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Pacific Community
Communauté du Pacifique

Gender-based violence in fisheries in the Pacific Islands region

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Abbreviations

APO	Association for Professional Observers
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
FGD	focus group discussion
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GBV	gender-based violence
HDG	Human Dignity Group
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	key informant interview
LGBTQI+	lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, intersex, plus other identities
MCS	monitoring, control and surveillance
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PAFCO	Pacific Fishing Company
PEUMP	Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RMI	Republic of Marshall Islands
SPC	Pacific Community
SRA	Social Responsibility Assessment
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VAW	violence against women
VAWG	violence against women and girls
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WHO	World Health Organization

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Executive summary

Fisheries are socio-ecological systems, where the interactions between human communities and marine environments shape the sustainability and resilience of both. In the Pacific, wild-caught inshore and offshore fisheries play a vital role in the region's economies, food security and cultural heritage. In turn, Pacific Island governments invest significant resources into aquaculture to enhance food security, diversify livelihoods and bolster economic resilience in the face of climate change and declining fish and invertebrate stocks. While recognition of the gender dimensions of fisheries (hereafter referred to as inshore and offshore fisheries and aquaculture) has increased in the past two decades, managers, practitioners and industry partners have not yet taken the measures needed to effectively tackle gender-based violence (GBV) in the sector.

Recognising this gap, the Pacific Community (SPC) commissioned a desktop review to document the evidence of GBV at different nodes along fisheries value chains. Stakeholder consultations were conducted to identify additional resources and organisations working on the nexus of GBV and fisheries. Using the resources collected, a rapid analysis was conducted of key GBV issues in the fisheries sector in the Pacific Islands region with the aim to: (a) document evidence of GBV in fisheries; (b) understand the links and the extent of GBV in the fisheries sector; and (c) analyse the root causes and impacts of GBV on the fisheries sector.

Despite the prevalence of GBV in the Pacific, research on its occurrence and impact within sectors like fisheries is limited. Broadly, the review found that GBV occurs in inshore and offshore fisheries, including both small-scale and industrial fisheries; however, the majority of the reports and evidence available is heavily skewed toward GBV in offshore fisheries, with limited information on inshore fisheries and seafood processing. No studies were found on GBV in aquaculture in the Pacific. The available research also centred on a select number of countries in Melanesia (i.e. Fiji, Papua New Guinea [PNG], Solomon Islands, Vanuatu), Micronesia (i.e. Federated States of Micronesia [FSM], Kiribati, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands [RMI]) and Polynesia (i.e. Tonga, Tuvalu).

Although the prevalence of GBV globally and its impact on both women and men are known, GBV is not well documented in industries, such as fisheries, and the underlying root causes are often not well understood. Fiji is the first Pacific Island country to launch a whole-of-government National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against All Women and Girls (2023–2028). The National Action Plan documents the root causes of violence against women and girls (VAWG), specifically mentions the fisheries sector, and acknowledges that women are disproportionately represented in informal sector occupations and bear economic stresses, which are key contributing factors of violence. GBV prevention and response programmes often focus on survivors as a priority (mainly women); however, limited attention is placed on perpetrators (mainly men) and the need to work directly with them to dismantle root causes, including harmful masculinity. Women work largely in inshore fisheries, where little GBV research exists, while men have received less attention in GBV research and policies. Further, there are gaps in understanding how the intersecting impacts of multiple identities (e.g. gender, age, religion, nationality, migration status, (dis) ability, class, level of education) compound to shape experiences of GBV, making it challenging for policy-makers and researchers to disentangle complex social issues. Finally, it is important to note that much of the evidence with relevance to GBV in fisheries is outdated and not based on empirical data and, for some issues, the evidence is largely anecdotal.

GBV manifests in diverse forms throughout the fisheries sector, impacting various fisheries actors, and is often exacerbated by structural inequities, societal norms and a hypermasculine work culture. Physically demanding environments and rigid gender roles can perpetuate exclusion and harmful behaviours, impacting economic stability, health and safety. Socio-cultural and patriarchal norms, including traditional views on masculinity and power dynamics, also contribute to GBV, affecting individuals differently. There were six main areas where GBV in fisheries was documented in the Pacific Islands region: (1) industrial fisheries; (2) sex work, "sex for fish" and sex trafficking; (3) child labour; (4) fish factories and canneries; (5) seafood marketplaces; and (6) monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) officers.

Industrial fisheries: The literature review highlighted five GBV issues that occurred on industrial fishing vessels operating in offshore waters in the Pacific: forced labour and slavery (forms of human trafficking); child labour; poor labour conditions; and generally unsafe spaces for women. Local and migrant crew are particularly vulnerable because they spend long stretches at sea, where they are physically isolated and have minimal opportunities to escape or report mistreatment. At the same time, working on industrial fishing boats can be dangerous and, while some injuries are inherent to the nature of the work, others arise due to inadequate occupational health and safety standards and procedures. The physically demanding nature of the work, coupled with long periods at sea, shared facilities and limited access to personal privacy, are not conducive for women working alongside men, who may face discrimination and harassment.

Sex work, "sex for fish" and sex trafficking: Sex work around port and transshipment areas in the Pacific Islands is shaped by the unique dynamics of maritime economies and the transient nature of seafaring communities, conditions that have led to a demand for sex work. However, the industry is often unregulated, and women are vulnerable to exploitation and face a high risk of physical and sexual violence, health risks and social stigma, with little consequences for male clients. This differs from "sex for fish", a form of transactional sex where women or girls trade their bodies for fish and other goods which has been documented in three countries in the Pacific. There are concerns about sex trafficking occurring in several countries in the Pacific, with connections to the fisheries sector. This includes the sex trafficking or exploitation of women and underaged girls. The sexual exploitation of children is of great concern and has been linked, in some cases, to fisheries. Sex work, transactional sex and sex trafficking come with health risks (e.g. HIV and other sexually transmitted infections), putting the victims and seafarers including fishers, their casual sexual partners and wives at risk.

Child labour: In many communities, fishing is a traditional practice and a vital part of daily life and a life skill for survival, leading to the normalisation of children's participation from a young age. However, there are cases of boys as young as 14 years old who have left school to work on industrial fishing vessels to support household income after their fathers have been injured or killed on these boats. There is evidence that recruiters for industrial fishing vessels target young boys and early school leavers, especially from rural villages.

Fish factories and canneries: Pacific Island tuna processing facilities are a critical component of the regional economy, serving as a major source of employment, with women constituting a significant portion of their labour force. However, female workers in these facilities (located in Fiji, PNG and Solomon Islands) often experience adverse conditions, such as inadequate workplace standards, insufficient compensation and vulnerability to GBV, including harassment. Many of these challenges are compounded by gender and cultural norms that discourage women from reporting abuse coupled with weak enforcement of labour rights, leaving many women without adequate recourse.

Seafood marketplaces: In the Pacific Islands, seafood markets are essential to local economies, supporting numerous livelihoods, with women playing a particularly prominent role as vendors. Nevertheless, these markets can be sites of GBV, including sexual harassment, intimidation and exploitation. Women engaged in fish sales at locations, like boat landings or local markets, face heightened risks of harassment and abuse from various actors, including fishermen, customers, fellow vendors and market personnel. The governance and decision-making processes at marketplaces and positions of authority are often dominated by men, leaving women unable to voice their concerns or have them addressed, and leaving them vulnerable to GBV with limited recourse.

Monitoring, control and surveillance officers: Fisheries MCS personnel are integral to maintaining lawful and sustainable fishing operations within Pacific Island fisheries. These officers, however, face significant risks, including documented instances of physical and psychological violence while serving as government fisheries observers on large industrial fishing vessels within national jurisdictions. Tragically, there are also cases of observers dying under questionable conditions from Fiji, Kiribati, PNG and Tonga.

Finally, there is an increasing global recognition of the interconnectedness between illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, depleted fish populations, and other illicit activities within the fisheries sector, such as human trafficking, forced labour and drug smuggling. The expansive nature of the Pacific Islands region poses significant challenges to border security, facilitating transnational crimes, including the movement of illicit drugs. Although there were no publications that presented empirical data on rates of narcotic and alcohol consumption among fishers or seafarers more broadly in the Pacific, the links between alcohol and GBV are recognised.

In conclusion, this desktop review underscores the urgent need for comprehensive research and targeted interventions to address the issue of GBV within Pacific fisheries, considering different nodes along the value chain. It is often challenging to separate different forms of violence, and different forms may occur concurrently, intersect or be related. Research on GBV is crucial to understand and address the systemic inequalities and harmful practices that compromise the safety and well-being of individuals within this sector. Ideally, any research should feed into existing efforts to address the social dimensions of fisheries and must consider the Pacific Island region's unique socio-economic and cultural context, including gender norms and relations, the vast size and remoteness of the region, number of countries and territories, and diversity of partners working in fisheries. As part of these context-specific considerations, it is also necessary to acknowledge the important role of fisheries for primary food security and as the sole source of income for some households, often households with hardship history. Women contribute significantly to provide nutrition security and generate income for basic goods from fisheries resources, thereby helping alleviate poverty and social protection risks. GBV-related risks, therefore, can have devasting impacts on the ability of women to provide and maintain family well-being. Ultimately, addressing GBV in these sectors is crucial not only to safeguard human rights but also to promote equitable participation, sustainable development and resilient livelihoods, ensuring that the benefits of the region's vital marine resources are shared by all.

1. Introduction

GBV is any act of violence against a person or group of individuals based on their gender, and includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological threats, harassment, coercion or any other deprivations of liberty.
(UN Women 2020)

The term "gender-based" is used when violence is shaped by gender roles and expectations, power and status in society.
(Russo and Pirlott 2006)

Fisheries are socio-ecological systems, where the interactions between human communities and marine and freshwater environments shape the sustainability and resilience of both. Recognising social dimensions – such as livelihoods, governance, and cultural practices – is equally important as managing fish populations to ensure balanced and sustainable fisheries, and supporting inclusive development. Coastal and oceanic fisheries are vital sectors for Pacific Island countries, playing a critical role in their economies, food security and cultural heritage (Gillett and Fong 2023). Offshore fisheries, particularly tuna, contribute significantly to national economies through exports, licensing agreements and regional cooperation, and are a significant source of employment and income for Pacific Islanders, providing thousands of jobs in fishing operations, processing plants and related industries such as logistics and vessel maintenance (Barclay 2010; Barclay and Cartwright 2007; Gillett and Fong 2023; Gillett 2016). Inshore fisheries, including aquaculture, are essential for local sustenance, community-based livelihoods, and resilience against food insecurity. Together, these sectors underpin sustainable development, environmental stewardship and the well-being of Pacific Island communities, highlighting their importance for the region's future.

Fisheries (including aquaculture) are important entry points and opportunities to address inequalities, including gender-based violence (GBV). GBV in fisheries manifests in various forms, affecting women, men, and marginalised groups who work directly in harvesting, processing, and trading or indirectly in supply chains (Mangubhai et al. 2023). Structural inequities in the sector and harmful societal norms often place women, men, girls and boys in precarious positions, making them more susceptible to violence and abuse. These experiences of violence can lead to diminished economic participation and compromised health and safety, with ripple effects that impact families and communities. Fisheries are often considered hypermasculine workplaces due to the physically demanding nature of the work, which often aligns with traditional notions of masculinity and strength (Mangubhai et al. 2023). The male-dominated environment can reinforce stereotypes and behaviours that exclude or marginalise women and perpetuate toxic masculinity (Forbes and Sirkan n.d.). Additionally, long periods of isolation during fishing trips and strong group identities among male crews may encourage behaviours and attitudes that emphasise dominance and discourage emotional vulnerability. These dynamics can contribute to environments where harmful behaviours and attitudes are reinforced.

A global review of the scientific literature spanning 20 years (2002–2022) has shed light on the evidence for, and relevance of, GBV in the fisheries sector (Mangubhai et al. 2023). The study identified five forms of GBV – physical, sexual, psychological, economic and cultural violence (Figure 1) – evidenced in formal and informal fisheries worldwide. These five forms of GBV are not mutually exclusive and more than one type of violence may occur together around any given issue. These forms of violence often intersect with labour exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and entrenched gender norms, amplifying vulnerabilities among women, men, and children. In general, fisheries planning, management and development do not integrate GBV prevention and elimination, representing a missed opportunity and potentially increasing risks by inadvertently increasing harm and furthering the marginalisation of vulnerable groups in the sector.

It is important to note that the global review focused largely on the scientific literature and used a specific subset of key words to undertake searches. Many reports may have information on GBV in fisheries but may not recognise it and, therefore, neglect to discuss the implications for those engaged in the sector. For example, Pacific Island countries have conducted socio-economic surveys and collected information on income from fisheries; however, often, authors have overlooked that the control of women's income by male relatives can be a form of economic violence. As a result, only a small number of resources were identified from the Pacific during the global review, and a second review of Pacific literature is warranted.

The Pacific Community (SPC) hosted a regional stakeholder consultation on 29 February 2024, with representatives from ministries responsible for fisheries and gender, GBV networks, environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the fishing industry and Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agencies. The purpose of the consultation was to assess research needs on GBV issues relating to, or stemming from, the fisheries sector. Stakeholders agreed on the need for focused research on GBV in fisheries but largely had only anecdotal stories from specific countries or relating to specific fisheries actors. A summary of the discussions was produced on: (a) issues that needed investigation; (b) geographic scale; (c) thematic scale; and (d) methodology (SPC 2024). The outcomes of the consultation informed the terms of reference for the development of an analytical framework for a study to examine GBV in fisheries in the Pacific Islands region.

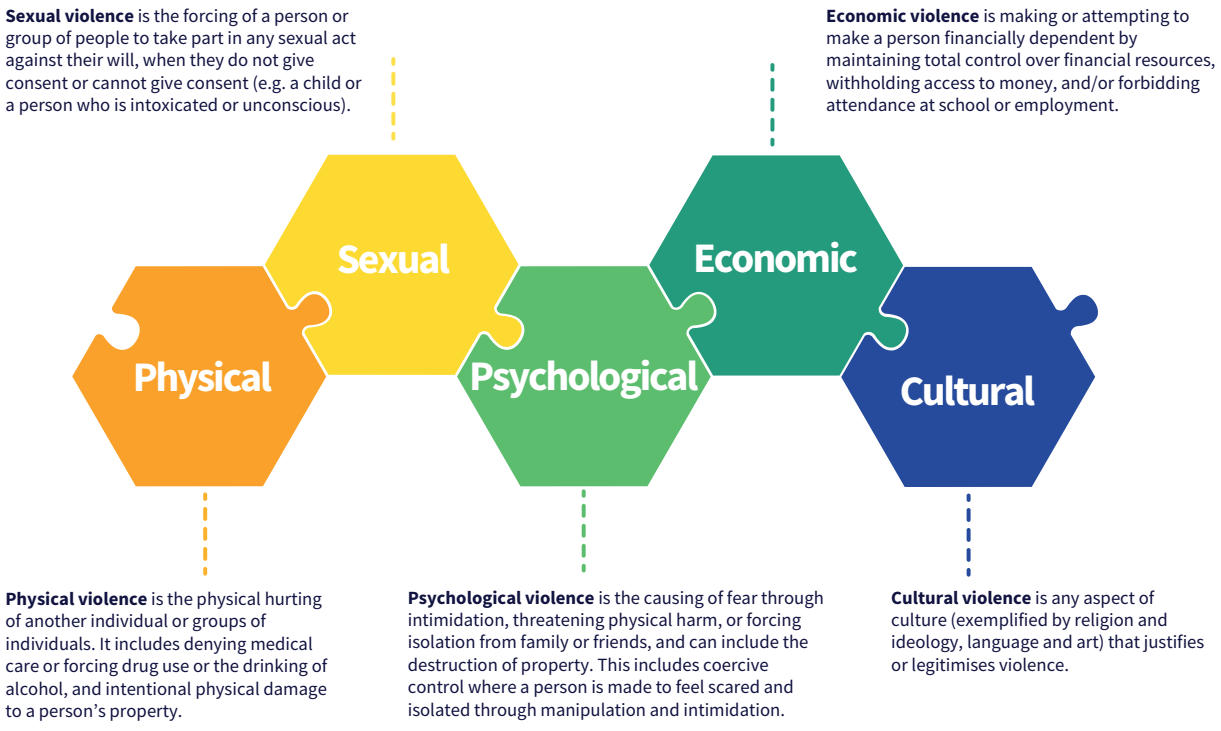

Figure 1. Definitions of the five types of gender-based violence relevant to fisheries and aquaculture[1]. Source: Mangubhai et al. (2023)

1 People with disabilities, and women with disabilities in particular, remain an often under-recognised at-risk group that experiences forms of GBV due to their disability status. Although the desktop review found that people with disabilities have been largely overlooked in research on the subject of GBV in fisheries, sexual violence and the inability to provide consent needs to be considered in the context of people with disabilities due to their heightened and intersecting vulnerabilities.

2. Aim and deliverables

The purpose of this consultancy was to develop a research design framework for SPC that provides the foundation to undertake a potential study on GBV and its relevance for the Pacific's fisheries sector. Specifically, the research design framework needed to: (a) define the research problem; (b) define the purpose and objectives; (c) determine the scope; and (d) develop a methodology with a clear description of procedures, techniques, methods and approaches, including field researcher training needs, testing and sampling.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research and evaluation of existing literature

A desktop review was conducted of peer-reviewed and grey literature, using a range of databases or search engines (e.g. Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Toksave), and websites of key organisations at global (e.g. International Organization for Migration [IOM], UN Women, International Labour Organization [ILO], Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], Human Rights at Sea, Environmental Justice Foundation), regional (e.g. SPC, Forum Fisheries Agency [FFA], World Wide Fund for Nature) and national (e.g. Human Dignity Fiji, Diva for Equality, Women in Fisheries Network-Fiji, United States Department of State) levels were searched for relevant publications and information on related projects. Additional reports, resources and organisations were identified and provided by stakeholder interviews (see Section 3.2). Using the resources collected, a rapid analysis of key issues relating to GBV in the fisheries sector in the Pacific Islands region was conducted to: (a) document evidence of GBV in fisheries; (b) understand the links and the extent of GBV in the fisheries sector; and (c) analyse root causes and impacts of GBV in the fisheries space.

3.2 Stakeholder consultations to inform the research design

Consultations were conducted with 23 GBV and fisheries experts in the region to gather information on available resources, information to narrow the scope of the work, and methodological approaches (Annex 1). The meetings were held online through Zoom (17 interviews) or in person (six interviews). SPC held a Regional Working Group meeting on the Implementation of Family Protection/Domestic Violence Legislation in Nadi in November 2024. This provided an opportunity to identify and – in some cases – interview key contact persons working in the GBV sector. During the interviews, a short slide presentation was provided on the aim and scope of the consultancy, key definitions and examples of GBV in fisheries in line with Mangubhai et al. (2023). Guiding questions were developed and used selectively and adaptively, depending on the expert being interviewed and their knowledge of, and experience with, GBV in fisheries (Annex 2).

3.3 Developing a research design framework

In designing the research design framework, the sectoral, thematic and geographic scope of the work were considered.

Sectoral scope: coastal, aquaculture, oceanic fisheries, as well as small-medium-large scale, artisanal and commercial fisheries were prioritised, with emphasis placed on the areas of the fisheries sector where the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme and its implementing partners operate.

