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Integrating Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion in Nature-based Solutions for Climate Adaptation

Principles, Case Studies and Lessons Learned

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Cover image:
Participatory mapping on Kolombangara Island, Solomon Islands
Thomas Yalu, WCS © Kiwa Initiative - 2024

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Abbreviations

C3	Community Centred Conservation
CBFM	Community-based fisheries management
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EbA	Ecosystem-based adaptation
ERWHS	East Rennell World Heritage Site
FPIC	Free, prior and informed consent
GEDSI	Gender equity, disability and social inclusion
IAS	Invasive alien species
INSPIRE	INvasive SPecies Management for Resilient Ecosystems and Societies
LTWHSA	Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association
MiCOAST	MICronesian Community-based Fisheries Management and Nature-based Solutions for COASTal resilience
PEBACC+	Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation for Climate Change Plus
POLFN	Pacific Organic Learning Farms Network
SPC	Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WISH+	Watershed Interventions for Systems Health Plus

1. Introduction

Global efforts to prevent biodiversity loss have largely failed, with species extinction rates and habitat loss and degradation accelerating, especially on islands. Although island ecosystems are characterised by high levels of endemism and unique species, their low species diversity and small population sizes makes them susceptible to both human-induced disturbances and climate change. In the Pacific Islands, biodiversity has been severely affected by habitat destruction, overexploitation, invasive species, pollution, disease, disasters and climate change. These pressures are not only threatening the natural heritage of the Pacific Islands but are also compromising food security, livelihoods, and the cultural identity and wellbeing of the communities who rely on the land and sea. To address these threats and pressures, practitioners have been working with governments and communities to design and implement nature-based solutions in the Pacific. Nature-based solutions are "actions to address societal challenges through the protection, sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems, benefiting both biodiversity and human well-being"[1]. The human dimension is crucial in nature-based solutions because it ensures that conservation approaches are designed and implemented in ways that address social needs, enhance community resilience, and foster sustainable relationships between people and the environment.

Communities in the Pacific are not homogenous, but are made up of diverse cultures, languages, traditions, and histories, each shaped by their unique geographic locations, interactions, and adaptations over time. Marginalised groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, have often been overlooked or undervalued in environmental policy and management. This includes their roles and contributions to natural resource sectors (e.g. conservation, fisheries, forestry, agriculture), as well as disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. There is a growing recognition of the need for inclusive, integrated, and sustainable approaches to natural resource management, with a growing emphasis on diversity and inclusiveness in regional (e.g. The Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas 2021–2025[2]) and global commitments (e.g. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework[3]).

In the Pacific Islands region, where the wellbeing of communities is deeply intertwined with their natural environment, integrating gender equity, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) into nature-based solutions is essential. To do this requires practitioners and their organisations to recognise that GEDSI principles are core values and not just a means to achieving conservation objectives. When GEDSI principles are embedded into nature-based solutions, they shape every aspect of the intervention, from the identification of goals to the methods of community engagement and the measurement of outcomes. By integrating these principles early in the project lifecycle, teams can ensure that the needs and perspectives of all

1 IUCN (2016) World Conservation Congress Resolution 069. Defining Nature-Based Solutions

2 The Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas 2021–2025 is available at https://pacific-data.sprep.org/dataset/pacific-islands-framework-nature-conservation-and-protected-areas-2021-2025

3 The Global Biodiversity Framework is available at https://www.cbd.int/gbf

stakeholders, especially those from marginalised or underrepresented groups, are considered and addressed. This approach moves beyond viewing GEDSI as add-ons or checkboxes; instead, it ensures GEDSI best practices are incorporated from the onset, fostering an environment that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. This approach not only enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of project outcomes but also helps to build trust, promote social justice and human rights, and create opportunities for all individuals to participate fully and equally in the project's success.

There are a small but growing number of case studies that have been written up on good practices for integrating GEDSI approaches into nature-based solutions in the Pacific Islands. 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. By documenting and analysing how GEDSI principles are being applied in practice within the Pacific context, case studies can provide valuable insights and lessons that are directly applicable to the region. 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.

Since its launch in 2020, the Kiwa Initiative has invested in strengthening the climate change resilience of Pacific Islands ecosystems, communities and economies through nature-based solutions, by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring biodiversity. It is based on easier access to funding for climate change adaptation and nature-based solutions for local, national authorities, civil society and regional organisations of Pacific Island Countries and Territories including the three French overseas territories. The Kiwa Initiative contributes to *The Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas 2021–2025* and *Vemööre Declaration - Commitments to nature conservation action in the Pacific Islands region 2021-2025*[4], by providing funds to support local, national and regional projects, and technical support to projects. The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is a regional partner of the Kiwa Initiative and provides technical assistance to Kiwa regional projects. This support includes the development and dissemination of toolkits on human rights, GEDSI and NbS, co-creating a GEDSI community of practice, conducting targeted trainings, and capturing learnings to enhance the implementation of gender-responsive and socially inclusive nature-based solutions for biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation in the Pacific region.

To support learning in the Pacific Islands countries and territories, a series of case studies have been compiled to showcase GEDSI principles and best practice in nature-based solutions in the region. The case studies were selected from regional and national projects funded by the Kiwa Initiative, and technical support provided through regional organisations. Recognising there may be managers and other practitioners who are new to GEDSI, a short description of commonly used terms and key concepts is provided (Chapter 2). This is followed by a brief description of seven guiding principles for integrating GEDSI into nature-based solutions or broader conservation projects (Chapter 3). Nine case studies from the Pacific region are provided to illustrate application of these guiding principles (Chapter 4). The report closes with a synthesis of lessons learned to date for improving GEDSI integration into nature-based solutions that can guide practitioners, organisations, and donors' investment in future work (Chapter 5).

4 Vemööre Declaration Commitments is available at https://www.sprep.org/sites/default/files/documents/circulars/Cir20-104_Declaration.pdf

2. Definitions and key concepts

Gender-related concepts

Persons with disabilities[5] include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Empowerment[6] is the process of enabling people to increase control over their lives, to gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives, to increase their resources and qualities and to build capacities to gain access, partners, networks, a voice, in order to gain control.

Gender[7] refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men, women, and people of diverse genders. While sex refers to the biological and physiological differences between males and females, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, and expectations that are associated with being women and men in a given society. Gender is a complex concept that influences how people perceive themselves and others, as well as how they interact with one another. Gender is also closely linked to power relations, as it often determines who has access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes in a given society.

Gender analysis is a process used to examine how gender roles, norms, and power relations affect the lives of women, men, and people of diverse genders. It is a systematic process that helps identify how gender differences and inequalities impact individuals and communities. The aim of gender analysis is to identify and understand the ways in which gender shapes people's experiences, opportunities, and outcomes, and to use this understanding to inform policies, programs, and interventions that promote gender equality and empowerment. Gender analysis involves gathering and analysing gender-specific data, and using this data to identify patterns, trends, and gaps in access to resources and opportunities. It also involves examining the social norms and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequalities and identifying strategies to address these norms and attitudes.[8]

Organic farmers at the Mudrenicagi Organic Learning Farm Centre, Fiji

Gender division of labour[9] concerns the allocation of the tasks and responsibilities of men and women at home, at work and in society according to patterns of work that are felt to be acceptable in a particular place and time.

Gender equality[10] refers to the concept that women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realising their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefitting from) economic, social, cultural and political development.

5 Adapted from https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/persons-risk/persons-disabilities
6 Adapted from UN Empowerment booklet https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ngo/outreachmaterials/empowerment-booklet.pdf
7 SPREP (2024) Gender equity, disability and social inclusion analysis for nature-based solutions in Pacific Islands. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia
8 Ibid.
9 SPREP (2014) Gender and the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) programme: Assessment and Action Plan. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia
10 Adapted from https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Genderglossarytermsandconcepts.pdf

Gender equality is, therefore, the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in the home, community and society. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Gender equity, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)[11] refers to approaches to ensure people from all backgrounds, including women and gender diverse people, persons with disabilities and people facing another form of marginalisation are included, reasonably accommodated and can contribute to nature-based solutions. A GEDSI lens is used to prevent unintended harm, exclusion and further marginalisation of at-risk groups, and to promote their rights, equitable opportunities and benefits.

Gender-responsive[12] programming includes specific action to try and reduce gender inequalities within communities.

Gender-sensitive[13] a gender-sensitive policy or programmes recognises gender inequalities as an obstacle that may deprive women of the same opportunities as men and prevent them from getting equal benefits from development programmes. Thus, it proposes measures to reduce gender inequalities and provides resources and services to address the needs of both men and women, in all their diversity.

Gender transformative change[14] is a deep structural change achieved by addressing the root causes of gender inequality, adapting to the context, and collaborating with a wide network of partners who agree on a common overarching agenda and focused interventions.

Grievance redress mechanism[15] is a locally based, formalised way to accept, assess, and resolve community feedback or complaints.

11 SPREP (2024) Gender equity, disability and social inclusion analysis for nature-based solutions in Pacific Islands. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia
12 Adapted from https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/thematic%20note%201_gender_final.pdf
13 SPREP (2016) SPREP Gender Policy - Gender equity and women's empowerment in communities and environments across the South Pacific. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia
14 Adapted from https://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2751
15 Adapted from CAO Advisory Note "A Guide to Designing and Implementing Grievance Mechanisms for Development Projects"

Human rights[16] are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.

Human rights-based approaches[17] are conceptual frameworks for the process of human development that are normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. These seek to analyse inequalities that lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind.

Risk assessment[18] is a process to determine the nature and extent of such risk, by analysing hazards and evaluating existing conditions of vulnerability that together could potentially harm exposed people, property, services, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend.

Sex-disaggregated data[19] separate out men's and women's activities and perspectives, i.e. collecting separate data on men and women. Data can also be disaggregated by age, location, ethnic group, etc. to help understand the different experiences of different groups and target solutions effectively.

Social justice[20] is based on the values of fairness, equality, respect for diversity, access to social protection, and the application of human rights in all spheres of life, including in the workplace.

Women's economic empowerment[21] means that women have the ability to succeed and advance economically, and the power to make and act on economic decisions to enhance their wellbeing and position in society.

16 SPREP (2024) Human rights for nature-based solutions in Pacific Islands. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia
17 Adapted from UN Sustainable Development Group https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach
18 Adapted from https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/ly/2Disaster-Risk-Reduction---Risk-Assessment.pdf
19 SPREP (2016) SPREP Gender Policy - Gender equity and women's empowerment in communities and environments across the South Pacific. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia
20 Adapted from https://sdgs.un.org/statements/message-world-day-social-justice-10379
21 Calder R, Rickard S, Kalsi K (2020) Measurement of women's economic empowerment. Work and Opportunities for Women Helpdesk Guidance No. 2. London

Nature-based Solutions concepts

Agroecology[22] is an integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of food and agricultural systems. It seeks to optimise the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while taking into consideration the social aspects that need to be addressed for a sustainable and fair food system.

Agroforestry[23] refers to the deliberate growing of woody perennials on the same unit of land as agricultural crops and/or animals, in some form of spatial mixture or sequence; and involving significant ecological and/or economical interactions between the woody and non-woody components of the system.

Community-based fisheries management[24] refers to 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. It is premised on the understanding that each community is responsible for its respective marine environment.

Ecosystem-based adaptation[25] is a nature-based approach to adaptation planning that seeks to harness the potential of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity to reduce vulnerability and build social and economic resilience to climate change.

Environmental and social management plan[26] consists of the set of mitigation, monitoring and institutional measures to be taken during the design, construction and operation stages of the project to eliminate adverse environmental and social impacts, to offset them, or to reduce them to acceptable levels.

Nature-based solutions[27] are actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, to provide both human wellbeing and biodiversity benefits.

Watershed management is the term used to describe the process of implementing land use practices and water management practices to protect, sustainably use and improve the quality of the water and other natural resources within a watershed.

22 FAO (2018) The 10 elements of agroecology: guiding the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems. Food and Agriculture Organisation, Rome
23 SPC (2016) Vulnerability of Pacific Island agriculture and forestry to climate change. Pacific Community, Noumea
24 SPC (2010) A community-based ecosystem approach to fisheries management: guidelines for Pacific Island countries. Pacific Community, Noumea
25 SPREP (2020) Pacific ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change: strengthening and protecting natural ecosystem services to enhance resilience to climate change. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Apia
26 Adapted from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/681881546239762727/pdf/ESMP-Hamirpur-Rath-Mar-18-r1.pdf
27 IUCN (2016) World Conservation Congress Resolution 069. Defining Nature-Based Solutions

3. Principles for integrating gender equity, disability and social inclusion in nature-based solutions

Seven guiding principles were identified during interviews with practitioners who are integrating GEDSI into nature-based solutions. The principles are founded on GEDSI and human rights-based approaches. The rationale behind each principle is described in this chapter and the name of the case is listed beneath the principle it illustrates. Through each case study, practitioners shared their best practice and reflected on the lessons learned from implementing one of the principles.

The principles are not a complete list, and nature-based solutions projects should not limit themselves to these seven. Many of the principles are interlinked and should not be seen as standalone. It is essential to develop principles with flexibility, adapting them to the specific social and cultural context where nature-based solutions are being implemented. By doing so, practitioners can ensure that their work is comprehensive, relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of their communities and the project. Additionally, regular reflection on these principles and best practices can lead to the discovery of new insights that further enhance the project's outcomes, and improve GEDSI best practice in nature-based solutions.

