

Gender-inclusive facilitation for community-based marine resource management

An addendum to 'Community-based marine resource management in Solomon Islands: A facilitators guide' and other guides for community-based resource management

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Abstract

Both women and men should be included in community-based marine resource management. To create an inclusive management process it is necessary to use deliberate and thoughtful and reflexive strategies that do not rely on or worsen existing power imbalances. Researchers using a reflexive strategy are self-aware and constantly reflecting on and critiquing their potential biases and how those might influence their research. In this paper we offer concrete examples of gender-inclusive facilitation strategies that could be used as part of a larger reflexive community engagement process. These strategies are drawn from experience across the Pacific Islands region.

Introduction

People who rely on a natural resource should be central to decisions about how that resource is used and managed. This principle is at the core of community-based management and other forms of co-management. Community-based management aims for high levels of resource-user participation in decision-making and in the management of resources. In practice, however, the processes and outcomes from collaborative management approaches: 1) are experienced differently by different social groups (Evans et al. 2011); 2) can preferentially benefit (Cinner et al. 2012) or disadvantage (Béné et al. 2009) certain sectors of society; 3) can exacerbate existing power imbalances; and 4) can lead to 'elite capture'¹ (Béné et al. 2009; Cinner et al. 2012), and may inadvertently exclude or marginalise women (or other groups) from decision-making processes and from the very resources on which they rely (Kleiber et al. 2015; Vunisea 2008).

When any management partner or facilitator engages with communities they must use deliberate, thoughtful and reflexive strategies to reduce the risk of exacerbating existing power imbalances (Schwarz et al. 2014). Researchers using a reflexive strategy are self-aware and constantly reflecting on and critiquing their potential biases and how those might influence their research. We draw lessons and experience from across the Pacific Islands region where there is a long history of community-based approaches to address fisheries and marine resource management (e.g. Johannes 1982), decades of national programming (e.g. King and Faasilili 1998;

Raubani et al. 2017), relatively recent high-level recognition (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2015), and widespread interest in the spread and improvement of these approaches (Govan et al. 2009).

In this paper we aim to support facilitators' capacity to use, reflect on, and adapt gender inclusive strategies in their work with communities. Furthermore, we aim to increase the frequency and quality of strategies used to reach women, men and other social groups in the preparation, design, implementation and adaptation stages of community-based resource management (CBRM). While the advice here is prepared with Pacific Island countries and community-based marine resource management in mind, some elements are more broadly applicable and are reflected in extensive experiences and feminist research from other agricultural and development sectors. We focus on gender-inclusive strategies that facilitators can use when working with communities; when used thoughtfully, as part of a larger cycle of gender-aware reflection on the equity of the process, the strategies are meant to enable gender-equitable participation in CBRM discussions, negotiation, planning and decision-making processes. This is not a step-by-step manual on 'how to do gender', or a recipe that will guarantee equitable processes or outcomes.

While gender-inclusive facilitation or practice has multiple dimensions, we refer to this in shorthand as 'reaching' women and men (see below). We begin by highlighting what it means to 'equitably reach' women and men, or being gender-inclusive in facilitation, and who is responsible for this facilitation.

¹ Elite capture refers to situations where resources are managed in a way that benefit a few individuals of superior social status to the detriment of the welfare of the larger population.

Why do we use gender-inclusive facilitation?

We share strategies that can contribute to more gender-inclusive CBRM discussions, planning and decision-making processes. It is important, however, to recognise that there are many steps to gender-inclusive participation, and having both women and men at a meeting is only one step (Fig. 1). Gender-inclusive facilitation techniques can be an important foundation that influences equity at all stages of participation.