Thematic scope: based on the stakeholder consultation and terms of reference (SPC 2024), several thematic areas were considered including, but not limited to:

- small-scale fisheries (formal and informal) – management (especially community-based), livelihoods, decision-making;
- post-harvest, marketing, and value-adding (personal safety, well-being, sexual harassment risks, inequality in bargaining powers);
- fishing on vessels, female crews, toxic masculinities and men's gender perspectives;
- social dynamics around port areas, community interactions with crew and the industry as such, and risks and impacts on women, children, migrants, people with diverse gender identities and different sexual orientations across the LGBTQI+ community or other marginalised groups using an intersectional lens;
- workplace and employment-related issues;
- observer issues; and
- transhipment, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Geographic scope: in line with the terms of reference (SPC 2024), based on geographic considerations suggested by stakeholders and as a result of literature findings regarding geographic gaps and relevance, a regional study scope with selected country case studies (depending on research priority areas) was considered.

Methodology: The methodology considered what and how different forms of GBV in the Pacific Island fisheries (including aquaculture) could be examined using a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach. In developing options for in-country field research and identifying research methods, several guiding criteria were developed and considered.

Other considerations: Recognising the risks associated with working on GBV, moreover, the appropriate safeguards and ethical protocols were factored into the framework, in particular for potential in-country field research. Questionnaires/surveys and facilitation approaches for focus group discussions (FGDs) or with key informants were developed for regional scale and in-country research. The collection of gender- or sex-disaggregated data, where possible, was considered when identifying quantitative and/or qualitative approaches.


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4. Evidence of GBV in fisheries and aquaculture

4.1 Key findings

The key findings from the review are outlined below.

- GBV occurs in inshore and offshore fisheries, both small-scale and industrial fisheries. However, the majority of the reports and evidence available are heavily skewed towards GBV in offshore fisheries, with limited information on inshore fisheries. No studies were found on GBV in aquaculture in the Pacific.
- The available research on GBV in fisheries is heavily skewed to a select number of countries in Melanesia (i.e. Fiji, Papua New Guinea [PNG] Solomon Islands, Vanuatu), Micronesia (i.e. Federated States of Micronesia [FSM], Kiribati, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands [RMI]) and Polynesia (i.e. Tonga, Tuvalu).
- While men and boys experience forms of inequalities and have received less attention in GBV research and policies, there was strong evidence of them experiencing different forms of violence working in industrial fishing, particularly in harvest with an almost exclusive male workforce. To put this into perspective, it should be noted that women and girls experience much higher rates of GBV in fisheries like in any sector because of the inequality in power relations and associated norms, attitudes and behaviours that are more harmful towards women and girls.
- There are gaps in understanding how the intersecting impacts of multiple identities (e.g. gender, age, religion, nationality) compound to shape experiences of GBV, making it challenging for policy-makers and researchers to disentangle complex social issues.
- Much of the evidence is outdated and not based on empirical data. For example, much of the violence towards Pacific observers has come from newspaper articles and a narrow set of case studies. Information on prostitution around fishing boats and ports is largely anecdotal for most Pacific Island countries. As a result, the degree to which GBV occurs in fisheries is still poorly understood in the Pacific region.

4.2 Detailed findings

This section provides a summary and synthesis of all known studies identified through the scoping review and through interviews with key stakeholders. Subsections are organised according to nine issues and contexts emerging from the review: industrial fishing vessels (4.2.2); sex trafficking, sex work and transactional sex (4.2.3); child labour (4.2.4); fish factories and canneries (4.2.5); seafood marketplaces (4.2.6); income control in small-scale fisheries (4.2.7); narcotics and alcohol (4.2.8); monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) (4.2.9); and climate change, disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic (4.2.10).

4.2.1 Summary of gender-based violence as it pertains to fisheries in the Pacific

GBV is a pervasive and deeply rooted issue in the Pacific region, manifesting in various forms such as domestic violence, sexual assault and harmful cultural practices. The underlying cause of GBV is gender inequality and unequal power distribution (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] n.d.). Globally, 35 per cent of women have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (World Health Organization [WHO] 2014). The Pacific region reports some of the highest rates of GBV globally, with an estimated 60 per cent of women and girls having experienced violence by an intimate partner or family member. Within the region, the highest rates of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence against women have been recorded in Kiribati (68 per cent), Fiji (64 per cent), Solomon Islands (64 per cent),

Vanuatu (60 per cent) and the RMI (51 per cent), while Palau has recorded the lowest rate in the region at 25 per cent (Figure 2; SPC and Pacific Women Lead 2023). The studies conducted to date show that, in Melanesia, there are high levels of gendered violence, reflected by high levels of sexual violence and marital rape, which is rooted in gender inequality. In Polynesia, there are comparatively low levels of sexual violence recorded but there are high levels of physical violence that are largely disciplinary in nature. In Micronesia, there are mixed patterns of violence and marital rape (Jansen 2023). Given the high prevalence of GBV in the Pacific, it is a reasonable assumption that a relatively high proportion of women working in the fisheries sector experience some forms of violence in their homes.

While there is increasing recognition of GBV as a critical human rights and development issue, responses are frequently framed within the context of preserving social harmony, familial reputation and cultural identity. Harmful gender stereotypes continue to define what women should do and be rather than recognising their individual rights as human beings (SPC 2020). In many Pacific societies, gender roles are strongly influenced by socio-cultural and patriarchal norms, where traditional views on masculinity, power dynamics and the sanctity of family often contribute to the normalisation and underreporting of violence against women and girls (VAWG) (UNFPA n.d.).[2] Pervasive and entrenched social norms about the acceptability of violence against women (VAW) are held by both women and men at all levels of society and are present in sectoral spaces, like fisheries. Entrenched discriminatory social norms, attitudes and sexist standards normalise and perpetuate VAW and create serious disincentives for disclosing and addressing the violence (SPC and Pacific Women Lead 2023). GBV has a range of consequences for women, men, girls and boys, families and communities, including substantial economic impact through increased health care, social services and policing costs (UN Women n.d.). Socio-cultural norms, economic inequalities and limited access to justice and support services continue to make it challenging to address GBV (UNFPA n.d.).

It is important to note that the framing and dialogue on GBV largely focuses predominantly on violence towards women and girls, and at the household level. Most of the statistics reported relate to

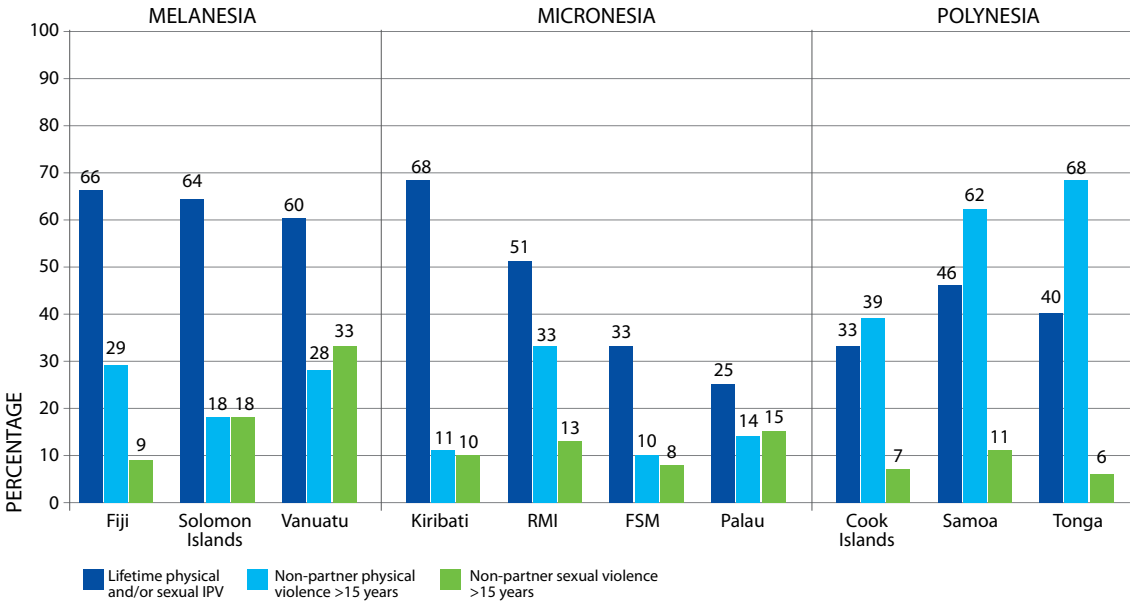


Figure 2. Comparison of prevalence of different forms of partner and non-partner violence against women. (Note: IPV = intimate partner violence.) Source: Jansen (2023)

2 Country-specific examples of patriarchal norms that are harmful to women: In Tonga, 83 per cent of women agree that a "good wife obeys her husband", even if she disagrees with him. In Fiji, 33 per cent of women believe a wife is obliged to have sex with her husband, even if she does not feel like it. In Solomon Islands, 73 per cent of ever-partnered women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she does not conform to her usual roles, e.g. not completing housework to her partner's satisfaction or disobeying him. Almost the entire population (98.4 per cent) in the Western Highlands of PNG believe that a woman must seek permission from her husband before visiting friends or relatives, with 62.9 per cent believing women also have to seek permission to access health services (SPC and Pacific Women Lead, 2023).

intimate partner violence between men (who are predominantly the perpetrators) and women (who are predominantly the victims). However, very few studies or assessments capture data on violence, including GBV, in sectoral spaces or on violence towards men and boys. These gaps or omissions are problematic because GBV in sectoral spaces (e.g. fisheries, forestry, agriculture, mining) often manifests through exploitative labour practices, harassment and abuse, particularly in male-dominated environments where power imbalances are pronounced, and can affect both women and men in different ways (Mangubhai et al. 2023). Marginalised groups can face heightened risks of violence within supply chains, compounded by limited reporting mechanisms and a lack of protections.

Despite regional commitments and stronger legislative frameworks to address GBV, significant challenges persist in changing attitudes, strengthening institutional responses, and ensuring the protection and empowerment of survivors. For example, in the last two decades, advocacy based on the social and economic costs of VAW have contributed to legislative change in the Cook Islands, Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, PNG, RMI, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to better protect women and criminalise domestic violence. While the legislation is established, the success is measured in the implementation, and the Pacific has not performed well in this area. Implementation gaps include, for example, the lack of enforcement of existing laws and inconsistent judicial rulings, limited awareness among women and other marginalised groups of their rights, financial and geographic limits on their access to justice, and inadequate funding to address the scale of the problem (SPC and Pacific Women Lead 2023). The degree to which legislation and policy also protect and address GBV in fisheries and other sectoral spaces, is a notable knowledge gap.

At the regional level, advocacy and work on ending VAW has been ongoing in the Pacific for decades, led by the women's rights movement and civil society organisations. These efforts have led to the establishment of crisis centres and the collaboration and establishment of the Pacific Women's Network on Violence Against Women in the 1980s. The network has a membership of 129 organisations in 13 countries across the Pacific and is deeply rooted in the principles of feminism, women's human rights, gender quality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and VAWG. Their strategies and approaches have greatly influenced and impacted families, communities and societies in the Pacific, including pioneering response and prevention approaches and engagement with men. The network includes women's crisis centres that provide counselling and case management services, as well as legal, medical and other practice support services for women and children who are sufferers and survivors of violence committed against them mostly by their intimate partner or other male relatives. There is a growing recognition of the need for services for male survivors of violence in the Pacific, but these services are currently limited. However, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre has a male advocacy programme that includes counselling and support for men and boys, as well as community education to raise awareness about the harmful effects of violence. The Crisis Centres have helped standardise best practice and approaches to GBV counselling in the Pacific (UN Women 2023). The degree to which those working in the fisheries sector have accessed these services is unknown.

Pacific Island countries have ratified several core international human rights treaties that include provisions to advance gender equality (SPC 2020). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women through the elimination of distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex. Of the 14 Pacific Island countries and territories analysed in a regional brief, Palau has signed but not ratified CEDAW, and Niue and Tonga have not signed CEDAW (UN Women n.d.). CEDAW provides minimum standards to advance women's rights in all sectors and at all levels, but Article 14 is more specific to fisheries and agriculture, as it refers to certain problems faced by rural women. The article calls upon states to ensure rural women's right to participate in, and benefit from, rural development. This requires the state to establish an enabling institutional, legal and policy framework in the fisheries sector, which is gender- responsive and adequately resourced, and includes addressing GBV (Graham and D'Andrea 2021). CEDAW general recommendation no. 35 provides more comprehensive guidance to accelerate the elimination of GBV and specifically mentions forms of GBV that can occur in the workplace or affect women workers, including domestic violence

which has impacts on women's work (e.g. work in formal and informal fisheries spaces). It is important for the fisheries sector to document GBV in the sector, as information on GBV in fisheries should be included as part of reporting by countries on their national, regional and global gender commitments.

4.2.2 Industrial fishing vessels

Industrial fishing is considered one of the most hazardous forms of employment with exposure to harsh weather, heavy machinery and a high risk of injury and fatality (Environmental Justice Foundation 2019). At the same time, diminishing catch and returns and the increased pressure on vessel owners and captains have contributed to forced, trafficked and slave labour in industrial fishing (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2019). The safety of captain and crew aboard industrial fishing vessels and the provision of support services are complicated by transnational (i.e. cross-border) fisheries. Fishing companies can exploit flags of convenience to bypass basic workers' rights, such as providing written contracts, ensuring fair wages, regulating working hours, and guaranteeing safe working conditions (Otumawu-Apreku et al. 2024). This often leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation by fishing companies, as evidenced by reports of abuse, including GBV, documented globally, including in the Pacific region. This presents significant challenges for Pacific Island governments in terms of establishing and enforcing minimum employment standards for captains and fishing crew, who can be local (i.e. Pacific Island nationals) or migrants (e.g. Southeast Asian nationals).

The literature review highlighted five GBV issues that have emerged on industrial fishing vessels operating in offshore waters in the Pacific: (a) forced labour and slavery (which are forms of human trafficking[3]); (b) poor labour conditions, including workplace health and safety at sea; (c) unsafe spaces for women; and (d) child labour (see Section 4.2.4). Most of the evidence was based on case studies or information available in the public domain (e.g. reports, newspaper articles) while some was empirical. Although documented in Asia, sexual violence towards captain or crew was not documented on industrial fishing boats in the Pacific.

4.2.2.1 Forced labour and slavery

Forced labour and slavery can be relatively hidden among industrial fishing operators due to complex supply chains, transshipment and flagging (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2019). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated that the Pacific is a transit point for human trafficking, particularly in the fisheries industry in which modern slavery is prevalent (McNeill 2022). There was evidence of forced labour and poor labour conditions for both local and migrant crew on industrial fishing boats operating in the Pacific region (Lee et al. 2018; Otumawu-Apreku et

> ***"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." - Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR 1948)**

> ***"Forced labour[4] is all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily." -* ILO**

> ***"Modern slavery' is defined as situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power." -* ILO**

3 Human trafficking involves the use of violence, threats and coercion in which victims are controlled through physical, psychological and sexual abuse. A significant portion of human trafficking involves the exploitation of women and girls. In cases of forced labour outside the sex trade, GBV is prevalent with women subjected to sexual harassment and assault. Moreover, in a forced labour situation, exploitative labour conditions and economic vulnerability can force situations where men and women exchange resources for survival.

4 A violation of the ILO Convention on Forced Labour 1930 (No. 29) occurs even if the initial recruitment is voluntary and the coercive mechanism to keep a person in an exploitative situation manifests at a later stage.

al. 2024; Yea and Stringer 2023). Power relations in industrial fishing are unequal and skewed in favour of fishing company owners and the captains of vessels; local crew "*often face precarious labour conditions on fishing vessels, including, contract substitution, unsafe and exploitative working conditions at sea, wage theft and lack of protection after exiting their work on board the vessels*" (Yea and Stringer 2023). Migrant fishers face these same issues as well as debt bondage, use of forged documents (thereby leaving individuals stateless), abandonment in foreign countries, limited bargaining power, language challenges and inadequate safety nets (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2019; United States [U.S.] Department of State 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2023a, 2023b). In extreme cases, there are accounts of captains abandoning crew members on remote islands either as punishment or when they are no longer needed for work (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2019).

Fishing companies may or may not give written contracts, and some leave the decision on wages to the captains who may under-record the number of hours worked (Azeemah 2024; Kailola et al. 2023). The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families provides comprehensive minimum standards to safeguard migrant workers' rights and the rights of their families, emphasising the connection between human rights and migration. The convention considers "a fisherman" employed on board a vessel registered in a state of which s/he is not a national to be a migrant worker (Art. 2 (c)). Several Pacific Island countries have signed and ratified or are considering ratifying this treaty. Migrant workers who obtain their contracts through fraudulent or unscrupulous recruitment agencies back in their home countries can be pushed into debt bondage[5] through excessive recruitment fees (Mangubhai et al. 2023). Issues around wages, including fishers being paid less than promised or not being paid at all, were documented on industrial fishing boats operating in Fiji (Azeemah 2024; Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2021; Kailola et al. 2023; Yea and Stringer 2023), and may occur in other countries. In some cases, fishers have reported that their contracts were changed (e.g. reduced wage or a change in the currency of wages), or wages were withheld once a fisher was on board a boat and powerless to leave. Interviews of 170 crew highlighted that most worked 14–20 hours per day, earning a daily rate of just FJD28–35 and, on rare occasions, around FJD40/day (Kailola et al. 2023). This is significantly below the wage rate in Fiji (FJD4 per hour or FJD56–80 per day).

Yea and Stringer (2023) provide numerous case studies from an empirical study in Fiji:

> *"When Aporosa was recruited he was told he would be paid USD400 a month. He was flown to another Pacific Island country to board a Chinese vessel. Once on the vessel, Aporosa was required to sign a contract outlining his wages as USD300 per month. When he queried the difference, he was told this was the 'correct contract'. Since he was already on the vessel, this left Aporosa with little or no recourse."*

> *"Captain Mr Kim told us that we would be going out fishing for one month and then we will get our pay. Within one month, we had our storeroom full, so we went and offloaded on land. When we demanded our pay, however, we were told again to make another trip, then he would pay us. We had completed three months without any pay and were getting frustrated because of the working conditions, and the living conditions were so pathetic and just unbearable. To top it all off, the captain kept on giving excuses about why he wouldn't pay us. Again, he said that if we worked for another trip, then he would pay us for the four months we had worked for him."*

Violence towards crew, including violence that results in death, is poorly documented in the Pacific. Local and migrant crew are particularly vulnerable because they spend long stretches at sea, where they are physically isolated and have minimal opportunities to escape or report mistreatment. Systemic violence may be deliberately employed by the ship's captain as a means to enforce control over crew under inhumane working conditions (Case studies 1–5). Reportedly, families who

5 Debt bondage is when someone is forced to pay off a loan by working for an agreed-upon or unclear period of time for little or no salary. The work performed to pay off the debt greatly exceeds the worth of the initial loan.

have had family members injured or have died do not receive any compensation and reported having not received any support for funerals (Syddall et al. 2022). The Human Dignity Group (HDG) Facebook posts highlight the trauma and grief experienced by the families left behind, as well as the experiences of Fijian fishers working on fishing boats in the Pacific:

> *"Akanisi's husband passed away in January 2023 after being stricken with severe stomach cramps on a local tuna fishing vessel; and Tokonata's husband died suddenly on a Yuh Yow Fisheries South Pacific vessel in March 2021. Through fishing crew members contacting us, HDG was able to assist the women and their families in small ways, such as facilitating their request for compensation. For Tokonata, we were also able to support her request for probate, with the assistance of Legal Aid."* - posted 05 March 2024

> *"The HDG team caught up with Jeremaia Daucakacaka who recently returned from a voyage of several months on a Chinese longliner. His story literally pulled our heartstrings as he shared their experiences of having to eat 'expired' rice for each meal (meaning it had weevils in it and tasted bad) while other "officers" were served new rice - and also vegetables and fruit (not served to deck crew). Such [are] the experiences faced by many men who have reached out to HDG for help."* - posted 14 February 2024

> *"HDG is gathering information for a report on the two longline vessels, Run Da 3 and Run Da 5. … Eight Indonesian crewmen disembarked from those vessels when they arrived in the Port of Suva after at least 18 months at sea without the vessels making landfall. The eight men claimed non-payment of wages and physical-mental abuse. Six Fijian men who had worked on those vessels a few years ago have revealed their harrowing stories to HDG, one of whom had been left to die in China."* - posted 01 September 2023

> *"Osea Baro Waqamailau was blind. He wasn't always blind. In mid-2021 while working on the Ben 10 in Rotuman waters a tuna's tail slashed across his eyes; the tail was covered in 'gunk' (dirt and mucus) and the fish's blood. There being no freshwater at hand, Osea splashed his eyes with salt water whereupon 'my eyes closed as if a curtain had come down.'"* - posted 31 May 2023

> *"Samu Qalia was a deckhand on one of the Lu Rong Yuan Yu vessels in March this year, when the mainline snapped. The line snapped back at him and cracked his eyeball. The vessel's agent at the Kings Wharf was attempting to secure compensation but the accident may have happened outside of Fiji waters."* - posted 05 May 2023

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre[6] has conducted evaluations to assess the efforts of individual tuna companies to address modern slavery in Pacific supply chains of canned tuna (2021). They concluded that modern slavery is endemic in the industry and, while two thirds of surveyed companies have corporate human rights policies in place, there was little or no action to implement them; in fact, all stated they did not have any form of slavery in their companies, revealing that a lack of implementation of these policies is likely leading to under-reporting on the issue.