Principle 1

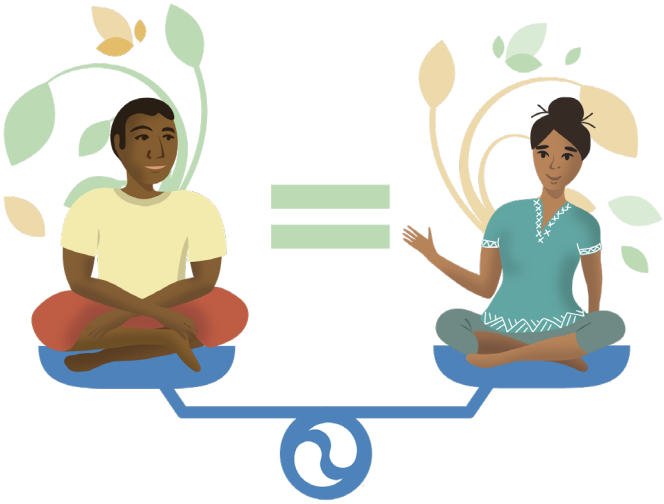
Obtaining free, prior and informed consent

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is a key principle that ensures communities, especially Indigenous Peoples, have the right to give or withhold consent at any time to projects that may affect their lands, resources, and rights. It emphasises that consent should be given freely without coercion, obtained prior to the commencement of any activities, and based on full, transparent information. Approaching FPIC through a GEDSI lens means ensuring that women and other marginalised groups are included in the process and have the opportunity to review, give or withhold consent. FPIC is not a one-off process but is ongoing with communities able to change their mind. FPIC is fundamental in upholding self-determination and protecting communities from exploitation and harmful practices.

Case study: Implementing free, prior and informed consent through a GEDSI lens in Melanesia

Principle 2

Intentional inclusion of marginalised and underrepresented groups



Social inclusion is a principle that advocates for the equal participation and representation of all groups, especially those that are marginalised and underrepresented. It emphasises removing barriers and addressing inequalities to ensure that everyone, regardless of gender, age or disability, has access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making processes. In addition to being fair or equitable, by actively involving diverse groups nature-based solutions benefit from a wider range of experiences, ideas, and feedback, leading to more innovative approaches and greater community buy-in, as people feel their voices are heard and valued.

Case study: Inclusion of women and persons with disabilities in invasive alien species management in East Rennell World Heritage Site, Solomon Islands

Case study: Supporting women and youth leadership on mangrove reforestation on Taveuni Island, Fiji

Principle 3

GEDSI analysis to inform project design and implementation

Investing in GEDSI analysis is vital to informing the design and implementation of nature-based solutions to ensure interventions provide equitable benefits for every member of the community. This involves collecting and analysing disaggregated data on gender and other social characteristics (e.g. age, disability, ethnicity) to understand disparities and inequalities more accurately. This approach helps to identify and mitigate potential inequalities, ensuring that nature-based solutions projects are both inclusive and equitable. Women and men often have distinct roles, responsibilities, and knowledge related to environmental management, which can affect their access to resources, decision-making power, and the benefits they derive from nature-based solutions interventions. By understanding and documenting these differences, nature-based solutions can be designed to be equitable and inclusive, addressing the specific needs and contributions of women and other marginalised groups in communities. This leads to more comprehensive and effective solutions that

are supported by a wider range of beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Case study: Gender analysis to inform project design and implementation on Gau Island, Fiji and Fatu Hiva Island, French Polynesia

Case study: Collection and analysis of disaggregated data informs project design and implementation in Timor Leste, Solomon Islands and Fiji

Principle 4

Investing in women's economic empowerment

Women's economic empowerment supports women's equal access to economic resources and opportunities, enabling environments for women's participation, and supports women's agency in decision-making. In the context of nature-based solutions, it involves removing barriers to women's full participation in the interventions, such as discrimination, lack of access to information, training and mentoring, and decision-making. Empowering women economically not only improves their individual wellbeing but also contributes to nature-based solutions and to broader social and economic development by fostering more inclusive and resilient communities.

Case study: Investing in the economic empowerment of women farmers on Tongatapu and Vava'u islands, Tonga

Principle 5

Developing a GEDSI strategy for projects

A GEDSI strategy in a nature-based solutions project is a commitment to mechanisms that ensure the needs and perspectives of all groups, especially marginalised or underrepresented ones, are considered in the planning, implementation and monitoring of a project. It recognises potential barriers to participation and decision-making, and promotes actions to ensure that all groups benefit from and contribute to nature-based solutions efforts. Projects that incorporate GEDSI strategies are more likely to achieve their objectives and have positive environmental and social outcomes, and ensure no one is left behind.

Case study: GEDSI integration into community-based fisheries management

Principle 6

Building a Community of Practice for GEDSI

A GEDSI community of practice fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing among practitioners to enhance the integration of GEDSI principles into nature-based solutions. By bringing together diverse perspectives and learnings, this community strengthens the capacity to design and implement inclusive, equitable, and effective nature-based solutions. The collective expertise and shared resources within the community of practice help ensure that nature-based solutions address the unique needs and contributions of all individuals, particularly marginalised groups.

Case study: Building a Community of Practice for GEDSI in nature-based solutions in the Pacific Islands region

Principle 7

Engaging experts to improve disability inclusion

Engaging and partnering with persons with expertise in disability is crucial for effectively incorporating disability equity and inclusion in conservation efforts. By collaborating with these experts, nature-based solutions practitioners can gain valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by persons with disabilities. Disability experts can provide guidance on accessible design, and adaptive approaches that ensure persons with disabilities can participate in, make decisions concerning them, and benefit from nature-based solutions. Their expertise can help identify and remove barriers that may prevent persons with disabilities from participating in nature-based solutions.

Case study: Partnering Pacific Disability Forum to deliver training on disability inclusion in nature-based solutions

Alice Latinga/WCS© Kiwa Initiative – 2024

Awareness workshop about the Kiwa WISH+ project at a local market on Manus Island, PNG

4. Case Studies

Principle 1. Obtaining free, prior and informed consent

Case Study: Implementing free, prior and informed consent through a GEDSI lens in Melanesia

- **Project name:** Kiwa Watershed Interventions for Systems Health Plus (WISH+)
- **Organisations:** Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), in collaboration with the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland
- **Project countries**: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands

Background

Watershed condition affects the health and wellbeing of people and the downstream environments in which they live. Sediments and nutrients entering waterways can have devastating impacts on freshwater and coastal ecosystems on which local people depend for food, livelihoods and cultural practice. In Melanesia, outbreaks of water-related diseases are common, amplified by environmental factors related to climate change, land use, and changing social conditions. Scientific research suggests that large and intact forest cover and wetlands can reduce disease occurrences in people and on downstream ecosystems by lowering the number of pathogens in untreated wastewater. Nature-based solutions, such as effective integrated watershed management, can reduce incidents of waterborne diseases and provide other tangible co-benefits for overall systems health, including carbon storage and capture to reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases, refugia for threatened forest and wetland biodiversity, and reduced impacts of climate related disasters, particularly through flood mitigation and water purification services.

Through systems health and nature-based solutions approaches, the Kiwa Watershed Interventions for Systems Health Plus (WISH+) project will deliver co-benefits for climate resilience, biodiversity and human health and wellbeing in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Specifically, WISH+ aims to: (1) implement integrated watershed management for biodiversity, climate resilience and human health co-benefits as well as providing a model for managing

systems health for the Pacific that is upscaled through decision-support tools, long-term sustainable financing and effective public policy; (2) facilitate investment in nature-based solutions for safely managed drinking water, sanitation, and wastewater in high-risk watersheds, identified through innovative decision-support tools, while simultaneously delivering on outcomes for multiple sustainable development goals; and (3) facilitate transmission of lessons learned through regional networks to influence policy and innovative practices.

Good practice for implementing the principle

Approach to FPIC

The Pacific Islands region is home to many Indigenous and local communities with deep cultural and spiritual connections to their land, sea and natural resources. Recognised under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples[28], Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)[29] is a specific right given to Indigenous Peoples, aligned to their right to self-determination (Figure 1). In the context of nature-based solutions, Indigenous Peoples have the right, at any time, to give or withhold their consent to proposed projects or activities that may affect their land, resources, and rights. FPIC allows Indigenous Peoples to engage in negotiations to shape the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects that they are involved in or affect them and their territories. In the Pacific Islands, FPIC is essential for ensuring that local and Indigenous communities are respected, their rights protected, and their voices included in any conservation or development activities affecting their lands, seas and resources.

Globally, WCS applies FPIC to all communities, regardless of whether they are Indigenous or not. In Melanesia, WCS has embedded FPIC into their community engagement protocols in culturally-sensitive and appropriate ways. This approach ensures FPIC is not a separate process, but rather an integral part of working with local communities, in all their diversity. This includes ensuring all groups in communities, including women, youth and persons with disabilities, have the opportunity to participate in the FPIC process and give their inputs and provide their consent (or not).

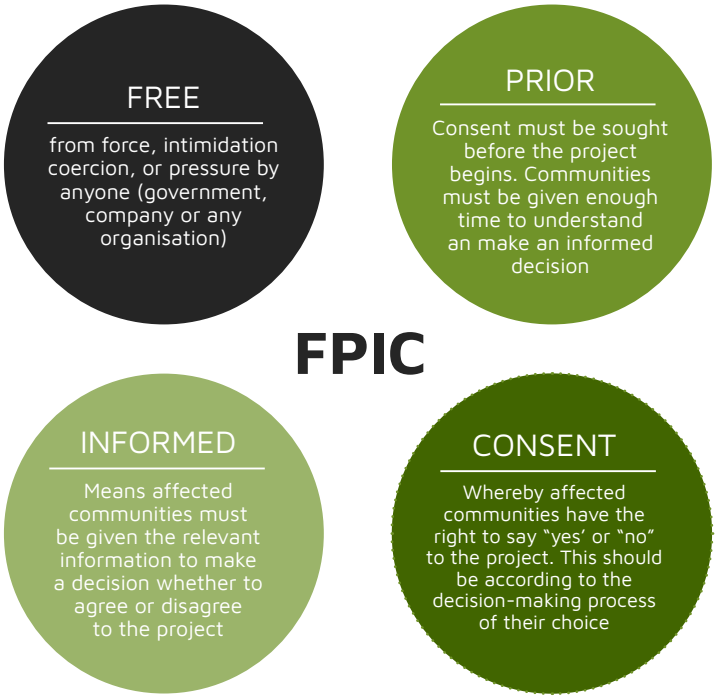


Figure 1. Free, Prior, Informed Consent

28 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is available at https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

29 The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Manual is available at https://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/

Gender risk assessment with a group of women on Kolombangara Island, Solomon Islands

When implementing FPIC, five principles for best practice are applied by local staff:

1. **Be broad and inclusive.** Include maximum number of affected stakeholders, including diverse groups.
2. **Be clear and transparent.** Information should be delivered in a way that is accessible to all participants. Consider persons with disabilities in this context.
3. **Enable dialogue**, ***stori, talanoa***. Ensure plenty of time for discussion.
4. **Use existing structures in the community**. Build on meetings of church and elder groups, women's groups, youth groups, chiefly and customary groups.
5. **Recognise local rights**. Ensure proposed activities are respecting local rights and customs.

Typically, the FPIC process includes three main phases: (1) an initial awareness workshop to describe project objectives, timelines and activities to local government partners and communities; (2) a second visit to communities who confirmed their interest in participating in the project to carry out a gender risk assessment with participation of broad segments of each community, including women, men, elders and youth; and (3) after allowing enough time for internal community discussion, a final visit to each community to obtain granted signed consent. Having three phases ensures there is adequate time provided for different members of the community to share their feedback on project activities, discuss within their community, and come to a decision on whether they consent to the project going ahead or not.

WCS recognises that FPIC is an ongoing process and allows for communities to retract their consent at any time if for example, the project is not delivering what it is supposed to, or they feel their grievances are not addressed. A Grievance Redress Mechanism is a core part of the FPIC process to ensure communities can

address any concerns they have about the project, without repercussions for their community. FPIC therefore, is likely to occur multiple times across a project and is seen as a continuous process that needs to be well documented for transparency and accountability.

Applying FPIC to WISH+

As part of the gender risk assessments for WISH+, WCS conducted separate focal group discussions for women and men in each of the 41 project beneficiary communities in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands using a questionnaire specifically designed to identify potential project risks. The aim was to identify barriers to women and men's participation in the project, what could be done to remove or minimise these barriers, identify those who could be negatively impacted by the project and what could be done to avoid these negative impacts. Each group identified and mapped the main natural resources they used, and their community had access to. The gender risk assessment helped identify the needs of different groups within communities and the possible social impacts of the project during the FPIC process. Social and environmental safeguard indicators were developed using results of the gender risk assessment and included in the project's Environmental and Social Management Plan. Examples of some of the risks identified during the FPIC process and the mitigation measures put in place by WISH+ are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Risks identified during the FPIC process and the mitigation measures in place.

Risk	Mitigation measures
Project activities conflict with church and school activities or other family commitments and duties.	• Plan all project activities in advance in coordination with the whole community and committees, at least 2 weeks in advance. • Improve communication with provincial offices and communities. • Review and finalise activity plans with communities.
Consultations will not be adequately participatory and will thus represent biased viewpoints, which will lead to water and land disputes.	• Conduct consultations at clan level and make sure to include women, men, youth and persons with disabilities. • Encourage women's and youth's participation. • Work with ward development committees and local level government. • Ensure that clan representatives report back to all clan members and are able to accurately represent viewpoints across all groups.
Certain people in the community may not benefit from project interventions.	• Develop gender-sensitive and inclusive water and sanitation safety plans with water committees. • Prioritise interventions arising from water and sanitation safety plans that will benefit the highest number of persons. • Women to be included in all stages of the decision-making during the consultation process. • Distribute benefits into nature-based solutions that communities can equitably access.
Livelihoods of village residents may be negatively impacted by restrictions in sustainable land management plans which may restrict access to collect materials for housing construction and for cooking.	• Work to ensure that no one is completely cut out of livelihood activities through participatory management planning. • Consider allowing local populations to access some types of building and cooking materials.
Cultural reluctance to allow women to participate on resource management and water committees.	• Discuss with communities to identify ways to ensure women's participation within culturally appropriate ways. • Allow enough time for women to complete all household activities before joining project activities. • Project does not require women's participation in activities that they deem as a risk for their safety.