Is equitably reaching women and men the same as achieving equitable outcomes or even empowerment? Not at all. The strategies outlined here fall within engagements focused on 'reach' (Fig. 2). Reach refers to ensuring both women and men are participating in information exchange, and discussions and decision-making processes. Many initiatives wrongly assume that effectively reaching women will be sufficient to benefit and empower them (CGIAR 2017; Theis and Meinzen-Dick 2016). Equitably reaching women and men is an important first step, but success at this step alone will not necessarily lead to equal benefits, empowerment, or deeper transformation of gender norms, beliefs and relations (Johnson et al. 2017); for this to occur, other strategies (not detailed here) would be needed. Nonetheless, good practices and gender-inclusive facilitation to reach women, men and other groups in societies may increase the likelihood that benefits are equitable, and that women and men are more empowered, but does not guarantee it.

Who is responsible for gender-inclusive facilitation?

We view gender-inclusive facilitation as the responsibility of all members of a facilitation team to ensure that the gender-inclusive facilitation strategies are applied throughout any process of community engagement. This must be more than simply ticking boxes. The questions throughout the reflexive facilitation cycle (Fig. 3), and the list of gender-inclusive facilitation strategies listed below can serve as a guide for prompting regular reflection on inclusive engagement. It is good practice to keep a written record of gender-inclusive processes and reflections. Such documentation is also critical for good project management and monitoring and evaluation, and enables researchers to better understand how the quality of a process might impact upon equity of outcomes and management success.

Reflexive facilitation cycle

Good facilitation includes planning, but it also requires observation of the process and critical reflection afterwards (Fig. 3). Observation and reflection can then be used to inform the next stage of planning. This creates a reflexive facilitation process that can respond to changing circumstances or unintended outcomes, and allows for adaptation and improvement over time.

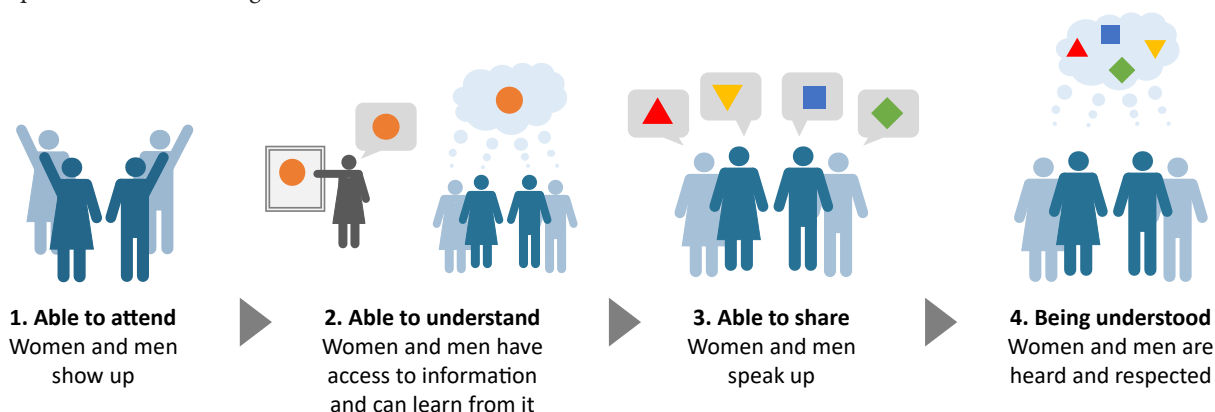


Figure 1. Gender-inclusive participation in the community-based resource management process includes four steps