6 The organisation focuses on human rights in business, tracking 10,000 companies in the effort to eradicate abuse.

Modern slavery: case studies (2018–2025)

CASE STUDY 1

Report highlights modern slave labour in Pacific fishing industry

"Two Indonesian seafarers also spoke of their recent experiences in Fiji. They worked on Chinese-owned and flagged vessels, and had been hired by recruiters who deducted fees from their salaries and retained their personal official documentation. On arrival in Fiji, they were taken to their vessels without being allowed to report to the Indonesian Embassy. The two men detailed inhumane conditions, which included living in close quarters and working more than 20 hours per day. They described their meals as 'disgusting and inedible'. One of them was forced to work when he had a 'finger cut so deep that my bones were visible and seemed to be about to break off'. Their concerns were consistently suppressed and hidden from inspectors."

"In another case, an Indonesian fisherman on board the Yu Shun 88, a Taiwanese flagged tuna longliner, has recently been repatriated from Fiji. Auckland human rights lawyer Karen Harding said the fishermen on the boat, which carries up to 17 people, were forced to work for 18–20 hours a day in 'abject' conditions. The captain had taken the passport, the seaman's book and withheld pay as a security bond. Beds were infested with fleas, food was spoiled and there was no fresh soap or water for showers. All at sea maintains that if these companies would only adopt the proper policies and procedures, all these issues could be resolved. A handful of successful companies, it contends 'have shown it is both commercially viable and a moral imperative to emancipate workers caught in modern slavery'. Governments should be pressured to 'mandate comprehensive human rights due diligence by companies, throughout their operations and supply chains."

Source: https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/04/06/fish-a06.html

CASE STUDY 2

Slave fishing crew released from Vanuatu jail (2023)

"Five Indonesians who were enslaved on a Taiwanese-owned fishing boat and later murdered their captain have been granted a pardon by the Vanuatu government. This pardon came six years into their original 18-year prison sentence in Vanuatu. However, the circumstances surrounding another Indonesian crew member's disappearance raise questions about the injustice faced by these men at the hands of Vanuatu and a Fijian judge."

Source: https://michaelf27.substack.com/p/slave-fishing-crew-released-from

Further explanation on the case can be provided in Misery at Sea. "On 7 May 2016, the Vanuatu-flagged longline fishing vessel, Tunago No. 61 sailed from Kaohsiung port in Taiwan towards fishing grounds in the Central Pacific. Its 28 crew included six Vietnamese, seven Filipinos and 13 Indonesian men. The captain of the vessel was Xie Dingrong, from mainland China, and the vessel was Taiwanese owned. On the night of 7 September, with the vessel on the high seas between Easter Island and Fiji, six of the Indonesian crew entered the captain's cabin and attacked and killed him. The next day, the chief engineer contacted the vessel owners in Taiwan to inform them of the captain's death. The vessel subsequently made its way to Fiji. When the six crew members were interviewed by Fijian police, they admitted their involvement in killing the captain. The six Indonesians were extradited to Vanuatu in early 2017, where they subsequently pleaded guilty to the captain's murder. The Supreme Court of Vanuatu sentenced the men to 18 years imprisonment, with a minimum non-parole period of nine years, recommending that the crew, once eligible for parole, could be returned to Indonesia to serve the second nine years of their sentence.

An analysis of the Supreme Court sentencing notes indicates that evidence suggesting the six men had been subjected to discrimination, mistreatment, and verbal and physical abuse by the captain, over an extended period and including the immediate lead up to the captain's death, was a mitigating factor in their sentencing."

Source: Misery at Sea (Lee et al. 2018)

Death and violence at sea: case studies (pre-2019/2020)

Source: Quoted directly from Human Rights at Sea (2017)

CASE STUDY 3

Body kept in freezer (2015)

"A body was discovered on a Taiwanese fishing boat. The deceased, a Chinese crewman, had been stabbed in the neck and his body had been kept in a freezer."

Source: https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/files/documents/HRAS-Fisheries-Abuse-Investigative-Report-Dec-2017-SECURED.pdf#:~:text=A%20body%20was%20discovered%20on%20a%20Taiwanese%20fishing%20boat.%20The%20deceased&text='Body%20Find%20in%20Fishing%20Boat%20%7C%20Fiji%20Sun'%20%3Chttp://fijisun.com.fj/2015

CASE STUDY 4

Accidental death from beating (2012)

"Two Fijian men were convicted of murder by the High Court in Tuvalu for beating a Chinese seafarer to death in Tuvalu. The deceased, a Chinese chief engineer, had reportedly upset the men on the day of the attack by swearing at the men in a manner they resented. Over the duration of the men's time on the vessel, the engineer had frequently used foul and insulting language to them, and the Fijians resented their having been given only baitfish for food whereas the Chinese crew members and captain were given better food."

Source: https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/204063/tuvalu-court-jails-two-fijians-for-killing-chinese-seafarer

CASE STUDY 5

Pronounced dead at arrival (2012)

"A 39-year-old man was pronounced dead on arrival at Suva Private Hospital on the 16 November 2012. He arrived complaining of shortness of breath, yet the results of a post-mortem examination show that the deceased died of injuries sustained as a result of an alleged assault. Investigations revealed that the manager of the fishing company employing the deceased had allegedly assaulted the man, inflicting the injuries that ultimately caused death."

Source: https://fijivillage.com/news/Manager-to-appear-in-court-for-alleged-assault-s2r9k5/

4.2.2.2 Poor labour conditions

Working on industrial fishing boats can be dangerous (as reflected in the case studies above) with experiences of violence, which some classify as gross human rights violations, as well as other risks, which can include fishing in bad weather (i.e. high risk of men overboard), fishers diving to uncoil the mainline from the propeller, accompanying transhipped tuna by raft, or being required to swim to transfer between vessels (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2021). While some injuries are inherent to the nature of the work, others arise due to inadequate occupational health and safety standards and procedures (Yea and Stringer 2023). Industrial fishing vessels often lack an onboard physician, leaving captains responsible for treating injuries at sea, and there are examples of inhumane treatment and care of crew injured while at sea (Case studies 6–8; Human Rights at Sea 2019; Syddall et al. 2022; Yea and Stringer 2023). There is inadequate support or compensation for those injured while at work (Syddall et al. 2022; Yea and Stringer 2023), and there are little to no compensation systems in place for injuries and long-term health issues in many labour-supplying countries (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2019; Human Rights at Sea 2019; Kailola et al. 2023).

Living conditions for crew are often well below standard, affecting their physical and mental health and morale. For example, fishers from Fiji highlighted poor sleeping conditions (e.g. bed bugs in bedding, cockroaches and rats in galleys), poor or insufficient food, or lack of potable water (Human Rights at Sea 2019; Kailola et al. 2023). Migrant workers similarly report poor living conditions and inadequate or poor-quality food and water (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre 2021). Personal protective equipment may be old, of poor standard, or unavailable (Ibid.). The lack of unions for fishers in the Pacific means they generally lack the ability to challenge or fight for their rights for decent work conditions and fair compensation for their hours worked or injuries (Syddall et al. 2022).

Inhumane treatment of Fijian crew injured on industrial fishing boats

CASE STUDY 6

Left at sea unattended

"Jone worked for several years on board foreign fishing vessels. On his last trip, his hand became caught on a fishing hook when the line was being pulled in, resulting in his shoulder being dislocated. In constant pain, Jone asked to return to Suva. Arrangements were made to transfer him to a company vessel enroute to Suva.

'They placed me in a narrow basket, otherwise used for our laundry, which reached to waist height, tied six buoys around it, gave me a strobe light and put my bag of clothes in a plastic bag with my passport and tied the bag behind my basket. I was dropped in the sea ready for the other vessel to finish pulling in its line and then pick me up … I looked around and couldn't see any sign of land. I kept on praying for God's protection as the basket could easily have been broken by sharks. I had pleaded with the captain for him to wait for the pick-up vessel before they left but he said that he had received instructions from their office to drop me and continue pulling the line … It became dark and still there was no sign of the recovery vessel. I put on the strobe light and kept on moving it up and down to see if anyone would see me.'" (quote from Jone)

"Jone was successfully picked up by the second vessel and taken to Suva. He was paid FJD170 for the two weeks of work and FJD20 for the next two weeks in compensation for his injury."

CASE STUDY 7

No support for fishers injured at sea

"... a newly recruited fisher who was ordered by the captain to dive down to clear the mainline from the propeller. His request for someone to accompany him was denied. While clearing the propeller he had difficulties breathing. Once back on the vessel, despite his breathing difficulties continuing, the captain forced him to work until he collapsed. When the vessel docked in Fiji he was taken to the hospital, where he passed away."

CASE STUDY 8

Working without adequate gear

"There was a lack of protective clothing on board several of the vessels. In the fish hold the temperature is minus 30 degrees Celsius and without protective clothing. Paul, who had worked for several years on fishing vessels, reflected 'many crewmen passed out in these freezing conditions because … our clothes we have, don't keep our bodies warm. Most of the time the coat is under-sized or torn'. Owing to the nature of the work on the vessels, including long hours, heavy manual work in wet and cold conditions, fishers suffer long-term health problems, including arthritis and back and joint pain. Temo reflected on the health impact of working on fishing vessels:"

"I am now living with a condition called osteoporosis arthritis, caused by wearing out of my backbone due to heavy workload—heavy lifting and continuous manual work in the cold on a swaying platform exacerbated by lack of sleep and insufficient and not nutritious food. As for now, I will not and would not want to encourage anyone to try out longline fishing because I would not want to see anyone limp around like me." (quoted from Paul)

Source: Yea and Stringer (2023)

4.2.2.3 Unsafe spaces for women

Much of the literature focuses on GBV towards men working on industrial fishing boats, since they dominate the sector (Barclay et al. 2022; Singh 2023), with little documented on the impact on women. Seven women work as crew for New Zealand-owned Solander Limited and three for the Fijian-owned Fiji Fish Marketing Group Limited (Fiji Fish), representing 0.6 per cent of the total employment of the harvesting sector in Fiji (Syddall et al. 2022). While there have been efforts to train small numbers of women as captains and crew members for industrial fishing vessels in Fiji[7] (Mattila and Baselala 2022) and Solomon Islands (Barclay et al. 2022) to take on non-traditional roles, working on these vessels can be challenging for women due to the male-dominated culture which often fosters discrimination and harassment. For example, women reported instances of assault and harassment while on board vessels (Syddall et al. 2022).

The physically demanding nature of the work, coupled with long periods at sea, shared facilities (e.g. sleeping, eating, bathing, toilets) and limited access to personal privacy, can exacerbate these difficulties (Rabonu 2021; Syddall et al. 2022; Vunisea 2021). Companies are hesitant to hire women as crew due to gender stereotypes relating to the strength and resilience of women on boats, as well as genuine concerns for their safety; furthermore, gender biases in recruitment and promotion may limit opportunities for women in this industry (Vunisea 2021). Finally, women who work or want to work on fishing vessels as captains, crew members or observers can be ostracised by other women for not following traditional employment and broader socio-cultural norms (Mangubhai et al. 2023).

4.2.3 Sex work, transactional sex and sex trafficking

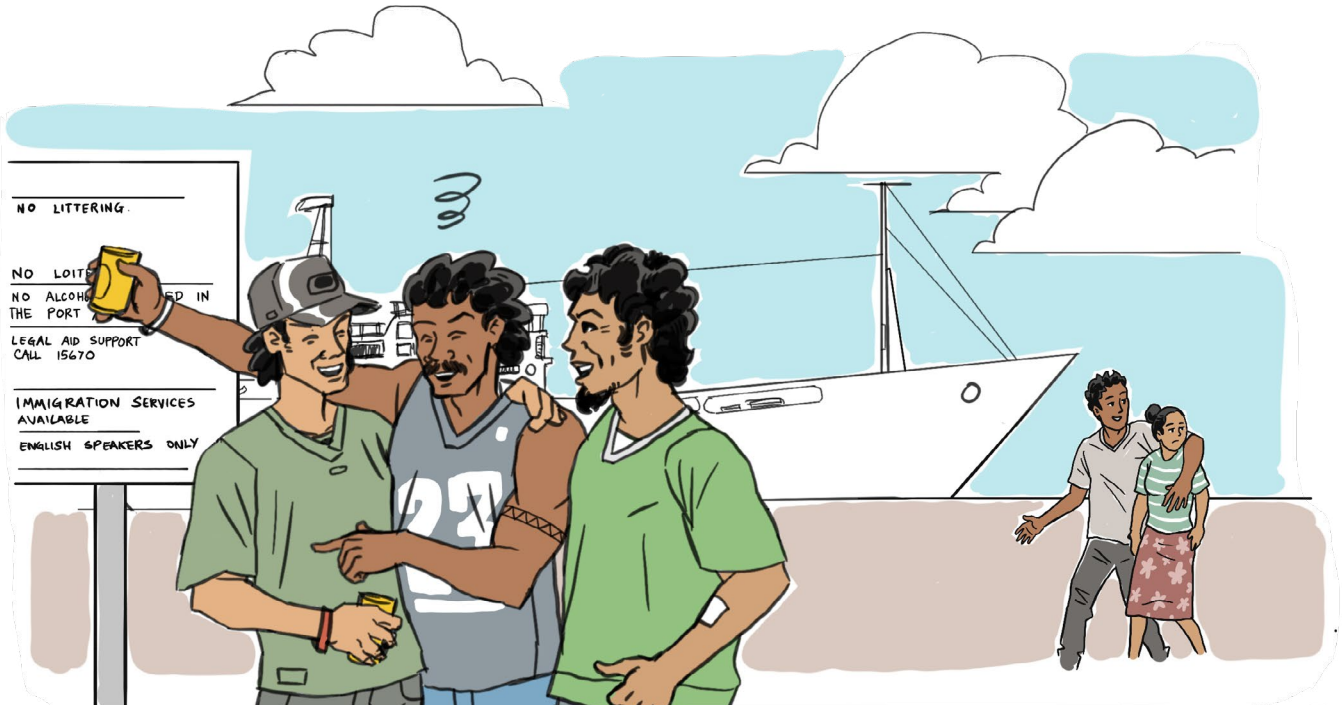
The conflation of sex work with sex trafficking has deleteriously affected the labour and human rights of both groups of workers and exacerbated their vulnerability in the Pacific Islands region. The distinction is that human trafficking victims are people forced into the sex industry against their will through force, fraud or coercion. However, the line between choice and force, willing sex work and human trafficking is sometimes difficult to distinguish, hindering necessary protections within sex work and obstructing access to safety and justice for victims of trafficking as well as accountability for traffickers and others benefiting from human trafficking.

4.2.3.1 Sex work around ports and transhipment areas

Sex work around port areas in the Pacific Islands has historically been shaped by the unique dynamics of maritime economies and the transient nature of seafaring communities (Oriente 2006). Ports serve as hubs of economic activity, attracting seafarers (including from the fisheries sector) from diverse cultural backgrounds who often seek social and intimate interactions during their brief stays ashore (Connell and Negin 2010; McMillan 2013; SPC 2004; Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi 2008; Vunisea 2005a). Transshipment areas provide opportunities for interaction between local sex workers and foreign crew (Barclay 2010; Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi 2008; Vunisea 2005a, 2005b). This has created a demand for sex work, which has become an informal part of the port economy in many towns in many Pacific Island countries, including Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Palau, PNG, RMI, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Barclay 2010; K. M. Barclay et al. 2022; McMillan 2013; McMillan and Worth 2014; SPC 2004; Sullivan et al. 2005; Syddall et al. 2022; Vunisea 2006).

A study from Kiribati found some local women travelled out to the foreign fishing vessels to drink and have sex with crew members in exchange for money, and had experienced violence (McMillan and Worth 2010). For example, some described situations where local boatmen demanded sex from, and threatened to abandon, them on small islets if they refused, while others spoke of policemen requesting sex for releasing them from custody or ignoring their presence on the boats (Ibid.). The women experienced different treatment depending on the ethnicity of the seafarer. Korean men were preferred because they tended to remain with their female partners (rather than pursue several different partners) and had a reputation for being kind and generous and for looking after their sexual partners. In contrast, Taiwanese seafarers generally wanted different sexual partners and were more exploitative of the women, including allowing

7 FFA sponsored 22 women from Fiji to undertake the Basic Sea Safety and Deckhand Fishing Course offered by the Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies at Fiji National University.



some women to be gang-raped. I-Kiribati men were characterised as being more aggressive and controlling (Ibid.).

The sex industry is often unregulated and fraught with challenges, including exploitation, a high risk of physical and sexual violence, health risks and social stigma, faced by sex workers with little consequences for male clients (McMillan and Worth 2019). For example, in Micronesian countries, women exiting tuna boats risked arrest *(Vunisea 2006),* which *"can drive it underground leaving women [more] vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, with little protection through the justice system"* (Mangubhai et al. 2023).

4.2.3.2 Transactional sex

Although there was limited information on women or girls trading their bodies for fish and other goods, several stakeholders interviewed stated that, anecdotally, this practice of "*transactional sex*" was occurring in the Pacific. Transactional sex is highly gendered, with most empirical studies from Africa (reviewed by Mangubhai et al. 2023). However, there are some older reports documenting this practice in the Pacific. A 2011 report noted: "*… exposure of young women to a system where sex is traded for fish and fresh produce; such a system has been identified as widespread in the Pacific among local and international fishing trawlers*" (Lindley and Beacroft 2011). The source for that statement was a government official and a report that largely focused on logging in Solomon Islands. Early studies of canneries in PNG suggested that women were forced to trade "sex for fish" with the crew of ships working for the cannery in Madang and Wewak, with some women feeling they could not say no because it is a means to survival (Sullivan et al. 2003, 2005). In Wewak, women traded fruits for fish and sex for fish on ships of all flags with crew from Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines and, at the time, many village women complained that they were asked for sex and even offered money and bribes for sex (Sullivan et al. 2005).