During the FPIC process in Papua New Guinea, WCS faced some challenging community expectations and conversations regarding the direct benefits of investing in nature-based solutions. Some communities were reluctant to participate in the project because it mostly focuses on nature-based solutions and does not provide immediate tangible infrastructural benefits such as damming and piping water. While there is a general understanding in these communities of the need to shift from current practices on how they raise livestock, dispose of waste and bury their dead to improve water quality and downstream ecosystems, some people are still sceptical about putting in their time to project activities based on nature-based solutions that have little to no immediate tangible benefits. However, the FPIC process has been successful and provided unique insights.

Participatory mapping exercise with a group of women on Kolombangara Island, Solomon Islands

© Thomas Yalu, WCS © Kiwa Initiative - 2024

Box 1. Anisha Kadles Michael from the Kolombangara Island Biodiversity Conservation Association and Thomas Yalu from WCS reflected on their experience applying FPIC with communities in the Solomon Islands.

"This approach helped the communities by providing and accommodating the space where the marginalised group of people (such as women and youth) could receive information and be a part of decision-making, including giving consent towards the project. This approach empowered these individuals and groups to share their ideas, concerns and questions.

FPIC and our approach was a game changer in the communities - it gives fair and equal opportunities to all people to participate. When we did the FPIC in the communities, the interesting thing that I learned was that it empowered the communities to see the importance of inclusivity. Going forward this is the best approach to any intending projects in the future." - Anisha Kadles Michael

"This FPIC process is vital for the implementation of any project in communities that have limited information, development support. The FPIC provides a way for them to share their views and voices on important issues that matter most to them, and that have never been heard and addressed. Thus, this process creates a platform that allows us as project staff to understand things from their perspective. The important thing for us is to be trying to address issues communities face and not issues we think they face. This is what this FPIC process provides for us." - Thomas Yalu

Consultations with clan members on Manus Island, PNG

Nella Sabak, WCS © Kiwa Initiative - 2024

Box 2. Fiona Manu from WCS reflected on her experience applying FPIC with communities in Papua New Guinea.

"Doing FPIC in new project sites, provides a platform for project awareness at a larger community scale where clans are invited to participate without being involved in the project as yet, so they are free to 'vet' the organisation and the project. The process gives time for people in the communities to inform and consult with family members living outside of the community (who may be higher up the clan hierarchy or better educated) and gain their perspectives which assists with their decision- making. FPIC as a community vetting process ensures that only interested clans whose leaders and members understand and agree to work with the organisation and project give consent for the project. When a community understands enough about our organisation and the project we want to implement, clans consent to project implementation knowing full well they can withdraw and how to use the grievance redress mechanism should conflict arise.

Doing FPIC in the new project sites is important because it allows us to understand community dynamics, making us aware of sensitivities around land ownership and usership, the social hierarchy and traditional ways of harvesting plants or animals, and restrictions on forest areas that may initially seem gender-biased, but are important community conservatory practices. For instance, restrictions on access to certain parts of a forest to women could be for their own safety - as the path there could be precarious and known only by a select few. These restricted places may be intact, highly biodiverse and teeming with life." - Fiona Manu

WCS hopes that their work with communities who consented to participate in the project will continue to raise awareness and demonstrate the importance and interest of nature-based solutions to improve water quality and ecosystem health. Women can play an important role in this mindset shift in their communities as they can influence decision-making in their household.

Lessons learned

1

The FPIC process should be specifically designed and tailored to align with local customs and norms, and be presented in local languages. In some communities, additional awareness consultations may be required where similar past projects have not addressed people's questions and concerns. Sufficient time should be given to the FPIC process, and people should not be rushed into making a decision before they are ready.

2

FPIC is a good practice that can apply to consultation with any local communities, including those that are not Indigenous. This recognises that all communities have the right to participate in decisions that affect their land, resources, and livelihoods, promoting greater equity and fairness. Applying FPIC universally helps to protect the social and environmental interests of all communities, fostering sustainable and inclusive nature-based solutions.

3

Many communities in Melanesia have extensive traditional knowledge of their environments, and their past history with other projects has likely given them insights about what works and does not work. Conducting risk assessments during the FPIC process can lead to better designed projects, where the risks are prevented or managed to minimise harm to all groups within the community.

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Lake Tegano World Heritage Area coastline

Principle 2. Intentional inclusion of marginalised and underrepresented groups

Case Study: Inclusion of women and persons with disabilities in invasive alien species management in East Rennell World Heritage Site, Solomon Islands

Project name: Kiwa Safeguarding Rennell Island Livelihoods and Biodiversity from Invasive Species

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

Project site: East Rennell World Heritage Site, Solomon Islands

Background

The East Rennell World Heritage Site (ERWHS) covers approximately 30 percent of Rennell, and is representative of the island's habitats and exceptionally high levels of endemism (i.e. species only found in a single defined location). In 2013, the ERWHS was declared 'in danger' from issues including lack of protected area status, limited livelihood opportunities, low perceived benefit from World Heritage Site status, potential logging, inadequate capacity for management, and incursions of Invasive Alien Species (IAS). A 2018 BirdLife International-led study confirmed the invasive black rat *(Rattus rattus)* was widely established on Rennell Island, threatening crops, livelihoods, and biodiversity, alongside invasive ants, coconut rhinoceros beetles and many introduced plants, signalling an urgent need for biosecurity. Six endemic birds alongside endemic snails were considered exceptionally vulnerable to the black rat introduction.

Lake Tegano WHA Kingfisher Landscape

To address these threats, BirdLife International partnered with the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association (LTWHSA), an Indigenous community-based organisation responsible for managing the ERWHS. The management committee includes women and youth representatives that are elected from Tevaitahe, Niupani, Tegano and Hutuna villages, that hold the tenure rights to the land and resources within the ERWHS. The goal of the project is to enhance the ecological and social sustainability of the ERWHS, by strengthening climate resilience through IAS management, improved livelihoods, and food security for the land-owning communities. IAS management is a proven and cost-effective nature-based solutions, and the project aims to: (1) quantify the effects of rats on food security/livelihoods and biodiversity indicators; (2) evaluate the benefits of rat suppression; (3) assess existing level of climate change risks, vulnerabilities & impacts and developing community-led response measures; and (4) establish the capacity to sustain rat suppression, biosecurity, and improved ecological monitoring and ERWHS management.

Good practice for implementing the principle

This case study focuses on GEDSI approaches used to engage women and people with disability, on the removal and monitoring of IAS. In 2022, during a community inception workshop, BirdLife International presented on the goals and objectives of the project and engaged a local project coordinator to work with communities to identify rangers to lead the management, measuring and reporting on the impact of removal IAS efforts.

Four male Indigenous rangers from each of the four villages of Tevaitahe, Niupani, Tegano and Hutuna, were recruited and trained in establishing landscape-scale rat suppression and monitoring; specifically measuring biodiversity indicators, data collection (including the use of GPS devices), and the reporting of monitoring data to inform the effectiveness of the rat suppression to reduce impacts to birds and livelihoods (agriculture). The original selection of men for these positions was determined by the community, based on the physical labour required initially to set up the rat suppression areas, and concerns on the safety of women. The rangers in turn trained members from their respective villages to provide others the opportunity to learn and be part of the rat suppression program. Focusing initially on reducing the population of black rats, a 100 ha and a 10 ha plot were selected encompassing several farms or gardens in each of the four villages. In each plot, rodenticide baits were applied at regular intervals through a network of bait stations.

By emphasising the importance of inclusion in culturally sensitive ways, and working closely within village governance structures, community members started to deliberate and drive discussions on engaging women and youth in the project. At the same time, women wanted to participate in the collection of data on endemic species and the removal of rats and made requests to their community. With the support of their communities, lead rangers then worked to ensure women were provided equal opportunity to participate in the monitoring of rat suppression efforts. Since mid-2023, about twenty women from the four villages have been trained by rangers and are now monitoring the consumption of bait by rats. Rangers and the data collectors, including women, engaged in monitoring efforts are paid a daily fee for the work.

With guidance from an Environmental Monitoring Plan, rangers check and replenish bait and suppress the population of black rats in the four treatment

areas across the four villages, including approximately 40 ha of garden area. The Plan enables rangers and community members, including women, to measure changes to endemic fauna in the ERWHS, and to monitor the effectiveness of the rat suppression, primarily by monitoring endemic bird species sensitive to black rat predation such as the endemic Rennell shrikebill *(Ghoghoviu)*. Other bird species, flying-foxes, endemic snails and native species are also monitored to track the condition of the World Heritage Site. Rangers and community members, including women, have begun capturing monitoring data and data sheets are sent monthly to BirdLife International for analysis. Recognising different gender roles in the community, the men conducted monitoring of birds in the mornings, as their schedules were more flexible. Women on the other hand, conducted crop and bait monitoring which could be done any time during the day around individual family and domestic duties. One woman in particular, Joy Teahemasi from Niupani Village, has been recognised for her strong organisational skills, particularly when it comes to monitoring data. Joy has been recruited to lead on the data entry, working closely with the Local Project Coordinator. Her contribution and those of the other women, are helping to demonstrate the roles women can play in projects alongside men from their communities.

Steve Cranwell, BirdLife © Initiative Kiwa – 2022

LTWHA Hutuna Rangers & Community

Box 3. Yvonne Tauika, Chairperson of Hutuna Women's Savings Club

"When BirdLife started working with the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association Committee to implement this project, we were very happy and supported the project because we wanted to make sure the rodents stopped doing damage to our crops and gardens. When the project started in our communities, I noticed that only men were recruited to work in the project. But as the work rolled on and there were more community meetings happening, women and young girls started to be engaged in bird monitoring and replenishing of baits in the treatment areas. Being engaged in this work is very interesting, especially when I was tasked to record data on birds. When I walk into the forest, I realise that there are a lot of birds in the forest, and naming birds especially the endemic birds is something I learnt in this project. The video footage from trail cameras showing young chicks in their nests in the forest is amazing. I have never seen this before. Oftentimes, I hear the sound of birds, but I did not bother to know them. Now I can recognise them. I have come to realise that when I collect data I can see how rats have really destroyed our coconuts and garden crops.

In this project a lot of widows and unfortunate families were also engaged in the monitoring work. Because of the payment (allowances) for the work they are able to meet their basic needs. This is the first time we engaged in conservation activities and got paid. Our Women's Savings Club is running very well because women are saving more money and are motivated to work to earn money. I have learnt a lot from this project and I'm looking forward to engaging in more activities like this in the future."

East Rennell women also participate in the rodent control monitoring at the ERWHS

Box 4. Joy Teahe collects and compiles data on invasive species

"After graduating from university, I found it hard to find a job in town, so I went back home. A few times our community high school asked me to do some work for them like typing exam papers and other admin work. Then when this project started, I submitted my letter of interest to the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association to work on the rodent control program. I was happy that they accepted it.

Basically, my work is to collect monitoring data from the Rangers and compile and enter them in Excel. Sometimes I argue with Rangers when they don't write the data properly and that makes it hard for me to enter the data. But we always help each other, and once I am satisfied with their reports, I also liaise with the Local Project Coordinator who checks their Timesheets.

When I started my work in entering data, I used to fill the data on sheets of paper which was very tiring. I am very thankful that the Coordinator allows me to use the project laptop. As a result, I have really improved my skills in using a laptop and know how to properly record data. I understand the different functions of Excel and other programs. Not only that, but I have also learnt a lot about the endemic birds and the importance of protecting our environment from harmful predators.

The only challenge I see is getting more women to be part of the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association Committee. Otherwise, this project is indeed supporting us to gain more knowledge about monitoring and collecting data. If this project is extended, or if there's any more projects like this, I will encourage and recommend more ladies to be engaged."

The skills and knowledge acquired by the rangers through the training provided by BirdLife International has continued to cascade down to community members. There are at least 70 Indigenous community members engaged in the monitoring programme, 30 percent of which are women from the four communities. There is a notable increase in the number of women that are getting involved. Women are able to get involved because the project continues to navigate gender norms in communities in culturally sensitive ways, and ensures the women have the support of their community. BirdLife International has appointed a female staff member to co-lead the project. Having a female staff member has meant the women in the village have a woman they trust and can go to, to talk about the project and raise any issues with.

LTWHSA Local Project Coordinator & Hutuna Ranger Presley during a monitoring session

Box 5. Presley Noatangu is a full time Ranger in this project

"Working on this project was not something I had planned at first. During the first month of the project, I was engaged as a village casual along with many others, and I found it very fascinating to collect monitoring data in the rodent treatment plots. I was shy at first, but I was so happy when I was recruited as a community Ranger. I like this project because it increases my knowledge on birds. I also support the Lake Tegano World Heritage Site Association by putting data from our village treatment and non-treatment plots into excel and I can produce graphs to see the actual areas that are most affected by rodents. I love this job!

The wages that I earned through this project is helping me to support my basic needs and to provide food for my mother and grannies. I have learnt a lot from this project, especially understanding how rodents are the main threats to our endemic birds. I have also seen how they attack bird nests. Collecting biodiversity and crop data through the monitoring forms is a new thing I learnt. And for the first time, I handled a GPS and compass. Through our work as Rangers, it has taught me how to use these instruments, and I know it will be helpful for me to take part in other projects in the future."

In addition to gender inclusion, the project is committed to disability inclusion. At the beginning of 2023, LTWHSA recruited Presley Noatangu, a 26 year old man from Hutuna Village with a speech impediment who faced challenges communicating and participating in village duties. Presley is exceptionally talented with computers and has taken on the role of producing bait grid maps for the control plots for the rangers. He also has skills in identifying birds on Rennell Island and participates fully in the bird monitoring programme. Presley serves as both the ranger for Hutuna Village and manages the church office and grocery shop in the village. His contributions to the project have helped to highlight the skills he has, which otherwise would not have been recognised much by the communities. The LTWHSA is actively promoting the increased participation of marginalised and disadvantaged individuals from their communities.