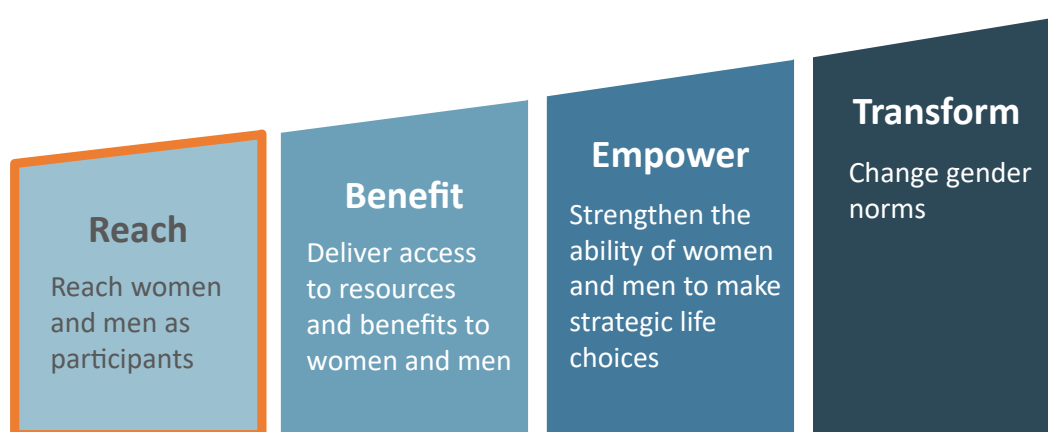


Figure 2. Four stages of development engagements and research questions.
Sources: Adapted from CGIAR 2017; Johnson et al. 2017; Theis and Meinzen-Dick 2016

The following points can act as prompts for reflections in Stage 3 (Critical Reflection) that may lead to adjustments to your facilitation plan, the structure and skills of your team, or your overall engagement with a community.

1. Did pre-existing equity issues create barriers to participation by some groups?

Did the equity issues you expected in the planning phase come up? Did equity issues that you did not expect in the planning phase come up? Were you able find strategies to overcome these barriers?

2. Were all fisheries activities considered and valued?

Have you included all methods of harvesting from places and habitats? Collecting seafood by hand from mangroves or intertidal areas is often neglected, or not given as much value. Have you considered pre- and post-harvest activities and roles (e.g. gear preparation, cleaning, cooking, selling catch)? Have discussions that you have led, facilitated, or brought to the surface, views about the different and similar ways in which women, men and youth use resources, habitats, methods and species?

3. Were all groups given a fair chance to participate (and how)?

Have you ensured that women, men and youth, people with disabilities, elderly, non-landowners, and newcomers, are participating in the process (Fig. 1):

- a. Able to attend: Have you invited everyone and chosen times and places that work for different groups?
- b. Able to understand: Are you using language and communication styles that can reach everyone in the meeting?

c. Able to share: Are you accounting for social norms about public speaking (e.g. whether it is socially acceptable for women and youth to share opinions in communal meetings)?

d. Being understood: Are your places and strategies enabling the views, concerns and solutions of women, men and youth to be shared, heard and considered?

4. Did all groups participate?

Are women, men and youth present and participating in discussions where decisions about resource use, access and benefits are being negotiated and made?

5. Were the outcomes seen as equitable by different groups?

Did the people participating feel that the decisions made were equitable? Did they feel some groups shared a bigger cost or benefit? If so, who?

6. Were there unintended or negative consequences or social conflict?

Did people display or report social conflict or other negative consequences?

7. How can you improve the facilitation and overall engagement the process going forward?

Are there formal or informal structures (adaptation processes, review of monitoring, decision-making committees) whereby decisions can be renegotiated and adapted (including around management decisions, rules and enforcement) in a way where women and men can share their perspectives? Have your actions or suggestions played a role in making these structures and processes more equitable?