> *"After I finish my work I feel like looking for extra money. I look for extra money by selling sex with the workers from the factory and even some other interested men around Wewak town. I sell sex so that I will be able to help my family members by giving them a lot of money. I don't forced by someone to sell sex but sell sex to feed all my family. Definitely, there is a group of women and also my age group are doing it"* - 19 year old factory worker (quoted in Sullivan et al. 2005)

A study by McMillan and Worth in 2019 found that, while the sexual relationship of I-Kiribati women who boarded boats was based on the exchange of sex and goods, the women viewed these as economic transactions and sometimes referred to their clients as *"little husbands"*, often staying on board with one client (for up to three months) and receiving a lumpsum payment when they left the boat. Most women were aged 18–25 years, but some were only 16 years old and therefore were still classified as children. The same study found that: *"Korean clients in particular prefer ongoing (albeit paid) sexual relations with i-Kiribati sex workers as opposed to a series of one nighters, which suggests that a version of domestic intimacy is also being bought here. I-Kiribati sex workers describe the way their Korean clients not only provide food, drink, and money, but also protect and care for them on board."*

4.2.3.3 Sex trafficking in the Pacific

Several Pacific Island countries, including Fiji, FSM, RMI, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, are on the Tier 2 Watch List[8], meaning the governments *"do not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but are making some progress"* (U.S. Department of State 2024d, 2024e, 2024b, 2023c, 2023d, 2021, 2019). PNG is the only Pacific Island country on the Tier 3 Watch List, meaning the PNG Government *"does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so"* (U.S. Department of State 2024a, 2023a). There is also little global literature on the use of fishing boats to transport victims of sex trafficking (Mangubhai et al. 2023); however, this practice was recorded in Fiji (U.S. Department of State 2021). Information from the Trafficking in Persons Report, published by the U.S. Department of State, are summarised in Table 1; where other reports are available, these are also included in the table. It is important to note that the annual Trafficking in Persons Report only provides a summary and does not include any references in terms of the source of the data, making it difficult to evaluate independently the statements made (e.g. how data was collected, the age of the information presented, the geographical coverage of the country represented).

8 The Tier 2 Watch List is derived from the United States annual Trafficking in Persons Report. For the purposes of our report, we have chosen to include only those countries with data specifically linked to fisheries. For example, sex trafficking is reported in Tonga but, as there were no reports linking it to fisheries in the Watch List, we did not include it here.

Table 1. Evidence of sex trafficking of women and girls in the Pacific. Source: U.S. Department of State reports on the Trafficking in Persons (unless stated otherwise)

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA (FSM)
Human traffickers exploit national and foreign women and children in FSM and exploit FSM nationals abroad (U.S. Department of State 2024d). Previously, traffickers, including family members, exploited Micronesian women and girls in sex trafficking through commercial sex in hotels, restaurants, and with the crew of Asian fishing vessels. In 2023, there were reports of taxi drivers facilitating child sex trafficking, although it was not clear if this included fishing crew (U.S. Department of State 2023c).
FIJI
Human traffickers exploit national and foreign victims in Fiji and exploit Fijian victims abroad (Davy and Tupou 2022; U.S. Department of State 2024c, 2023b, 2021). According to a 2023 prevalence study, 20 per cent of respondents identified either experiencing themselves or knowing someone who experienced trafficking indicators in the hospitality, retail, wholesale, food service, vehicle maintenance, storage, transportation, construction, agriculture, fisheries or forestry sectors. Crew members on foreign fishing vessels exploit foreign victims (e.g. from Thailand, People's Republic of China), as well as Fijian women and children in sex trafficking (Davy and Tupou 2022; U.S. Department of State 2024c, 2023b). Several factors make Fijians vulnerable to trafficking in persons, including poverty, unemployment, homelessness, lack of education, family breakdown, migration to urban areas, gender discrimination, teenage pregnancy and child sexual abuse (Davy and Tupou 2022). Official figures from the Human Trafficking Unit of the Fiji Police Force suggest that, on an annual basis, there are several cases of Fijians trafficked abroad and a number of suspected cases of foreigners trafficked into Fiji, although it is not known how many relate to fishing (Ibid.). Anecdotal reports suggest fishing boats are sometimes used to transport trafficked Chinese victims into Fiji on small boats to avoid ports (U.S. Department of State 2021).
KIRIBATI
Crew members, especially Asian men, exploit children and some women prostituted on board their vessels or in bars that they frequent in Kiribati. Local I-Kiribati (including sometimes family members) knowingly facilitate trafficking by transporting underaged girls to boats for the purposes of prostitution (Naidu et al. 2022; U.S. Department of State 2016). The girls receive cash, food, alcohol or goods in exchange for sexual services with, according to the last report, as many as 20 I-Kiribati girls (some as young as 15 years old) reportedly subjected to child sex trafficking in local bars and hotels (U.S. Department of State 2016).

PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG)
Human traffickers exploit national and foreign victims in PNG and exploit PNG nationals abroad (U.S. Department of State 2024a, 2023a). International NGO research estimated about 30 per cent of sex trafficking victims from PNG are children (girls and boys), with some as young as 10 years old (Ibid.). Fishing companies sometimes coerce crew to carry out illegal fishing activities, making them vulnerable to forced criminality. Government support has been documented in some cases. Police reportedly accepted bribes to allow undocumented migrants to enter the country or ignore trafficking situations.
REPUBLIC OF MARSHALL ISLANDS (RMI)
Human traffickers exploit national and foreign victims in RMI and exploit RMI nationals abroad (U.S. Department of State 2024d, 2023e). Traffickers, including hotel and bar staff and family members, recruit and transport Marshallese and East Asian women and girls and exploit them in sex trafficking in RMI with crew of foreign fishing and transhipping vessels that dock in Majuro. Some of these women and girls have also been confined and subjected to forced childbearing as part of international fraudulent adoption schemes. Observers report commercial sexual activity involving foreign fishermen has increasingly moved from fishing vessels to local bars, hotels and suspected commercial sex establishments. Traffickers force foreign women (most of whom are long-term residents of RMI) into commercial sex in places frequented by crew from the People's Republic of China as well as other foreign fishing vessels.
SOLOMON ISLANDS
Human traffickers exploit national and foreign victims in Solomon Islands and exploit Solomon Islander victims abroad (U.S. Department of State 2024e, 2023d). Traffickers exploit Solomon Islander adults through forced labour in the logging, fishing and mining industries. Traffickers exploit Solomon Islander children in labour and sex trafficking within the country, sometimes in exchange for money or goods, including on foreign and local commercial fishing vessels (American Bar Association 2014; Maebiru et al. 2016; Save the Children 2015). Traffickers exploit local, South Asian and Southeast Asian men and women in labour and sex trafficking in Solomon Islands (American Bar Association 2014; U.S. Department of State 2024e, 2023d).
VANUATU
Human traffickers exploit national and foreign victims in Vanuatu and exploit Vanuatu nationals abroad (U.S. Department of State 2024b, 2023f). Child sex trafficking occurs on fishing vessels in Vanuatu. Onshore local recruiters reportedly take underage girls aboard vessels for sexual exploitation by crew, often for weeks at a time. The local recruiters (and sometimes the families) receive payment for recruiting and transporting the girls to the boats.

4.2.3.4 Sexual exploitation of children

Children in Fiji, PNG and Solomon Islands are subjected to the worst forms of child labour (linked in some cases to fisheries), including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (U.S. Department of Labor 2023a, 2023b). There are also children fishing in Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu, in a manner that is considered child labour as determined by national law or regulation on hazardous work and in contravention to Article 3(d) of ILO C.182[9] (U.S. Department of Labor 2023a, 2023b; U.S. Department of State 2023g, 2020).

A Save the Children study[10] provided empirical evidence of the sexual exploitation of children in exchange for money or fish, particularly near foreign logging camps, on foreign and local commercial fishing vessels, and at hotels and entertainment establishments in the three provinces of Malaita, Choiseul and Guadalcanal in Solomon Islands (Maebiru et al. 2016). The study found that social practices, such as customary marriage and informal adoption were used to set up "*the socially acceptable context in which sexual and labour exploitation is induced and rampant*" (Ibid.) Children are more likely to go to fisheries sites to explore opportunities to earn money when household members are unemployed (Maebiru et al. 2016; Save the Children 2015). In extreme cases, children (especially girls) seeking livelihoods near fisheries sites engaged in transactional sex while working as house girls, often through the negotiations of *solair*[11]. Usually alcohol and goods are used by foreign workers to solicit young men into acting as *solair* to find young girls for them and bring them to fishing boats (Save the Children 2015). Harmful gender power dynamics and relationships were revealed where underaged or young girls are coerced by their male friends into engaging in transactional sex in order to please them and avoid challenging male authority (Ibid.).

4.2.3.5 HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections

Sex trafficking, sex work and transactional sex come with health risks, including HIV/AIDS and other types of sexually-transmitted infections, putting seafarers including fishers, their casual sexual partners and wives/partners back home at risk (SPC 2004; Vunisea 2006, 2005a, 2005b). A 2010 study documented a qualitative investigation into HIV/AIDS vulnerability and the risk for 25 I-Kiribati women living in South Tarawa who engage in sex work on board foreign boats (McMillan and Worth 2010). The study noted that some local women travelled out to the foreign fishing vessels to drink and have sex with crew members in exchange for money, fish and luxury items. In addition to being at high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, women who are identified as *ainen matawa*[12] are more vulnerable to *"violence from family, sexual abuse from local men and local boatmen, and sometimes deters them from laying complaints with the police when these assaults occur"* (McMillan and Worth 2010).

4.2.4 Child labour

> ***Child labour is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It includes work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. - ILO***

While child labour is often addressed as its own subject matter, it is included in this review because it occurs in fisheries in the Pacific. Given it is often misunderstood, it is important to note that child labour does *not* include children in the Pacific who help their parents under safe conditions and in safe environments, as a means to learn skills and responsibilities, provided it does not occur during school times and the amount of work does not impact the children's ability to learn. The use of child labour in fisheries in the Pacific Islands region is driven by a combination of economic, social and cultural factors. Poverty and limited livelihood

9 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999.

10 Household surveys were conducted with female heads of households, children and youth across 500 households (1591 were below 18 years old). Focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews were held with key stakeholders and with children and young people directly affected (Maebiru et al. 2016).

11 "*Solair*" is a term used in Solomon Islands to refer to a person acting as a go-between or messenger. It is derived from a short form of "Solomon Airlines" (Save the Children 2015).

12 Women who board foreign fishing vessels and engage in sex for money and goods with foreign seafarers in Kiribati are referred to locally as "*ainen matawa*".

opportunities often push families to involve their children in fishing to contribute to household income or subsistence (ILO 2024). There are cases of boys as young as 14 years old having left school to work on industrial fishing vessels to support household income after their fathers have been injured or killed on these boats (Syddall et al. 2022). In many communities, fishing is a traditional practice and a vital part of daily life, leading to the normalisation of children's participation from a young age. Weak enforcement of labour laws, limited access to education and geographic isolation further exacerbate the issue, leaving children vulnerable to exploitation (ILO 2024). Additionally, the demand for low-cost labour in the fishing industry, coupled with the informal nature of much of the work, make it difficult to regulate and monitor, perpetuating the cycle of child labour in the region.

There is evidence that recruiters for industrial fishing vessels target young boys and early school leavers, especially from rural villages. In Fiji, although the minimum age for work is 15 years, the minimum age for hazardous work (which includes working on large vessels) is 18 years. There is also evidence that recruitment of underaged boys does occur in Fiji, which can be linked to a lack of awareness, poor enforcement or oversights of responsible staff to verify age and qualification requirements (Yea and Stringer 2023). For example, Yea and Stringer (2023) documented a Fijian recruiter explaining:

> *"There was no education qualification or any other criteria for the recruitment of longline fishing crew as we only need physically well-built men who will be able to withstand the conditions and the long hours of work in the fishing vessel. I would always target school leavers too because these are the men interested in exploring what work is like on a fishing vessel and finding out what it is like to be out at sea for months doing fishing. They've all heard about the long hours and the tiring work on a longline fishing vessel as that is the first version or introduction that they will hear from their peers or their relatives who have arranged for them to come and work on the longline fishing vessel."*

A Save the Children study documented evidence of child labour in a *bêche-de-mer* fishery on Ngongosila Island in Malaita Province (Save the Children 2015). Those working in the *bêche-de-mer* fishery were diving in deep water, sorting, loading and transporting the catch to supplement family income and pay school expenses.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4.2.5 Fish factories and canneries

In FFA-supported countries, there is a strong gender division in the industrial tuna fisheries labour force where 70 per cent of women are employed in processing facilities (canneries and loining plants), 30 per cent in the public sector, and less than one per cent in the harvesting sector (Barclay et al. 2022). Tuna factories and canneries in the Pacific Islands play a vital role in the region's economy, providing employment to thousands, particularly women, including women in rural areas who make up the majority of the workforce in these facilities (Barclay et al. 2022; International Finance Corporation 2021). Women working in tuna canneries and factories in the Pacific Islands region face numerous challenges, including poor working conditions, low wages, and exposure to GBV, including harassment (Barclay et al. 2022; Syddall et al. 2022). Where public transport is infrequent, this can result in long working days and high costs relative to wages, and may be unsafe for women finishing shifts late at night (Barclay 2021). Many of these challenges are compounded by gender and cultural norms that discourage women from reporting abuse and the weak enforcement of labour rights, leaving many women without adequate recourse. In some communities or families, "*social perceptions about certain types of jobs being for women or for men tend to discourage people from seeking employment in non-traditional roles. If women (or men) take up work in non-traditional roles, pressures from family and workplace cultures may make women (or men) feel unwelcome, and can make it difficult to stay in these roles*" (Barclay 2021).

The cannery SolTuna[13] in Noro Town in Solomon Islands faces high employee absenteeism and turnover, particularly among production staff — 64 per cent of whom are women (International Finance Corporation 2021). The women are largely responsible for cleaning and preparing fish loins for canning (Barclay et al. 2022). Four main factors contributed to absenteeism and turnover among women: (a) financial literacy and cash flow (i.e. 14 per cent reported that they had money left the day before payday and the rest took time off to sell other goods in order to obtain instant cash needed for the household); (b) limited career prospects (i.e. 67 per cent of SolTuna women employees work in low-paying roles and only 14 per cent hold middle manager positions), with almost 50 per cent of women workers believing they did not have fair opportunities to be promoted which contributed to low morale and absenteeism; (c) care responsibilities (i.e. 15 per cent of absenteeism was due to the need to care for sick children or family members, and 44 per cent of resignation letters cited child or elder care as the reason); and (d) poor worker and family health (i.e. 38 per cent took sick leave, and a further 10 per cent were absent due to "family problems" or GBV) (International Finance Corporation 2021).

An International Finance Corporation commissioned study as part of *Waka Mere*[14] across nine companies, including SolTuna, found domestic and sexual violence had a large impact on both women and men in the workplace in Solomon Islands (Anne Lockley et al. 2019). The study found a number of concerning statistics: (a) 33 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men had experienced domestic or sexual violence in the 12 months preceding the study; (b) 63 per cent of women and 55 per cent of men participants who had experienced domestic or sexual violence reported that, at times, this caused them to feel anxious, depressed, or ashamed when they were at work; (c) 34 per cent reported feeling unsafe at work at least "sometimes"; and (d) 20 per cent said that they were currently working in the same workplace as the person who was or is abusive to them (Anne Lockley et al. 2019). A collaboration between IFC and SolTuna is helping address these issues (International Finance Corporation 2021).

Fiji's largest cannery, the Pacific Fishing Company (PAFCO),[15,16] was established in the 1950s and is the largest employer in the town of Levuka and a key economic driver for the Lomaiviti Province. In the 2000s, the company was also the largest employer of women in the tuna industry in Fiji, comprising 64 per cent of the total employees primarily in production roles, as well as in office administration and management roles (Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi 2008); currently the company employs over 800 people, 66 per cent of whom are women (Vunisea 2021). Gender roles in PAFCO have changed over time with women now employed as forklift drivers, and as employees in finance, human resources, production, and quality

13 SolTuna in Noro Town, Western Province, is the only tuna-processing facility in Solomon Islands, employing 1800 workers. https://soltuna.com.au/

14 Fifteen of the largest companies in Solomon Islands have signed on to the Waka Mere Commitment to Action (*Waka Mere* or "She Works" in Pijin), which aims to advance gender equality in the country's private sector by promoting women in leadership, building respectful and supportive workplaces, and increasing opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men (Anne Lockley et al. 2019).

15 PACFO website: https://pafcofiji.com/our-story/

16 A documentary was produced in 2001 on the lives of Fijian women cannery workers working for PAFCO, highlighting the interweaving webs of the global economy, tradition and local politics (In the Name of Growth 2001).

assessment; 50 per cent of all middle management positions are held by women (Ibid.). Although the engagement of women in PAFCO has seen a shift in gender norms relating to women working, no studies were found examining GBV issues.

PNG has five tuna canneries across RD Tuna Canners Ltd[17] in Madang, Southern Seas Tuna Corporation[18] in Wewak, and Majestic Seafood Corporation[19] (a business that has been temporarily suspended since 2023), International Food Corporation Ltd[20] and Frabelle (PNG) Limited[21] in Lae. Studies in the 2000s reported the canneries as generally unsafe, with sometimes overcrowded work environments, long hours, and insufficient access to sanitary facilities, exacerbating the vulnerability of women workers (Sullivan et al. 2003; Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi 2008). It was noted that single women working in canneries were more likely to engage in sexual relations with male staff, fishing crew and others, and to abuse alcohol and drugs (Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi 2008).

4.2.6 Seafood marketplaces

Fisheries represent an important economic sector for Pacific Islanders who are dependent on fisheries for livelihoods (Gillett and Fong 2023). Seafood markets in the Pacific Islands region serve as critical hubs for local economies, providing livelihoods for many, particularly women, who make up a significant portion of seafood vendors (Thomas et al. 2021; Vitukawalu et al. 2020). However, these markets are also spaces where GBV can occur, manifesting as sexual harassment, intimidation and exploitation. Women who sell fish in locations, such as boat landing areas or local markets, are often exposed to risks of sexual harassment and abuse from fishermen, customers, male (and female) vendors, and market officials (Demmke 2006; Mangubhai et al. 2019b, 2019c, 2019a; UN Women 2014; Vitukawalu et al. 2020). In Fiji, inadequate infrastructure, such as poor lighting and a lack of secure facilities, further exacerbates their exposure to violence, particularly during early morning or late night trading hours (Case study 9, Vitukawalu et al. 2020). Solomon Islander women selling raw fish and cooked fish and chips in municipal markets around the country faced a range of challenges, including: greater risk of violence/harassment through robbery or family taking cash; unhygienic market conditions (lack of toilets and clean water, wooden benches, roaming dogs); a lack of facilities (storage, seating, shelter from the sun and rain, poor flooring quality); and poor mechanisms for coordination to lobby for improvement (Barclay et al. 2015). Further, there are gender and cultural norms against women travelling and leaving behind domestic duties; for example, women cannot spend weeks away on selling trips (e.g. to Honiara) if they have young children, and some run the risk of being subject to rumours that they have sexual liaisons while travelling, leading to conflict, including domestic violence from intimate partner relations (Barclay et al. 2018).

The governance and decision-making processes at marketplaces and in positions of authority in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are dominated by men, leaving women unable to voice their concerns or have them understood and addressed, and leaving them vulnerable to GBV with no recourse (UN Women 2014). Structural inequalities, such as limited access to resources, a gendered division of labour, exclusion from decision-making, insecure market infrastructure and discriminatory social norms, reinforce power imbalances that make women more vulnerable to GBV in seafood markets. Additionally, the normalisation of gender discrimination within market governance and community structures often leads to underreporting of GBV and inadequate responses from authorities.

17 Owned by R D Corporation, a Philippines-based company that processes skipjack tuna. https://www.rdfoodsbv.eu/about-us/ct-menu1-item5
18 A joint venture between local and foreign stakeholders, with the participation of international tuna businesses that process skipjack and yellowfin tuna. https://www.southseastuna.com/
19 A joint venture between the Thai Union (Thailand), Century Canning (Philippines), and Frabelle Fishing Corporation, that processes skipjack tuna.
20 Ownership unknown but the cannery processes mackerel and tuna under the "Besta" brand. https://www.ifc.com.pg/
21 Owned by Frabelle Fishing Corporation, a Philippines-based company that processes skipjack and yellowfin tuna. http://frabelle.com

Economic violence in small-scale fisheries[22] in the Pacific undermines the livelihoods and well-being of vulnerable groups, particularly women and marginalised communities as well as those with intersecting vulnerabilities (e.g. migrant women or women who marry into a community that is not their own). *"Economic violence includes the taking away of earnings of the victim, not allowing them to have a separate income (e.g. delegating their role to housewife, or making them work in a family business without a salary), or making the victim unfit for work through targeted physical abuse"* (Mangubhai et al. 2023).

This form of violence manifests through unequal access to resources, exploitation of labour, unfair pricing, and exclusion from decision-making processes (Ibid.). Underlying factors include entrenched gender inequalities, gender and cultural norms, weak governance and the informal nature of many small-scale fisheries, which can leave workers unprotected from exploitation (Ibid.). Furthermore, global studies show that women who are the main breadwinners in their families are more at risk of intimate partner violence than in situations where men are the main earners (Siles et al. 2019).

4.2.7 Income control in small-scale fisheries

Research conducted in three municipal fisheries markets in Fiji revealed that 2.6–4 per cent of women fishers and 4.9–9.1 per cent of women seafood traders had their earnings controlled by their husband or another male family member (Mangubhai et al. 2019b, 2019c, 2019a; Vitukawalu et al. 2020). A value chain analysis of the sea cucumber fishery in Fiji found women were sometimes paid less than men for sea cucumbers (Mangubhai et al. 2016). In Solomon Islands, fisherwomen reported that men's controlling attitudes and jealousy negatively impacted their fishing activities, with some men blaming them for poor catches (Makhoul et al. 2023). In addition, changes in gendered division of labour (e.g. shell money fishery) where women are actively involved in trading has created friction on what kinds of activities are suitable for women and who should control cash incomes (Barclay et al. 2018).

22 Economic violence in industrial fisheries has been summarised under forced labour and is not repeated in this section of the report.

CASE STUDY 9

Barriers, issues and needs of women seafood vendors in Fiji

Women selling seafood and freshwater products at three main markets in Fiji identified several issues they face, as summarised below.

Space availability and allocation: *A vast majority of the women across the three markets stated that limitations on sufficient space w[ere] barriers to selling seafood. In most cases, women vendors were provided a disproportionate distribution of space, and were required to sit very close to each other in a congested space and/or were asked to share a designated space with other vendors.*

Poor or inadequate market conditions: *The issue of improper shelters, poor drainage, unhygienic toilets, poor stall conditions, lack of water facilities and lack of tables and chairs ha[s] become a growing concern for most of these vendors across all three markets. Many women shared their experiences on how the unavailability of proper shelters would affect their sales and leave them vulnerable, especially during adverse weather conditions. Also, the lack of proper tables and seats have resulted in women using plastics, tarpaulin and cardboard to put their seafood on, with many relying on wooden boxes and drums on which to sit.*

Lack of information: *Knowledge of municipal bylaws was very low, particularly for women vendors in the Suva and Labasa municipal markets, with few women stating they received information from the respective town/city councils either through noticeboards or through public announcement systems.*

Communicating their needs: *A number of women stated they were not comfortable being vocal and sharing their issues and needs verbally or in writing with the respective town/city councils. They stated they were afraid that if they raised their issues or made complaints, they may not be allowed to sell their seafood at the markets. Others stated that the council never responded to their complaints or problems.*

Source: Vitukawalu et al. 2020 provides a summary of three market reports from the Suva, Labasa and Savusavu municipal markets (Mangubhai et al. 2019c, 2019b, 2019a)

Past studies highlighted discrimination against I-Kiribati women working as fish sellers. Examples included: (a) a woman did not receive her pay personally, as it was included as part of her husband's income from fishing; (b) an employer regularly neglected to pay a woman at all; and (c) the pay scale varied in another case (Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi 2008). FGDs conducted as part of a gender analysis of coastal fisheries and aquaculture across four atolls in Kiribati (Tarawa, Maiana, Nonouti and Kiritimati) found that some women did not have control of the income earned from fisheries (Mangubhai and Fox 2024). These included women of a range of ages and from different atolls. Mangubhai and Fox 2024 summarised their findings from FGDs with women as follows:

> *"Elder women from both South and North Tarawa indicated that their husbands controlled the money earned from fisheries, allocating how it is spent. Those in South Tarawa further explained that the husband gives the money to the wife for food and other family needs and only a small portion is kept by the husband for entertainment (e.g. kava)."* - elder women, North and South Tarawa Atoll
>
> *"The middle-aged woman's husband, the woman herself, or her parents made decisions on money earned from selling fisheries resources."* - middle-aged women, Maiana Atoll
>
> *"Some make decisions on their own, while others make decisions jointly with their husbands. However, most women in Autukia Village said their husbands make decisions on how the money earned from fisheries resources is spent."* - middle-aged women, Nonouti Atoll
>
> *"Some elder women decide how to use the earnings, while the husbands decide for others."* - elder women, Nonouti Atoll
>
> *"Men made the decisions about the income earned from fishing."* - young women, Kiritimati Atoll

A similar gender analysis conducted in Tuvalu found two responses to surveys listed the father or head of family or clan (*matai*) as the one who makes the decisions related to income earned by women (SPC unpubl. data).

4.2.8 Narcotics and alcohol

A growing global narrative suggests that illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, along with the decline of fish stocks, are closely connected to other fisheries violations, such as human trafficking, forced labour and drug trafficking (Liddick 2014; Mackay et al. 2020; Telesetsky 2014; Vunisea 2005a). The vastness of the Pacific Islands region makes it difficult to monitor borders for transnational crime, including the shipment of narcotics and other banned substances; however, UNODC has identified the Pacific as a transit point for drug and human trafficking routes (McNeill 2022). While the use of fishing vessels to transport and move narcotics is not GBV, there is a connection between the consumption of narcotics and alcohol to cope with the pressures of working in industrial fisheries and GBV on boats or back at home with families, as has been documented globally (Mangubhai et al. 2023). Narcotics and alcohol abuse among crew on industrial fishing boats is thought to be linked to domestic violence, family breakups, teenage pregnancies, and loss of employment (Demmke 2006).

There were no publications that presented empirical data on the rates of narcotic and alcohol consumption among fishers or seafarers more broadly in the Pacific, although the links between alcohol and GBV are well recognised (e.g. Chadwick et al. 2023). Barclay et al. 2022 highlighted the social impacts of fishing when husbands/sons/fathers are absent for long periods and engage in sex, drugs and alcohol behaviours in port. A representative from Fiji Fish reported murders and stabbings have almost occurred during fights on their premises where alcohol has been involved: *"they come and drink, and you know, and it's just all the pressure gets released and they just fight... they are not my crew, they are contracted"* (Syddall et al. 2022). Mothers have witnessed how their children working on industrial tuna vessels have succumbed to drug use as well as prostitution (Ibid.).

In Kiribati, the growth in the sex trade was thought to contribute to alcohol and drug abuse and other social problems (Vunisea 2005b). "*Studies cited in an analysis of HIV/AIDS risks among seafarers from Pacific Island countries in the tuna fishing and international shipping industries found, in response to a question regarding the reasons for practicing unsafe sex, that 'drinking too much alcohol' was the answer given by 79% of Tuvaluan seafarers, 79% of I-Kiribati seafarers and 81% of Fijian seafarers"* (Schoeffel 2015); however, no citations for these studies were provided to examine the statement further. Alcoholism and drug abuse has been documented among women sex workers (McMillan and Worth 2010; Toatu et al. 2018) and among women working in canneries (Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi 2008), highlighting the ways these issues intersect with fisheries.

4.2.9 Monitoring, control and surveillance officers

> *"... while marine observers protect the fish, there are scant protections for the observers themselves. Sometimes, the job is a little like being sent behind enemy lines to make sure that the other army plays fair"* - (van der Voo 2023)

MCS officers play crucial and diverse roles in ensuring sustainable and legal fishing practices in Pacific fisheries. These professionals include fisheries observers who monitor catches onboard vessels, port inspectors who verify landings and compliance with regulations, and surveillance officers who operate aerial or maritime patrols to detect illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities. They often work in collaboration with regional agencies, such as the FFA and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), to enforce rules across the region's vast exclusive economic zones and national security organisations (e.g. navy, police, customs). There are also MCS officers who focus on ensuring compliance with laws and regulations relating to inshore fisheries and aquaculture and cover areas, such as ports (i.e. for export species), fish landing sites, seafood markets and fishing communities.

Physical and psychological violence towards Pacific Island government fisheries observers on large, industrial fishing vessels operating within national waters has been documented, including several who have died under suspicious circumstances. Fisheries observers risk their lives to provide the data on fishing operations (e.g. quantities of catch, composition of different fish species, fishing methods employed), which is necessary for their countries to monitor vessels in their waters and ensure the sustainability of their national fisheries resources. These observers are also responsible for monitoring compliance with established management measures. Because of the role they play, fisheries observers can live on boats for extended periods of time, sometimes living among hostile captains and/or crew and operating in unsafe conditions (Human Rights at Sea 2020). While they also may bear witness to forms of GBV between or against captain or crew members, most reports or newspaper articles tend to focus on harm directed at fisheries observers.

Although there are protections and minimum standards for fisheries observers,[23] several have lost their lives under suspicious circumstances with little to no resolution for the families they leave behind. The majority of publicly available cases are largely from Kiribati and PNG, with a small number of cases from Fiji and Tonga. The exact number of fisheries officers who have been harmed or killed is not readily available and often based on limited case studies and newspaper articles, making it difficult to ascertain the exact

23 Observers are subject to protections, such as the 2017 Conservation and Management Measure for the protection of WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Observers, ILO C188 Work in Fishing Convention, and the 2012 Cape Town Agreement on fishing vessel safety.

number. For example, in 2018, an article in the PNG Post-Courier reported that 18 fisheries observers from PNG's National Fisheries Authority had gone missing during the 2013–2018 period (Elapa 2018); however, the specifics of each of these cases was not provided or verified. The case that has received significant international attention[24] and support concerns the death of Kiribati fisheries observer, Eritara Aatii Kaierua, due to blunt force trauma to his head while conducting observer work on board the Taiwanese flagged fishing vessel (FV) WIN FAR NO.636 (Human Rights at Sea 2021, 2020, 2017). While justice has yet to be served for Eritara Aatii Kaierua and the family he left behind, the investigation into his death highlighted three more fisheries observers from Kiribati who also lost their lives under suspicious circumstances – Antin Tamwabeti in 2019, Moanniki Nawii in 2017, and Tabuia Tekaie in 2009 (Association of Professional Observers 2024).

Numerous articles have highlighted the psychological violence on board industrial fishing boats (Carreon 2020; Island Times 2020; van der Voo 2023; Vance 2020). Groups, such as Pacific Dialogue and the Human Dignity Group, have tried to keep records of observer deaths in the Pacific Islands region but are largely restricted to information in the public domain. The Association for Professional Observers (APO) routinely logs stories of such incidents with their website describing acts of violence across the world, such as *"observers locked in their rooms, threatened at knifepoint, chased around docks, forced to accept bribes, raped, starved, pressured to sign off on sustainability criteria"* (van der Voo 2023).

Two examples are provided to illustrate psychological forms of violence that fisheries observers face in the Pacific. First, Simi Cagilaba, an observer for 18 years, watched the captain of the Sea Quest falsify catch reports twice and saw two crewmen dump plastic at sea. After observing these incidents, the captain behaved in a menacing way towards him, tried to pressure him to censor his report, and took action that affected his career as a fisheries observer (van der Voo 2023). Second, before the death of Kiribati fisheries observer, Eritara Aatii Kaierua, his family reported he was under significant psychological stress as he was already fearful for his life (Vance 2020):

> *"Kaierua experienced some of these tensions. In 2016, he told his sister about attempts to bribe him over a shark fin catch. And in the year before he died, a crew turned on him after they were forced to offload tonnes of tuna in Tuvalu after officials checked his log and found that it didn't match that of the captain. Nicky Kaierua, 42, says her younger brother felt his life was put in danger."*
>
> *"Eritara got so scared... After that incident, he would go out to do his work, come back and lock himself up in his room. In the mess room, he was so fearful of being poisoned that he would grab the sailors' food rather than eating the serve allocated for him. Most of the time he would eat noodles and biscuits, his own rations, in his room. He came off that boat and he reported it to Kiribati Fisheries."*

While there is limited information on women observers and their experiences, Syddall et al. 2022 wrote:

> *"A PNG observer identified and interviewed through an interviewee from the Women in Fisheries Network commented on her experiences on board a purse-seine vessel where she had been attacked in 2003. While generally being 'treated the same' on board by crew, this observer noted the attacker who was a PNG national young crew member 'had no experience with female observers before'. Purse-seine vessels were noted by Fiji industry representatives and other interviewees to provide better living standards (e.g. separate facilities). Nevertheless, this did not deter the assault where she was 'strangled from behind with rope' because the attacker wanted her camera that had photos of illegal fishing activity. Due to lack of evidence, her case was dropped after three years, and she never saw the assailant again. Her boss at work provided support but no counselling was offered to her. She says she has got over it in time and still goes out to sea."*

24 Death at Sea: https://www.deathatseafilm.com/death-sea/film, https://www.deathatseafilm.com/death-sea/film-extras

Examples of observer deaths and disappearances in the Pacific Islands region

Observer: Arnold Latu (2021)

Country: Tonga

Vessel: Hsinlong 1, owned by Hsinlong Fisheries Ltd (Chinese-owned/ operated)

Notes: Arnold was the monitoring officer employed by the Tongan Government to check that the amount of fish caught on its three-week voyage was legal and correctly recorded. The Hsinlong 1 had almost completed its work and was berthed close to Pangaimotu Island, off the shores of Nuku'alofa, awaiting clearance from local authorities to berth at the Tuimatamoana fishing wharf. The crew found Arnold dead and alerted the ship's captain who contacted the Tongan police. Despite calls for a transparent investigation from international bodies, there are still no answers about what caused the apparently healthy man's death.

Source: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/04/its-a-mystery-for-us-the-puzzling-death-at-sea-of-a-tongan-fisheries-observer

Observer: Eritara Aatii Kaierua (2020)

Counry: Kiribati

Vessel: Win Far 636, a Taiwanese-registered and -flagged tuna purse-seine vessel

Notes: Eritara's journals and logs reveal that the vessel was accordingly obtaining Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified catch while also hauling conventional caught tuna. His family reported that, on previous recent trips, he had been harassed and felt his life was threatened. His death is featured in a July 2020 report by Human Rights at Sea (2021) and is under investigation for murder. The vessel was owned by KuoHsiung Fishery, based in Taiwan's Kaohsiung City. The local Kiribati agent for the vessel was the government-owned company, Central Pacific Products Limited (CCPL).

Source: https://islandtimes.org/death-on-the-high-seas-the-mysterious-death-of-a-humble-fishing-observer/

Observer: Antin Tamwabeti (2019)

Country: Kiribati

Vessel: Taiwanese-owned fish carrier, Shin Ho Chun No. 102

Notes: Antin's death is rumoured to have been suicide. He had been harassed on board an IATTC-registered vessel in January 2019, a Taiwanese-owned fish carrier Shin Ho Chun No. 102 where he was threatened by the crew. This was reported by the company that hired him, MRAG Americas, in a report published prior to his suicide.

Source: https://islandtimes.org/death-on-the-high-seas-the-mysterious-death-of-a-humble-fishing-observer/

Observer: Moanniki Nawii (2017)

Country: Kiribati

Vessel: Yu Wen 301

Notes: Maonniki was found dead in his cabin aboard the Yu Wen 301 after he failed to show up for breakfast. The vessel was in PNG waters, but the captain requested it dock in the Marshall Islands. It was instead directed to Honiara, and Solomon Islands police carried out an investigation at the request of Kiribati. The authorities concluded that he died of "hypertension".

Source: https://islandtimes.org/death-on-the-high-seas-the-mysterious-death-of-a-humble-fishing-observer/

Observer: James Junior Numbaru (2017)

Country: Papua New Guinea (PNG)

Vessel: Feng Xiang No 818, a Chinese-flagged purse-seine vessel

Notes: James fell overboard from a Chinese purse-seine vessel and was captured on the vessel's CCTV. His family conducted its own investigation and the NFA kept the case open years later. The Association for Professional Observers (APO) determined through Global Fishing Watch that the vessel did not initiate a search and rescue operation after the time they claimed they were aware of him missing, as required under the WCPFC observer safety measures. His notebook revealed that he made a notation of pollution just three days before he disappeared.

Sources: https://islandtimes.org/death-on-the-high-seas-the-mysterious-death-of-a-humble-fishing-observer/

https://www.thenational.com.pg/png-fisheries-observer-missing-off-nauru/

Observer: Usaia Masibalavu (2016)

Country: Fiji

Vessel: F/V Western Pacific, a United States- flagged, WCPFC-registered tuna purse-seine vessel

Notes: Usaia died on the F/V Western Pacific. According to a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) After Action Report, the vessel informed the USCG on 19 May 2016 that Usaia had a "twisted knee injury" and the vessel was heading to port so that he could seek medical attention at a hospital. The injury was described as a minor injury. A few hours later, in the afternoon of that same day, the vessel updated the USCG, saying that Masibalavu had "problems with his vision". One day later, on 20 March 2016, the vessel called the emergency contact at the NOAA Observer Program for American Samoa, the Port Coordinator Steve Kostelnik to inform him that Masibalavu had "passed away on route to American Samoa". A subsequent autopsy defined the immediate cause of death (on 21 May 2016) as "septic aortic valve endocarditis".

Source: https://islandtimes.org/death-on-the-high-seas-the-mysterious-death-of-a-humble-fishing-observer/

Observer: Larry Gavin / Kevin (2014 or 2016)

Country: PNG

Vessel: Japanese-flagged vessel Miya Maru No. 1

Notes: Larry's name and date of disappearance are uncertain. Various sources have reported his name as Larry Gavin and that he disappeared in 2016. One PNG observer, who wishes to remain anonymous, reported to APO that his name was Larry Kevin, not Gavin and he was 26 years old at the time of his disappearance. He died on board the Japanese-flagged vessel Miya Maru No. 18, his second trip with the National Fisheries Authority (NFA), and he disappeared from that vessel in 2014, not 2016. However other reports state he disappeared in 2016.