Lessons learned

Gender roles within the community had a strong influence on what men and women did in the project and their availability. It was therefore important for project managers from BirdLife International to listen, learn and understand these roles and value the way communities organise themselves. In the case of the ERWHS, women were able to navigate the gender dynamics within their community in safe ways, and get support for participating in the project. The project is being designed to ensure there is not a disproportionate burden of work on any group, and especially women.

Inclusion of a person with a disability in the ranger monitoring program has helped to highlight the important role they can play in any project, and the additional/valuable contribution they can make to their community. Furthermore it is helping to break down barriers and stigmatism that can exist around disability in rural communities.

It is important that the project is intentional about inclusion, but in culturally sensitive ways. Rather than shying away from this, the project welcomed the engagement of everyone from the community and this led to men in the community proposing that women needed the opportunity to be part of the project.

Taveuni Island, Fiji

Case Study: Supporting women and youth leadership on mangrove reforestation on Taveuni Island, Fiji

Project name: Kiwa Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change (PEBACC+)

Organisations: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Project site: Navakacoa, Qeleni village, Taveuni Island, Fiji

Background

Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) approaches are increasingly being used in the Pacific region to build the resilience of local communities to climate change through the protection or restoration of ecosystems. However, to be effective, there is a need for a coherent national response to climate change that integrates social, economic and ecological approaches across all sectors and at all levels of society. There is also a need to map ecosystem services and assess how they can build adaptive capacity and contribute to resilient outcomes at community and national level. The Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change Plus (PEBACC+) project works to reduce the vulnerability of coastal communities and ecosystems to climate change by investing in EbA. From 2015-2020, the project trialled a systematic approach for identifying and prioritising EbA options based on analysis of social and ecological factors in the context of climate change and non-climate change threats in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The approach involved conducting ecosystem and socio-economic resilience analysis and mapping studies and EbA options assessments. These were then used to work with local communities to develop EbA implementation plans for selected options, which were then implemented as demonstration projects.

PEBACC+ builds on these earlier efforts and its successes and aims to: (1) develop, support and institutionalise the ecosystem-based approach to

The Navakacoa Youth Club and the Navakacoa Women's Group during World Environment Day where they planted 300 coastal plants that would replace plants recently cleared to extend Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) electricity powerlines. A beach cleanup and extension planting of over 4,000 mangrove trees followed to restore and rehabilitate mangroves.

Members of the Navakacoa Youth Club and the Navakacoa Women's Group during a replanting initiative of 300 coastal plants during World Environment Day

climate change adaptation in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna; (2) consolidate the EbA experience on historical demonstration sites and expand it to new areas, in order to diversify adaptation options and reach New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna. These activities will contribute to the institutionalisation of EbA at the national and local levels and ensure its sustainability; and (3) strengthen regional cooperation among Pacific Island countries and territories by sharing experiences and lessons learned, and promote and replicate the project concept to increase the resilience of Pacific communities to climate change.

Good practice for implementing the principle

This case study focuses on GEDSI in mangrove restoration efforts, and specifically the inclusion of marginalised or underrepresented groups. PEBACC+ is working with women and youth from the Nakavacoa community, in Taveuni, Fiji, to have a voice in project planning, decision-making and implementation

on mangrove restoration efforts in their village and across their district. By supporting women's empowerment and engaging youth, communities can effectively address environmental challenges while also advancing equality and intergenerational rights to a clean and healthy environment.

Mangrove restoration in Nakavacoa is being spearheaded by a group of Indigenous women, demonstrating their leadership and agency. These women are actively involved in planning, implementing, and monitoring the project, ensuring that their needs, learnings and priorities are reflected. They are investing in mangrove restoration to address coastal inundation affecting their village, and to improve and maintain their fisheries, which they are dependent on for subsistence. This builds on their understanding of the importance of mangroves to the health, wellbeing, and livelihoods of the island's communities. The Nakavacoa women believe regrowing mangroves that have been cleared, will contribute to improved coastal resilience, increased biodiversity, economic benefits, and enhanced community cohesion.

Some of the approaches used by PEBACC+ to engage and work with women included creating inclusive spaces for women and girls to participate; for example, holding meetings at times that did not interfere with women's domestic and care duties. The project also supports the women to be leaders and role models for young women; for example, the women invited their families to attend tree planting sessions and encouraged children to be involved. The selection of mangrove restoration sites is being done in consultation with women and men, to ensure accessibility for all. Prioritising wider community engagement promotes a sense of ownership and support for healthy mangroves in the village boundary, ensuring that such initiatives remain relevant and sustainable.

Mikaele Tawake, a male advocate, played a crucial role in breaking down gender stereotypes by advocating for women's leadership in mangrove growing within the village and across the district (9 villages and 2 settlements). He made an effort to support and invited young men and women to be active in the project. Early on in the project, Mika approached the Navakacoa Women's Group and the Navakacoa Youth Club, sharing with them learnings from past efforts on the island to grow mangroves, including what worked and what had not, with the aim to inform women and youth about the potential of mangrove reforestation in their community. At the provincial council meeting,

Navakacoa Youth and Women's Group doing mangrove replanting at Naisogo Point, Taveuni in Fiji under the Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change plus (PEBACC+) project funded by Kiwa Initiative and the French Facility for Global Environment.

Box 6. Women's perspectives on mangrove habitats

"Awareness has reached the village on the importance of mangroves. Over the years, with the disappearance of mangroves, we see many changes. One of them is the levels the waves are reaching our shorelines, moving further inland and eroding our coast. This is because mangroves are not there like before to function as wave barriers." - Ana Tumaivei, women group representative.

"I'm a fisherwoman and when I go out to sea to fish, I don't think much about the importance of mangroves along our shoreline; even when I fish near the mangroves, I would pull or cut one down so I can use it to make a place to rest. But after I learned the importance of mangroves especially as a home for fish, it changed the way I treated these coastal plants. About three or four years ago I attended a training course where I learned the functions of mangroves and their importance. We were also taught to plant and replant mangroves, and we did so that year, about 3000 mangroves were planted." - Elenoa Sisilia, women's group representative.

Mikaele Tawake (right in white tshirt) with the Navakacoa Youth Club at Naisogo Point doing extension planting of over 4,000 mangrove trees to restore and rehabilitate mangroves

Manasa Vula © Kiwa Initiative - 2024

Box 7. Youth perspectives on mangrove restoration

"I often dive and I see the change in our marine environment. We would normally find a lot of fish and big ones close by but now we go further out to find big fish. Our forefathers used to find big fish so close to shore but now our time, we go further out due to the changing climate. With these types of initiatives like mangrove replanting, we hope to see what our forefathers used to see." - Pelasio Raibia, president of the youth group.

"Mangrove replanting is such an important initiative especially when we're seeing the change in our climate. These initiatives will not only benefit us, but they will also benefit the generations after us. This initiative can hopefully help us bring back marine species that have disappeared from our reef such as fish." - Kelevi Naulu, youth group representative.

dominated by men, traditional leaders are becoming aware of the women's group as advocates for mangrove health, as Mikaele provides an update of Navakacoa's mangrove restoration efforts and as news spreads to surrounding villages.

Youth from Nakavacoa were also actively engaged to participate in the project, contributing their energy, creativity, and local knowledge. Young fishers from the village mentioned to the project team that they noticed less fish in their fishing grounds and had to go out further to find more fish. They shared their concern that coastal resources would not be available to them when they are older. Mika worked to enhance the skills and knowledge of young women and men in the village on the benefits of mangroves, technical know-how of restoration, including seedling health and species, and environmental conservation. By committing to a GEDSI approach, PEBACC+ is fostering intergenerational collaboration, allowing older and younger members of the village (women and men) to share their knowledge and experiences with fishing in their community for subsistence and semi-subsistence use, as well as monitoring together how effective their efforts with mangrove reforestation have been, so that they can adapt.

The mangrove restoration efforts in Nakavacoa serve as a valuable case study for demonstrating how GEDSI can improve the effectiveness of EbA in addressing climate change challenges. By leveraging the knowledge and experience gained from past demonstration sites, efforts were made to diversify adaptation options and reach a wider range of vulnerable communities, ensuring its sustainability and integration into long-term development plans.

Lessons learned

1

The inclusion of women and youth enabled a wider diversity of community members to be involved in the project. Community-led initiatives can empower local residents, particularly women and youth, and provide them with opportunities for leadership and economic development. The ability to learn from mistakes and adapt strategies, including GEDSI practices, is crucial for successful conservation efforts. The project built on the lessons learned from previous attempts, such as earlier efforts on establishing a mangrove nursery.

2

The importance of sharing traditional knowledge and cultural systems often have strong social support components, which can help to foster community engagement and support, and emphasise sustainability and long-term ecological balance. Involving women's groups and youth groups as leaders and promoting their efforts, aids in shifting gender and youth stereotypes to recognising women's and youth contribution to a healthy environment.

3

The role of male advocates in breaking down gender barriers and promoting women's leadership is highlighted. Supporting women and youth and encouraging their participation in conservation efforts helped to create a more inclusive and equitable environment and may challenge traditional norms about the role of women and youth in environmental conservation.

Acknowledgements

The PEBACC+ Project is implemented by SPREP with funding from the Kiwa Initiative and the French Facility for Global Environment. The four-year project that started in 2022 is being implemented in Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Wallis-and-Futuna. This project is a continuation of phase one of the PEBACC project, funded by the International Climate Initiative and implemented from 2015 to 2020 by SPREP in Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

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Consultation with women on Gau Island

Principle 3. GEDSI analysis to inform project design and implementation

Case Study: Gender analysis to inform project design and implementation on Gau Island, Fiji and Fatu Hiva Island, French Polynesia

Project name: Kiwa INvasive SPecies Management for Resilient Ecosystems and SocietiEs (INSPIRE)

Organisations: BirdLife International is working in partnership with NatureFiji-MareqetiViti (Fiji), Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie (French Polynesia)

Project sites: Gau Island (Fiji), Fatu Hiva Island (French Polynesia)

Background

Island systems have suffered disproportionately from invasive species, accounting for half to two-thirds of all species extinctions. Invasive species are a key threat to marine and terrestrial biodiversity and the livelihoods of Pacific Island communities. To date more than 1,500 Pacific Island species, including endemics, are threatened by invasive species. Pacific species are also directly impacted by subsistence and commercial agriculture, forestry, and infrastructure, in addition to indirectly impacting underlying ecosystem

services and functions and the cultural practices of communities. Such impacts will continue to be further exacerbated with climate change, affecting the resilience of ecosystems, biodiversity, and communities.

The eradication, suppression and prevention of invasive species as a nature-based solution protects and regenerates biodiversity and restores ecosystem services, while improving the livelihoods of local communities through better access to food and natural resources, improved health and wellbeing, and enhanced opportunities for economic development. INSPIRE's objective is to enhance and mainstream invasive species management for climate change adaptation in priority biodiversity sites in the Pacific, specifically in Fiji, French Polynesia, Palau and Samoa. The project has three main components: (1) establishment of project teams and engagement of local stakeholders in biosecurity and invasive species management at the selected sites; (2) establishment of national and regional peer-learning networks for island ecosystem resilience through invasive species management; and (3) influencing the development of key local, national and regional strategies, policies and emerging opportunities to mainstream IAS management in nature-based solutions. BirdLife International and its partners are committed to supporting and integrating GEDSI and broader human rights within INSPIRE.

Good practice for implementing the principle

A GEDSI analysis provides information that can be used to design interventions to ensure nature-based solutions provide equitable benefits for every member of the community. This case study focuses on how INSPIRE is collecting data and information to better understand the gender division of labour within communities in Fiji and French Polynesia. Understanding the gender division of labour is essential when designing and implementing nature-based solutions because it directly influences how different groups interact with natural resources and ecosystems, and the time individual groups might have to engage on the INSPIRE project.

Gau Island, Fiji

An assessment was conducted in 2023 to assess the feasibility of IAS management on Gau Island in Fiji, and identify feasible activities that will increase the resilience of the people, species, and ecosystems to the effects of global human-induced climate change. Household surveys and whole-of-village consultation workshops were conducted in Navukailagi, Vione and Qarani in Navukailagi District. The household surveys collected data on gender, age, sources of livelihood, social, cultural, and economic activities and aspirations, alongside their perceptions of ecological and biodiversity threats, invasive species, and climate change resilience activities. Whole-of-village workshops were held in community halls to gather insights and perspectives of the villagers by grouping participants into elder men, elder women, young women and young men. The groups discussed and answered questions about invasive species threats and management, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services, livelihood, land use, climate change adaptation, gender and social services and economic development. Ample time was provided for group members to complete their discussions, articulate their views, and present back to the other three groups.

The collection and analysis of disaggregated data provided insights into the different roles of women and men (young and old) within their communities which were highly gendered. For example, women from Navukailagi Village were involved in mat weaving, reef and estuarine fishing, sewing and cooking and community work, while men went out pig hunting, deep sea fishing and diving, and managed their crop plantations. In addition to being responsible for household duties and care, women also take on a number of other roles in their communities. For example women from Qarani Village took on roles such as village nurse, and participated in church and provincial events. Some of the needs groups identified were also highly gendered. For example women from Vione needed access to healthcare services, including prenatal and postnatal care, family planning, and general medical care, as well as resources such as land, credit, and technology to improve economic opportunities for them. Many of the women who lacked formal education highlighted their need for education and training programmes to enable them to develop new skills and knowledge. This is particularly important for women who are engaged in farming, fishing, and other traditional activities, as they may lack formal education and training. In contrast, men from Navukailagi village requested leadership training to better implement the decisions made by the village chief and other leaders, and work with influencers within communities.

Conducting surveys in Omoa Village in French Polynesia

Fatu Hiva Island, French Polynesia

The Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie has been working 15 years in the Omoa catchment, on Fatu Hiva Island in French Polynesia to protect the Fatu Hiva Monarch. A socioeconomic survey (i.e. key informant interviews) were conducted in the village to understand women and men's perspectives on the INSPIRE project, an understanding of how IAS impacts people, and to collect data on their current livelihoods. The information is valuable for partnering with the community and will inform nature-based solutions interventions with the community.