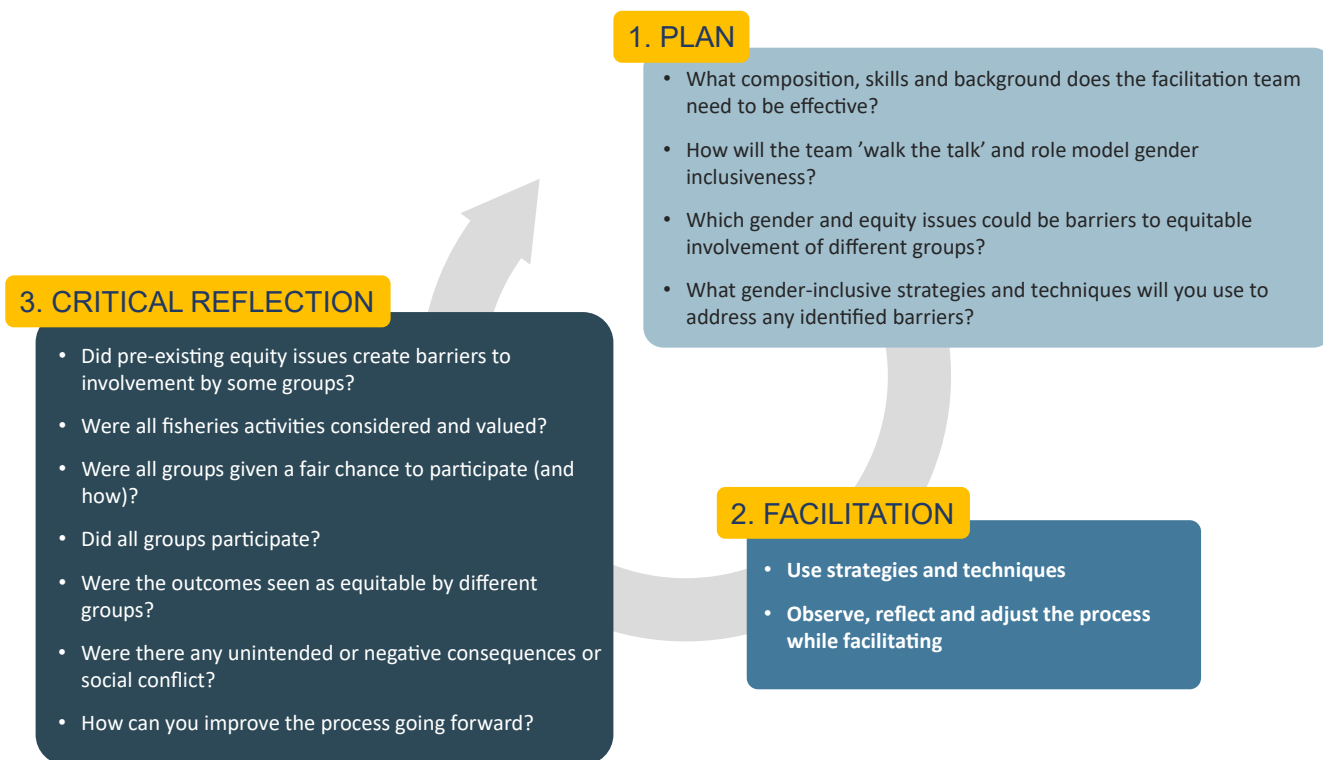


Figure 3. Reflexive facilitation cycle

Strategies

To increase the likelihood that CBRM facilitation is gender-inclusive and effectively engages men, women and youth, facilitators should consider the following strategies that have been used (individually or together) in CBRM facilitation in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati. These strategies will help minimise the risk of marginalising women, men or youth, and enabling a more equitable decision-making process. Not all strategies will work in all contexts; for example, local social norms and engagement objectives will determine what is most appropriate, and the efficacy of any of these strategies is reliant on the skills and experiences of the facilitator.

Pre-facilitation strategies

- **Meet with community leader(s), women's group leader(s) and youth leader(s) prior to engagements**

Before entering a community, leaders (female, male and youth) should be contacted verbally and/or in writing. There may be specific cultural and social protocols that should be followed. Seeking out women leaders, or leaders of women's groups, may take a little longer and more effort – but it is important. At this time you can set expectations that your engagement intends to work with women and men. Use the opportunity of this meeting to discuss the rationale for including women and youth, and discuss ways to make this possible.

- **Gather information about social and gender groups, and dynamics and potential barriers**

If possible, ask the leaders or other contacts about potential barriers to equitable participation. This could include local customs about who is allowed in, or allowed to speak in meeting areas, as well as common time constraints for women and men. Also, potentially identify leverage points or allies.