Source: https://islandtimes.org/death-on-the-high-seas-the-mysterious-death-of-a-humble-fishing-observer/

Observer: Wesley Talia (2015)

Country: PNG

Vessel: Unknown

Notes: According to an article by Raymond Sigimet, "Observer Wesley Talia was reported missing in the waters of New Ireland in 2015". The body was wrapped in a "blue cloak" (the same as the vessel's livery) is of some interest. There are all sorts of colours around this story – the vessel he went missing from was one of a fleet of 7–9 (again different numbers depending on which local expert you speak to) which were on their first trips of a rather unusual licensing arrangement whereby they were foreign vessels fishing under license to the provincial government rather than to the national government, as foreign vessels usually are.

Source: https://www.apo-observers.org/observer-safety/misses/

Observer: Charlie Lasisi (2010)

Country: PNG

Vessel: Dolores 838 is owned by the Philippines Rd Tuna Ventures (formerly South Sea Fishing Ventures)

Notes: Charlie disappeared in 2010 on board Dolores 838 in the Bismark seas near PNG's Indonesian border. The vessel is owned by the Philippines Rd Tuna Ventures which runs the Madang-based RD Tuna Canners Limited in Madang Province. Six Filipino crew members were brought to Port Moresby for questioning and were charged for the alleged murder. The charges were later dismissed and the suspects discharged due to circumstantial and insufficient evidence for a trial. Later, it was reported that his remains were discovered off West Sepik in October 2015, bound in chains, suggesting a murder had taken place. The case continues to be overshadowed by uncertainty, due to a lack of comprehensive recording of evidence and facts and probably a lack of transparency with regards to the investigation's results. The criminal investigation was never closed and one of the crew members testified to having seen the murder conducted by three Filipino crew members but was initially too scared to speak in court. Unfortunately, no further indictment has been brought forward and the case continues to be mired in murky circumstances.

Source: https://islandtimes.org/death-on-the-high-seas-the-mysterious-death-of-a-humble-fishing-observer/

Observer: Tabuia Tekaie (2009)

Country: Kiribati

Vessel: Sajo Accordio, a Korean-flagged vessel

Notes: Tabuia was 27 years old when he served as an observer aboard the vessel, Sajo Accordio, a Korean-flagged vessel that has since changed flags from Korea to Kiribati and its name changed to Mamautari. Tebuia was found dead in his bunk by one of the ship's 23 crew members. The body of the observer was dropped into the sea before their arrival, further contaminating the evidence. Following his death, the dead man's cabin had been made ship-shape. It was scrupulously clean; no fingerprints or forensic evidence of any sort was available. "Nor for that matter was there any forensic capability in Kiribati to take or test it. When the body was eventually flown to New Zealand and underwent an autopsy, the New Zealand authorities concluded that Tabua Tekaie had died of "hypertension" and his body was returned to his family.

Source: https://islandtimes.org/death-on-the-high-seas-the-mysterious-death-of-a-humble-fishing-observer/

https://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/western-leader/3210019/A-case-of-sudden-death-at-sea

4.2.10 Climate change, disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic on fisheries and aquaculture

The interplay of climate change, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified vulnerabilities of workers in the fisheries sector, disproportionately affecting women and exacerbating GBV (Mangubhai et al. 2024). Environmental changes, such as rising sea levels and ocean warming, disrupt fish populations and diminish catches, undermining fisheries livelihoods (Mangubhai et al. 2023). Women in fisheries often occupy informal and precarious roles, such as processing and marketing, making them more susceptible to income loss during disruptions (Mangubhai et al. 2024). Economic strain can exacerbate household stress, increasing the risk of GBV. Additionally, the marginalisation of women in decision-making processes related to fisheries management further limits their access to resources and support systems, intensifying their vulnerability (Chaston Radway et al. 2016; Thomas et al. 2021). The burden of caregiving, coupled with limited access to resources and support systems, has deepened gender inequalities (Mangubhai et al. 2024), leaving women with fewer options to escape abusive environments.

The literature on the impacts of climate change, natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic on the social dimensions, and specifically GBV, is limited in the Pacific. This is not surprising given the sensitive nature of GBV research and lack of attention on sectoral research. For some countries (e.g. Fiji, FSM, Vanuatu), it has been flagged that disasters and climate-induced displacement significantly increases vulnerability to trafficking due to a loss of livelihood, shelter or family stability (U.S. Department of State 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2023b, 2023c, 2023f). In other countries (e.g. PNG), women and girls displaced as a result of natural disasters or communal conflict are at higher risk of trafficking (U.S. Department of State 2024a, 2023a). There are concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent increase in unemployment and poverty have contributed to increased cases of domestic trafficking in persons (Davy and Tupou 2022).

FFA commissioned a series of reports on the impacts of COVID-19 on offshore fisheries. A study from Tonga found that, during the global pandemic, it was mostly women working in the offices of fishing companies, as fish shop attendants, and in cleaning work who lost their jobs, causing financial stress on their households. Although crisis centres in Tonga experienced a 54 per cent increase in domestic violence cases during the pandemic (UN Women 2020), data were not available for individual sectors, such as fisheries or aquaculture (Chan-Tung et al. 2022). An IOM study suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent increase in unemployment and poverty may have contributed to increased cases of domestic trafficking in persons in Fiji (Davy and Tupou 2022); however there are no figures available on how many of these cases relate to the fisheries sector.

5. Summary of consultations

Stakeholder consultations provided valuable inputs and suggestions for the design of the research framework including: (a) organisations working on, or that can contribute to, GBV in fisheries (Table 2); (b) GBV issues and countries where they are or may be occurring, noting some only had anecdotal information or were repeating information from their parties; and (c) guidance on the approaches, methods or tools for data collection.

While the stakeholder interviews did not cover every organisation working on GBV in the Pacific, numerous organisations were working with the fisheries sector on GBV issues. These include regional organisations (i.e. SPC and FFA), UN agencies (i.e. ILO, IOM) and international NGOs (i.e. The Asia Foundation, Conservation International) among others (Table 2). Although no interviews were conducted with UNODC, they are included on the list since they were mentioned by others and referenced in the literature review. Some fisheries and GBV stakeholders were aware of specific issues and countries, while only a select few had substantial experience working on GBV in fisheries. The list below provides a summary of key areas relevant for GBV in fisheries, based on stakeholder feedback and existing evidence from the desktop review:

- forced labour and trafficking (Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu);
- violence towards observers (Parties to the Nauru Agreement – FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, PNG, RMI, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu – and additional tuna-exporting countries, such as Fiji and Vanuatu);
- child labour in inshore and offshore fisheries (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands);
- fish factories and canneries (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands);
- transactional sex or "sex for fish" (Fiji, Kiribati, PNG, Solomon Islands);
- sex work at ports and transhipment areas (Fiji, Kiribati, RMI, PNG, Solomon Islands); and
- seafood vendors at marketplaces (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu).

While the majority of stakeholders could not provide specific guidance on the approaches, methods or tools for data collection beyond recommending socio-economic surveys, several tools were highlighted.

Social Responsibility Assessment (SRA): The SRA is a human rights risk assessment tool designed specifically for the seafood industry to support socially responsible seafood (Conservation International 2021a). Together with environmental and human rights groups, Conservation International co-developed the Monterey Framework for Socially Responsible Seafood, a unifying consensus framework recalling international human rights frameworks to: protect human rights, dignity and access to resources; ensure equality and equitable opportunity; and maintain and improve food and livelihood security. The SRA tool can be used to assess risks of social issues (forced labour, slavery, labour rights violations, etc.), uncover critical information gaps, and identify areas in need of improvement that can inform an action plan. The SRA is a risk-assessment tool that can be used as part of a holistic five-step human rights due diligence in seafood supply chains. This tool has been used in Fiji (Singh 2023) and New Caledonia, and will be applied to the industry in Samoa in 2025. The SRA tool is currently being updated by Conservation International to better integrate gender and human rights issues (J. Fitzpatrick, Conservation International, pers. comm.).

Prevalence Surveys on Violence Against Women: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for the monitoring of VAW. Eleven Pacific Island countries[25] conducted VAW Prevalence surveys between 2000 and 2014, using the methodology developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the multi-country study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women. Having data at the national level on the prevalence of VAW is the first step to understanding how to end it. Prevalence data provides an estimate of the prevalence of VAW occurring within a population. Importantly, women are at the centre of the collection of data for prevalence surveys, helping ensure the findings are actionable and can be used to effectively address GBV.

25 Where national level studies on VAW and girls have previously been conducted, there is a need for more recent data, including in the Cook Islands (2013), Fiji (2013), FSM (2014), Kiribati (2008), Nauru (2013), Palau (2013), RMI (2012), Samoa (2006), Solomon Islands (2008), Tonga (2009), and Vanuatu (2009). There have been no national surveys on VAW conducted in Niue, Tokelau, or Tuvalu (Jansen 2023).

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS): The MICS is a standardised household survey tool that has become the largest source of statistically sound and internationally comparable data on women, men and children worldwide since its launch in 1995 (UNICEF 2021, p. 202). The survey generates data for monitoring progress towards the achievement of national and global goals aimed at promoting the welfare of women, men and children, including data for monitoring progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and for reporting on Voluntary National Reviews. There are several GBV indicators in MICS; these indicators focus on GBV towards women and girls, which would leave out the GBV experiences of men, boys, non-binary individuals and men with different sexual orientation. In the Pacific, the main objectives of the MICS are to: (a) collect social development data on health, nutrition, education, child protection, water and sanitation, human capital and the well-being of children, women and men; (b) build capacity of national partners in data collection, compilation, processing, analysis and reporting on the situation of children, women and men; and (c) provide decision-makers with evidence on the situation of the rights of children, women and other vulnerable groups in the Pacific.[26]

Several considerations and/or recommendations that emerged during stakeholder consultations, which are relevant to the development of a research framework, are summarised below.

Fisheries experts

- Some countries are sensitive about research on GBV (e.g. PNG), particularly if the results might impact the fisheries sector economically. There may be pushback from some Pacific Island governments on topics it considers too sensitive.
- Many suggested the importance of looking into transhipment areas at port or at sea. "Transshipment" refers to vessel-to-vessel transfers, often involving fishing vessels offloading catch onto large carrier vessels. Transhipment has been linked to both crew abuses, because it enables fishing vessels to remain at sea for long stretches, and to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, because catches from different vessels often mix in the carriers' holds and become difficult to trace.
- Although there are few unions in the Pacific that support and look after fishers' rights, there are two unions that should be examined more closely – the Vanuatu National Workers Union (800 fisher members) and the Fiji Commercial and National Workers Union (at least 50 members, covering mainly offshore fishers).
- There are also fishing industry associations operating in some countries that could be interviewed for knowledge of GBV in fisheries. For example, the PNG Fishing Industry Association and Fiji Fishing Industry Association are strong and well organised.
- According to ILO, Kiribati is establishing a migrant workers' resource centre for workers, including fishers. If formed, interviews of members could shed light on issues faced by migrant fishers.

GBV experts

- GBV experts have highlighted the challenge of conducting research on GBV in communities due to the sensitivity of the issue and the lack of data at the provincial levels. However, they noted the importance of examining the cultural context and, in particular, the unreported aspect of GBV and the "silence" prevailing around it at the community level. A recommendation was made to use researchers who have been trained and have undertaken prevalence surveys in the Pacific, as well as graduates who have undergone the *kNOwVAWdata* course, to support research in the region. https://knowvawdata.com/ (Jansen 2010).
- There was a recommendation to draw upon the research tool protocols and approaches of the International Women's Development Agency. For example, the toolkit, "Floating Coconut Story", is a participatory learning method to identify the impacts of paid and unpaid work of women and men on the well-being of their families and societies.
- As there are various datasets and survey methods used by different agencies, an expert highlighted the MICS indicators as a potential dataset to insert targeted questions with the aim to gain insight into GBV in the fisheries sector.

26 MICS provide more up-to-date data on select violence against women and girls (VAWG) indicators in Fiji (2021), Kiribati (2018–2019), Samoa (2019–2020), Tonga (2019), and Tuvalu (2019–2020) (UN Women n.d.).

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) produced a report on the lessons learned from conducting field research on VAW in Solomon Islands and Kiribati. The recommendations and guidance provided in this report should be considered in the proposed research framework (Jansen 2010).
- kNOwVAWdata is an initiative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which seeks to develop sustained regional capacity, through the development and implementation of a comprehensive training curriculum, and to build a committed pool of professionals and research practitioners who are trained and sensitised on the measurement of VAW in Asia and the Pacific region and who can be called upon to support future GBV research.
- The Pacific Network on Violence Against Women may be a valuable ally when working on GBV in fisheries. The network comprises a membership of 129 organisations in 13 countries across the Pacific and is deeply rooted in the principles of feminism, women's human rights, gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and VAWG. The Pacific Network has pioneered response and prevention approaches, including the engagement of men to combat GBV and advance gender equality. Member organisations collect data but have limited capacity to analyse this data or publish their findings.

Table 2. Organisations that are working on, or can contribute to, GBV in fisheries in the Pacific, based on stakeholder interviews

ORGANISATIONS	RELEVANCE TO GBV IN FISHERIES
Conservation International	Conservation International has conducted a social responsibility assessment of tuna fisheries in Fiji (2023) and New Caledonia (2024) and will be expanding to Samoa (in 2025) as part of its efforts to work with industry to improve human rights (and labour) standards. Co-developed with labour, human rights and environmental organisations, the SRA Tool for the Seafood Sector is useful as a diagnostic, benchmarking, or risk assessment tool for conducting human rights due diligence in seafood supply chains. Resources: https://riseseafood.org/social-responsibility-assessment/
Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)	FFA supports its members to create and enable the maximum long-term social and economic benefit from the sustainable use of offshore fishery resources. This includes supporting MCS in the region. For example, the FFA Regional Observer Programme is dedicated to ensuring that fishery observers receive comprehensive training, are adequately equipped for their duties, and operate in a safe and protected environment while at sea. FFA supports its members to implement the new Conservation and Management Measures adopted by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in December 2024, to regulate labour standards for fishing crews on vessels operating within its jurisdiction. FFA also funded studies to document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on fisheries in the Pacific.
International Labour Organization (ILO)	ILO's Pacific office is supporting Pacific Island countries to ratify Convention 190, relating to violence and harassment in the world of work, including sexual harassment. With funding from New Zealand, ILO undertook work in three communities focused on raising awareness on worker rights, including fishers. Although they also planned to look at trade unions for fisheries, this is currently on hold due to changes in funding. ILO also developed a concept note to modify an ILO training manual to "develop knowledge and skills that will lead to the integration of the psychosocial and health promotion issues into a comprehensive enterprise policy and establish a framework for preventative action". ILO is working in RMI and Palau, mainly training and advocating for the ratification of ILO Convention 188 (including labour trafficking of persons). ILO has previously undertaken projects on child labour, including the exploitation of children, and has worked with fishers' associations and fishers' unions in the Pacific. Resources: https://www.ilo.org/regions-and-countries/asia-and-pacific/pacific-island-countries
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	IOM is working on labour standards, particularly more egregious labour rights violations on fishing vessels. IOM has conducted a country capacity assessment on trafficking in persons for seven countries in the Pacific, three of which have been published (i.e. FSM, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu). However, the reports focus on the ability of countries to counter trafficking in persons, with only limited questions relating to fisheries in countries where fisheries have been determined to be a "high risk sector for employment". The assessments are used to shape a two-day training across nine Pacific Islands governments, with frontline officials from labour and fisheries. The training covers: the international legal definition of trafficking; impacts of trafficking on victims; causes and risks associated with trafficking; reasons people are unable to leave situations of trafficking; national legislation on trafficking in persons; jurisdictional challenges specific to the fisheries sector; and the vulnerability of fishers to trafficking and labour exploitation. They also cover victim identification, victim determination, interviews, reporting, and referral to assistance services, as well as how to report ethically on these topics (i.e. rights of victims to confidentiality, data protection, etc.). With complimentary funding from an internal fund – the Development Fund, IOM is rolling out a training-of-trainers in FSM, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. Government staff have issued materials on trafficking in persons in Noro, Solomon Islands and all states in FSM.

ORGANISATIONS	RELEVANCE TO GBV IN FISHERIES
Pacific Community (SPC)	SPC has large programmes focused on fisheries (including aquaculture), gender, and human rights, with components that include work on GBV. Through the PEUMP programme, there have been focused investments to better integrate gender equity and social inclusion and broader human rights-based approaches in the fisheries sector. The Human Rights and Social Development division provides quality, results-focused and contextually relevant technical assistance, capacity development, research, policy and legal services to SPC member states, and to civil society, to advance human rights, gender equality and social inclusion for all Pacific people, grounded in cultural values and principles, and people-centred approaches. SPC is a partner organisation on the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls, a platform that aims to bring together high-level (senior) government officials from ministries responsible for coordinating and/or implementing their country's/state's family protection/domestic violence legislation. The platform enables information-sharing and discussions, strategic planning, and the development of regional initiatives to improve the implementation of protection/domestic violence legislation at the national level. Through these efforts, SPC promotes improved leadership in the region for effective protection/domestic violence legislation implementation, and the identification of solutions to address challenges faced by the countries/states in implementing their respective legislation. The Regional Working Group on the Implementation of Family Protection and Domestic Violence Legislation is a Pacific-grown and -led initiative, which seeks to ensure domestic violence legislation is effectively implemented in the Pacific with a more collaborative and coherent response across Pacific Island countries. The Regional Working Group was established in October 2018 with the SPC Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division serving as its secretariat. The Regional Working Group was established to support the previous work undertaken by the Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division, providing technical support to, and building the capacity of, SPC members to enact domestic violence laws. The secretariat facilitates information-sharing, coordinates working group plans and activities, and collects data to track progress over time related to the implementation of domestic violence legislation.
The Asia Foundation	The Asia Foundation, with funding from USAID, is implementing a five-year "Pacific Regional Initiative and Support for More Effective Counter Trafficking in Persons ("Pacific RISE-CTIP") program" to strengthen trafficking in persons prevention, protection and prosecution through a holistic, multi-sectoral approach that engages government, civil society, and the private sector. The initiative focused on Fiji, PNG and RMI during the first two years (2022–2023) and expanded to Tonga in the third year (2024). The project is taking a gender equality and social inclusion lens to: (a) improve prevention through enhanced local and community-based mechanisms and strategies to prevent trafficking; (b) strengthen protection and sustainable, durable solutions and services for trafficking victims; and (c) build capacity to prosecute traffickers and increase access to legal services by trafficking victims.
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)	Recognising that few resources have been directed towards collecting data and conducting research on trafficking in persons in the Pacific Islands, the UNODC implemented a project to bolster data collection systems that estimate and monitor the number of victims of trafficking in persons in Fiji, FSM, Palau, RMI, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

6. Proposed framework

6.1 Defining the research problem

Inshore and offshore fisheries play a vital role in the Pacific Island region's economies, food security and cultural heritage. However, while significant attention has been given to managing fish populations and ensuring sustainable development, the social dimensions of fisheries – particularly structural inequalities and GBV – remain underexplored. Structural inequities in the sector and harmful societal norms often place women, men, girls and boys in precarious positions, making them more susceptible to violence and abuse. These experiences of violence can lead to diminished economic participation and compromised health and safety, with ripple effects on families and communities. GBV manifests in various forms across the sector, affecting women, men, and marginalised groups involved in harvesting, processing and supply chains, often driven by structural inequities, harmful societal norms, and the hypermasculine nature of many fisheries workplaces. Working environments, characterised by high physical demands and entrenched gender roles, can perpetuate exclusion, toxic behaviours and increase vulnerabilities that compromise economic participation, health and safety, with effects that trickle into households and communities. Gender roles are strongly influenced by socio-cultural and patriarchal norms, where traditional views on masculinity, power dynamics, and the sanctity of family can contribute to GBV in sectors, such as fisheries, affecting women and men in different ways.