With few employment opportunities the population in Omoa Village is highly skewed, with few young people (15-35 years) and the majority of the population is 50+ years. The study found that levels of employment and unemployment did not differ significantly between women and men, with both also engaging in the informal economy. Interestingly, there was no notable difference between the average salary of women and men. However, there was a strong gender division of labour in the household where women were responsible for domestic and care duties. Despite the higher workload of women, there was still a high interest in participating in the INSPIRE project with more than 90 percent of women responding favourably. The study found that due to domestic and care duties, women had very specific times in a day when they were available to participate in INSPIRE, including taking on new livelihoods. Both women and men, particularly those unemployed or with low earnings, had similar ideas and interest in terms of livelihoods (e.g. plant nursery for coconut regeneration and trees used for handicrafts, ecotourism, dried fruit, honey), suggesting there is an opportunity for the project to focus on family-led livelihoods, where women and men can work together.

The study also highlighted the gendered aspects of working with IAS. When it comes to rats, this IAS affects women and men differently. For men, the rats largely impacted their livelihoods, and specifically copra livelihoods and coconut regeneration efforts. Women largely talked about the impact rats had in their homes and the diseases they brought. These responses highlight the importance of understanding women and men's perspectives on IAS and not making assumptions that they are affected in the same way.

Lessons learned

1

In seeking to gain GEDSI insights through a project baseline survey, it is important to remember that the design of the survey will determine the quality of the data collected, which ultimately has implications on how the data is interpreted. Effort should be made to invest in a design that ensures that the knowledge, attitudes and practices of different groups within a community are captured and understood. This will ensure nature-based solutions interventions reflect the GEDSI analysis and considerations at project sites.

2

While great effort was made to collect data that was disaggregated by gender and age (in the case of Fiji), the analysis and reporting of gender-disaggregated data remains challenging for researchers and practitioners with limited experience conducting GEDSI analysis. Further analysis of the data (possibly with the support of a GEDSI expert) would better elucidate the gender dimensions of the two studies. Furthermore, recommendations arising from GEDSI analysis or broader socioeconomic surveys should consider gender dynamics and relations in communities, and GEDSI-specific needs of individuals and groups within communities.

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Women from Lian-Lidu, Timor Leste, traveling out to monitor their LMMA site

Principle 3. GEDSI analysis to inform project design and implementation

Case study: Collection and analysis of disaggregated data informs project design and implementation in Timor Leste, Solomon Islands and Fiji

Project name: Kiwa Initiative Local Projects Component

Organisations: Community-Centred Conservation (C3), BirdLife International, Blue Ventures

Project sites: Hera, Behau (Ilimano), Lian-Lidu and Marmer villages (Timor Leste), Raviravi, East Rennell Island (Solomon Islands), Navidamu and Qaranivai villages (Fiji)

Background

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) works with the Kiwa Initiative to strengthen resilience to climate change in Pacific Island countries and territories, by funding nature-based solutions that involve protecting, sustainably managing, and restoring biodiversity. IUCN manages the portfolio of very small, small, and medium-sized grants (€25,000 to €400,000) available to Pacific civil-society organisations.The specific objective of this funding is to improve access to funding targeting nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation in the Pacific while mainstreaming gender equality and a human rights-based approach. The Kiwa Initiative's Local

Projects Component lists 18 eligible countries with grants currently awarded to 11 countries with a total of 17 grant recipients under the first call for proposals. These projects run from 12 to 24 months and are focused on restoration of terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems, agroforestry, protected and conserved areas, sustainable use and management of natural resources, community-based management, and invasive alien species management.

Good practice for implementing the principle

This case study explores how medium-sized grants are using the findings from GEDSI analysis to guide the design and implementation of nature-based solutions. A GEDSI analysis can help examine how gender roles, norms, and power relations affect the lives of women and men in all their diversity. It is a systematic process that helps identify how differences and inequalities impact individuals and communities. Disaggregated data is a key part of undertaking a GEDSI analysis to support the success of nature-based solutions projects. By disaggregating data by social factors or characteristics such as sex, gender, age, (dis)ability, ethnicity, etc., project teams can start to identify disparities, vulnerabilities, and opportunities. The information gained from a GEDSI analysis is essential for tailoring nature-based solutions to meet the specific needs of different groups in the project community, ensuring that benefits are equitably distributed, and maximising the project's overall impact. Additionally, disaggregated data helps monitor progress, measure outcomes, and identify areas for improvement, ultimately contributing to more effective and sustainable nature-based solutions initiatives.

This case study provides three examples of projects from Timor Leste, Solomon Islands, and Fiji that are undertaking GEDSI analysis and are using disaggregated data to better design and implement nature-based solutions. This approach has helped identify the unique challenges faced by women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups within their respective projects. By tailoring nature-based solutions interventions to the specific needs of different groups, the projects can better ensure benefits are distributed equitably, thereby enhancing their overall impact. IUCN provides ongoing capacity-building assistance to grantees, including monitoring of their Environment and Social Risk Management Systems which includes GEDSI data or related information.

East Rennell Island, Lake Tegano, Hutuna Village Local Ranger Mr. Presley Noatangu developing a baiting grid map for the Hutuna garden plot

In Timor Leste, Blue Ventures used tools such as the 'time-use survey', and 'problem tree analysis' as part of their GEDSI analysis. The time-use survey requires participants to describe their main tasks and responsibilities over a typical 24-hour period. The information helps to visualise how women and men allocate their time between different activities, providing insights into their daily lives. The data showed that women had to invest more time to travel further out of their communities to source food and to fish for livelihoods which raised concerns about their personal safety and the impact this had on their other duties (e.g. care of their children and elderly family members). The findings helped make other community members aware of the high workload of women and provided the opportunity to discuss how to better share the tasks and responsibilities within their homes so that women have the time to participate in nature-based solutions, such as mangrove restoration and monitoring. These insights led to the development of targeted interventions, such as the introduction of women-led mangrove restoration projects, which

Women from the Navatudua Women's Club, dedicated three days to potting and planting mangroves within their communities

not only contributed towards the management of coastal erosion within their communities but also provided alternative income-generating activities for women. The problem tree analysis tool was used to map the causes and effects of a particular issue; in this case coastal erosion and the deteriorating state of their mangrove sites. The problem tree allowed different community members to map causes and effects to better understand the chain of connected circumstances that led to the current situation. Using the tree as a metaphor, they can separate the causes (roots) from the effects (branches) of a central issue (trunk). Using this tool, participants unpacked and analysed their environmental issues or challenges, discussed the impact it had on different groups within the communities, and identified strategies to address their issues. Data collected from villages were disaggregated by sex, age, single-headed households, and information collected on species of mangroves planted, distance to the nearest school, health centre, types of transportation available, and main sources of livelihoods.

In East Rennell Island, a vulnerability assessment led by BirdLife International highlighted the exclusion of persons with disabilities from traditional community decision-making processes. This prompted the project to establish inclusive community consultation mechanisms, ensuring that the voices of all community members were heard and the nature-based solutions interventions were accessible to everyone. Currently, the project has employed a youth with disability to manage their community-based, bird database, this decision has also helped inform the inclusion of disability-related perspectives into the project's implementation and planning (see Case Study 2).

Raviravi, Navidamu, and Qaranivai villages have each established a locally managed marine area encompassing at least 10 hectares of mangrove habitat. C3 used the time use survey and problem tree analysis to better understand the existing vulnerabilities and root causes of mangrove deforestation and alternative livelihood options. The communities identified the lack of livelihood options and therefore for conservation efforts to be effective there needed to be an alternative livelihood option for families; this is because communities rely on mangroves as a source of firewood for cooking and use harvesting marine life from mangrove forests for food. This allowed the community and C3 to sit together and develop a management plan for the locally-managed marine area. The management plan included a livelihood; specifically, using biogas as an alternative fuel source and its by-products as a source of income for families including organic liquid fertilisers for backyard gardens. Collecting disaggregated data was useful to examine how the management plan and specific interventions impacted various community members differently. The main source of cooking fuel used (i.e. firewood, gas stove, kerosene stove), the main source of livelihoods was

examined through disaggregated data collected on sex and (dis)ability (mostly physical). The data showed women were the primary collectors of firewood and responsible for food preparation, and persons with disabilities within the community who may have limited mobility face additional challenges in accessing firewood for cooking or livelihood options. So, introducing biogas as an alternative fuel reduced family dependency on firewood (and mangrove deforestation), which improved the lives of women and persons with disabilities.

Lessons learned

1

The collection and analysis of disaggregated data allows projects to identify and address specific needs within communities. By designing interventions that target specific vulnerabilities, projects can ensure more inclusion, remain relevant to community needs, and achieve more equitable outcomes. Disaggregated data is not only useful in the initial stages of project design but also plays a critical role in monitoring progress and allows for necessary adjustments to be made based on that data. Continuous analysis of GEDSI factors also allows projects to remain responsive to the changing needs of communities.

2

The use of tools and practical examples to socialise the concept of GEDSI is effective, particularly in communities where there might be reservations with the use of conventional terms associated with gender and human rights. Therefore, it helps to translate terms in the local language and utilise practical examples, or good examples as a more comfortable approach during sessions.

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Students of the Navuso Agriculture Technical School at the Organic Learning Farm site

Principle 4. Investing in women's economic empowerment

Case Study: Investing in the economic empowerment of women farmers on Tongatapu and Vava'u islands, Tonga

Project name: Kiwa Pacific Organic Learning Farms Network (POLFN)

Organisations: POLFN is implemented by the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), 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.

Project sites: Mahuleva Organic Learning Farm Centre (Tongatapu Island) and Ovava Organic Learning Farm Centre (Vava'u Island), Tonga.

Background

The widespread use of chemical synthetic fertilisers and pesticides also in conventional farming practices has led to significant environmental degradation that is impacting Pacific Island communities. These chemicals contaminate water sources, harm ecosystems, and exacerbate the challenges of climate change. Additionally, conventional farming methods often deplete soil health and reduce biodiversity, leading to decreased agricultural productivity and increased vulnerability to pests and diseases. A shift towards nature-based and organic farming systems addresses these challenges. Using organic methods, farmers can improve soil health through intercropping, composting,

and minimal tillage, which provides nature-based solutions such as enhancing soil fertility and reducing risk of erosion. Additionally, they can protect water quality by implementing practices such as watershed management, rainwater harvesting, contour farming, preventing pollution and maintaining clean water sources. Furthermore, organic farming conserves and enhances biodiversity by creating and maintaining habitats for wildlife, supporting pollinators, natural pest control and promoting crop diversity, leading to improved soil fertility, pest control and nutrient cycling. Moreover, it can mitigate climate change by sequestering carbon in the soil and increasing the resilience of agricultural systems to climate change impacts.

By transitioning to organic farming, farmers, including women, can improve environmental sustainability, and enhance food security, adapt to climate change, and promote biodiversity conservation, thereby strengthening the overall resilience of agricultural systems. Organic farming can be a powerful tool for women's economic empowerment in the Pacific region. Women's economic empowerment means supporting women to feel empowered to participate fully in the economy, make informed financial choices, and contribute to their communities. By providing women organic farmers with access to training, resources, and markets, organic farming can create new economic opportunities and strengthen their livelihoods. The Pacific Organic Learning Farms Network (POLFN) is an initiative focused on developing organic farming systems within an agroecological framework, for food security, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity conservation with smallholder producers. This includes actively involving and supporting women in all aspects of the programme to address the specific challenges faced by women farmers, increase their access to resources and opportunities, and strengthen the overall resilience of agricultural communities in the Pacific region. The network supports demonstration sites in four Pacific Island countries (Fiji, Nauru, Tonga and Solomon Islands) to facilitate co-learning among farmers about the benefits of biodiversity, agroecology, agroforestry and financially viable organic production methods and technologies for climate resilience.

Farm tour at the Launch of the Mahuleva Organic Learning Farm Center, Tonga

Good practice for implementing the principle

Gender inclusion helps to reduce social inequalities by addressing the specific challenges faced by women in the Pacific region. By providing women with access to resources, training, and support, but also by developing economic opportunities specifically targeted for young women, POLFN works to create a level playing field and support women to participate fully in the agricultural sector, increasing their ability to participate in household decisions. This can lead to more relevant and sustainable outcomes, such as the development of gender-inclusive value chain that support long-term financial sustainability and environmental conservation.

POLFN's Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (hereafter "GSI Strategy") prioritises implementing gender and social inclusion practices throughout its project activities to enhance its reach, impact, and benefits while contributing to reducing social inequalities. Training approaches and learning materials and methodologies are adapted to address the specific needs and challenges of different social groups. A broader perspective on livelihoods and welfare, particularly in areas where women play a key role, is also considered. Women's economic empowerment may also require individuals to step out of traditional gender roles and stereotypes to contribute more effectively to household and community livelihoods.

Established in 2023, the POLFN learning centres in Mahuleva and Ovava in Tonga, play a significant role in supporting women farmers, to adopt organic farming practices and strengthen their livelihoods in agriculture. Roots crops are vital for food security and income in Tonga, and are traditionally managed by men. However, challenges such as out-migration, ageing farmer populations, and climate change have led to a growing trend of women taking on increased agricultural roles. POLFN support them in developing other agricultural products, that can be grown close by the household, such as vegetables, fruits, aromatics, spices or medicinal plants. The project also aims at providing necessary equipment and training for women to process organic food, developing new value chains. The objective is to offer economic opportunities to young women and that they can play a key role in Tonga's agriculture.

While it is true that traditional gender roles in Tonga have often placed the primary responsibility for agriculture on men, it's important to note that more women are becoming involved in agriculture, particularly in recent years.

