



Pacific handbook for human rights, gender equity and social inclusion in tuna industries



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MODULE 4

HR and GESI in port areas



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human rights, gender equity and social inclusion

in tuna industries

Module 4: HR and GESI in port areas

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Key points

- Port areas are vibrant places full of people and economic activity, but an element of seafarer culture means there also tends to be drugs and alcohol, and casual sexual encounters, which can give rise to HR and GESI issues.
- Port areas include the actual port itself, and the part of town around ports connected to the port through businesses servicing ports and crews, and where the social life is affected by seafarer activities.
- Some of the key factors in good governance of port areas is to avoid stigmatising or criminalising the sexual encounters, including transactional sex, so as to avoid driving it 'underground' and exposing people to more risk. Facilities for crew while they are in port is a great help, as are services for prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and gender based violence, and for economic empowerment so that everyone has a viable alternative to sex work if they want it.
- HR and GESI around fishing ports is relevant for fisheries management, but fisheries managers do not have the expertise or resources to address it, so collaboration with other organisations interested in social issues around port areas is key.

Social issues arising from visiting seafarers around ports

As noted in Module 3, maritime masculine cultures worldwide have some problematic elements in terms of risk taking, violence, substance abuse and promiscuity.¹ Not all seafarers fit this mould, but the tendency is visible around port and fish landing areas, where there is usually a thriving bar scene and commercial sex trade. Not all seafarers want to 'party' when they go ashore, many like to phone their families and go shopping. Fishing crew interviewees, however, say partying is considered normal when in port, and if crew are living together in close quarters on vessels it can be hard to escape. There can be group pressure on colleagues to participate.

Tuna industries are only a small part of port life – ports also have freight and passenger vessels coming and going. The issues raised in this module are thus about port culture and administration as a whole, with tuna vessels and crews being just one piece.

It helps if there is a range of activities and places to go for seafarers. For example, Mission to Seafarers ('Flying Angel') charity hostels offer places to stay and recreational activities for seafarers who do not want to party, but unfortunately none are operating in the island Pacific. According to interviewees, seamen's centres used to be common around the Pacific. They sometimes included pool tables, food, counselling, sometimes financial literacy programmes. Sometimes they were just a shipping container office with a connected computer, phone and counselling for seafarers. At the time of writing, we are not aware that any of these centres are functioning, although the Anglican Church had plans to re-establish one in Fiji. Seafarers also like to visit shopping malls, movie theatres and sports grounds.

Even basic guidance about the social context of the port could be useful – in Palau there have been problems of visiting crew taking fruit and vegetables from local gardens, presumably because the crew were not fully aware that the fruit and vegetables had been planted by locals for their own food supplies, and were not free for anyone to take. Likewise, it is useful for residents of towns around ports to be aware of occurrences in the ports and the seafaring world. For example, the Fiji Times has a 'Shipping Times' section once a week with information relevant for Suva ports.

Noro – a tuna town

Noro in the Western Province of Solomon Islands is a major port for the country and hosts most of the domestic tuna fleet and a large tuna processing factory – SolTuna. Tuna activity around the port is a source of economic benefit and vibrancy – there are not only negative social impacts but positive ones too. The port brings employment and market-stall opportunities. It attracts people from all over the country. The tuna companies pay for infrastructure, like the local sports ground, and services such as relocation of the rubbish dump. Some of the challenges Noro faces include problems with home-brew alcohol (*kwaso*) and marijuana. The Double A Club nightclub generates a lot of activity.

¹ Allison E. H. (2013). A "provocation" on maritime masculinities – and why they matter for management. Presentation at the MARE People and the Sea Conference, University of Amsterdam, July 2013. <https://genderaquafish.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/04-allison-mare-maritime-masculinities.pdf>

Stakeholders involved in developing this handbook all note that sex is usually part of what some visiting seafarers want when they come to port, at the same time as restocking and refuelling. This is the case with industrial tuna fleets transshipping their catches in Tarawa lagoon in Kiribati, it happens in Fiji, it happens at ports all around the world.

The historical background and cultural context of people working in the tuna industry means there are multiple perspectives on relations between seafarers and local women or sometimes local men. There are probably also LGBTQIA+² relations, although we have no information about that. Some Pacific Islanders are strongly Christian and view sex out of marriage and transactional sex as morally wrong. Selling sexual services is illegal in most Pacific Island countries and territories. A complicating factor is that in some places there is a historical precedent whereby visiting seafarers, usually men trading ceremonial valuables, were offered local women or adolescent girls for sexual purposes as part of cultures of hospitality and reciprocity. Women and girls themselves, as well as their families, expected goods in return.³ In contemporary times, local men and women may be drawn to foreign fishing crew for access to alcohol and drugs. After initially befriending crew through drinking parties, young women may become involved in transactional sex, or they may continue partying with seafarers without it being explicit sex work.⁴

There is no verified data about these sensitive issues, but it seems the young people interacting with men from the ships are often from socially and economically marginalised backgrounds, who may have experienced neglect and/or abuse. They may be poor, rural youth with limited job opportunities in urban areas, or children from 'broken families'. They may accept payment for sex – such as a ride on a motorbike, or some cigarettes.

There have been rumours about 'sex for fish' trading with crew in the Pacific,⁵ but most of the trade with crews for reject fish is for fresh fruit and vegetables, cigarettes or other commodities. There is trade of sex for fish in some parts of Africa.⁶ Women sometimes engage in the sex industry because of lack of other opportunities for cash income.⁷

Transactional sex

The kinds of sexual arrangements between locals and visiting seafarers vary. On the one hand some may be very explicit transactions with an expectation that cash or other goods will be paid for services. On the other end of the spectrum, there may be more loose arrangements where locals have friends who work on tuna fishing vessels who give them gifts. Another spectrum is of people who enter into these relations very much of their own free will, and of people who have little choice about it, through lack of livelihood options. Power inequalities between people (women and men, older and younger people, people with and without money) are central to how transactional sex plays out. We should take care with the words we use to talk about these activities because of the stigma involved. People who need help may refuse to talk if they are shamed by the ones they reach out to.

'Transactional sex', 'prostitution' and 'sex work'

There is no single term that all people involved accept as the right one for transactional sex. The term 'sex work' was coined by people engaged in transactional sex in the 1970s as a term they preferred to the legalistic and negative term 'prostitute'. Most people do not like to be called prostitutes. 'Sex work' allows for all genders and highlights that the activity is a form of employment, and should have the rights and protections that other forms of work have, so some people involved in transactional sex prefer the term 'sex work'. On the other hand, some feminist organisations see that underlying discrimination against women is a root cause and the inherent risks of violence in transactional sex mean that it is not a free relationship of employment, so should not be called sex 'work'. Also, people whose relationships with seafarers are on the friendship end of the spectrum may not want to be called sex workers.

2 LGBTQIA+ means lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and any other sexual and gender identities beyond heterosexual and cisgender.

3 Crook T., Farran S., & Röell E. (2016). Understanding gender inequality actions in the Pacific: ethnographic case studies and policy options. European Commission, Luxembourg.

4 Vunisea A. (2006a). Kiribati national tuna development and management plan – social and gender considerations. Noumea, New Caledonia: Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

5 Sullivan N., Warr T., Rainbubu J., Kunoko J., Akauna F., Angasa M., & Wenda Y. (2003). Tinpis Maror: A Social Impact Study of Proposed RD Tuna Cannery at Vidar Wharf, Madang. Madang, Papua New Guinea.

6 Béné C., & Merten S. (2008). Women and Fish-for-Sex: Transactional Sex, HIV/AIDS and Gender in African Fisheries. *World Development*, 36(5), 875–899. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2007.05.010>; Fiorella K. J., Camlin C. S., Salmen C. R., Omondi R., Hickey M. D., Omollo D. O., Milner E. M., Bukusi E. A., Fernald L. C. H., & Brashares J. S. (2015). Transactional Fish-for-Sex Relationships Amid Declining Fish Access in Kenya. *World Development*, 74, 323–332. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.05.015>.

7 World Health Organization. (n.d.). Sexual exploitation and abuse, prevent and protect, what you need to know and do. Zurich: World Health Organization (WHO). Retrieved from www.who.int/about/ethics



Transactional sex is a fact of life around port areas. For example, in Majuro there are reports of young Chinese women involved in transactional sex in motels near port areas.⁸ According to stakeholders consulted for this handbook, differences in whether transactional sex leads to negative social impacts include: (1) the quality of social leadership and governance in surrounding communities; (2) the existence of services regarding sexual health and violence prevention; and (3) economic empowerment such that people have viable alternatives to sex work.

For example, while women's service staff in Noro in Solomon Islands say transactional sex continues, according to long term Noro residents and visitors, it is much less visible and causes less social disruption than it did in the past. Noro has been a fishing port since the mid-1970s and has had a processing factory since 1990. Several interviewees said sex workers no longer go out to the vessels in Noro, whereas in Honiara sex workers take small vessels from outside the restricted port areas and travel out to the ships. Stakeholders interviewed for this handbook said that vessel masters who prefer not to have sex workers come to their vessels thus prefer to trans-ship in Noro rather than Honiara. In Vanuatu, even with strict security environment around ports, transactional sex continues. The Department of Women's Affairs, National Council of Women and the Health Department are working with vessel owners to promote awareness to reduce risks of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and stigma.

In some ports sex trafficking seems to be part of wider criminal activities around port areas including drug smuggling and dealing. It is important to note the crucial human rights difference between transactional sex that people engage in by choice, and sex trafficking. Trafficking is a human rights abuse while consensual sex work is not, even though both may be illegal and both may look the same from the perspective of clients. Also, if someone is in a desperate economic situation, they may feel forced to engage in transactional sex, so the line of 'choice' may be unclear.

Interviewees note that in Suva, with increases in security in port areas over the years, transactional sex is no longer feasible on vessels or within the port area. However, just outside the ports there are bars that seafarers know they can visit to find sex workers, and there are sex workers on the streets, even though it is illegal. Some of this business appears to be quite large scale and organised. In 2017 a large group of young Chinese women doing transactional sex were uncovered and deported.⁹ This incident was not near a fishing port but it is possible similar practices occur around ports. It is unclear from the media reports whether those women were trafficked or were willing sex workers. Studies have found that the reasons people go into sex work in Fiji are mainly economic, including unemployment, breakdown in marriage/de facto relationships and failure of husbands to pay maintenance, breakdown with extended family relationships, and inadequate government help. These factors are exacerbated by lack of education, childhood and maternal poverty, low wages for women, family violence, and the marginalisation of transgender people.¹⁰ Past estimates have suggested that the number of sex workers per capita in Fiji is similar to that in Thailand.¹¹

Public discourse around seafarers is often disapproving of transactional sex. The Republic of the Marshall Islands government has put in place regulations that specifically target trans-shipment activities, aiming to prevent human rights abuses such as human trafficking and sex with children. From a human rights perspective, transactional sex is a problem if people are forced into it, or if people too young to provide true consent are involved. But the criminalisation of sex work pushes it underground and often creates other human rights problems. It is usually sex workers – mainly women – who are targeted in legal crackdowns. For example, women have been arrested leaving tuna fishing vessels in Micronesian countries, but not the fishermen.¹² Transactional sex already has social stigma and when it is also illegal, it is driven further underground and makes people more vulnerable to rape and other forms of violence, and less able to seek help from health services or the justice system if they are attacked.

There are alternatives to criminalisation to address some of the gender equality and human rights problems that arise around transactional sex. In Fiji in the late 1990s, there was successful engagement through 'persistent and professional' youth volunteers from the Fiji AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) Taskforce working on the streets with sex workers in a programme called 'Stepping Stone' that empowered them to protect themselves and help prevent the spread of STIs.¹³ The AIDS Taskforce and Stepping Stone training have both finished operating, but it could be useful to build on those learnings to think about ways to address social issues around ports.

8 Vunisea A. (2006b). Republic of the Marshall Islands national tuna development and management plan – social and gender considerations. Noumea, New Caledonia.

9 Cohen H., & Webb T. (2017, October 6). Chinese nationals deported from Fiji were sex workers, not fraudsters: source. ABC Radio National. Retrieved from <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-06/chinese-nationals-deported-from-fiji-sex-workers-not-fraudsters/9019666>

10 McMillan K., & Worth H. (2011). Sex Workers and HIV Prevention in Fiji - After the Fiji Crimes Decree 2009. In International HIV Research Group. International HIV Research Group. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.14123.75049>

11 Ahlburg D. A., & Jensen, E. R. (1998). The economics of the commercial sex industry. In M. Ainsworth, L. Fransen, & M. Over (Eds.), *Confronting AIDS: Evidence from the Developing World*. European Commission, Brussels.

12 Vunisea A. (2006a). Kiribati national tuna development and management Plan – social and gender considerations. Noumea, New Caledonia: Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); Vunisea A. (2006b). Republic of the Marshall Islands national tuna development and management plan – social and gender considerations. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, New Caledonia.

13 Arama and Associates. (2000). Gender impacts related to development of commercial tuna fisheries. Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), p.30.

Trading with crew in port areas

It should also be noted that Pacific Islanders frequently interact with visiting seafarers with no sex or substance abuse involved. When tuna fishing vessels are in port offloading their catch, many locals go out to the tuna boats in canoes or dinghies to sell fruit, vegetables, tobacco, soft drinks, and so on. One of the main objectives is to receive reject fish from the tuna fishing vessels, which can then be sold in local markets or taken home. When tuna vessels come to ports in Madang, Lae and Wewak in Papua New Guinea, women, men and children, go out to the vessels on canoes, selling coconuts, pawpaw, bananas and fresh vegetables, which they exchange with crew for fish.

The reject fish ('saltfish') from tuna fishing vessels is not necessarily of poor quality as long as it has been kept cold and is sold quickly. It may be rejected because it is damaged, or of the wrong species for the tuna processing facilities. Reject fish forms an important part of food systems in port areas where industrial tuna vessels trans-ship, such as South Tarawa in Kiribati. It may be sold direct, for example, in Honiara in the part of the market where pelagic fish are sold. Tuna from the industrial vessels are sold from cool boxes as 'saltfish'. The fish are preserved on the fishing vessels by freezing in brine, so they look brownish in colour and have a very salty flavour. Fish from the industrial vessels are also sold cooked by some vendors as fish and chips, or in curries or stews. Women make up a significant part of the value chain, making livelihoods from the reject fish coming from industrial vessels.¹⁴

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) around ports

The kinds of sexual liaisons that happen with seafarers in port tend to be quite risky – people may be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs and the interactions are likely to be casual. This means seafarers can be vectors for STIs, bringing them from one port to another. There is a particular problem around HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and AIDS. In some island countries, almost all or all HIV and AIDS cases are linked to seafarers who have returned home and infected their wives, and, via their wives, newborn babies.

Case study: visiting seafarers and local women¹⁵



The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a major hub of tuna trans-shipment – where tuna are moved from fishing vessels to carrier vessels. Thousands of seafarers thus visit the small island of Majuro each year. Majuro has a population of 20,000 people. At sea, the seafarers are isolated from wider society, confined, and under strict rules, then once they get to port they are approached by sex workers and offered alcohol. The government has taken measures to curb activities involving minors. Many seafarers fear contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and believe younger partners are safer. According to stakeholders talked to for this handbook, police interventions in recent years have enforced the age limit of 18, to prevent children from being involved. The issue is difficult to research so the Republic of Marshall Islands government lacks a thorough understanding of these activities. Government officials and women's organisations have called for analysis of sexual relations with visiting seafarers because STIs are having a major impact on reproductive health in the Republic of Marshall Islands.

¹⁴ McClean N., Barclay K., Fabinyi M., Adhuri D. S., Sulu R., & Indrabudi T. (2019). Assessing tuna fisheries governance for community wellbeing: case studies from Indonesia and Solomon Islands, summary report. Sydney: University of Technology Sydney. Retrieved from <https://www.uts.edu.au/about/faculty-arts-and-social-sciences/research/fass-research-projects/assessing-governance-tuna>

¹⁵ Vunisea A. (2006b). Republic of the Marshall Islands national tuna development and management plan – social and gender considerations. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, New Caledonia; Crook T., Farran S., & Röell E. (2016). Understanding gender inequality actions in the Pacific: ethnographic case studies and policy options. Luxembourg.

Case study: STIs in tuna town Noro

Noro in Solomon Islands has an active port and a large tuna processing factory. According to interviewees, Noro has higher rates of STIs than the average in Solomon Islands. This is due to the young population from all over the country living in an urban setting, as well as the activities of seafarers. Interviewees observed that there are quite a number of sex workers in town, many of whom are under 20 years of age, whose clients are seafarers. The tuna processing factory SolTuna has sexual health training for all workers. Nurses give workshops about using condoms and the health consequences if people are not careful. The company has an annual medical check. There is a Community Awareness team that talks to people about the issues associated with boarding ships for partying or transactional sex. This is relevant for all ships coming in and out of Noro, including freight and logging vessels as well as tuna boats. During COVID the contact between people from ships and the town was more strictly controlled.

Case study: HIV-AIDS from seafarers in Tuvalu¹⁶

There is not much research or analysis available on Tuvalu's HIV/AIDS situation. Figures vary year to year and there is no testing done for most people in the outer islands. According to Ministry of Health data in 2015, there were 12 people with HIV/AIDS living in Tuvalu; they were picked up during routine testing in antenatal care. Their identities are carefully guarded due to the risk of stigma and social exclusion in a small island setting where communal relationships are such a strong part of all aspects of life. There is no HIV treatment or anti-viral medication programme. In 2015 one of the children was found to be HIV-positive after birth.

Gender-based violence around ports

Seafaring masculinities, including in the tuna industry, can encourage violence and poor treatment of women by some men. Substance abuse that often occurs when visiting port, means that gender-based violence (GBV) may be heightened around port areas. Pacific Island countries and territories have on average very high rates of intimate partner violence; the statistics of Papua New Guinea are the highest with 47.6% of women experiencing violence from their intimate partners. For all forms of violence against women, including violence through trafficking or other exploitation, the figures are even higher, with 79% of all women in Tonga experiencing violence during their lifetime, and in Solomon Islands it is 64% of all women.¹⁷ Women having sex with visiting seafarers may be shamed by the rest of society, so they can be particularly vulnerable. The nature of these relations where seafarers are only in ports for certain periods, and may be drunk or on drugs, exacerbates the problem.

It is useful to have coordinated services for people who have suffered GBV, and many Pacific countries do have coordinated services. Women and children may need physical health services for injuries, as well as counselling for trauma, emergency housing, legal advice, and police protection. It is difficult for women who are coping with violence to travel around different parts of town and deal separately with different services. GBV services such as those in Fiji are sometimes concentrated in and around urban areas, and do not have specific considerations for those involved in maritime industries. Most services target general GBV abuse and those involved in providing services may have little knowledge of seafarers and related violence.

In Noro there is the SAFENet, a network that comprises both government and non-government frontline service providers. In a joint effort with relevant stakeholders – Church women's groups, Church elders and Church boards, the local Family Support Centre, Noro Town Council, the Ports Authority, the Police and health services – SAFENet coordinates support for women. It is challenging to work on GBV because of widespread beliefs that domestic violence is a private family matter, and for violence that occurs outside of the domestic space there is shame and fear of exclusion, so people are not willing to talk about it openly. SAFENet have been implementing

¹⁶ Tuvalu Ministry of Health. (2015). Health Report 2015. Government of Tuvalu.

¹⁷ United Nations Population Fund. (2021). Gender-based violence. Retrieved December 10, 2021, from <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-based-violence>; Pacific Women. (2017). Ending Violence Against Women - Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. In Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. Pacific Women. <https://pacificwomen.org/our-work/focus-areas/ending-violence-against-women/>

the Community Healing Program, with the aim of healing an individual who then influences others, so the whole community changes. As part of this program they talk about the Family Protection Act, about gender roles, about GBV definitions, and sexual exploitation. Sexual abuse around port areas can include 'human trafficking', whereby people are forced into doing sexual work and the person controlling them takes most or all of the money. Noro Family Support Centre has had clients that have been sex-trafficked, including women who were originally captured by being lured into taxis.



Definition of 'human trafficking'

"The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs."¹⁸

Sexual exploitation of children

Children from broken families, or from families who have migrated to town from rural areas seem to be most at risk of taking up sex work with visiting seafarers. Children without a stable home providing for their economic and/or emotional needs, may seek friendship or income from seafarers. Some rural migrant families struggle to make an income in town and may encourage their children to go to seafarers in exchange for fish or cash.¹⁹

Some of the local people interacting sexually with seafarers are young teenagers. Women arrested when returning from tuna fishing vessels in Kiribati and the Republic of Marshall Islands were aged from 14 to 26 years of age. The young age of these people has been seen as a particular concern, because children are more vulnerable to exploitation, and less able to give true consent. The WHO defines sexual relations with anyone under 18 as sexual abuse.²⁰

Organisations attempting to use legal means to prosecute the sexual exploitation of children by seafarers have faced problems. The Chuuk Women's Council, for example, has advocated to raise the legal age of consent for sexual intercourse to 18 years in Chuuk State as one way to try to address the problem of young teenagers being sexually exploited by visiting seafarers, amongst other reasons such as health concerns, combatting child marriage and teenage pregnancies. The age of consent for sexual intercourse was also raised from 16 to 18 years in Pohnpei State as a result of advocacy work by the local civil society organisation Care Micronesia.²¹ The Federated States of Micronesia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993, which creates state obligations across all four states to protect children from all forms of violence, including GBV.²²

As with transactional sex with seafarers more broadly, there is no verifiable data about whether or how many girls, and in some cases boys, are sexually exploited in ports. There is very limited reporting and no follow-up, so there is no evidence apart from anecdotal evidence. Verbal reports include parents taking their children to vessels in port for transactional sex, as a source of family income. With few or no income earning alternatives, families see these relationships as their girls having boyfriends who come into port at regular times and they become accustomed to these sorts of arrangements. It is hard to imagine the dire situation a family must be in to resort to these measures. It indicates that solutions to prevent the exploitation of children will have to range beyond just the tuna industry.

18 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Article 3, paragraph (a)), Pub. L. No. Resolution 55/25 (2003). Retrieved from <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html>

19 Walk Free. (2020). Murky waters: A qualitative assessment of modern slavery in the Pacific region. Minderoo Foundation.

20 World Health Organization. (n.d.). Sexual exploitation and abuse, prevent and protect, what you need to know and do. Zurich: World Health Organization (WHO). Retrieved from www.who.int/about/ethics

21 Jaynes B. (2019, May 17). Care Micronesia Foundation assists Pohnpei State to raise the age of consent to 18. The Kaselehlie Press.

22 Pacific Community. (2019). Gender analysis of the fisheries sector in Federated States of Micronesia. Noumea, New Caledonia; Vunisea A. (2006a). Kiribati national tuna development and management plan – social and gender considerations. Noumea, New Caledonia: Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); Vunisea A. (2006b). Republic of the Marshall Islands national tuna development and management plan – social and gender considerations. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, New Caledonia; Crook T., Farran S., & Röell E. (2016). Understanding gender inequality actions in the Pacific: ethnographic case studies and policy options. Luxembourg.

Stigma for people in relations with seafarers

Related to the stigma of transactional sex, locals in relations with seafarers are often treated with great social stigma. This is indicated by the shaming names they may be called. For example, in Fiji the word is '*kabawaqa*', in PNG '*two kina meri*', in Solomon Islands '*dugong*'. The stigma can pass on to children who are born from these relationships. Experiencing social stigma means that when problems such as STIs or violence happen, these people may be unwilling to seek help, or if they do seek help, they may be judged rather than given assistance.



Case study: *Te korekoreas* in Tarawa, Kiribati²³

Many large tuna fishing vessels trans-ship their catch in Tarawa lagoon in Kiribati and purchase goods and services in town, including sex. Many people from the outer islands come to Tarawa seeking work, or a different life in town, but not all of them can find work. Tarawa is overcrowded and has serious unemployment problems. According to AMAK (Aia Maea Ainen Kiribati), the peak women's organisation in Kiribati, some families without good employment in the Betio area have made arrangements with Korean and Taiwanese crew on tuna fishing boats to make their daughters available for sex in exchange for fish, which the families can eat and sell. Other children and young women may seek contact with the crews independently. Because so many of the seafarers seeking sex in port were Korean, these young girls and women came to be called *te korekoreas*. This term has a degrading and humiliating tone.

Action points: what can fisheries management agencies do to improve HR and GESI in the seafarer scene around ports?

Data

The first stage in achieving anything to improve the situation is to understand what is going on. See Module 2 for some pointers on how to investigate impacts of the tuna industry on community well-being. It is important, however, to note that it is not easy to research activities that are illegal or have social stigma – because people are unwilling (for good reason) to speak openly about these activities. One possibility is through 'key informant' interviews with people who work with or around seafarers when they visit ports – such as fisheries observers, port monitoring staff, and health workers from clinics around port areas who may be treating people with STIs, and victims of violence. In Kiribati, the churches have been involved in work relating to the sex trade relating to the tuna industry. Churches and local NGOs are starting points to identify what is going on around ports. The UNAIDS Pacific Office in Fiji has information about sex work, including the tracing of sources and support systems for sex workers.²⁴

Multi-stakeholder forum

Another thing fisheries managers can do is similar to the multi-stakeholder forum suggested in Module 3 – collaborate with other organisations that are able to address some of the social problems that can arise around the seafarer scene. Fisheries agencies are in some way responsible for these issues, because they are a direct result of access agreements and may relate to port State obligations, but since they are social and health-related problems, fisheries managers do not have the expertise or resources to provide effective solutions. In many cases, there is little coordination between the various stakeholders who have interest in social issues for seafarers and around port areas. For example, health services try to deal with HIV, which is directly related to the tuna industry, but neither the fishing industry nor fisheries managers are part of the discussions.

One concrete action that could result from a multi-stakeholder approach is to design posters to display around port areas with telephone numbers of people to contact for help regarding STIs, GBV, and sexual exploitation. This would need to be in the local language, English, and key languages of seafarers and sex workers, such as Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Korean and Chinese.

²³ Sullivan N., Ram-Bidesi V., Diffey S., & Gillett R. (2008). Gender Issues in Tuna Fisheries: Case Studies in Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Kiribati. Honiara, Solomon Islands: Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Community (SPC).

²⁴ McMillan K., & Worth H. (2011). Sex Workers and HIV Prevention in Fiji - After the Fiji Crimes Decree 2009. In International HIV Research Group. International HIV Research Group. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.14123.75049>.

- Other collaborative activities that could be facilitated through a multi-stakeholder forum include:
 - gender training for port security officers (recruit also women security officers) – especially around body searches of women entering port areas (to avoid inappropriate and unwelcome touching of private body parts);
- ensuring health services can be accessed by seafarers and their sexual partners;
- ensuring adequate treatment and educational services for prevention of STIs are available;
- providing care for ‘at risk’ youth so they have less interest in interacting with seafarers;
- ensuring adequate services for preventing and treating gender-based violence are accessible for people around port areas – a range of services is needed including health, counselling, safe-houses and police;
- providing alternative options of places to go and things to do for seafarers, such as religious organisations possibly providing hostel accommodation, sporting groups providing access to grounds and possibly social games for team sports;
- ensuring all people have access to livelihoods, so they have a choice about seeking income from transactional sex with visiting seafarers; and
- building respectful awareness of the social situations of seafarers and their sexual partners at community level, including local residents and people engaged in businesses at port areas such as heavy vehicle drivers, ship chandlers, police, shipping and fishing company agents, fisheries officers and port security staff.

‘Circle of Care’ for seafarers

Several of the points above could be addressed through providing a ‘one-stop-shop’ of facilities and services for seafarers in ports, building on some initiatives that have existed in the past, or exist elsewhere in the world. This could become a place seafarers want to visit because they know their concerns and needs will be addressed there. Establishing these facilities and services will take resources, and Pacific Island government Port Authorities are unlikely to be able to fund them alone. Port users (fishing and shipping companies) could potentially pay a fee towards funding these services, since the services are for their employees. The kinds of things that could be offered include:

- posters and brochures in relevant languages on topics of interest to seafarers, such as:
 - local cultural context, places of interest to visit
 - STI prevention
 - assistance with human rights or labour abuse complaints
 - correct process for handling deaths at sea;
- face-to-face seminars on topics of interest;
- phone and internet access;
- showers, toilets, and common spaces with chairs and tables, possibly cooking facilities;
- kiosk selling basic supplies of interest;
- easily accessible and affordable health clinic, with connections to doctors or hospitals as necessary;
- individual counselling services (could be offered by Church organisations or civil society organisations); and
- affordable transport service to other parts of town.

Acronyms

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
GBV	gender-based violence
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
LGBTQIA+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, and other forms of sexuality and gender identity that are not heterosexual and cisgender
STI	sexually transmitted infection
WHO	World Health Organization

