

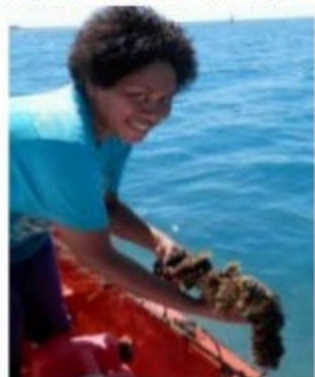
# Pearl-based livelihoods empowering women in Fiji

Katja Mikhailovich (KPM EPOCH Consulting)

Michael Clarke (AgEconPlus)

# Background

- Pearl related enterprises- winged pearl oyster farming and spat collection, mabé production and mother of pearl shell carving and jewellery production.
- Livelihood opportunities coastal communities, women and youth
- **BENEFITS AND IMPACTS FOR WOMEN INVOLVED IN ACIAR FUNDED PEARL LIVELIHOOD ENTERPRISES IN FIJI**



# Context and Culture Fiji

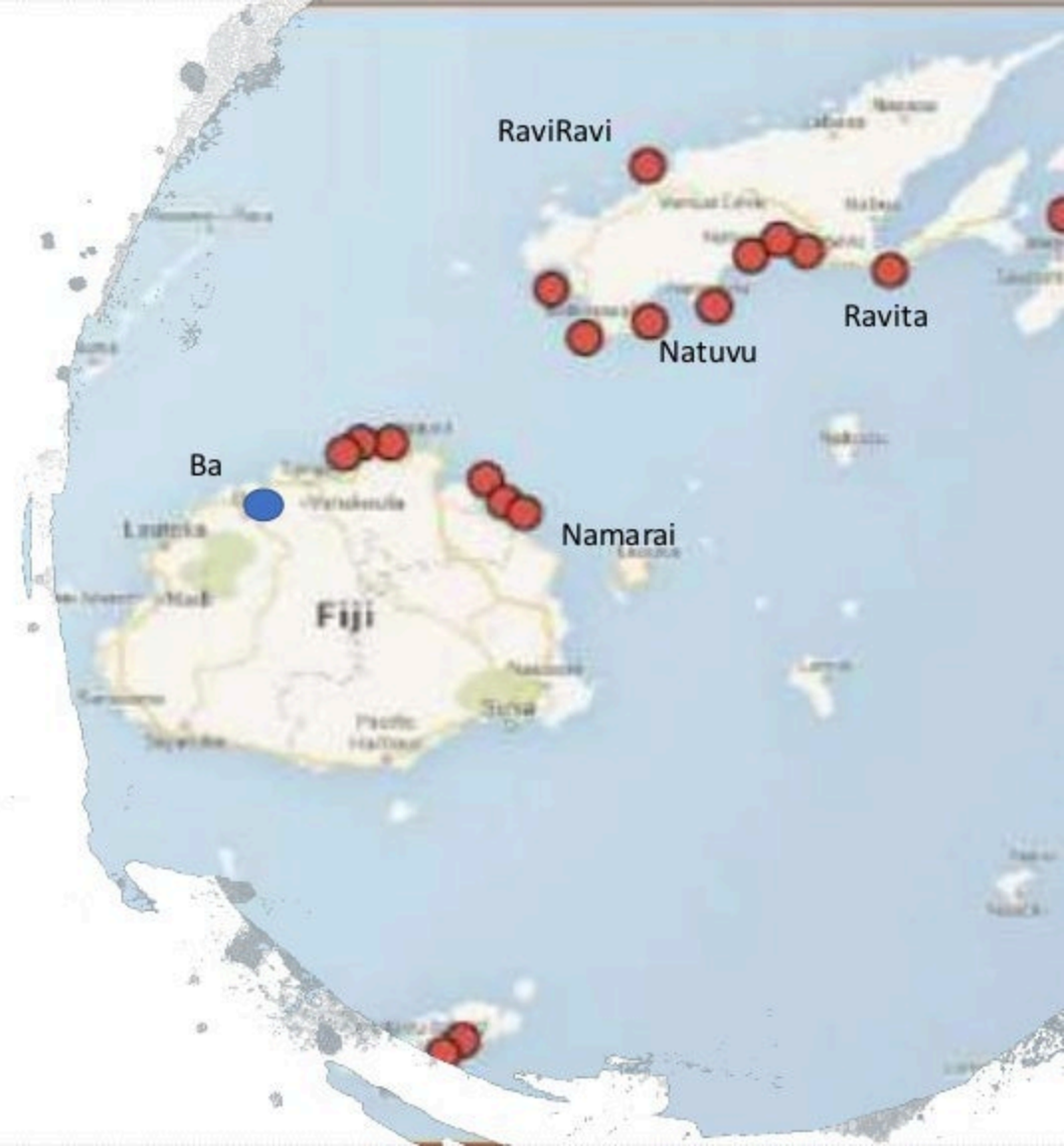
---



- Traditional roles for women: raising children, maintaining household, making handicrafts, inshore fishing
- Male roles: decision makers, fishing, forestry, agriculture
- Kinship structures: inform behavior, relationships and gender norms
- In fisheries sector: cultural defines roles and participation (women inshore fishing / men offshore fishing)
- Culturally oyster harvesting and artisan carving are consistent with pre-existing cultural practices in coastal communities in Fiji.

# Approach and frameworks

- Assessment frameworks/ tools:
  - *Rapid appraisal approach*
  - *Women's economic empowerment framework (Golla, Malhotra and Mehra (2011))*
  - *A-WEAI (IFRI 2012)*
- Selected domains and indicators: participation, skills and knowledge, productive assets, income, leadership, time and workload.
- Methods: literature and project document review, structured individual interviews and community or group interviews (18 men and 32 women) across five locations.
- 4 sites focused on spat and mabe farming and 1 shell handicraft group
- Limitations: time, resources, access and logistics projects at different stages of development
- Case study and Vignettes



Empowerment domain	Indicators	Success level
Capacity development: skills and knowledge	Training is available to women and girls in spat and mabé production	
	Women acquire new knowledge and technical skills in spat and/or mabé production	
	Women are able to apply skills and knowledge to practice independently	
	Women gain increased confidence and recognition in their community	
Access and control of productive assets and income	Women have access to/ownership of resources/assets to engage in production	
	Women derive income as a result of production	
	Women have control over how to spend earned income	
	Women buy new resources/assets from pearling activity income	
Decision-making and leadership	Women are involved in decisions about production	