Navuso Tuiaimeiapi, Farm Advisor, Mahuleva Organic Learning Farm Center, Tonga

Vilimaina Tamata, SPC POETCom © Kiwa Initiative - 2024

Box 8. Perspectives on women in agriculture

"Women in agriculture benefit our community and families. As women and mothers, we are naturally obligated to take care of our families. Women in agriculture do not mean that we compete with men in agriculture, but we do so to ensure that the wellbeing of our families and children is sustained." - Melesila Weilert

"According to traditional knowledge and cultural living in Tongan society, we treat our women as the "queens" of the family, contrary to most countries in the Pacific and the world. This is why it is new for some people to accept that women should be out and about on the farms but rather stay at home while the men carry out the hard duty and labour of farming and providing for the family. However, nowadays, women are starting to participate in farming. Even though that is our cultural way of living, we support these women in our community, and I hope all communities support them, too." - Sio Tuiano

"... on commercial farming and food security, and we are trying to incorporate traditional knowledge as methods of organic farming. For example, as women, we do not have the strength to maintain the weeds on our farms, but we understand that on every new moon, the shrubs and weeds die out, so we use that traditional knowledge to help us maintain our farms and provide food security for our community." - Melesila Weilert

At the Ovava Learning Farm in Vava'u, access to the Organic Learning Farm centre has been extended to all women in surrounding villages and islands, encouraging them to participate in organic farming, and ensuring they have access to farming plots for subsistence or semi-commercial farming. POLFN further works to create a supportive environment for women farmers by providing access to resources, training, and mentorship. The learning centres offer practical training in organic farming techniques and processing, enabling women to learn from experienced farmers, including women, to explore new practices, crops and processed products, and provide a platform and equipment for farmer-to-farmer exchange on traditional knowledge practices. Creating a network of farmers, including women supporting each other, enhances the environment for women's economic empowerment.

Sesili Sinipata, participant at the Mahuleva Organic Learning Farm Center, Tonga

Women in Tonga initially faced significant barriers to participating in the Pacific Organic Learning Farms Network (POLFN) First Circle Farmers (FCFs) training, largely due to limited access to land and the legal restrictions on land ownership for women. Indeed, Tonga is the only Pacific nation with legislation barring women from owning land by 1875 law, which allows only men to inherit land. As a result, only 10% of the FCF participants were women. Recognizing this imbalance, the POLFN team identified this as a critical concern. In alignment with its commitment to promoting women's involvement in agriculture and cultivating gender equity in the Pacific, the project revised its participation criteria to include women farmers regardless of their direct access to land. This adjustment aims to ensure more inclusive opportunities and greater representation of women within the network by:

- Inviting the household to the project activities and not only the register farmer
- Targeting specifically women's group and association (legal entity instead of physical person)
- Proposing training on crops that are traditionally grown by women and on food processing, another activity traditionally lead by women.

One significant learning of supporting women's economic empowerment through organic farming, came from reviewing the application process for interested farmers. POLFN noted the limitation of land ownership as a precondition to participation. In reflecting on enabling more access to women and men to the Organic Learning Farms in Tonga, POLFN is changing its reference from "smallholder" farms to "family owned" farms, in recognition that farms in Tonga are a family/communal-oriented enterprise, including women and other family members. There are plans to extend available training slots to women in farmer families. This shift is significant in POLFN's understanding of processes for inclusion in Tongan society, and recognising opportunities to extend training and mentoring to women.

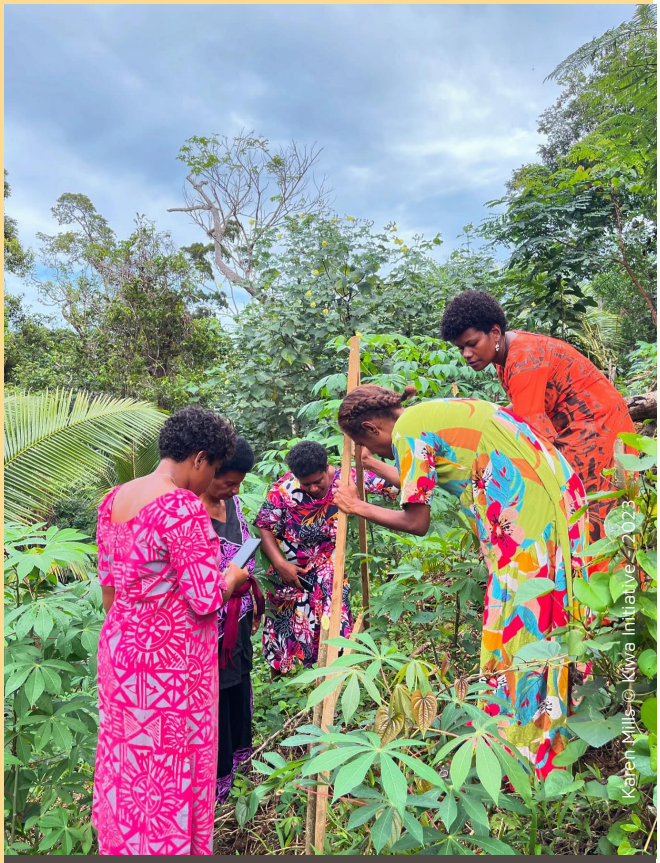
Box 9. Karen Mills reflections on sharing her knowledge and experience with local farmers

Karen Mills is a farm advisor at the Mudrenicagi Organic Learning Farm Centre in Fiji. She shared her shift towards organic farming.

> *"When my husband and I returned to Fiji in 2015 we made a commitment to ourselves and our land to farm organically. We started with very little organic farming knowledge and very little support from our Agriculture officers. As we've gained knowledge and experience, we wanted to be able to share our knowledge with our community. Our goal was to be able to develop a local training centre that demonstrated organic farming techniques sustainably. When we saw the expression of interest for the POLFN project, we knew that the program was perfectly aligned with our goals. Our farm was fortunate to be selected as an OLF."*

As Karen gained knowledge and experience in organic farming, she recognised the importance of sharing her expertise with the community. The Pacific Organic Learning Farms Network (POLFN) project provided the perfect opportunity to establish a local training centre that demonstrated sustainable organic farming techniques.

Karen's role as a farm advisor has been instrumental in guiding farmers towards adopting agroecological practices. She oversees the implementation of capital projects, leads farmer-led research trials and trainings, and supports the First Circle Farmer program. She has developed innovative training methods, including farmer-led field schools, talanoa sessions, and farm site visits, to cater to the diverse needs of farmers. One of Karen's significant achievements has been the successful implementation of organic farming techniques through training programs. Participants have learned about composting, mulching, chop and drop, and agroforestry, and many have applied these techniques on their own farms. She shared a **success story from their FCF training.**



Organic farmer participants using the A-frame for contour farming at the Mudrenicagi Organic Learning Farm Centre, Fiji

> *"A young woman attended our first training with her brother and father. She was very quiet for the first couple of days but started participating more vocally by day 3 and very actively by the end of the 5th day. Back at the farm she is showing her other siblings and youth in her community how to make compost and has posted pictures on our facebook page of her large compost pile."*

Karen's leadership has also inspired and empowered women in agriculture. She actively promotes gender equality in her training programs, ensuring that all participants have equal opportunities to learn and contribute. Her success story has shown that women can play a vital role in leading and shaping the future of organic agriculture.

"I believe that any woman in a leadership role will influence and empower women by the example that they make; If I can do it, so can you. But I also believe that I need to ensure that women have an opportunity to participate in all training activities including discussion, answering questions, using tools, getting their hands dirty, etc. This means I need to be sensitive to the gender dynamics within a training group to make sure all participants are equitably involved. Sometimes that means handing a shovel to a female to dig a soil sample hole and sometimes it means handing the chopping knife to a male to chop off the marigold blossoms. As the instructor, I set the expectation that everyone will participate in all activities and that everyone gets a chance to try everything regardless of gender."

As Karen looks ahead, she plans to continue her efforts by organising farmer-led field schools, conducting talanoa sessions, and creating educational resources in both English and Fijian.

"I think that there are many amazing women in Agriculture, I'm just one of many female farmers. We had one full group of women attending our training who are having success growing market vegetables. We also had some amazing women from Taveuni who are also successful farmers. Traditionally women grow food for their family and take their surplus to their local market for sale. So often these women are not seen as farmers. We need to shine the spotlight on these women who feed their families and their communities and not just recognise the farmers (typically male) who farm the root crops."

Lessons learned

1

Inspired by Karen's example and by capacity building to increase inclusiveness, POLFN aims at ensuring training programmes meet the needs of women farmers. By adapting to address the unique challenges of women and providing ongoing support, the programme is significantly enhancing their confidence and skills in sustainable agricultural practices.

2

Creating a welcoming and enabling environment for women farmers is essential for their success and participation. Such an environment encourages and fosters collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and ensures that women have equal access to resources and opportunities within the agricultural sector.

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Lani Drecala, Organic Farmer Participant on her family farm in Suweni village, Cakaudrove Province, Fiji

Box 10. Fuatino Fatiaki's reflections on agroecological organic learning hubs and supporting women farmers

Fuatino Fatiaki, the Agroecology and Organic Production Systems Officer at the Pacific Organic Learning Farms Network Project (POLFN), plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable agriculture in the region. Her primary focus is on researching and disseminating best practices in agroecology, tailored to the specific needs of Pacific farmers. Through the POLFN, Fuatino is working towards establishing agroecological organic learning hubs. These hubs serve as platforms for farmers to exchange knowledge, access information, and connect with markets. She also oversees research collaborations, ensuring that farmers' needs are at the forefront of the research process.

One of Fuatino's key research areas is farmer-led research in Tonga, Nauru, Solomon Islands, and Fiji. These studies address critical challenges faced by organic farmers, such as market access, pest and disease control, and soil health. The findings from these research projects will provide valuable insights for improving organic farming practices in the Pacific. Her work has been instrumental in creating a supportive environment for female farmers and empowering them to participate fully in decision-making processes.

Fuatino recognises that female farmers in the Pacific region face unique challenges in the context of organic and agroecological farming. These challenges include lack of access to organic agricultural training, limited access to capital, and restricted opportunities to contribute to agricultural production decision-making. To address these challenges, POLFN has implemented several strategies. Prioritising female farmer cluster groups within the project, ensure their active participation and representation. Additionally,

Participant at the Mahuleva Organic Learning Farm Center, Tonga

training programmes are specifically designed to meet the needs of female farmers, such as those focused on vegetable gardening, value addition, poultry, and biopesticides production.

Fuatino explains that the project supports women *"... by allowing their dependent children to accompany them, conducting all-women training sessions that initiate active learning and exchanges for women as well as prioritising female farmer cluster groups under the first circle of farmers"*.

Fuatino's commitment to gender equality extends beyond training programmes. She hopes her work will empower female farmers, promote their access to farm supplies, support value adding initiatives and facilitate market access. These efforts will help enable female farmers to enhance their livelihoods and build their economic independence.

Fuatino explains *"POLFN aims to provide female farmers as much support to empower them and enable female led value chains to help them build capital, raise their families and enable them a voice in decision making".*

Fuatino's future plans for the project include expanding research efforts and providing more support to female farmers. She believes that farmer-led research is essential for developing sustainable and adaptable agroecological practices in the Pacific. By empowering small-holder farmers, especially women, Fuatino is contributing to a more resilient and sustainable food system for the region.

MiCOAST Inception Workshop in Pohnpei

Principle 5. Developing a GEDSI strategy for projects

Case Study: GEDSI integration into community-based fisheries management

Project name: Kiwa Micronesian Community-based Fisheries Management as a nature-based solutions for COASTal resilience (MiCOAST)

Organisations: OneReef Worldwide Stewardship, Marshall Islands Conservation Society, Nauru Fisheries and Marine Resources Authority, Conservation Society of Pohnpei, Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organization, RARE, cChange

Project countries: Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau

Background

Small Island Developing States in the Pacific are increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, coastal erosion, and the degradation of vital ecosystems like coral reefs. These changes pose significant threats to food security, livelihoods, and cultural practices, particularly in communities that depend heavily on coastal fisheries. Nature-based solutions offer a promising path forward by integrating the sustainable management, protection, and restoration of ecosystems to address these societal challenges, enhancing both human wellbeing and the natural environment.

Imagine a world where local communities in Micronesia lead the transformation of their coastal fisheries management, embracing sustainability, and enhancing overall climate resilience and adaptation. The MiCOAST project embodies this vision, focusing on strengthening community-based fisheries management (CBFM) as a key nature-based solutions approach. CBFM can be considered a nature-based solution because it involves local communities in sustainably managing marine resources, enhancing ecosystem resilience, supporting climate adaptation, and providing socio-economic benefits. By partnering with local organisations and authorities across Micronesia, MiCOAST aims to promote sustainable fisheries practices, integrate climate-smart innovations, and scale up successful actions through dynamic collaborations.

However, achieving the successful implementation of nature-based solutions through CBFM requires scaling up adequate efforts, resources, and institutional support. It is crucial to prioritise traditional and site-based knowledge, local empowerment and governance, and community-driven practices. This approach not only bolsters the resilience of coastal ecosystems but also empowers communities to take ownership of natural resource management efforts, ensuring that fisheries remain productive and sustainable.

Good practice for implementing the principle

UNDP identifies the following principles and best practices for developing a GEDSI strategy for projects[30]:

Leadership Commitment: Ensure and encourage strong, visible commitment from leaders to integrate GEDSI into all aspects of the project's operations.

Inclusive Policy Frameworks: Develop and implement policies that reflect GEDSI principles and provide clear guidelines for action.

Capacity Building: Train staff at all levels to understand and apply GEDSI principles in their work.

Participatory Approach: Engage diverse stakeholders, including marginalised groups, in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish systems to track progress and assess the impact of GEDSI initiatives, ensuring continuous improvement.

Accountability Mechanisms: Create structures that allow individuals and project partners to hold themselves accountable for integrating and maintaining GEDSI principles.

Resource Allocation: Ensure adequate resources (financial, human, and technical) are allocated to support GEDSI initiatives.

Cultural Sensitivity: Adapt GEDSI approaches to respect and integrate local cultures and contexts[31].

