity and justice. While the human rights booklet recognises that there are many more rights enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 12 rights were selected as an entry point for considering rights in NbS. This was purposely done to avoid overwhelming practitioners while considering the rights that were most relevant to NbS.

⁵ <https://kiwainitiative.org/en/news/download-now-our-freely-available-resources-on-gedsi-and-humanrights>

The **Human rights risk assessment** is a tool designed to help practitioners assess and address human rights risks in different NbS sectors. Identifying human rights risks is a critical step to preventing and mitigating harm to people resulting from NbS. The process of identifying risks is an important opportunity for stakeholder engagement, enhancing the quality of NbS design and implementation, while enhancing accountability for impacts on human rights. A human rights risk assessment can contribute to national environmental and social impact assessments and environmental and social safeguards (ESS) management for projects. With the right social safeguards in place, NbS can positively reinforce human rights and are likely to be more fair and effective. The four main components of a human rights risk assessment are: (1) identification and assessment of actual and potential human rights risks; (2) integrating measures to prevent and mitigate against human rights risks into the design and implementation of NbS; (3), tracking actions to verify that prevention and mitigation measures are effective; and (4) communicate results for transparency, accountability and learning.

The **GEDSI analysis** is a tool designed to help practitioners conduct a GEDSI analysis and use the findings to ensure NbS stakeholders promote fairness, address barriers related to gender and disability, and ensure social inclusion in NbS initiatives. A GEDSI analysis helps to identify the knowledge and expertise of different groups in communities and their respective roles in implementing NbS for climate change adaptation in Pacific Island communities. To ensure NbS are inclusive, data for GEDSI analyses should be disaggregated by sex, age, dis(ability), ethnicity, and other relevant social categories. The information collected can be used to design interventions to ensure NbS provide equitable benefits for every member of the community. If equity and inclusion in NbS are not addressed, key groups of people will continue to be excluded, and climate change adaptation goals will be ineffective. Through a GEDSI analysis framework, a scope of actions can be identified that promote practices that ensure that women, persons living with disability and other marginalised groups in the Pacific, in relation to NbS, are included and have access to resources, information, decision-making and livelihood opportunities. Findings from such analysis can be used for multiple purposes such as designing and implementing NbS, risk assessment, environmental and social safeguards management, environmental and social impact assessment, and monitoring and evaluation.

A **training kit** was developed to enable NbS practitioners including those that are not part of Kiwa Initiative to undertake self-paced learning. It comprises basic tools and foundational knowledge on human rights and GEDSI in the context of NbS. The training kit consists of three modules. Each module contains a powerpoint presentation, short videos, graphics and tables to support further in-depth learning on specific aspects.

- 1) **Module 1** provides an introduction to human rights and explains the direct relationship between human well-being and the environment. Twelve human rights that are most relevant to NbS are described in detail, with examples to illustrate their relevance to practitioners.
- 2) **Module 2** provides guidance on how to conduct a risk assessment of NbS projects, with due consideration to human rights, including GEDSI. It focuses on providing examples of a human rights risk assessment tool which practitioners can use to integrate human rights into NbS.

- 3) **Module 3** provides a virtual learning course to help identify cross sectoral links between GEDSI, climate change and climate sensitive development sectors. It highlights that mainstreaming GEDSI into climate change adaptation enhances the effectiveness of planned climate change interventions, and helps to achieve the best possible development outcomes for all project stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Posters were created by SPREP to serve as visual aids to support advocacy and education efforts in integrating human rights into Pacific Island NbS.

Key lessons learned from developing guides and toolkits

- Guide and toolkit development requires a collaborative and inclusive approach, involving experts from diverse fields, including human rights, gender, environment, and stakeholders from the Pacific. As well as mapping the kind of similar resources in use and for any gaps in tools on human rights, GEDSI and NbS. Engaging with these groups throughout the development process, ensured the toolkits were relevant, culturally appropriate and addressed the specific needs of Pacific NbS practitioners.
- Appointing dedicated GEDSI focal points within project teams can facilitate the effective use of guides and toolkits and ensure that GEDSI considerations are integrated throughout the project lifecycle. If an organisation is relatively inexperienced it is still recommended that they get support from an expert the first time, for example, if they are doing a GEDSI analysis.
- The Pacific region is diverse culturally, socially, and environmentally. Tailoring tools, approaches and examples to specific experiences within the region ensures their practical application and take up. Additionally, as GEDSI and NbS content is constantly evolving, staying updated on the latest developments, both globally and within the Pacific, is crucial. Further iterations of the toolkits should include more Pacific-centred case studies and link to emerging content.
- To maximise the take up of these toolkits, the guides were short and provided practical guidance and checklists. These tools were aimed at helping practitioners identify and address potential human rights and GEDSI risks and impacts. Checklists and templates are easy to use in the field, and ensure accessibility and practicality.
- Long-term capacity-building initiatives are essential to foster a culture of human rights and GEDSI integration in NbS in the Pacific. Investing in training, mentoring, and knowledge-sharing programmes aims to equip NbS practitioners with the necessary skills and knowledge. These toolkits should be complemented by comprehensive training programmes, mentoring and communities of practice to ensure their optimal utilisation.

