



Contesting gender: The translation of gender commitments into action in small-scale fisheries in the Pacific Islands

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In collaboration with
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Small-scale fisheries

- Operate at household or community scale
- Directly support the livelihoods of 116 million people
- 97% live in developing countries
- Women comprise 50% of total engagement

(World Bank, 2012)



Credit: Fabien Astre

Gender and small-scale fisheries

“The fishing industry has a man’s face but women’s efforts also are behind every bite of fish we taste” (GAF7, 2018)

- Women are involved throughout the value chain
- Their contributions are under-valued and under-reported
- Reinforced by gender norms and relations shaping expectations about labour, decision-making power, economic status and access to resources

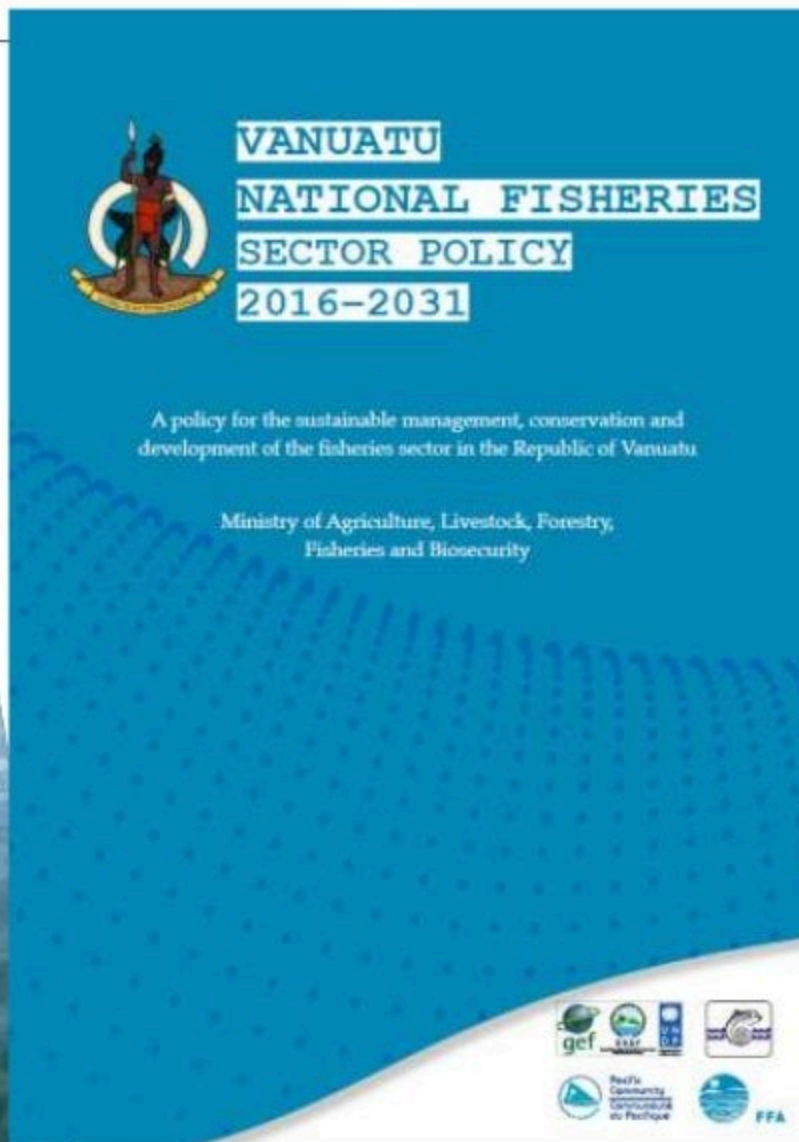
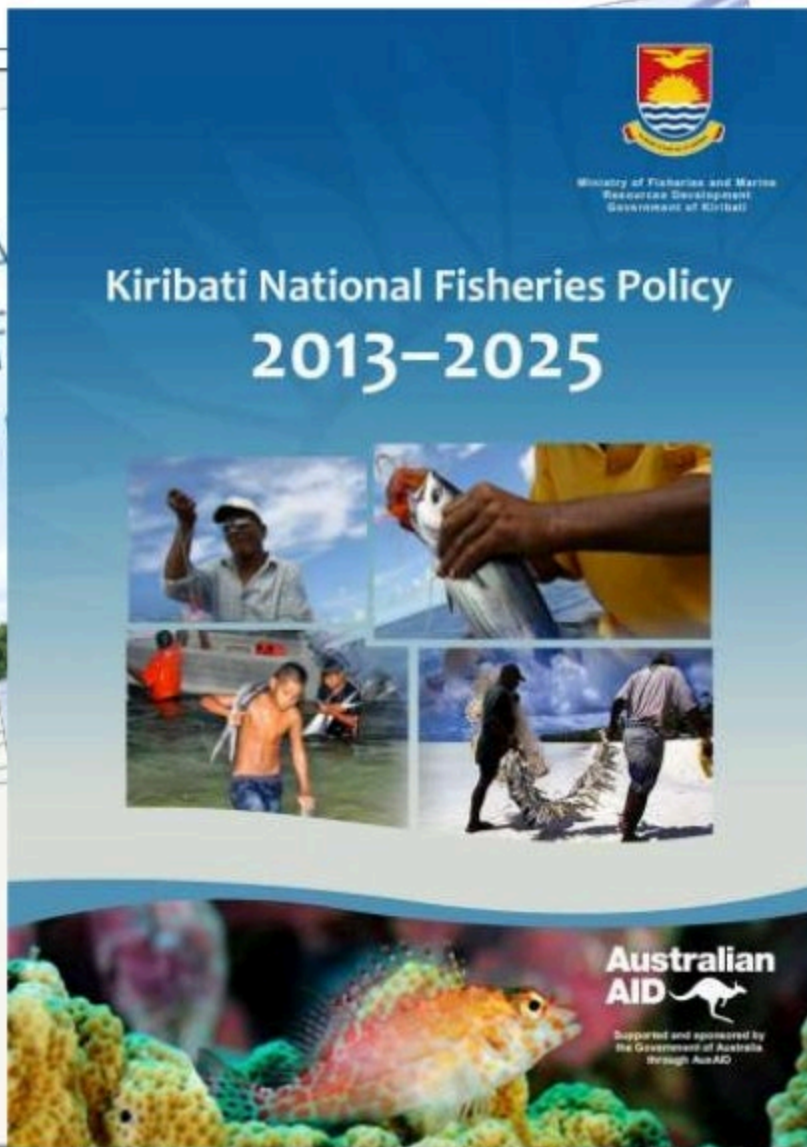
(Harper et al. 2013; Kleiber et al. 2017)