Sustainability: Plan for the long-term sustainability of GEDSI efforts, beyond the life of projects, ensuring they are embedded into programs and institutional practices.

Developing a GEDSI strategy for the MiCOAST project means embedding these principles into the core operations, policies, and practices of the project and its partners. Participation in the Kiwa Initiative provides the unique opportunity to see how this could be integrated at a regional-level, while recognising the diversity of partner organisations and social contexts involved. The collaborative project spans four countries, multiple cultures, and varied communities across Micronesia, each with diverse and evolving needs.

Each partner organisation faces different GEDSI-related challenges and opportunities. Without a consistent approach, there is the possibility of an uneven application of these principles, which may lead to gaps or disparities in how effectively GEDSI goals are achieved across the project. A consistent approach ensures that all stakeholders are working within the same general framework, which promotes coherence and alignment in the project's objectives.

While there was a wealth of resources available to help partners understand and integrate GEDSI principles, the abundance of information made it difficult to

30 UNDP gender equality strategy is available at 2022-2025 https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-07/UNDP%20gender%20equality%20strategy%2C%202022-2025dp2022-18%20(1)_0.pdf

31 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2023) Applying Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion Principles in Agricultural Water Resources Management. https://www.fao.org/platforms/water-scarcity/Knowledge/knowledge-products/detail/applying-gender-equality--disability--and-social-inclusion-principles-in-agricultural-water-resources-management/en

Power Walk during MiCOAST inception workshop

know where to begin. This variability underscored the need for a structured, yet flexible and adaptive approach. Our strategy has been developed to be both broadly applicable to all MiCOAST project partners but specific enough that it can be tailored and adaptable to their specific contexts. By developing a nuanced strategy and framework, we ensured that each partner organisation could engage meaningfully with GEDSI principles, enabling effective and contextually appropriate implementation.

When considering nature-based solutions, the focus is on harnessing what already surrounds us—our environment, the strengths of individuals and communities, and the invaluable role of traditional knowledge and stewardship in society. We incorporated these elements into the design of our strategy and approach.

The application of a CBFM approach within a nature-based solution framework provides a holistic and integrated method for managing marine resources within Micronesian communities. By combining local knowledge, participatory governance, adaptive management, and ecosystem-based approaches, CBFM within a nature-based solutions framework strives to effectively address the intertwined challenges of sustainable resource use, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and responsible development. Planning and decision-making processes related to CBFM in this context should be inclusive and transparent, ensuring that all community members, including women, youth, and marginalised groups, have a voice in culturally appropriate ways. This inclusivity fosters equitable management and benefits, and can additionally enhance social cohesion and trust. This approach not only supports the ecological integrity and resilience of marine ecosystems, but also enhances community adaptation and empowers local stakeholders to take an active role in local resource management decisions, leading to more sustainable and equitable outcomes.

The GEDSI approach in the MiCOAST project has been an essential component in ensuring that the CBFM-nature-based solutions framework is both environmentally successful and sustainable and socially inclusive. Understanding that GEDSI is dynamic and context-specific, the approach emphasises the need for ongoing adaptation and responsiveness. The MiCOAST GEDSI approach prioritises cultural sensitivity, recognising that GEDSI is not a one-size-

fits-all model. Each partner organisation is supported in defining (and acting on) what GEDSI means within their specific context, ensuring that interventions are culturally appropriate and effective.

Each partner's GEDSI strategy will be dynamic and evolving, requiring continuous reflection, adaptation, and commitment. Some partners are considering these dimensions for the first time in a particular setting or circumstance; others have much more experience. The project will assist partners in starting or continuing their GEDSI voyage from where each organisation and staff are uniquely at. Along the way, the MiCOAST project will provide guidance and support to partners during implementation so that they can learn, pilot, test, apply and/or strengthen or modify approaches that suit their needs. This ongoing learning and application process ensures that the project remains relevant, inclusive, and equitable, maintaining the effectiveness of nature-based solutions interventions.

The MiCOAST GEDSI approach involves a phased and collaborative methodology to develop a MiCOAST project GEDSI voyage for each project partner. The phased approach works in a few ways, it allows people to visualise a full GEDSI voyage, and join in at a point that makes sense to them given their prior knowledge and experience of GEDSI. Different staff members in organisations can join at different points, and each experience the full voyage at their own pace. The phases create a sense of movement, growth, and dynamism, showing how progress is made by moving from one phase to the next.

The voyage is comprised of the following phases:

Building the GEDSI Reef
(Awareness)

Establishing the foundational structures and awareness for GEDSI within the project, akin to the formation of a coral reef as a base for further development.

Charting the GEDSI Waters
(Self-Assessment) Conducting assessments to understand current GEDSI efforts and identify needs and opportunities, similar to charting a course before navigating to a desired location.

Casting the GEDSI Net
(Action Plans)
Developing and implementing action plans based on previous assessments and making iterative improvements as new insights and opportunities emerged.

Navigating the GEDSI Tides
(Mainstreaming)
Ensuring that GEDSI strategies remained flexible and adaptable to evolving circumstances, akin to navigating changing tides.

At each phase we use a specific training module to delve into the topic deeper, using a variety of activities and tools. At the end of each module, we propose to work with partners to help them further modify these tools to their specific projects and cultural contexts. In this way we are increasing the GEDSI capacity of our partners by having them take ownership of their own tailored approach and resources, and assisting them in developing these approaches and resources as deep and detailed as they would like for their specific use. These resources can also be shared or even further co-generated with other interested stakeholders within a jurisdiction.

We anticipate that the outcomes of the GEDSI approach in the MiCOAST project will include:

Dynamic Adaptation: A flexible and adaptive GEDSI strategy that allows for ongoing refinement and responsiveness to new insights and challenges. Our design and GEDSI framework will continue to grow and adapt as our partners' technical and cultural expertise adds to the base layer design.

Enhanced GEDSI Integration: A more robust integration of GEDSI principles into the overall project's nature-based solutions and CBFM frameworks, assists partners to develop specific goals for applying GEDSI principles within their own contexts, leading to more inclusive and equitable fisheries management practices among the communities they work with and assist.

Improved Stakeholder Engagement: Increased engagement and commitment from local stakeholders and partners, tailored to their specific GEDSI contexts.

Strengthened Capacity: Development of tailored GEDSI action plans, resources tools that empowers partner organisations to implement effective and contextually relevant GEDSI practices.

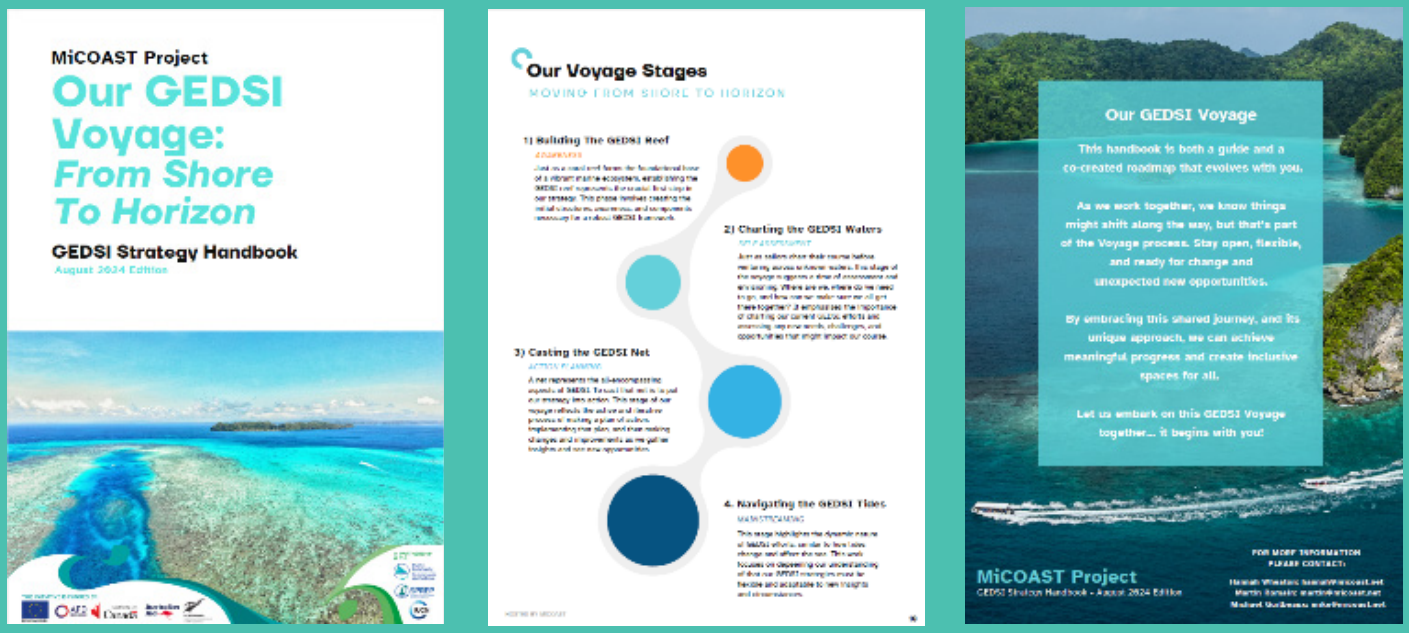

Figure 2. Kiwa MiCOAST GEDSI Strategy Handbook (August 2024). Accessible at: https://library.sprep.org/content/our-gedsi-voyage-shore-horizon-kiwa-inistiative-micoast-project-gedsi-strategy-handbook

"As we continue on this learning voyage, we are excited to help merge the knowledge, experience, technical expertise and valuable insights of our partners, in creating a strategy that they can truly take ownership of. We are dedicated to striking the right balance between gathering meaningful input from our partners and ensuring that our process remains collaborative, consistent, and non-exploitative.

Framing GEDSI as a voyage has given us a strong foundation, and we feel confident as we embark on this voyage with our partners. Together, we look forward to navigating this path, growing, and adapting as we work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable future."

Lessons learned

1

One of the main challenges was distilling a large volume of information and resources that is currently available in the Pacific into a strategy that was tailored to meet the specific needs of partners across the Micronesia sub-region.

2

Crafting the strategy involved aligning with broader initiatives like the Kiwa Initiative, SPC, various donors, and regional programs, while also maintaining coherence. This required careful navigation to ensure that local priorities were addressed without compromising the larger frameworks guiding the project.

3

The strategy needed to accommodate different levels of experience/competencies and phases of implementation and collaboration with various partners simultaneously. This required a level of flexibility, ensuring that the strategy could adapt to different contexts and stages of development while still maintaining its core objectives, integrity, and sense of progression/direction.

4

Developing a strategy that is robust enough to stand alone, yet adaptable enough to be tailored to the specific needs of partners was crucial. The strategy had to be a comprehensive framework of principles, approaches, resources, adaptable to different circumstances, while allowing partners to modify it according to their unique contexts while retaining its overall effectiveness.

5

It was important to ensure that the strategy had practical applications, filled with resources and activities that could be used in real-world scenarios related to the coastal fisheries and stakeholders in countries where the project is operating. The focus was on creating a strategy that was not just theoretical but also actionable, providing tangible benefits to those implementing it and fishing communities throughout Micronesia.

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Setaita Tavanabola, SPREP © Kiwa Initiative — 2024

Kiwa Third Regional GEDSI Workshop, Suva, Fiji

Principle 6: Building a Community of Practice for GEDSI

Case study: Building a Community of Practice for GEDSI in nature-based solutions in the Pacific Islands region

Project name: SPREP Technical Assistance to the Kiwa Initiative

Organisations: SPREP, Talanoa Consulting

Project countries: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna

Background

Climate change affects all Pacific Islanders, but especially those which are already in vulnerable situations, and have less power and privilege. Those who are at greater risk from environmental and climate change often include women, SOGIESC[32] persons, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons living in poverty, Indigenous communities, ethnic minorities, migrant communities and displaced persons. Non-discrimination and equality are fundamental human rights that everyone is entitled to regardless of sex, race, (dis)ability, religion, political or other opinion, or where a person is born. Because the benefits and costs of nature-based solutions may differ between individuals and groups, approaches used by practitioners can reinforce, perpetuate or increase existing forms of discrimination. In some cases, the approach used could itself be discriminatory. nature-based solutions that integrate GEDSI are likely to recognise the risks and benefits different activities, approaches or

32 An acronym for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics.

interventions might have on different social groups within a community, and to take action to address inequities and forms of discrimination.

The Kiwa Initiative is supporting practitioners and their organisations to integrate GEDSI and broader human rights into nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation. To do this, a Community of Practice (CoP) for GEDSI in nature-based solutions (hereafter "GEDSI CoP") was established in 2023 to build and strengthen in-country capacity. The goals of the Kiwa Initiative's GEDSI CoP are to: (1) support knowledge sharing, learning and reflections on GEDSI best practice in nature-based solutions; (2) promote introductory trainings and resources on GEDSI and nature-based solutions; and (3) build networks of GEDSI-sensitive nature-based solutions practitioners in the Pacific.

Good practice for implementing the principle

A community of practice (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' (Figure 2). A strong CoP therefore relies on regular interaction and a willingness and openness to share ideas.

Figure 3. Community of practice.

The GEDSI CoP brings together people to share expertise and passion for GEDSI and broader human rights and human rights-based approaches. Practitioners implementing projects under the Kiwa Initiative are supported to share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative and reflective ways that foster new approaches to solving problems. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of a CoP. Examples of what the GEDSI CoP does include: increasing the basic knowledge and practical skills on GEDSI; sharing GEDSI resources that are Pacific-centric and focused; foster knowledge sharing, reflections, sharing best practices of GEDSI in nature-based solutions externally so others can learn.