2. Regional Workshops

Three regional workshops were conducted as part of the specific support to Kiwa Initiative beneficiaries and their partners to effectively address GEDSI and broader human rights in NbS for climate change adaptation projects. The purpose of the regional workshops was to facilitate cross-project learning processes on key human rights and GEDSI concepts relevant to NbS, share GEDSI integration strategies, identify GEDSI support needs, and explore potential GEDSI thematic areas for cross-learning across projects. The key recommendations and lessons learned from the participants to the workshops are summarised below, showing progression of Kiwa regional projects in considering and integrating GEDSI into their project planning.



First Regional Workshop held in Suva, Fiji - Margot Bantegny @ Kiwa Initiative – May 2023

Table 1. Participants and recommendations from the three Kiwa regional GEDSI workshops

Participants	Recommendations/Key learnings from participants
First Kiwa GEDSI workshop - Suva, Fiji, 18 May 2023	
39 attendees, primarily from Fiji, with others from FSM, Samoa, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Australia, Japan, and the United States of America (USA) attending either in-person or online (including 18 women and 17 men, 16 participants identified as Indigenous, while 17 identified as non-Indigenous.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to form a community of practice and provide toolkits for Kiwa practitioners; need for more training based on GEDSI and incorporating training on GEDSI elements into baseline assessments; more practical sessions on how to apply a GEDSI approach when working with communities; and more one-on-one meetings, following up on specific needs shared in relation to GEDSI.

Participants	Recommendations/Key learnings from participants
Second Kiwa GEDSI workshop - Online, 26-27 March 2024	
<p>27 attendees at this workshop (18 women and 9 men attended). Additionally, 6 participants identified as Indigenous, while 4 identified as non-Indigenous, and 17 were unsurveyed. Participants attended from Fiji, New Caledonia, FSM, French Polynesia, Japan and USA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all projects are working to integrate GEDSI components across and at the kick-off of their projects, with many already identifying initial insights and early GEDSI learnings; • opportunities to plan and strategise for GEDSI integration with projects are yet to commence; • ESS and FPIC processes underway/completed have surfaced early learnings on GEDSI considerations for NbS; • interests for GEDSI-sensitive community engagement training; • engagement in CoP and continuing where possible one-on-one support has shown effectiveness for inception workshop planning/design; and • expanding knowledge sharing across projects, exploring and encouraging ways to connect projects with shared themes, inviting regional projects to participate in each other's sessions, and considering expanding regional discussions beyond GEDSI to include topics like climate resilience and NbS.
Third Kiwa GEDSI workshop - Suva, Fiji, October 22-23 October 2024	
<p>There were a total of 27 participants on the first day and 26 participants on the second day, including 4 online. The participants were from Fiji, New Caledonia, FSM, PNG, RMI, French Polynesia, Solomon Islands, Samoa and USA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshops should be conducted for more than 2 days to have more focused sessions on some of the topics; • there should be continuous CoP sessions; • MEL Support mechanisms are needed to review data collection tools, etc.; • it would be helpful to have a GEDSI expert with some understanding of our society and culture to provide support to practitioners; • mandatory GEDSI training must be provided for all implementing staff and a dedicated budget line to support GEDSI focus; and • GEDSI toolkits of various dimensions and coaching must be provided to help practitioners introduce the concept and approach to their partners, contractors and local community beneficiaries.

Key lessons learned from the regional workshops on GEDSI and NbS

- In-person workshops are invaluable for fostering strong relationships and building trust among Pacific Islanders and partners. These face-to-face interactions allow for deeper discussions, shared learning, and the development of collaborative partnerships. The regional workshops were a key mechanism for facilitating the exchange of GEDSI and NbS knowledge and experiences in the Pacific, gaining greater comfort in discussing sensitive issues, identifying common challenges, and exploring solutions together. It was valuable to engage with PEUMP to learn from GEDSI efforts in other sectors, such as fisheries.
- The Kiwa GEDSI regional workshops were designed with the needs and interests of participants in mind. By involving project leads in the co-design, the workshop agenda was relevant, engaging, and tailored to their specific contexts. This participatory approach not only increases ownership and buy-in but also fosters a sense of community and shared purpose under the goals of the Kiwa Initiative.
- While it is important to share project updates and achievements, it is equally crucial to create a space for genuine learning and reflection. These Kiwa GEDSI regional workshops tried to strike a balance between formal presentations and interactive sessions that encourage open dialogue and critical thinking. By incorporating supporting presenters in lead-up to the workshop, and ensuring the lead facilitators are Pacific persons who can connect to cultural sensitivities and nuanced approaches, supported a safe and inclusive environment where participants feel empowered to share their experiences and learn from each other.