Although GBV is prevalent throughout the Pacific, there is limited research on how it occurs and impacts sectors, such as fisheries. A review of Pacific literature on GBV in fisheries found much of the evidence is outdated, with few empirical studies to draw from, especially those that are Pacific Islander-led (Section 4). Further, the reports available were heavily skewed towards GBV in industrial fisheries (or offshore fisheries), with limited information on small-scale (or inshore) fisheries. No studies were found on GBV in aquaculture in the Pacific. As a result, the degree to which GBV occurs in fisheries is still poorly understood in the Pacific region.

Addressing this knowledge gap requires focused research on violence, including GBV, in fisheries, considering different nodes along value chains, so that the issues and how they impact individuals and the wider sector are better understood. It is often challenging to separate different forms of violence, and different forms may occur concurrently, intersect or be related; hence, this research framework takes a broader approach to examine GBV, by considering other, relevant forms of violence. Ideally, any research should feed into existing efforts to address the social dimensions of fisheries and must consider the Pacific Island region's unique socio-economic and cultural context, including gender norms and relations, the vast size and remoteness of the region, number of countries and territories, and diversity of partners working in fisheries.

When conducting research on GBV in fisheries and any subsequent actions or policies that might arise, it is crucial to connect with existing, preferably local-led, efforts, frameworks and organisations tackling GBV more broadly in the Pacific. These entities provide established knowledge, resources, and best practices that can enhance sector-specific interventions. Aligning fisheries-focused GBV work with regional frameworks – such as the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration or the Pacific Framework for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls – ensures consistency with wider policy goals and strengthens advocacy. Collaboration with organisations experienced in GBV prevention and response fosters a holistic, intersectional approach that leverages expertise, funding and networks, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable solutions. Ultimately, this work seeks to foster a safer, more equitable environment for those who experience and are vulnerable to different forms of GBV in Pacific fisheries, ensuring their rights and well-being in the workplace are prioritised.

6.2. Purpose and objectives

6.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research framework is to define a series of studies to examine the prevalence and underlying factors that contribute to GBV within fisheries (inshore, offshore, aquaculture) in the Pacific Islands region, to better understand its underlying social and economic impacts, and the intersection of traditional gender norms and industry practices.

6.2.2 Objectives

The objectives of this research framework are outlined below.

1. Assess the prevalence and drivers of GBV in fisheries in the Pacific.
2. Evaluate the impact of GBV on women's participation and well-being in fisheries.
3. Identify policy and interventions to address GBV in fisheries in the Pacific.

6.3 Scope of the research

This research framework aims to conduct studies to provide evidence and insights into six critical areas under the three objectives.

OBJECTIVE 1. Assess the prevalence and drivers of GBV in fisheries in the Pacific

1.1 Identify the forms, frequency and underlying causes of violence within fisheries-related activities

1.2 Examine socio-economic, cultural and policy-related factors contributing to violence in the sector

OBJECTIVE 2. Evaluate the impact of GBV on women's participation and well-being in fisheries

2.1 Investigate how violence affects women's economic opportunities, safety and access to resources in fisheries

2.2 Explore the social, health and psychological impacts of violence on individuals and communities

OBJECTIVE 3. Identify policy and interventions to address GBV in fisheries in the Pacific

3.1 Identify existing gaps in policies and legal frameworks related to violence in the fisheries sector

3.2 Recommend strategies for governments and industry stakeholders to prevent and respond to violence effectively

The research will largely use a mixed-methods qualitative approach, to conduct key informant interviews (KIIs) and/or FGDs with a diversity of fisheries actors, including fishers, processors, industry members and government staff, working on fisheries who experience or are affected by GBV. The research will include a review of existing policies, legislation and institutional frameworks addressing (or failing to address) GBV in fisheries. The research proposed integrates gender-sensitive and broader intersectional approaches to fully capture the diverse experiences and vulnerabilities of individuals across different social identities. The findings can help inform the development of targeted interventions, including policy recommendations for governments, Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agencies and fisheries organisations.

The specific topics that were selected were based on evidence and findings from the desktop scoping review (Section 4), a meeting with SPC and FFA (held 10 February 2025), a wider stakeholder meeting (held 10 March 2025), and several other considerations:

- resource limitations (time, budget)
- potential sensitivities that may arise and be considered taboo, culturally inappropriate to discuss, or even politically sensitive in a country context
- pervasiveness of the issue
- little to no empirical data, but a serious issue
- opportunity for locally led, in-country research
- partners with experience to collaborate or lead the work
- existing mechanisms to use research and potentially address the issue (e.g. harmonisation)
- alignment to PEUMP programme

6.4 Research recommendations

Research recommendations are divided into three sections: (a) synthesis of existing data (Section 6.4.1); (b) integration of fisheries into existing GBV data collection efforts (Section 6.4.2); and (c) priority areas for new research (Section 6.4.3).

6.4.1 Synthesis of existing data

Logbooks by fisheries enforcement officers. Relevant organisations working on MCS in inshore and offshore fisheries in the Pacific were called on to identify two to three countries with which to work, to review and analyse MCS logbooks, and to synthesise data on different forms of violence, including GBV. The analysis should include the different forms of violence MCS officers[27] record that is perpetrated by those working in fisheries value chains, as well as any form of violence towards the officers themselves. This study can help inform: (a) the prevalence and frequency of violence recorded; (b) training to ensure MCS officers document different forms of violence in logbooks and the actions to address these; and (c) the degree to which GBV is being documented as part of MCS. It is important to note that this analysis will complement the semi-structured qualitative study recommended in Section 6.4.3.3 (Study 6).

Review of legal cases. There are cases of violence related to the fisheries sector that have been reviewed within the Pacific Court System. The Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute (PacLII) contains all case law in the Pacific. Relevant organisations with legal expertise were engaged to assess these cases and use a human rights framework, to understand what types of cases have been processed through the courts and the factors that contributed or led to GBV in these cases.

6.4.2 Integration of fisheries into existing GBV data collection efforts

Prevalence studies. Prevalence studies are specifically designed to collect prevalence data on VAW across cultures, and has rendered an otherwise "invisible" problem both visible and quantifiable.[28] The population-based surveys use the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women. In future prevalence studies in the Pacific, questions on VAWG could be analysed with a sectorial lens.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). The MICS is an international household survey initiative developed by UNICEF to assist countries in filling data gaps for monitoring human development in general and the situation of women and children more specifically. The MICS offers information on household living conditions and also includes optional modules for unmet needs and domestic violence. It may be worth exploring if sectoral "GBV in fisheries" data could be collected and analysed for future MICS.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. This report is led by UNICEF and includes evidence of sexual violence against children. In the Pacific, the regional report covers five countries (including Fiji, Kiribati and PNG) highlighted in the statistics obtained by police and the courts and supplemented with anecdotal evidence on child prostitution, where available (UNICEF Pacific 2006). The statistics obtained from police and the courts in some of the country studies (Fiji, Kiribati and PNG) supported the anecdotal evidence regarding child prostitution. In Kiribati, for example, police statistics indicated that up to 80 young *te korekorea* (commercial sex workers associated with the foreign fishing vessels mooring in Kiribati) had visited boats in port in 2000. It may be worth exploring if sectoral data could be collected and analysed relating to the exploitation of children in the Pacific to determine how much of this exploitation is driven by the demand of the fisheries sector.

27 MCS officers include those working in inshore and offshores areas, on small-scale or large-scale fisheries, and/or working on shore or on boats.

28 In the Pacific to date, data show that, in Melanesia, there are high levels of gendered violence, reflected by high levels of sexual violence and marital rape, which is rooted in gender inequality. In Polynesia, there are comparatively low levels of sexual violence recorded, but there are high levels of physical violence that are largely disciplinary in nature. In Micronesia, there are mixed patterns of violence and marital rape (Jansen 2023).

Administrative data. Administrative data represent a valuable source of statistics on VAW. These include public data systems and administrative records that provide data that can be analysed (from diverse sources, e.g. health and social services, hotlines, legal aid services, courts and police) (Jansen 2020). Social services, such as counselling centres, collect such data and, while they represent a relatively minor number of cases, they would generally capture incidents of the most severe forms of violence. While the administrative data cannot help to measure the extent and patterns of violence in a population, they do reveal the number of cases or incidents identified by a specific service, the response and treatment provided and, in some cases, the effectiveness of resources allocated or referral systems. It may be worth exploring if sectoral data could be collected and analysed in the future.

Immigration data. Since 2003, the Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference has shared immigration data, which could provide insights into trafficking in persons. Each year, the 23 members of the Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference (which includes Australia and New Zealand) produce an unpublished annual report based on monthly intelligence reports, containing data on people smuggling, human trafficking and illegal migration in the region. It is worth noting that data in the annual report does not capture incidents of trafficking within a country (i.e. domestic trafficking). However, it claims to present "the most accurate and wide-ranging information on immigration in the region" (Lindley and Beacroft 2011). It may be worth exploring if future data synthesis could collect and analyse sectoral data, to better document the links to fisheries.

Demographic and health surveys. These surveys are carried out every five years and cover subjects like fertility, family planning, maternal and child health, nutrition and diseases. The results of these surveys inform countries' population policies, health plans, human development reports, development strategies and national Sustainable Development Goal reports. It may be worth exploring if sectoral data could be collected and analysed.

Socio-economic surveys in the Pacific. SPC supports fisheries ministries and departments in the Pacific to conduct socio-economic surveys of inshore fisheries. Recently, there have been efforts to include gender dimensions in these surveys and to sex-disaggregate data during analysis and reporting. Future socio-economic inshore fisheries surveys should integrate questions related to GBV to shed light on the hidden prevalence of GBV within inshore fisheries, and to better understand the scope and nature of the problem. By including GBV-related questions, surveys can contribute to a more holistic understanding of the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by fishers and their families.

6.4.3 Priority areas for new research

6.4.3.1 Multidisciplinary team needed for GBV in fisheries research

A significant gap exists in research expertise at the intersection of fisheries and GBV. Expertise in either field alone is inadequate; a truly multidisciplinary approach necessitates researchers with specialised training and proficiency in both or for a multidisciplinary team to be created with expertise in both issues. Specifically, the research team must have expertise in feminist research methodologies[29] and possess strong qualitative research skills, including experience in conducting trauma-informed interviews and discussions, and equally possess a deep understanding of gender roles and dimensions within Pacific fisheries and how the sector is structured and operates. As there are few researchers working in the intersection of GBV and fisheries, training on GBV in fisheries, survivor-centred approaches, safety planning, and referral pathways to support services, will be paramount. In the long term, it is essential to cultivate and support Pacific researchers capable of leading and participating in this complex area of study.

29 Feminist research prioritises equality and social justice, critically examining how knowledge is shaped by gender, history and power structures, and aims to reveal the varied experiences of women and marginalised groups and how social hierarchies contribute to and sustain systems of oppression.

6.4.3.2 Safeguards and ethical protocols

Research on GBV in fisheries requires stringent safeguards and ethical protocols to protect participants, researchers and the integrity of the study. Given the sensitive and potentially traumatic nature of GBV-related topics, ensuring confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation is essential to prevent harm and re-traumatisation. Ethical guidelines should include trauma-informed approaches, culturally-appropriate methodologies and risk mitigation strategies. Researchers must also establish clear referral pathways for support services, collaborate with local stakeholders to ensure community buy-in, and undergo training in ethical GBV research. Without these safeguards, research efforts risk exacerbating vulnerabilities rather than fostering meaningful change.

Ethical protocols should be grounded in human rights principles and informed by Pacific-specific cultural contexts. The proposed methodologies under this research framework must also be informed by the current and commonly used approaches, international standards and good practices on GBV investigations, and must be adapted and tailored to the fisheries sector. The safeguards and ethical protocol recommendations are drawn from the experience and practice of conducting prevalence studies on VAW in the region. The ethics and safety protocols require that any research or survey does not harm respondents or put them at increased risk of violence. Compliance with the ethical and safety recommendations is essential, not only for the ethical conduct of the survey, but also for the quality and utility of the data it generates.

The following principles are adopted from WHO and need to be respected, as these are essential to safety protocols for any survey covering GBV (SPC and UNFPA 2023):

1) The safety of the respondents and the research team is paramount and should guide all research decisions.
2) Prevalence studies need to be methodologically sound and to build upon current research on minimising the underreporting of violence.
3) Protecting confidentiality is essential to ensure respondents are safe. This includes ensuring that data is kept safely.
4) All research team members should be carefully selected and receive specialised training and ongoing support.
5) The study design must include actions aimed at reducing distress caused to the participants/respondents by the research.
6) Fieldworkers should be trained to refer respondents requesting assistance to available local services and sources of support.
7) Researchers and donors have an ethical obligation to ensure their findings are properly interpreted and used to advance policy and intervention development.

In any research involving children, considerations should be made on cultural sensitivity – ensuring understanding of traditional knowledge and practices, obtaining informed consent of all participants, as well as the consent of parents/guardians and children (where appropriate). The protection of children from harm is central to all research and of paramount importance.

6.4.3.3 New research

The proposed new research or studies are focused around specific nodes in the fisheries value chain and documenting and analysing the: (a) types, frequency and severity of GBV at specific parts of the fisheries value chain; (b) factors (e.g. socio-cultural, gender norms) that contribute to GBV; and (c) current policies, reporting mechanisms, and/or support systems in place to prevent and address GBV. Table 3 provides an overview of the studies being proposed that could be led by relevant organisations.

Table 3. Summary of new research proposed on GBV in fisheries in the Pacific Islands region

TOPIC	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE(S)
STUDY 1 **Legislation and policy review on GBV and fisheries**	Conduct a comparative analysis of national laws and policies in Pacific Island countries that are relevant and can be used to address GBV in fisheries Provide recommendations for each country to address legal and policy gaps Methods: legal analysis
STUDY 2 **Industrial fishing**	Work in partnership with industry, ensuring human rights due diligence, to identify human rights issues in industrial fishing in select countries in the Pacific Document incidences of human rights violations in the Pacific Islands region, witnessed or experienced by those who have left the industry Determine if the SRA tool can be used to benchmark human rights issues (which includes GBV) and monitor compliance with the Conservation and Management Measure on Crew Labour Standards Methods: SRA
STUDY 3 **Fish factories and canneries**	Investigate the types, frequency and severity of GBV experienced by workers, particularly women in seafood-processing facilities Analyse the factors, including workplace conditions, power dynamics and socio-cultural and gender norms, that contribute to GBV Identify household dynamics and well-being that are affected (positively and negatively) by women and men working, with a focus on different forms of GBV Examine current policies, reporting mechanisms and support systems in place to prevent and address GBV in seafood-processing facilities Methods: company, KII and household surveys
STUDY 4 **Seafood markets**	Investigate the types, frequency and severity of GBV experienced by seafood sellers working at seafood markets Identify structural inequalities that limit women's agency and economic empowerment in seafood markets Examine current policies, reporting mechanisms and support systems in place to prevent and address GBV in seafood markets Methods: FGDs
STUDY 5 **Aquaculture**	Examine how aquaculture projects in the Pacific impact different social groups Investigate the types, frequency and severity of GBV experienced by aquaculture farmers Understand how project design and implementation influence individual and family resilience and well-being Methods: KII and/or household socio-economic surveys
STUDY 6 **Monitoring, control and surveillance**	Document the types, frequency and severity of violence, including GBV, experienced by government MCS officers Document the types and severity of violence, including GBV, that MCS staff have witnessed against those working in the fisheries sector Identify the types of support services for MCS staff who experience or are witnesses to violence, including GBV Methods: KII surveys
STUDY 7 **Port-associated authorities**	Identify the types of services that relate to GBV and that are available in and around ports and accessed by the fisheries sector Document the types, frequency and severity of GBV witnessed by government officers working in ports used by the fisheries sector Identify the structural factors that enable GBV in port settings Methods: KII surveys

Several GBV in fisheries topics identified through the desktop review, such as sex trafficking, different forms of sexual violence towards women and children, and child labour, are poorly researched and require attention. However, these topics are not included for one or more reasons. The topic: (a) is a highly specialised (and, in some cases, dangerous) area to research, requiring substantial experience on the subject matter; (b) may involve working with highly traumatised persons for which support services or removal from the source of GBV may be required; (c) may be illegal under law (e.g. sexual exploitation of children, human trafficking, rape cases); and/or (d) is not an area in which SPC (or its partners, like FFA) currently works or has expertise. These sensitive or challenging subjects have only been integrated into research recommendations for SPC and/or FFA, where there is a low likelihood of harm to victims or survivors of GBV. Table 4 provides a summary of new research areas proposed on GBV in fisheries that can be prioritised by organisations that are working on, and have experience or are developing projects or programmes to, tackle these issues. The table does not provide an exhaustive or detailed list but rather provides a summary of topics that have received little attention and are poorly documented.

Table 4. Summary of new research proposed on GBV in fisheries in the Pacific Islands region

TOPIC	RESEARCH GAP(S)
Child labour	• The prevalence of child labour on fishing vessel operations in the Pacific • Mechanisms and pathways for the recruitment and hiring of underaged boys on industrial fishing boats
Sex trafficking	• Data on domestic and transnational trafficking of women and children (national, foreign) for sexual exploitation in the Pacific, and the role of the fishing industry (e.g. use of fishing boats) • Capacity of law enforcement and judicial systems to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases • Availability and effectiveness of victim support services, and the effectiveness of prevention programmes
Sex work	• Effectiveness of current laws and regulations for protecting the rights and safety of sex workers while engaging with the fisheries sector • The socio-economic factors that contribute to engagement in sex work with those working in the fisheries sector, with special attention given to the factors that increase vulnerability to exploitation • The prevalence and spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections between fisheries actors and sex workers in the Pacific • Access to, and utilisation of, sexual and reproductive health services, including the prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, by fisheries actors and sex workers in the Pacific
Transactional sex	• Prevalence and frequency of transactional sex in the Pacific, disaggregated by gender and age • Socio-economic factors that contribute to transaction sex in the fisheries sector, with special attention given to the factors that increase vulnerability to exploitation • The prevalence and spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections between fisheries actors and sex workers in the Pacific • Access to, and utilisation of, sexual and reproductive health services, including the prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, by fisheries actors and sex workers in the Pacific
Sexual exploitation of children	• Prevalence and frequency of sexual exploitation of children in the Pacific, disaggregated by gender and age • The social, economic and cultural factors that contribute to children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation, including power dynamics, traditional practices and the influence of local versus migrant workers • The prevalence and spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections between fisheries actors and sexually exploited children in the Pacific
Narcotics and alcohol	• The use of fishing boats for transporting drugs into the Pacific • Prevalence and patterns of drug and alcohol use among fisheries actors and workers, including the quantification of the types of substances used and the frequency of their use, and the identification of demographic and occupational factors that correlate with substance use • The underlying causes of substance use within the fisheries sector, such as occupational stressors (including working in hypermasculine environments), social norms and cultural practices, and access to health-care and treatment services Partners: UNODC

STUDY 1

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LAWS AND POLICIES

Countries suggested:
Prioritise countries selected for studies 2–7

Background: Although some Pacific Island countries and territories have national laws and policies addressing GBV, their effectiveness in the fisheries sector remains uncertain due to legal gaps, weak enforcement and cultural barriers. A comparative analysis of these legal and policy frameworks is essential to identify strengths, weaknesses and best practices across different countries. This analysis should initially focus on countries where GBV-specific research will be conducted (Table 3, Studies 2–7, Section 6.4.3.3), and cover topics listed in Table 4.