- **Check on the facilitation team's own gender dynamics**

Have a team meeting about the gender dynamics you practice. Are men usually presenting while women take notes? What are some inclusive behaviours you could adopt and model during the facilitation? Such as taking turns to talk, not interrupting or talking over each other, respecting each other's input.

- **Be explicit within the facilitation team regarding the aims and strategies to be used**

Have a team meeting to discuss the equity barriers you anticipate, and the strategies you will use during the facilitation process. This includes planning out the different responsibilities, and making sure they are shared equitably (see strategies on the team gender dynamic above). Also discuss how you plan to deal with conflict if it comes up.

Facilitation strategies

Attendance strategies

- **Ensure that meeting times are when women, men and youth will be available**

It is the responsibility of the facilitation team to make sure that meetings and discussions take place at times that suit

men, women and youth within the community. Different times may suit different groups (Baereleo Tavue et al. 2016). In some contexts, meeting on weekends may be best, or on a Sunday evening when men, women and youth can attend. Keep note of times that work well or do not work well, and record the reasons to help with future planning.

- **Make sure that meeting catering does not limit women's participation**

Catering for a community meeting is common, and often expected. Although it offers an opportunity for groups within a community to generate some income, it may also prevent women from joining because they are cooking for the meeting. It can also subtly reinforce gender stereotypes of men as decision-makers and women as caretakers. Possible solutions could be having less-formal meetings where everyone brings ready-made food, or ensure that decisions are made after the catering has finished. Other solutions could include single-sex meetings (see below).

- **Allowing children in the meeting and go with the flow**

Women are often tasked with childcare. Allowing children in the meeting may enable women to participate who may not otherwise be able to do so. The structure and flow of a meeting of women can be quite different from that of a men's group (which may potentially be more formal) (Dyer 2018).

- **Ensure you have a venue that allows women and men to attend and participate**

There are some venues in a community that are cultural places where meetings with both women and men can take place. Ensure that these venues not only allow for both women's and men's attendance but allows them to freely speak in front of the assembly to ensure joint discussion. As a facilitator, it is your role to also ensure that single-sex meetings are held in venues that are considered appropriate for the group of interest. For women, ensure that a meeting venue is both safe and easily accessible as long-distance travel may be difficult and thus limit attendance.

Understanding strategies

- **Make the presentation or process accessible to all groups**

Select a presentation style to share knowledge, prompt discussion or deliver training that is accessible to all groups, including marginalised groups such as youth. Take into account that there will be differing levels of education, literacy and different preferences for how information is transferred and received. For example, some people may prefer active demonstrations rather than verbal explanations or presentations. In general, good facilitation will involve less formal meeting settings and ensure a range of different and active sessions and activities that encourage debate, engagement and discussion. This can also help to breakdown some of the formal barriers and gender imbalances in meetings.

- **Using theatre and story telling²**

Theatre, song and drama provide powerful platforms to engage a broad range of people within a community in a discussion, and potentially action around CBRM processes and objectives. Using theatre that presents a fictional yet relevant

² See, for example: Neihapi P, Sokach A, Koran D, Devine J, Dorras J, Andrew N, Steenbergen DJ (2019) 'Twisting and spinning' theatre into coastal fisheries management: Informing and engaging communities to address challenges. SPC Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin 30:24–29.

story, with embedded information and lessons, can effectively make sensitive subjects discussable, challenge ideas without finger pointing, and attract members of communities whom would not otherwise attend meetings. Importantly, plays as standalone performances are less likely to deliver useful outcomes if they are not immediately followed by a tailored workshop that draws on the play to interactively discuss ideas and have them make sense in people's own frames (Neihapi et al. 2019).

Sharing and being understood strategies

- **Have male and female facilitators, data collectors and interviewers**

When preparing to engage with a community, plan to have both female and male facilitators. The facilitation of single-sex meetings by facilitators of the same sex may assist community members to openly express themselves, bring up issues that they might otherwise not feel comfortable discussing with a facilitator of the opposite sex, and be reassured that their ideas and opinions will be listened to and recorded. Similarly, facilitation may work better when there is a cultural affiliation between the facilitator and the community.