Developing recommendations for GEDSI integration into NbS. Third Kiwa GEDSI workshop, Suva, Fiji – Setaita Tavanabola © Kiwa Initiative – October 2024

3. Community of Practice

A CoP for GEDSI in NbS (hereafter “GEDSI CoP”) was established in 2023 to build and strengthen in-country capacity to integrate GEDSI and broader human rights into NbS for climate change adaptation across eight Pacific Island regional projects. The CoP was originally intended as a dedicated space for two GEDSI focal points (one female, one male) per Kiwa Initiative project or per organisation, to gather on a quarterly basis to gain knowledge and skills, and share learning across projects. Staff who were interested in promoting and championing GEDSI were encouraged to join and participate in the CoP. It was hoped that GEDSI staff and champions would help projects implement GEDSI principles and best practices. A concept note was developed and shared with practitioners to ensure the GEDSI CoP was addressing their needs.

The specific goals of the Kiwa Initiative’s GEDSI CoP were to:

- 1) support knowledge sharing, learning and reflections on GEDSI best practice in NbS;
- 2) promote introductory trainings and resources on GEDSI and NbS; and
- 3) build networks of GEDSI-sensitive NbS practitioners in the Pacific.

A CoP is a group of passionate people who come together to work towards addressing a common concern or a set of problems, by sharing best practices and to co-creating new knowledge and innovations that helps ‘do things better’. A strong CoP therefore relies on regular interaction and a willingness and openness to share ideas. A capacity needs assessment survey was conducted and based on the feedback from NbS managers and practitioners, online GEDSI CoP sessions were designed around five topics (Table 1). The first four CoP activities comprised specific learning sessions on key GEDSI topics. In addition, guidelines on human rights, GEDSI analysis and risk assessment were developed to help practitioners and these were shared during the CoP sessions or separate learning events that were open to all participants. Evaluations were done after each GEDSI CoP (Table 1). Where possible, the feedback from participants informed the design of subsequent CoPs to ensure it was adaptive and meeting their needs.

Key lessons learned from coordinating and implementing a GEDSI CoP

- Although originally designed and intended for NbS practitioners working on the ground, in communities, there was interest from managers who recognised they lacked capacity in GEDSI. To accommodate this request GEDSI sessions were divided into two. The first part focused on learning where both managers and practitioners were invited. The second hour was a closed session for the practitioners, to provide a safe space for peer-to-peer learning and to try and address challenges as they emerged. This highlighted the capacity gap that existed within organisations, with GEDSI being new to all project staff and partners.

- CoP offers numerous benefits, particularly in fostering shared learning among individuals on GEDSI in NbS. By bringing together people who face similar challenges or have similar goals, a CoP creates an environment for learning, sharing best practices, and innovative ideas. This Pacific collaborative setting enhances skill development, and accelerates problem-solving, and promotes a sense of a support community.
- CoP can create GEDSI values within organisations and help drive continuous improvement on GEDSI best practices. Over time, the sustained interaction within a CoP can cultivate a strong culture of learning and innovation, benefiting both individual members, their organisations, and other partners across the Pacific.
- While one off trainings are important to build initial awareness on GEDSI, practitioners still need further training, coaching and mentoring. Continuous investment builds trust, ensures that skills are reinforced and that new insights are integrated into practice. Moreover, ongoing support helps practitioners navigate real-world challenges, fosters deeper expertise and builds practitioner confidence to apply and share their knowledge. Ongoing mentoring also strengthens relationships and can support practitioners to identify opportunities to train and support others.

Table 2. Topics, objectives and outcomes of each community of practice session

Topic	Session objectives	Learning outcomes	Attendees
GEDSI-101 September 8th 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote training and resources on GEDSI and NbS in the Pacific ● Support knowledge sharing, learning and reflections on GEDSI and NbS ● Build networks of NbS practitioners in the Pacific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants learnt the key concepts of GEDSI ● Participants learnt how to incorporate GEDSI into their NbS projects in the Pacific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 27 individuals participated comprising 13 females and 14 males. ● Participants were from Fiji, Solomon Islands, French Polynesia, Palau, Nauru, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Tonga and Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) ● 9 participants completed the evaluation