The GEDSI CoP includes eight regional projects being implemented by 20 organisations, to reach 32 communities across 15 countries and territories in the Pacific. Participants in the GEDSI CoP are practitioners from the organisations implementing regional Kiwa Initiative projects across the Pacific. The CoP invests in 'gender focal points' from each organisation to ensure there is GEDSI capacity during and beyond the timeline of their projects, while supporting other

emerging GEDSI champions. Because gender is about women and men, in all their diversity, including their relationship with each other, where possible, organisations were encouraged to identify a female and male gender focal point from local staff who are responsible for implementing nature-based solutions at specific sites. It was hoped that these gender focal points could be specifically tasked with ensuring GEDSI is integrated into all aspects of their nature-based solution project. The GEDSI CoP is inclusive, and so encourages practitioners who want to be future champions or are just passionate to learn more to attend and participate.

Kiwa Third Regional GEDSI Workshop, Suva, Fiji

Kiwa Third Regional GEDSI Workshop, Suva, Fiji

Based on feedback from nature-based solutions managers and practitioners online GEDSI CoP sessions were designed around five topics (Table 2). The first four CoPs had 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 CoP or separate learning events that were open to all participants. Sector-specific, tailored GEDSI tools are essential for addressing the unique challenges and barriers faced by nature-based solutions practitioners, to ensure interventions are contextually relevant.

Table 2. Topics covered in each community of practice session

Topic	Session objectives
GEDSI-101	• Promote trainings and resources on GEDSI and nature-based solutions in the Pacific • Support knowledge sharing, learning and reflections on GEDSI and nature-based solutions • Build networks of nature-based solutions practitioners in the Pacific
GEDSI Analysis	• 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
Disability Inclusion	• Have an enhanced understanding of the implications of climate change and environment issues for persons with disability • Be in a strengthened capacity to ensure their nature-based solutions projects better include and benefit to 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

GEDSI-sensitive community facilitation and engagement	• 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
GEDSI in nature-based solutions	• Share experiences, best practices, and challenges related to implementing GEDSI- and human rights-based approaches in nature-based solutions • Strengthening the GEDSI CoP to build a space for knowledge sharing, peer learning, and ongoing support for Pacific nature-based solutions practitioners

Kiwa Third Regional GEDSI Workshop, Suva, Fiji

Practitioners reflected on what worked with the GEDSI CoP:

> *"All the 'questions' in the Group Session Exercise, were all great examples of real-life GEDSI questions I can think of in my projects."*

> *"Getting to virtually meet other CoP members and listening to their experience in real time. I got to hear other practical examples of how GEDSI is applied in other Pacific countries."*

> *"I was able to better contextualise disability inclusion in nature-based solutions approaches."*

> *"There's always a factor that causes certain people to be so quiet in the community. To break the barrier, one has to really dig deep to better understand the cause and work from there."*

It is hoped that through the CoP, nature-based solutions practitioners feel they have some core skills and the confidence to implement Pacific-centred, locally relevant GEDSI practices in nature-based solutions. This will ensure that current and future nature-based solutions projects will be designed to reflect the expressed needs, wisdom and experiences of Pacific Island communities, particularly women, diverse groups and youth, in adapting to climate change.

Lessons learned

1

A CoP offers numerous benefits, particularly in fostering shared learning among individuals on GEDSI in nature-based solutions. 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.

2

A CoP can create GEDSI values within organisations and help drive continuous improvement on GEDSI best practice. 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.

3

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.

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SPREP (2024b) Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion Analysis for Nature-Based Solutions in the Pacific Islands. Secretariat of the Regional Environment Programme, Apia

SPREP (2024c) Human Rights and Nature-Based Solutions. Secretariat of the Regional Environment Programme, Apia

Sainimili Tawake from Pacific Disability Forum leading disability training for practitioners

Principle 7. Engaging experts to improve disability inclusion

Case study: Partnering Pacific Disability Forum to deliver training on disability inclusion in nature-based solutions

Project name: SPREP Technical Assistance to the Kiwa Initiative

Organisations: SPREP, Talanoa Consulting

Project countries: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna

Background

The Kiwa Initiative is designed to increase the capacities of Pacific Island countries and territories to access climate funding mechanisms and to protect, restore, and enhance biodiversity in order to adapt to climate change impacts and to strengthen the resilience of their socio-ecological systems through nature-based solutions. Human Rights, including GEDSI are issues the Kiwa Initiative is particularly attentive to promote in nature-based solutions, and on which specific support to organisations implementing projects funded by the Kiwa Initiative. Persons with disabilities are among the most marginalised groups, often encountering various obstacles, including those related to participating in and benefiting from nature-based solutions. Article 1 of the The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states *'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'* At present, most environmental organisations are not adequately incorporating the perspectives and needs of individuals with disabilities into nature-based solutions or broader environmental initiatives.

Practitioners participating in the GEDSI Community of Practice (see Principle 6) identified *disability equity and inclusion in the Pacific* as a key area where focused training was needed. To address this capacity gap, the Kiwa Initiative partnered with the Pacific Disability Forum to deliver virtual training for Kiwa project beneficiaries and partners. Pacific Disability Forum has extensive expertise and experience working on disability, climate change and environment issues in the Pacific region. The training aimed to build and strengthen the capacity of nature-based solutions practitioners to better include and provide tangible benefit to persons with disabilities in their project' communities.

Good practice for implementing the principle

Forming partnerships with experts is essential for addressing disability capacity gaps, as these collaborations bring specialised knowledge and skills that can enhance the effectiveness of inclusive initiatives. Experts can provide valuable guidance in developing culturally relevant strategies that address the unique challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the region. By working together, these partnerships can help ensure disability equity and inclusion becomes an integral part of nature-based solutions efforts across the Pacific. Through the partnership with Pacific Disability Forum, nature-based solutions practitioners gained an enhanced understanding of the implications of climate change and environment issues for persons with disability. Practitioners gained 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.

Nature-based solutions provide benefits for persons with disabilities (Figure 4). When considering why nature-based solutions are relevant for persons with disabilities in the Pacific, it was important to consider:

Therapeutic landscape: community/sensory/healing gardens provide physical activity, social interaction and sensory stimulation for people with disability;

Green infrastructure: parks, green roofs, and wetlands provide accessible recreational space, reduce urban heat island effects, and improve air quality for people with disability;

Nature-based rehabilitation: horticultural therapy, animal-assisted therapy, and ecotherapy have positive effects on physical health, mental health, and social inclusion; and

Accessible outdoor recreation: hiking, fishing, boating, etc. with the use of adaptive equipment, accessible facilities, and trained staff for persons with disabilities to participate in outdoor activities.

Figure 4. Benefits of nature-based solutions for persons with disabilities.
Source: Pacific Disability Forum

Some key principles reflected throughout the CRPD were highlighted, and included respect for inherent dignity, non-discrimination, inclusion in society, respect for differences, equality of opportunity, accessibility, equality between women and men, and respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities. A principle that was stressed was the general obligation of states to revise laws that are discriminatory. There have been shifts in thinking and approaches to disability inclusion that were important for practitioners to understand. Of importance is the growing realisation and understanding that persons with disabilities are not the problem, and instead it is the systems that are the barrier to their participation in society.

The phrase *Nothing About Us Without Us* is often used by those advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, as a powerful slogan that emphasises the importance of including the voices and perspectives of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes that directly impact their lives. This principle advocates for the active participation and involvement of individuals with disabilities in policies, programmes, and initiatives that concern them. It recognises that individuals with disabilities are experts in their own experiences and should be central to discussions about issues that affect them. Therefore, to ensure that nature-based solutions are inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities, it is important to involve persons with disabilities in the planning, design, implementation, and maintenance processes. This can include conducting accessibility audits, providing training for staff and volunteers, and developing partnerships with disability organisations. By working together, we can create natural spaces that are welcoming and beneficial for all members of our communities.

Lessons learned

1. Collaborating with disability experts is crucial for building capacity in disability equity and inclusion, as they bring valuable insights and expertise to create more accessible and inclusive environments. Their involvement ensures that strategies and programmes are effectively tailored to meet the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities, fostering greater equity in all aspects of development.

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SPREP (2024c) Human Rights and Nature-Based Solutions. Secretariat of the Regional Environment Programme, Apia

5. Summary of key lessons learned

Despite global, regional and local efforts, biodiversity loss in the Pacific Islands continues to accelerate. Human activities and climate change are the primary drivers of this decline, threatening not only the function and integrity of habitats and ecosystems but also the livelihoods, cultural heritage and wellbeing of Pacific communities. Nature-based solutions offer significant potential for addressing environmental challenges while promoting social inclusion and equity. By recognising and valuing the diverse knowledge, contributions and perspectives of all stakeholders, including Pacific women, youth and those with disability, nature-based solutions can be more effective, equitable, and sustainable.

Regional nature-based solutions projects across the Pacific are playing a crucial role in integrating GEDSI principles in their approach and interventions by prioritising the inclusion of marginalised and underrepresented groups. While projects funded by the Kiwa Initiative are still in their early stages, nature-based solutions practitioners are investing in GEDSI in deliberate and intentional ways, and it is valuable to capture and share these learnings. Integrating GEDSI principles into nature-based solutions projects is essential for guiding best practice. When GEDSI principles are embedded into nature-based solutions, they shape every aspect of the initiative, from the identification of goals to the methods of community engagement and the measurement of outcomes.

The nine case studies presented in this report provide valuable insights into the practical application of GEDSI principles in these nature-based solutions projects, sharing key lessons learned. A summary of the overarching lessons learned are presented below. By incorporating the key lessons learned so far into future nature-based solutions projects, the Pacific can work towards a more sustainable and equitable future for people and ecosystems. The approaches being used by practitioners represent promising steps, strategies and commitment towards ensuring GEDSI is integrated into nature-based solutions in the Pacific Islands.

GEDSI strategy to guide integration

A GEDSI strategy is valuable for outlining the vision and approach for integrating GEDSI into nature-based solutions projects and holds an organisation accountable. It provides a clear framework to ensure GEDSI is central to the project design and implementation. The strategy has to be a comprehensive framework of principles, approaches, resources, adaptable to different circumstances, while allowing partners to modify it according to their unique contexts while retaining its overall effectiveness. A good GEDSI strategy has practical applications, is well-resourced and with activities that could be used in real-world scenarios in the Pacific Island communities where the project is operating. It also ensures there is ongoing monitoring and evaluation to measure the impact of GEDSI on these initiatives, driving continuous improvement and transparency.

Capacity strengthening requires multiple approaches

Nature-based solutions practitioners in general, have little to no training on gender and disability equity and inclusion, and therefore it is not realistic or fair to expect them to integrate GEDSI into nature-based solutions without significant investment. While one-off trainings are important to build initial awareness on GEDSI, practitioners and leaders in their organisations still need ongoing training, coaching and mentoring, to build or strengthen their knowledge, equip them with practical skills and increase their confidence. Collaborating with gender and disability experts is crucial for knowledge and skills transfer on best practice, as well as the diversity of tools and rights-based approaches that have been developed, including for the Pacific Islands region. A community of practice may provide a space for learning, sharing and building relationships with other practitioners with similar goals and facing similar GEDSI capacity challenges. Furthermore, a community of practice can cultivate a strong culture of learning and innovation to advance nature-based solutions in the Pacific Islands region.

Cultural practices of inclusion

Pacific cultural systems are deeply rooted in communal values and respect for kinship which can offer unique pathways to foster and support GEDSI. In many Pacific cultures, women hold significant roles in the family and their communities, and have their own traditional knowledge of the natural world. These offer examples of how gender equity and inclusion can be organically embedded in societal structures. By drawing on cultural strengths and positive practices of inclusion, nature-based solutions 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.

Ensuring marginalised groups are included

Marginalised or underrepresented groups (e.g. women, youth, persons with disabilities) often possess unique knowledge and perspectives on managing natural resources, derived from their lived experiences and deep connection to the environment. Their inclusion is important, if nature-based solutions are more responsive to diverse needs, culturally relevant, and equitable in distribution of benefits. Nature-based solutions practitioners are finding new ways to engage marginalised or underrepresented groups - for example, by discussing inclusion early in the project in culturally sensitive ways, working closely with traditional governance systems, and working with more privileged groups (e.g. men) to advocate for inclusion of others. Moreover, involving a wider diversity of groups can uncover innovative approaches to environmental challenges and build local ownership, which enhances the long-term success and resilience of these solutions. Prioritising the voices of marginalised groups leads to more effective, socially just, and sustainable nature-based solutions.

GEDSI analysis to inform nature-based solutions

GEDSI analysis is a systematic process used to examine how roles, norms, and power relations affect the lives of women and men in all their diversity. The information collected from a GEDSI analysis should inform the design and implementation of nature-based solutions, and to address inequalities, exclusion and discrimination. The collection and analysis of GEDSI data should be done in a manner that allows disaggregation by gender, age and any other relevant social factors. For projects with no experience, an expert with experience in the design, implementation and analysis of GEDSI data should be engaged. The recommendations arising from GEDSI analysis should reflect the dynamics and relations of different social groups in communities, and the specific needs of these groups.

Shifting gender stereotypes

Shifting gender stereotypes is crucial for gender transformative change because it challenges deep-rooted norms that limit opportunities and reinforce inequality. Stereotypes are a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person. For example, involving women's groups and youth groups as leaders and promoting their efforts, aids in shifting gender and youth stereotypes to recognising their contributions to a healthy environment. Male allies can play an important role in shifting stereotypes, by advocating for women's leadership. By breaking down these stereotypes, everyone can fully participate in nature-based solutions, leading to more inclusive and equitable benefits and outcomes.

Women's economic empowerment

Women are crucial users of natural resources, yet they face barriers to participation and decision-making, as well as access to financial resources, expertise and training. Investing in 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, contributes to achieving women's economic empowerment. When women have greater economic independence, they can influence community priorities, enhance environmental stewardship and foster innovation, ensuring that nature-based solutions address a broader range of social and environmental challenges. This investment not only benefits the women involved but also strengthens the resilience and success of nature-based solutions projects overall for communities.

Contributors

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KIWA INITIATIVE

Nature-based solutions for climate resilience

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/

SPREP

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme