

# Where's the data?

## A recently-concluded meeting of the Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji calls for sex-disaggregated data on the participation of women in the fisheries sector

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The Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji (WiFN-Fiji) was established in 1993, and currently has 63 members. Its core areas of focus are capacity building and advocacy. The network promotes capacity building to improve livelihoods and food security opportunities for women in fisheries, focusing on financial literacy, resource management, post-harvest handling, market identification, gender equality and social inclusion. It also promotes advocacy for improved policy and policy implementation for greater gender equality in all aspects of fisheries through research, participation in national policy consultations and information sharing.

The network held its second forum in the city of Suva in Fiji on 4 December 2018, with 82 participants representing the government, academia, non-government organizations, the private sector and representatives of women communities. The event was inaugurated by Fiji's minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Mereseini Vuniwaqa. In her opening address, the minister extended an invitation to the WiFN-Fiji to work more closely with her ministry to advance the interests of women in the fisheries sector, an invitation warmly embraced by the network.

The key highlight of the forum was the launch of the report entitled 'National Stock-take of the Institutional and Enabling

Mechanisms That support Gender in Fisheries in Fiji'. The report, commissioned by the WiFN-Fiji with funding by the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT), Australia, channelled through the Fiji Women's Fund, was a follow-up activity to the inaugural forum where an urgent need for sex-disaggregated data on the participation of women in the fisheries sector was stressed by participants.

The key findings of the report include the following conclusions. One, that there is no baseline data available on the number of women engaged in the fisheries sector in Fiji. Two, that there are three key government ministries that hold a wealth of data on women in fisheries, stored in different formats: the Ministry of I Taukei Affairs, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Bureau of Statistics. And finally, that there is need to mine and analyze currently available data with the government and NGOs, to quantify the role of women in fisheries.

At the forum, success stories were shared by women fishers from Ra who run a very lucrative trade in sea-grapes (known locally as nama) and the pearl farmers from Vanua Levu engaged in culturing the mabe pearl. The women related the hardships, rewards and lessons learnt from their struggles to become established in their respective fisheries. Community representatives stated that financial literacy training conducted by the network in partnership with Westpac had

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Participants at the Women in Fisheries Forum with their copies of the gender stocktake report that was launched. At the forum, success stories were shared by women fishers from Ra who run a very lucrative trade in sea-grapes



Minister for Women, Hon Mereseini Vuniwaqa speaking at the Opening of the Women in Fisheries Forum. Given the positive feedback received from participants, the Women in Fisheries Forum is likely to become an annual feature

a profound impact on the women fishers and made a significant positive change to the lives of their families. The final session of the forum involved group discussions with each group working on a specific recommendation from

the stock-take report, and suggesting next steps for implementation.

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