Topic	Session objectives	Learning outcomes	Attendees
GEDSI analysis November 22 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding of GEDSI analysis, and how to use this tool Learn from experts who have implemented a GEDSI analysis Practice designing a GEDSI analysis for your project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants learnt the importance of conducting a GEDSI analysis Participants learnt how to conduct a GEDSI analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first session was open to all and 41 individuals participated while the second session which was closed for practitioners included 19 participants Participants were from Fiji, FSM, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu 12 participants completed the evaluation
Disability equity and inclusion February 28th & 29th 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have an enhanced understanding of the implications of climate change and environmental issues for persons with disability Be in a strengthened capacity to ensure their NbS solutions projects better include and benefit persons with disabilities in their project' communities Gain knowledge on the pre-conditions for inclusion of persons with disabilities, a prerequisite for the effective and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in any given process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge on disability Shift in attitude towards persons with disabilities from enforcing to dismantling myths Identified diverse needs and accommodation, and power dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 41 individuals participated on day 1, and 31 individuals participated on day 2 of the CoP 3 session Participants were from Niue, Fiji, Nauru, Federated State of Micronesia (FSM), PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Marshall Islands, Tonga, Australia, French Polynesia and USA 14 participants completed the evaluation

Topic	Session objectives	Learning outcomes	Attendees
<p>GEDSI-sensitive community facilitation and engagement</p> <p>May 7th 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding of key concepts around GEDSI-sensitive facilitation and community engagement Reflecting and sharing what approaches practitioners are using in different cultural contexts Identifying ways to share learnings from the Kiwa Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants gained an understanding of key concepts around GEDSI-sensitive facilitation and community engagement Participants learnt about GEDSI-sensitive cultural approaches that promote the inclusion of different members of their communities in the projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19 individuals participated comprising 13 females and 6 males Participants were from Fiji, Solomon Islands, PNG, Samoa, French Polynesia, FSM, RMI, Nauru and New Caledonia 8 participants completed the evaluation
<p>Reflecting on the challenges and approaches to integrating GEDSI into nature-based solutions for climate adaptation</p> <p>October 2nd 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share experiences, best practices, and challenges related to implementing GEDSI and human rights-based approaches in NbS Strengthening the GEDSI CoP to build a space for knowledge sharing, peer learning, and ongoing support for Pacific NbS practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants shared their experiences on the challenges faced when integrating GEDSI into nature-based solutions Participants learnt how to implement best practices to promote GEDSI and human rights-based approaches in NbS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 individuals participated comprising 11 females and 9 males Participants were from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, PNG, Samoa, French Polynesia, FSM, RMI, Nauru, New Caledonia and Australia 11 participants completed the evaluation

4. Learning Events

Five online open learning events were developed and facilitated by Talanoa Consulting to provide guidelines on human rights, GEDSI analysis, risk assessment and community engagement in NbS. The objectives were to provide learning opportunities to other NbS practitioners in the Pacific, including those not funded by Kiwa; and provide opportunities for Kiwa Initiative staff, not participating in CoP sessions to join learning events. The topics, objectives, learning outcomes and details of attendees of the learning events are provided in Table 2.

Key lessons learned from hosting short learning events on GEDSI and NbS

- Offering concise, focused online learning events has proven to be highly effective in engaging busy practitioners. By introducing thematic topics on NbS in these bite-sized sessions, we aimed to reach a wider audience with an interest in or emerging interests in NbS, GEDSI and Human Rights in the Pacific. This approach also aligns with the increasing demand for flexible and accessible learning opportunities in the digital age.
- Basing these sessions on the Kiwa NbS projects and community of practice insights, provided a practical and relatable context for learning. By highlighting real-world examples and case studies, the learning events offered insights into how human rights, GEDSI, risk assessment, and community engagement can be effectively integrated into NbS initiatives and with Pacific perspectives.
- The huge response to these online learning events underscores the need for a more sustained and coordinated approach to capacity building in the Pacific region on NbS. By encouraging regional institutions such as SPC, SPREP, and the University of the South Pacific to support and facilitate regular, accessible, and context-specific learning opportunities, we can continue the learning ecosystem that the Kiwa Initiative has contributed to and support Pacific NbS practitioners to deliver impactful NbS projects.

Table 3. Topics, objectives and outcomes of each learning event

Topic	Objectives	Learning outcomes	Attendees
Human Rights in NbS for Climate Change Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build knowledge, capacity and practical skills for understanding linkages between human rights and NbS Provide practitioners with basic tools to support integrating human rights in NbS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants learnt what human rights are and why they matter when designing and implementing NbS Participants had basic tools to integrate human rights into NbS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 352 people registered for the event while 87 people attended 24 participants filled out the evaluation form
GEDSI 101 for NbS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on existing knowledge, capacity and practical skills for understanding the linkages between GEDSI in climate change Identify cross sectoral links between GEDSI, climate change and climate sensitive development sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants became aware of the key concepts of GEDSI and its importance in climate change adaptation Participants learnt why GEDSI mainstreaming is important in climate change sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 486 people registered for the event while 98 people attended 27 participants filled out the evaluation form
GEDSI analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding of GEDSI analysis, and how to use this tool Learn from practitioners who have implemented a GEDSI analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants learnt how to conduct a GEDSI analysis Participants learnt how to use findings from a GEDSI analysis in their NbS projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 373 people registered for the event while 66 people attended 18 participants filled out the evaluation form
Assessing Human Rights Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of human rights and human rights risk assessment Tools available to support risk assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants learnt why risk assessments improve the design and implementation of NbS projects Participants had the tools to conduct a human rights risk assessment of NbS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 103 people registered for the event while 30 people attended 14 participants filled out the evaluation form
GEDSI Sensitive Community Engagement and NbS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain an understanding of key concepts on GEDSI-sensitive facilitation and community engagement Reflecting and sharing what approaches practitioners are using in different cultural contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants became aware of key concepts on GEDSI-sensitive facilitation and community engagement Participants learnt different cultural approaches to support GEDSI-sensitive community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 141 people registered for the event while 35 people attended 5 participants filled out the evaluation form

5. Case Studies

Having Pacific-centric case studies is essential for creating contextually relevant and culturally appropriate approaches and strategies that resonate with the unique realities of Pacific communities. Case studies can highlight successful approaches, reveal challenges, and offer practical guidance for other projects and communities facing similar circumstances. Sharing lessons learned through case studies fosters knowledge sharing among practitioners and stakeholders, accelerating the adoption of GEDSI best practices and innovations that contribute to environmental sustainability. To support learning in the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories, ten case studies were compiled to illustrate the application of the seven guiding principles for integrating GEDSI into NbS or broader conservation projects in the region (Table 3). The case studies were selected from regional and national projects funded by the Kiwa Initiative, and technical support was provided through regional organisations.

Key messages from across the case studies on GEDSI best practices for NbS


- A **comprehensive and adaptable GEDSI Strategy** is essential for successful NbS implementation. GEDSI strategies must be institutionalised within the organisations and connected to projects. It must be flexible enough to adapt to the diverse Pacific context while maintaining core principles. By incorporating practical applications and resourcing activities specifically tailored to Pacific Island communities, we can ensure that GEDSI is not just a theoretical framework but a practical reality.
- While initial **GEDSI training is crucial, continuous learning and support are equally important**. Providing NbS practitioners with regular training, coaching, and mentoring opportunities empowers them to build their knowledge, skills, and confidence in the Pacific. This continuous learning approach is vital for fostering a culture of GEDSI within organisations.
- **Leveraging expert knowledge and cultural strengths** offers invaluable insights and tools for effective GEDSI integration. By drawing on cultural strengths and positive practices, NbS can build on existing practices that value women's contributions and leadership. At the same time it is important to recognise culture is not static, and like gender, can change to remove biases or barriers for marginalised groups, while preserving Pacific Islanders' rich cultural heritage. Collaborating with gender and disability experts is crucial for knowledge and skills transfer on best practices, as well as the diversity of tools and rights-based approaches that have been developed, including for the Pacific Islands region.
- **Marginalised groups**, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, have their own knowledge and experiences with natural resources use and access in their communities. By prioritising their inclusion in NbS initiatives, we can create more responsive, culturally relevant, and equitable solutions. Engaging these groups early in the project, collaborating with traditional governance systems, and enlisting the support of community leaders are key strategies for effective inclusion. By

prioritising the voices of marginalised groups, we can build stronger, more resilient, and socially just communities.

- **GEDSI analysis is a valuable tool** for understanding the underlying power dynamics and social inequalities within communities. By using this information to inform project design and implementation, we can address specific needs and challenges faced by women, men, and diverse groups. This helps to ensure that NbS projects are more socially just and environmentally sustainable.
- **Shifting gender stereotypes** is crucial for gender transformative change because it challenges deep-rooted norms that limit opportunities and reinforce inequality. By breaking stereotypes, everyone can fully participate in NbS, leading to more inclusive and equitable benefits and outcomes. Male allies can play an important role in shifting stereotypes, by advocating for women's leadership.
- **Investing in women's economic empowerment**, including ensuring women's access to financial resources, skills, networks and leadership opportunities, and promoting an enabling environment for their access to and control/decision-making over economic resources, is a powerful strategy for achieving gender equality and sustainable development. By providing women with access to resources, skills, and opportunities, we can strengthen their agency and decision-making power. This, in turn, contributes to more resilient and equitable communities.

Key lessons learned from the case studies

- A GEDSI case study development process that **prioritises collaborative writing**. By engaging with Pacific NbS practitioners directly involved in the field, the writing process worked to gain deeper insights into how NbS practitioners explored, perceived and viewed GEDSI in their work. This approach encouraged practitioners to capture GEDSI integration learnings through their lens, grounded in real-world experiences of their projects and connecting back with their GEDSI capacity building journey. This collaborative process allowed for the complexities of integrating GEDSI into NbS projects to surface, uncover ongoing challenges of integrating GEDSI in their NbS projects.
- Providing **structured guidance and mentoring for Pacific writers and practitioners**, particularly at the initial stages of case study development. By providing a clear writing template and a series of guiding questions at the start, the case study development process aimed to empower Pacific NbS practitioners to organise their reflections and effectively convey their experiences. This approach helped to demystify GEDSI concepts, explore how their practices link to GEDSI principles, promote the collection of case studies and encourage deeper reflection, leading to the production of case studies that accurately reflect the realities of integrating GEDSI into NbS projects in the Pacific.
- Another important lesson learned is the **emphasis on creating Pacific-centric case studies on integrating GEDSI into NbS**. While this initiative has been a valuable step forward, it highlights the significant gap in existing resources and knowledge on GEDSI, Human Rights and NbS within the region. By advocating for more case



studies, we can expand the evidence base, showcase diverse approaches, and inspire further action. This case study process has been an important step in promoting the sharing of knowledge and elevating experiences among NbS practitioners in the Pacific. It becomes part of the fostering of a culture of learning and collaboration, towards advancing the integration of GEDSI into NbS.

Table 4. GEDSI framework for capturing learning

Principles	Case studies	Project description
Principle 1. Obtaining free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)	Implementing FPIC through a GEDSI lens in Melanesia	<p>Kiwa Watershed Interventions for Systems Health Plus (WISH+)</p> <p>Organisations: Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), in collaboration with the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland</p> <p>Countries: Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands</p>
Principle 2. Intentional inclusion of marginalised and underrepresented groups	<p>Inclusion of women and people with disabilities in invasive alien species management in East Rennell World Heritage Site, Solomon Islands</p> <p>Supporting women and youth leadership on mangrove reforestation in Fiji</p>	<p>Kiwa Safeguarding Rennell Island Livelihoods and Biodiversity from Invasive Species</p> <p>Organisations: BirdLife International, Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association, Live & Learn Solomon Islands, Solomon Islands Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock</p> <p>Kiwa Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change (PEBACC+)</p> <p>Organisation: SPREP</p>
Principle 3. GEDSI analysis to inform project design and implementation	<p>Gender analysis to inform project design and implementation on Gau Island, Fiji and Fatu Hiva Island, French Polynesia</p> <p>Collection and analysis of disaggregated data</p>	<p>Kiwa INvasive SPecies Management for Resilient Ecosystems and SocietiEs (INSPIRE)</p> <p>Organisations: BirdLife International in partnership with NatureFiji-MareqetiViti (Fiji), Société d’Ornithologie de Polynésie (French Polynesia)</p> <p>Kiwa Initiative Local Projects Component</p>

	inform project design and implementation in Timor Leste, Solomon Islands and Fiji	Organisations: Community-Centred Conservation (C3), BirdLife International, Blue Ventures
Principle 4. Investing in women's economic empowerment	Investing in the economic empowerment of women farmers on Tongatapu and Vava'u islands, Tonga	Kiwa Pacific Organic Learning Farms Network (POLFN) Organisations: Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) along with the Land Resources Division of the Pacific Community (SPC). In Tonga, POLFN works with the Tonga National Youth Congress and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
Principle 5. Developing a GEDSI strategy for projects	GEDSI integration into community-based fisheries management	Kiwa MICronesia Community-based Fisheries Management and NbS for COASTal resilience (MiCoast) Organisations: OneReef Worldwide Stewardship, Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS), Nauru Fisheries and Marine Resources Authority, Conservation Society of Pohnpei, Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organization, RARE, cChange Countries: FSM, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau POLFN
	Gender and social inclusion strategy for the POLFN project	Organisations: POETCom and SPC Countries: Fiji, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tonga

<p>Principle 6. Building a CoP for GEDSI</p>	<p>Building a CoP for GEDSI in nature-based solutions in the Pacific Islands region</p>	<p>SPREP Technical Assistance to the Kiwa Initiative</p> <p>Organisations: SPREP, Talanoa Consulting</p> <p>Countries: FSM, Fiji, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Palau, PNG, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna</p>
<p>Principle 7. Engaging experts to improve disability inclusion</p>	<p>Partnering Pacific Disability Forum to deliver training on disability inclusion in NbS</p>	<p>SPREP Technical Assistance to the Kiwa Initiative</p> <p>Organisations: SPREP, Talanoa Consulting</p> <p>Countries: FSM, Fiji, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Palau, PNG, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna</p>

6. Tailored support to project implementation

Specific support to Kiwa Regional Projects was a strategic approach designed to enhance the integration of GEDSI principles and practices within Kiwa regional projects through one-on-one support. This was delivered through a multifaceted approach, combining regular check-ins, tailored learning sessions, and collaborative workshops. Regular check-ins are conducted with GEDSI focal points and key project staff including managers to provide ongoing guidance, address questions, and monitor progress. These interactions ensured that support was timely and responsive to the evolving needs of projects who sought additional support.