Gender and small-scale fisheries policy



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Coral Reef Studies



Gender and small-scale fisheries donor commitments

Funded by



EUROPEAN UNION



Sweden

Sverige

Implemented by



Pacific Community
Communauté du Pacifique



FFA



SPREP



USP
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC



IUCN



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

“... at least 80 per cent of all aid investments, regardless of their primary objectives, must effectively address gender issues in their implementation” (DFAT, 2019)

Pacific European-Union Marine Partnership injecting EUR 45 million into the Pacific region. They have key objectives around strengthening gender approaches.

Gender and small-scale fisheries actor commitments



Small-scale fisheries actors committing to address gender inequality in implementation



Research gap

Gender equality



Global, regional and national gender commitments



Investment



Commitments to action



Insufficient evidence about these commitments translate into practice

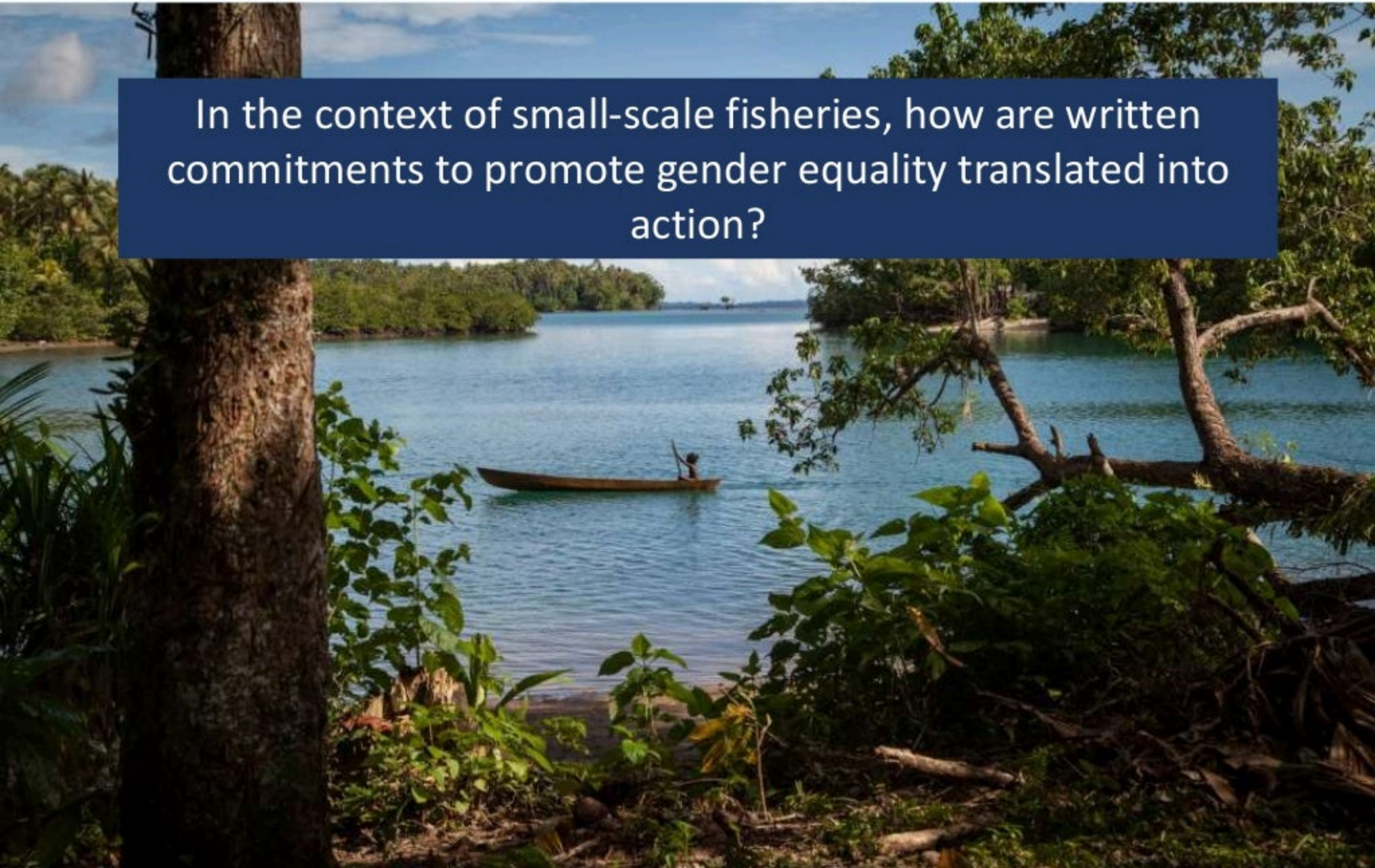


Action?

Impact

Research question

In the context of small-scale fisheries, how are written commitments to promote gender equality translated into action?