	Women are involved in leadership in production	
	Women are involved in leadership in community	
Workload and time	Women's work hours and conditions are manageable	



## Benefits for women

---

- *Participation*
  - Women 60% (spat & mabe), 90% shell handicrafts. Estimated 340 women across 17 villages.
- *Specialised knowledge and skills – enhanced standing in community related to income producing activity*
- *Access and control of assets* - belonged to women's groups in 2 of 4 villages . Remaining 2 community controlled. Artisan carvers assets and income mix of individual and collective control.
- Time involved in enterprise/ Age of participants



## Benefits for women contd.

- *Income* – Dependent on stage of development access to markets and community structures- Individual and collective income
- *Decision making*- some have high autonomy in decision making about production and income others operate in the service of the broader community or cooperative structures
- *Time and workload* - work not burdensome in time or effort but most women needed the support of men with some aspects of production. Can work close to home but lack of boats identified as a barrier.
- Carvers wanted more time to work unaided by project team.



## Social Benefits

- *Relationships*- compatible with collective approach to community activities
- *Self confidence and efficacy*- growing confidence, pride and capability, high personal satisfaction
- *Increased networks* – Fisheries officers, Gov depts, Women in fisheries networks, facilitating grant applications
- *Strengthening cultural practices*- fishing and aquaculture, carving



# Conclusions

- Pearl related enterprises offer viable livelihood opportunities for women and youth
- Full economic benefits will take time
- Projects worked within the existing cultural and gender norms- collective activity
- Some women were exercising autonomy, agency and power to make productive decisions within their cultural and social context
- Women's standing within communities enhanced by their capacity for economic activity
- Risk and challenge: markets for shell handicrafts





**Impact assessment of investment  
in aquaculture-based livelihoods  
in the Pacific Islands region  
and tropical Australia**

**96**

ACIAR Impact Assessment Series

## Chapter 5: Impact of women's involvement in mabé and pearl industries

---

<https://www.aciar.gov.au/publication/Aquaculture-based-livelihoods-Pacific-region>