In addition to regular check-ins, tailored learning sessions are designed to meet the specific needs of each project. These sessions cover a range of topics, including GEDSI analysis, risk assessment, community engagement, and institutional capacity building. By focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by each project, these sessions provide practical tools and strategies to enhance GEDSI integration. This one-on-one support has shown effectiveness for inception workshops planning/design, and for some projects, implementation.

For instance, the INSPIRE project benefited from the support provided on the development of a comprehensive workshop agenda and facilitated insightful sessions on GEDSI and NbS. Additionally, guidance was provided on designing and conducting thorough GEDSI analyses, as well as strategies for building institutional capacity to mainstream GEDSI principles. Specific support included discussions and design on ToRs for GEDSI positions, meetings with lead technical staff on building institutional capacity, and advice on conducting GEDSI analyses.

The MiCOAST/OneReef project also received dedicated support, including assistance in developing the workshop agenda and providing a report on the GEDSI needs assessment of MiCoast respondents. Additionally, training was provided to local facilitators to enhance their capacity to implement GEDSI considerations within the project.

The INSPIRE project in French Polynesia received support on analysing data collected through their GEDSI analysis, with a focus on using the findings to improve the design of NbS interventions.

The WCS (WISH+) project received support in communicating with AFD and SPREP on templates for environmental and social safeguard management plans, as well as in discussing indicators in the project workplan and their analysis.

Through these targeted interventions, the Specific Support to Kiwa Regional Projects initiative aimed to enhance the quality and impact of Kiwa regional projects, ensuring that they are inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. By supporting project teams with the knowledge and skills to integrate GEDSI principles, this initiative contributes to the overall goal of creating a more just and equitable future for the Pacific region.

Key lessons learned from providing specific support to each project

- The effectiveness of providing specific support to Kiwa Regional Projects varied across different projects. While some projects, such as INSPIRE and MiCOAST/OneReef, POLFN and WCS (WISH+) actively engaged with the support provided, others utilised the support to a lesser extent. Notably, projects implemented by larger organisations, such as SPC and SPREP, may have had existing internal capacity and expertise in human rights and GEDSI, leading to less reliance on specific support. This disparity highlights the importance of assessing the specific needs and capacity of each project before designing and implementing support strategies. A more nuanced approach that considers the organisational context and existing resources may be necessary to maximise the impact of such initiatives.
- The effectiveness of this approach was influenced by the level of proactive engagement from project teams. Projects that actively sought support and participated in regular check-ins and training sessions benefited significantly from the initiative. For future support like this, it is essential to provide clear guidance on how to access support and the types of support available and encourage regular communication.

Overall Learnings

The approaches being used by practitioners represent promising steps, strategies and commitment towards ensuring GEDSI is integrated into NbS in the Pacific Islands. By incorporating the key lessons learned so far into future NbS projects, the Pacific can work towards a more sustainable and equitable future for people and ecosystems. A summary of the overarching lessons learned from implementing the regional workshops, GEDS training, CoP sessions and case studies is provided below.

- 1) it is important to elevate Pacific case studies intended on GEDSI and document GEDSI best practices;
- 2) institutionalising GEDSI, including appointing and resourcing GEDSI focal points, adopting a GEDSI strategy, investing in capacity building, integrating GEDSI into processes, and monitoring progress;
- 3) CoP and cohorts: Over time, the sustained interaction within a CoP can cultivate a strong culture of learning and innovation, benefiting both individual members, their organisations, and other partners across the Pacific; and
- 4) one-on-one support has shown effectiveness for inception workshop planning/design.

Annex 1 Recommendations for the Pacific region to strengthen GEDSI integration in NbS

The intersection of environmental conservation and human rights is rapidly evolving, with growing recognition of the interconnectedness between the two. As investment into NbS continues to grow in the Pacific Region to address the biodiversity and climate change crises, it is imperative to integrate GEDSI principles to ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes for Pacific peoples. Considering the emerging landscape of human rights and ecological justice in the Pacific Island region, taking a human rights-based approach (which includes GEDSI) to NbS implementation is vital.

Pacific Island NbS practitioners attending the 3rd Kiwa GEDSI regional workshop in Suva, 22-23 October 2024 proposed short- and long-term recommendations for the Pacific Islands, to strengthen GEDSI integration in NbS, and foster a more inclusive and equitable future for the Region. Short-term recommendations refer to project timelines (3 years), while long-term recommendations refer to programme timeframes (10 years).

These recommendations are for those living and working in the region, regional organisations and donor partners. They highlight areas where investments are needed to support the integration of GEDSI into NbS.

Short term recommendations

1) Strategically investing in GEDSI Capacity

Recommendations: Invest in dedicated GEDSI expertise and foster interdisciplinary collaboration.

Rationale: It is crucial to invest within projects (i.e. 3 years) in GEDSI capacity to effectively integrate GEDSI principles into Pacific NbS initiatives. This involves recruiting and retaining dedicated GEDSI experts within donor organisations, regional institutions, and programmes but also anticipating the additional cost of inclusion (additional staff or service provided, extra funding for carers etc). By providing targeted training and capacity-building and strengthening opportunities, NbS practitioners can be equipped with the skills to address gender, equity, and social inclusion issues in their projects and across connected regional programmes. Furthermore, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration between scientists, social scientists, and gender experts will enhance the holistic understanding and implementation of NbS.

2) Addressing GEDSI Capacity Challenges and Promoting Pacific Leadership

Recommendation: Implement a multi-pronged approach to address GEDSI capacity challenges, including promoting Pacific leadership, developing innovative business models, supporting national gender action plans, and documenting and sharing Pacific-centred case studies (i.e. 3 years).

Rationale: The ongoing GEDSI capacity challenges hinder the ability to maximise NbS benefits and can lead to further marginalising groups, increasing their vulnerability and compromising long-term sustainability. By promoting Pacific leadership, integrating gender and human rights into business models, supporting national gender action plans, and documenting and sharing best practices, we can empower marginalised groups, strengthen efforts towards achieving gender equality, and create more inclusive and resilient communities.

3) Strengthening Regional Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

Recommendation: Facilitate regular (i.e. 3 years) regional spaces for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaborative action, such as workshops, conferences, and online platforms.

Rationale: Facilitating regional spaces to foster a deeper understanding of the interlinkages between NbS and climate adaptation is needed to coordinate efforts and knowledge sharing of the benefits of NbS in the Pacific. It is crucial to elevate and advocate for Pacific-centric approaches regionally and internationally. By bringing together Pacific experts, policymakers, practitioners, and community leaders, we can build upon collective lessons learned and develop innovative approaches to climate adaptation. Furthermore, supporting joint research and capacity-building initiatives can strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of Pacific Island countries and territories.

4) Securing Long-Term Financing for GEDSI-Inclusive NbS

Recommendations: Unlock sustainable funding sources, explore innovative financing mechanisms, and incentivise coordinated action on NbS initiatives that are GEDSI-inclusive in the Pacific.


Rationale: Securing long-term, sustainable financing is crucial for the implementation and scaling up of GEDSI-inclusive NbS initiatives in the Region. By exploring innovative financing mechanisms and incentivising coordinated action, NbS can empower Pacific Island countries to address climate change and biodiversity loss while promoting social equity and gender equality.

Long-term recommendations

1) Addressing Capacity Constraints and Policy Gaps

Recommendations: Investing in capacity building for local Pacific practitioners, promoting research and knowledge sharing, and creating a supportive policy environment for NbS and GEDSI.

Rationale: A significant barrier to the successful implementation of NbS in the Pacific is the limited capacity of local practitioners to integrate GEDSI effectively, as well as a lack of supportive policies to guide the take-up of NbS and GEDSI approaches. By investing in capacity building for local practitioners, promoting research and knowledge sharing, and creating a supportive policy environment, we



can empower Pacific Island countries to effectively integrate GEDSI principles into their NbS projects and achieve sustainable outcomes.

2) Strengthening Pacific Coordination and Collaboration

Recommendations: Pacific stakeholders need to coordinate and collaborate more within the region and across international efforts by fostering strong partnerships among NbS practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders to enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing of Pacific experiences.

Rationale: A lack of coordination and collaboration, limited knowledge sharing, and weak partnerships can result in duplication, overwhelmed communities, inaccessible resources and missed opportunities to integrate GEDSI in NbS.



The Kiwa Initiative - Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for Climate Resilience aims to build the resilience of Pacific Island ecosystems, communities, and economies to climate change through NbS by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring biodiversity.

It is based on simplified access to funding for climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation actions for local and national governments, civil society, and regional organizations in Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

The Initiative is funded by the European Union, Agence française de développement (AFD), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). It has established partnerships with the Pacific Community (SPC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the Oceania Regional Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN - ORO).

For more information: <http://www.kiwainitiative.org/>