Case study of the Pacific Islands region



Highest concentration of small-scale fisheries investments and governance actors

Across the three countries between 50-80% households involved in small-scale fisheries
(FAO, 2018; Pacific Community, 2017)

Organizational landscape

Organizational datapoints:

Total organizations: 33

Total interviews: 74 (f=44, m=30)

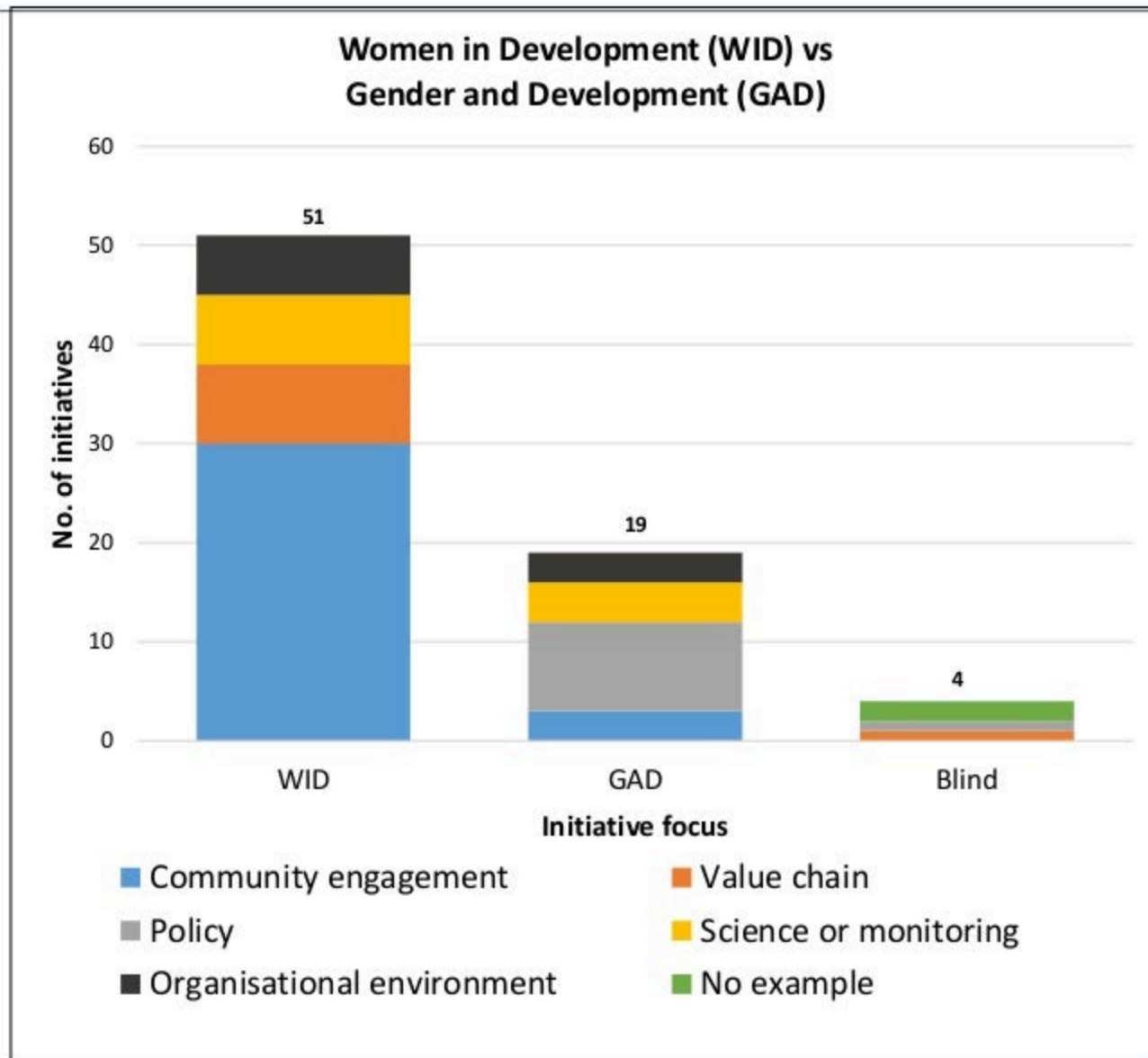
Global



Local

Gender approaches in small-scale fisheries

74 fisheries initiatives



How do global principles (gender equality) spread?