Objectives: (1) Conduct a comparative analysis of national laws and policies in Pacific Island countries that are relevant and can be used to address GBV in fisheries; and (2) provide recommendations for each country to address the legal and policy gaps identified.

Methods: Drawing from and building on previous comparative analyses of gender and human rights in coastal fisheries and aquaculture (Graham and D'Andrea 2024, 2021), this study will evaluate the main pieces of legislation and policies covering violence in fisheries, including but not limited to GBV, employment and labour rights. This study seeks to assess existing national laws and policies relevant to addressing violence, including GBV, in fisheries and provide targeted recommendations to bridge legal and policy gaps, ensuring a more gender-equitable and safe environment in the sector.

STUDY 2

INDUSTRIAL FISHING

Countries suggested: Parties to the Nauru Agreement (i.e. FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, PNG, RMI, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu) and members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (i.e. Cook Islands, Fiji[30], FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, PNG, RMI, Samoa[30], Solomon Islands)

Background: The offshore fisheries sector in the Pacific plays a significant role in national economies, employment, and global seafood supply chains. However, concerns over human rights violations (and forms of GBV) at sea, including forced labour, poor working conditions, and child labour, are evident and increasingly arising (Section 4.2.2 and 4.2.4). There are also human rights concerns on land relating to the sexual exploitation of women and children by those in the fisheries sector (Section 4.2.3). When conducting research on industrial fishing, some considerations should be kept in mind. First, research on human rights violations, including GBV, is challenging and can pose significant risks both to researchers and fishing boat employees (i.e. captain and crew). Second, addressing GBV on industrial fishing vessels is best undertaken through a human rights lens, as the issues are complex and often interlinked. Examining human rights issues requires a comprehensive approach that best involves (where possible) collaboration with industry stakeholders to assess risks, identify gaps in human rights protections and develop actions to address them.

Objectives: (1) Working in partnership with industry, conduct a human rights due diligence to identify human rights issues in industrial fishing in select countries in the Pacific; (2) document incidences of human rights violations in the Pacific Islands region, witnessed or experienced by those who have left the industry; and (3) determine if the SRA tool can be used to benchmark human rights issues (which includes GBV) and monitor compliance with the Conservation and Management Measure on Crew Labour Standards[31].

30 SRAs have been conducted by Conservation International in partnership with fisheries ministries and industry partners in Fiji (2022), New Caledonia (2024) and Samoa (2025) and, therefore, are not required. However, there is an assumption that industry members are likely to be more socially responsible and will be more willing to participate.

31 The Conservation and Management Measure on Crew Labour Standards was adopted at the 21st Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in December 2024 in Suva, Fiji. https://www.ffa.int/2024/12/ffa-members-welcome-wcpfc-adoption-of-first-ever-crew-labour-standards/

Methods: With the support of industry fishing companies in Pacific Island countries that are Parties to the Nauru Agreement and/or members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, conduct SRAs using the tool developed by Conservation International and partners. The Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector: a Rapid Assessment Protocol[32] (Conservation International 2021a) and a Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector: A Guide to Data Collection (Conservation International 2021b) are freely available and have been tested in Fiji and New Caledonia. The methods involve: (a) using the SRA for guidance and to review and modify existing survey instruments for fishing crews (ideally local and migrant workers) and managers within the fishing fleet; (b) conduct KIIs with fishers and workers in compliance with informed consent, ethics and data management protocols (see Section 6.4.3.2, Annexes 3 and 4); (c) if possible, conduct FGDs to communicate results of the assessments back to the captain, crew and their representatives and agree upon how the results of the assessment will be handled; and (d) where human rights risks are identified, co-design corrective action plans, against which improvements are monitored. This SRA employs a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews to explore GBV in industrial fisheries. The limitation of this approach is that companies knowingly involved in human rights abuses and violations or in criminal activities (e.g. illegal unreported and unregulated fisheries) are unlikely to participate in the study. It is important to note that some crew may be 16- or 17-year-old boys who would be considered children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child[33], and special considerations are required for interviewing children (see Section 6.4.3.2).

To capture information on vessels where gross human rights violations may have occurred, a second complementary study is recommended that specifically targets captains and crew who have retired or have left the industry (willingly or unwillingly). Recruitment criteria include: (a) at least five years of experience in industrial fishing; (b) left the industry within the last 10 years; and (c) willingness to discuss experiences related to GBV in the fishing industry. Focusing on those who have left the industry offers potential advantages in terms of reduced fear of reprisal and potentially greater willingness to reflect on past events. Using the SRA framework, semi-structured key information surveys should be developed by adapting questions in the SRA, where necessary. A purposive sampling strategy should be employed (e.g. through fishers' associations, unions), as well as snowball sampling to identify participants. The interviews must be conducted in person, depending on participant availability and preference, audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed for analysis.

STUDY 3

FISH FACTORY AND CANNERY WORKERS

Countries suggested: Fiji, PNG

Background: With the exception of recent work in SolTuna in Solomon Islands, GBV in fish factories and canneries in the Pacific is an under-researched yet critical issue, given the significant role that these industries play in the region's economy and the large proportion of women in their workforce (see Section 4.2.5). Workers, particularly women, often face precarious employment conditions, power imbalances and limited protections, which can create environments where GBV is prevalent but goes unreported and unaddressed. Examining GBV in these settings is vital for understanding how intersecting factors, such as gender, economic vulnerability and workplace hierarchies contribute to violence and exploitation. At the same time, women workers may also face GBV at home as a result of gender norms changing as women assume more formal work to contribute to household income. This research provides an opportunity to look beyond GBV in the factory and to examine the degree to which formal work in fisheries contributes to GBV in the household. This research is essential not only for informing policies that promote safer, more equitable working conditions but also to advance economic opportunities for women in the fisheries sector.

32 The SRA tool is available for download: https://fisheryprogress.org/sites/default/files/SRAT_20210317.pdf
33 A child is defined as any person below the age of 18 years, as per Article 1 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Objectives: (1) Investigate the types, frequency and severity of GBV experienced by workers, particularly women in seafood processing facilities; (2) analyse the workplace conditions, power dynamics, and socio-cultural and gender norms that contribute to GBV; (3) identify household dynamics and well-being affected (positively and negatively) by women and men working, with a focus on different forms of GBV; and (4) examine current policies, reporting mechanisms and support systems in place to prevent and address GBV in seafood-processing facilities.

Methods: There are four components to this research, designed to achieve the objectives of this study.

Part 1. Conduct consultations with representatives from seafood processing companies (i.e. management, human resources, worker representatives) and any government agencies who monitor or inspect companies and their facilities, to provide valuable insights into the company, in the context of GBV; identify potential challenges and opportunities for the research; and ensure the study's relevance to the company and decision-makers.

Part 2. Evaluate existing responses and solutions, as well as the policies, reporting mechanisms, and support systems in place to prevent and address GBV in seafood-processing. Gaps and proposed strategies for strengthening workplace protections, regulatory enforcement, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, including engagement with governments, industry and labour organisations should be identified.

Part 3. Conduct qualitative, semi-structured KIIs with workers in the factory (Annex 5). A stratified random sampling technique will be employed to select a representative sample of workers with different roles in the factory or cannery. There should be a higher sampling of women since they often dominate in seafood-processing and women are more likely to be experiencing or facing GBV at work and at home. The inclusion of men is important to examine seafood factories and canneries through a gender lens, including gender norms and relations in the workplace. For workers, a KII survey instrument has been designed to assess the prevalence and forms of GBV, specifically, the types, frequency and severity of GBV experienced by workers, particularly women, in seafood-processing facilities. This includes examining workplace harassment, discrimination, exploitation and the intersections of GBV with labour rights violations. The survey instrument is designed to identify the key risk factors and structural drivers of GBV in the workplace (e.g. workplace conditions, power dynamics, socio-cultural norms, gender norms and relations) as well as the policies, management practices, gendered divisions of labour, and economic vulnerabilities that may heighten risks. The interviews must be conducted in person, audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed for analysis.

Part 4. Conduct qualitative, semi-structured household interviews to understand the links between employment in fish-processing (specifically in canneries) and GBV in the home, especially for women. This method is particularly valuable for understanding sensitive issues, such as power imbalances and economic (in)dependence and the impact of fluctuating fishing incomes on domestic relationships, all of which can contribute to increased vulnerability to GBV in the home.

STUDY 4

SEAFOOD MARKET SELLERS

Countries suggested: Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, as well as other interested Pacific Island countries

Background: There is a significant lack of information on GBV along inshore fisheries value chains, leaving critical gaps in understanding how it affects food security, livelihoods, and individual, household and community resilience in the Pacific (see Section 4). Seafood markets are environments where women face heightened risks of GBV, which not only undermine their livelihoods but also perpetuate structural inequalities that limit their agency and economic empowerment (see Section 4.2.6). Investing in research in this space is crucial to uncover the scale and nature of GBV, inform targeted interventions, and design safer, more inclusive market systems that support both gender equity and sustainable fisheries management. Given UN Women's Markets for Change has been working in select markets in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, it would be worth exploring a partnership with them to co-design research to examine GBV faced and experienced by sellers at select seafood markets.

Objectives: (1) Investigate the types, frequency and severity of GBV experienced by seafood sellers working at seafood markets; (2) identify structural inequalities that limit women's agency and economic empowerment in seafood markets; and (3) examine current policies, reporting mechanisms, and support systems in place to prevent and address GBV in seafood markets.

Methods: Conduct FGDs with seafood sellers at select seafood markets. Depending on the composition of seafood sellers, FGDs can be conducted with women and men to examine the gender norms and relations in seafood marketplaces. However, depending on the number of women operating at the market, it would be useful to conduct FDGs with different women to obtain higher sampling and representation as they are more likely to be experiencing or facing GBV at work and at home. It may also be useful to separate those selling the seafood they caught versus those selling seafood their husband or another family member has caught. The FGD survey instrument is designed to assess the prevalence and forms of GBV, specifically the types, frequency and severity of GBV experienced by sellers, particularly women, in seafood markets. This includes examining workplace harassment, discrimination, and the intersections of GBV with labour rights violations, as well as their GBV experience at home and in their communities.

STUDY 5

AQUACULTURE

Countries suggested: Fiji, FSM, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga

Background: While many countries are attempting aquaculture, the leading countries for aquaculture activities in 2021 were French Polynesia (pearls, shrimp), New Caledonia (shrimp), PNG (tilapia), Solomon Islands (seaweed) and Fiji (pearls, tilapia) and, to a lesser extent, Tonga, Guam and FSM (Gillett and Fong 2023). Despite the financial investment in aquaculture in the Pacific, there remains a significant gap in research on its social dimensions, particularly concerning gender dynamics, labour conditions, and individual, household and community impacts. The desktop review (see Section 4) highlighted an absence of research on GBV in aquaculture, despite evidence from inshore (wild caught) fisheries showing that women experience different forms of GBV. This lack of scholarship leaves critical social issues unexamined, potentially reinforcing harmful power structures and limiting efforts to create equitable and sustainable aquaculture systems. Addressing this gap is essential for ensuring that aquaculture development in the Pacific does not exacerbate social vulnerabilities but instead contributes to inclusive and just livelihoods.

Objectives: (1) Examine how aquaculture projects in the Pacific impact different social groups; (2) investigate the types, frequency and severity of GBV experienced by aquaculture farmers; and (3) examine how project design and implementation influence individual and family resilience and well-being.

Methods: A qualitative, semi-structured household survey instrument should be developed by SPC to examine the social dimensions, including GBV, in aquaculture. The survey should assess social equity and inclusion by examining how aquaculture projects in the Pacific impact different social groups, with a focus on gender roles, power dynamics, and the participation of marginalised groups in decision-making and benefit-sharing. The survey should also look at the gender dimensions (including GBV) around small-scale, family-run aquaculture businesses. This would include questions to identify the prevalence, drivers and consequences of GBV within households participating in aquaculture, and to better understand how project design and implementation influence vulnerabilities and the safety of individual farmers and their families. The study should build on the rapid study undertaken on tilapia farming in Fiji (SPC et al. 2018).

STUDY 6

MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE

Countries suggested: Parties to the Nauru Agreement (i.e. FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, PNG, RMI, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu) and members of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (i.e. Cook Islands, Fiji, FSM, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, PNG, RMI, Samoa, Solomon Islands)

Background: The violence or threat of violence, including GBV, in fisheries MCS is acknowledged but is largely undocumented and therefore is not well understood. Fisheries MCS officers, who play a critical

role in managing and protecting marine resources, often operate in isolated and high-risk environments where power imbalances, workplace harassment, and violence can go unreported and unaddressed. Both men and women in these roles may experience GBV, whether in the form of harassment aboard patrol vessels, coercion in regulatory interactions, or violence within the communities with which they engage. They also may be witness to violence, for example, while serving as observers on industrial fishing boats. Given the lack of research in this area, there is a vital opportunity to examine these experiences, uncover systemic issues, and inform policies that foster safer and more equitable working conditions for MCS and other ministry of fisheries staff.

Objectives: (1) Document the types, frequency, and severity of violence, including GBV, experienced by MCS officers; (2) document the types and severity of violence, including GBV, MCS staff have witnessed against those working in the fisheries sector; and (3) identify the types of support services for MCS staff who experience, or are witnesses to, violence, including GBV.

Methods: A mixed-methods (quantitative/qualitative) approach is recommended, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Purposive sampling should be undertaken, stratified by gender, age, role, experience and location to capture a diversity of experience in the inshore and offshore fisheries sector. KIIs will be used to explore experiences of GBV in greater depth, focusing on detailed accounts of incidents of GBV experienced and witnessed (Annex 7, Annex 8). Perceptions of support systems and reporting mechanisms will also be explored, as well as potential ideas for prevention and response strategies. It is important to note that this analysis will complement the analysis of MCS logbooks (see Section 6.4.1).

STUDY 7

PORT-ASSOCIATED AUTHORITIES

Countries suggested: Ideally, the countries selected should be the same ones selected for Study 2

Background: Interviews with key authorities (e.g. fisheries, biosecurity, immigration) working in fishing ports across the Pacific could provide critical insights into the often-hidden issue of GBV associated with industrial fishing boats and land-based transhipment areas. Authorities operating or frequenting port areas may have firsthand knowledge of exploitative labour conditions, trafficking risks, practices such as "sex for fish", and patterns of harassment or violence involving both crew members and vulnerable groups, such as women engaged in transactional sex near ports. These perspectives can help illuminate the structural factors that enable GBV in port settings, the challenges of enforcement and victim/survivor support.

Objectives: (1) Identify the types of services that relate to GBV and that are available in and around ports and being accessed by the fisheries sector; and (2) document the types, frequency and severity of GBV witnessed by government officers working in ports used by the fisheries sector; and (3) identify the structural factors that enable GBV in port settings.

Methods: A mixed-methods (quantitative/qualitative) approach is recommended, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Purposive sampling should be undertaken, stratified by role, experience and location to capture a diversity of experience working in ports areas. Key informant interviews will draw from Study 6 but include additional questions on services being used by the captain and crew of fishing boats and the different types and forms of violence experienced or witnessed (Annex 8).

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Annexes

Annex 1. List of stakeholder consultations conducted

NAME	ORGANISATION
Lorraine Reiher	Consultant
Maribel Buenaobra	The Asia Foundation
Farzana Gulista Rahim	The Pacific Community (SPC) - Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division
Ana Cowley	Consultant
Aliti Vunisea	Women in Fisheries Network
Saras Sharma	Blue Prosperity Fund
Emily Kamoe	Ministry for Women, Children and Social Protection (Fiji)
Surkafa Katafono	International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Pacific Island Countries
Nathalie Hanley	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Rose Martin	Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
Andrew Smith	The Pacific Community (SPC) - Fisheries Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) Division
Francisco Blaha	Independent Consultant
Kate Barclay	University of Technology Sydney
Milika Sobey	German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)
Juno Fitzpatrick	Conservation International
Jeff Kinch	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Cherie Morris	University of the South Pacific
Allan Rahari	Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
Nalini Singh	Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM)
Margot Zamier	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)
Kathryn Relang	The Pacific Community (SPC) - Human Rights and Social Development (HRSD) Division
Jenny House	Independent Consultant
Nalini Singh	Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM)
Afu Billy	Consultant and National Council of Women, Solomon Islands

Annex 2. Questions used to guide stakeholder consultations

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK MILESTONES	KEY GUIDING QUESTIONS	ADDITIONAL EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS	PROPOSED INFORMATION SOURCES
Define the research problem Define the purpose and the objectives	• What is your experience working on GBV in fisheries? • For the review, what are some key areas the research should focus on when it comes to GBV in fisheries? [Note, use examples if participants are not sure. These can include observers on offshore, women in canneries, fishers/ sellers at fish markets, human trafficking, HIV and seafarers, prostitution in fisheries, child labour in fisheries.] • Are there specific countries (or country analyses) that you think we should be looking at for the review? Why? • Are there any reports or publications you are aware of that we should include in the review? • Are there any datasets (e.g. globally, regionally, nationally) that might be useful data or statistics on GBV in fisheries in the Pacific?	What are some key areas in the GBV sector network that cross over to the fisheries sector (policies, counselling support, medical services, economic issues)?	Datasets Additional informants Context/relevant research review Additional reports and publications
People to interview or datasets to access	• Are there any other researchers or studies happening on GBV in fisheries? [Note: get specifics – who, what area, scope.] • Are there any specific experts or organisations we should interview? [Note: get specifics.] • Are there any specific ministries we should interview other than fisheries and women? [Note: get specifics.]	Are there specific GBV (or labour) support services for those working in the fisheries sector we should be aware of? [Note: this can help identify other organisations to interview, or datasets that may have relevant GBV data. It would be good to find out if there are any Pacific countries with unions established for fisheries actors.]	Regional networks Government committees – working groups

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK MILESTONES	KEY GUIDING QUESTIONS	ADDITIONAL EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS	PROPOSED INFORMATION SOURCES
Develop a methodology with a clear description of procedures, techniques, methods and approaches, including field researcher training needs, testing and sampling	• What topics should the research study cover? • Are there particular GBV in fisheries issues in the Pacific we should prioritise? • Are there any topics that we should try and get a regional perspective on? [Note: explain the need to balance between looking at issues across the region versus conducting a deep dive into specific countries.] • Are there specific countries that you think we should focus on for collecting data? Why?	For sensitive (e.g. prostitution) or dangerous topics (e.g. trafficking), consider asking experts for their advice. • Are there sensitive (or dangerous) topics we should not cover? • Are there sensitive (or dangerous) topics that are best led by other organisations? Who specifically?	
Develop research tools in line with the methodology (e.g. questionnaires, surveys, etc.)Method questions:	Method questions • What methods or approaches should we be using? (FGDs, KIIs, case studies) • Are there specific tools we should be aware of and use? [e.g. SRA used by Conservation International] • Are there examples of methods and tools used in the Pacific that have been successful?		Copies of tools Examples of reports that used a particular tool kNOwVAWdata - principles and approaches
Concluding remarks	Before we finish, do you have any other specific recommendations for us?		

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