- **Having single-sex meetings with joint reflection**

This strategy requires women and men to meet or discuss separately, but then gather together to reflect on similarities and differences in outcomes. Here, you may need to actively facilitate by ensuring that you steer the process to allow the sharing of views from women and men. This technique is often applied in the diagnosis phase, for example, where groups of women and men may separately map the areas of importance for fishing, 'free list' species of importance, or identify issues and strategies for management. It is important for facilitators to take note of how many women and men participate, and the confidence they have in their participation. It is also worth noting that some groups may nominate a spokesperson or representative. This is not the same as having individuals dominating.

- **Having single-sex meetings without immediate joint reflection**

Separate meetings or discussions may be undertaken in separate groups of women and men; in many instances, focus group discussions work very well in this way. It may be that these groups do not come back together for sharing reflections immediately. This has been found to work well, for example, in a process that first builds knowledge, dialogue and confidence among a group of women (Hilly et al. 2011). In this process we try to encourage more women and young girls to fully participate and increase their participation by creating space and providing opportunities for them to share their concerns, ideas and thoughts on their livelihoods, nutrition, fisheries, access to land and sea resources and so forth.

- **Active inclusive facilitation**

Where women, men and youth are present, facilitators can help ensure equal participation of women and men during the meeting. This may mean noticing who is not speaking, and actively seeking contributions from those who may not have a chance to share otherwise. This can mean soliciting

input from an individual, or making a statement such as 'I've noticed we haven't heard from any of the young men at the back. Could you please share what you think about XYZ?'. Another technique is to split into smaller groups and have a representative from each group report back. Without active facilitation, the meeting may be dominated by particular people. It is also important to acknowledge the contributions of people equally. Active facilitation can be challenging and may not fit the context, meaning that in some instances one large communal meeting (especially early in the process, or in some communities), will not be effective for equitable participation, and other strategies will be needed. Good, active facilitation that leads to a balanced discussion requires experience and great skill; simultaneously, care needs to be given so that facilitators are not influencing the main points that emerge from discussions.

- **Help less powerful or marginalised groups prepare for engagement**

Organise a separate pre-meeting to gather the thoughts and needs of marginalised people, and even practice sharing key points 'in group'. This can allow marginalised groups to better engage in the moment.

- **Set up the meeting space in a way that positions participants as equals**

Avoid high and low seats, back rows, or seating that does not have a clear view of the meeting.

- **Count how often women and men talk in the meeting**

To make a more objective measure of contributions to a meeting or discussion where women and men are both present, it is possible to count how many times a woman or man speaks (see Dyer 2018). These data could be used to help the team reflect on how the facilitation is going, and perhaps analyse trends in contributions over time (e.g. Baereleo Tavue et al. 2016 reported anecdotally that women's contributions in joint meetings increased over time). It does not matter whether it is the same person speaking but it is important to identify and understand who is confident, influential and has the ability to speak out in meetings. Using the male (♂) and female (♀) symbols in your own notes is helpful, and facilitators should note if the same person speaks a number of times during the meeting.

Post-facilitation strategies

- **Stay in the community, allow time and space for informal conversations**

So much is never said or understood through meetings or interviews, no matter how skilled the facilitation team is in creating an environment that promotes exchange. Mutual understanding is much better generated through genuine relationships and communication. Where CBRM partners stay, and how they engage and behave outside of any structured programme is influential. 'An important, but more informal, strategy [to understand different perspective] was that the female facilitator would make the most of break times, meal times and evenings to engage women in discussions and hear their perspectives.' (Baereleo Tavue et al. 2016:32)

- **Find out how different people experienced the process**

Using informal discussions with different people (including people from marginalised groups), ask if they felt respected, and if they felt the outcomes were equitable. Also reach out to people who did not attend, or who did not participate, and ask why.

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