Response typology

Applied practice / action

Responses:

Resistance

Rhetorical
adoption

Contestation

Implementation

Internalization



Lawless et al. in review

Empirical findings: Responses to gender in small-scale fisheries

Responses:

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Usually people working at the regional level don't support gender integration, "if a male is leading something they won't want gender issues [as part of the initiative]".
- *Female, middle management, regional agency*

"The fisheries mandate is not on gender, it's on sustainably managed fisheries".
- *Male, senior leader, regional fisheries agency*



Responses to gender in small-scale fisheries governance

Responses:

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Regional scale

In our funding proposals we mention 'gender mainstreaming', I still don't even know what this means, or how to do this.

Maybe it's a juicy term that appeals to donors. We leave it to the gender team to do this work (paraphrased from original).

- Male, senior leader, regional fisheries agency

The Secretary General always asks us to include gender because he 'should' be doing it. "If there is a [gender-balanced] panel he looks good".

- Female, middle management, regional agency



Responses to gender in small-scale fisheries governance

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National scale

“There is no resistance [to work on gender], but fisheries officers do not know how”
- Male, national policy advisor, regional fisheries agency

“I think people want to include gender in their work, but what does including gender actually entail?”

- Female, fisheries research officer, national fisheries ministry

“We are biologists, not gender experts”
- Female, conservation scientist, INGO



Responses to gender in small-scale fisheries governance



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"You always deal with backlash [when working on gender]. It's a sign you're on the right track and that you're destabilizing those harmful social norms".
– *Female, regional gender expert*



Responses to gender in small-scale fisheries governance

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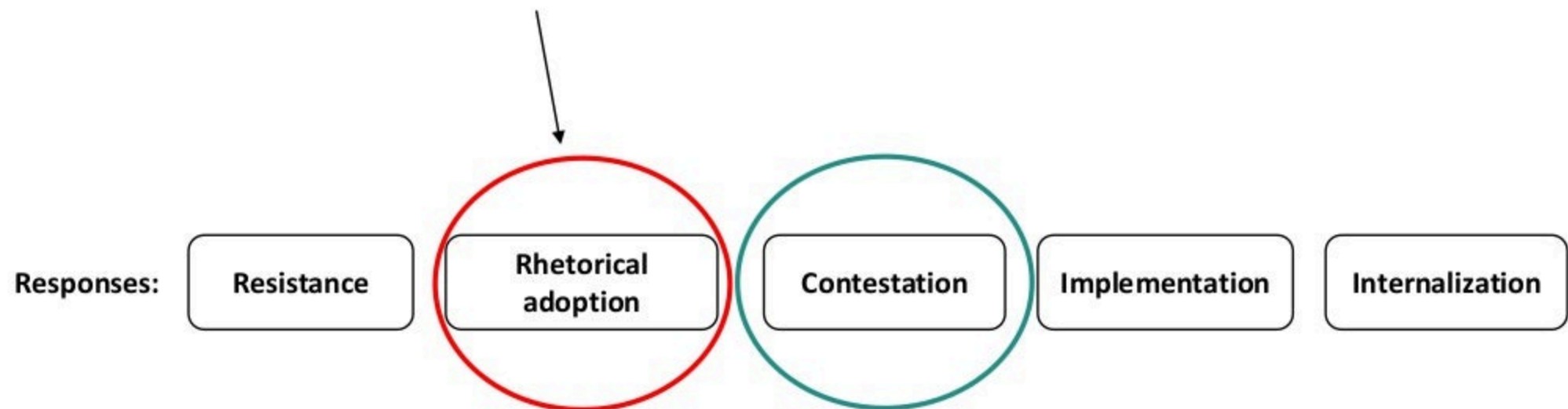


Evidence beyond written commitments is limited



What does this mean for future research?

If gender remains obscure, intangible and non context specific = Best case



Contestation is the space where 'doing gender' is negotiated, made more tangible and contextualized.



Lawless et al. in review

Thank you

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