

AQUAPearl: Community-led Oyster Farms in Fiji: A Case Study of Gender Responsive Aquaculture



Project partners



J. HUNTER PEARLS Fiji



Funders



In partnership with
Canada



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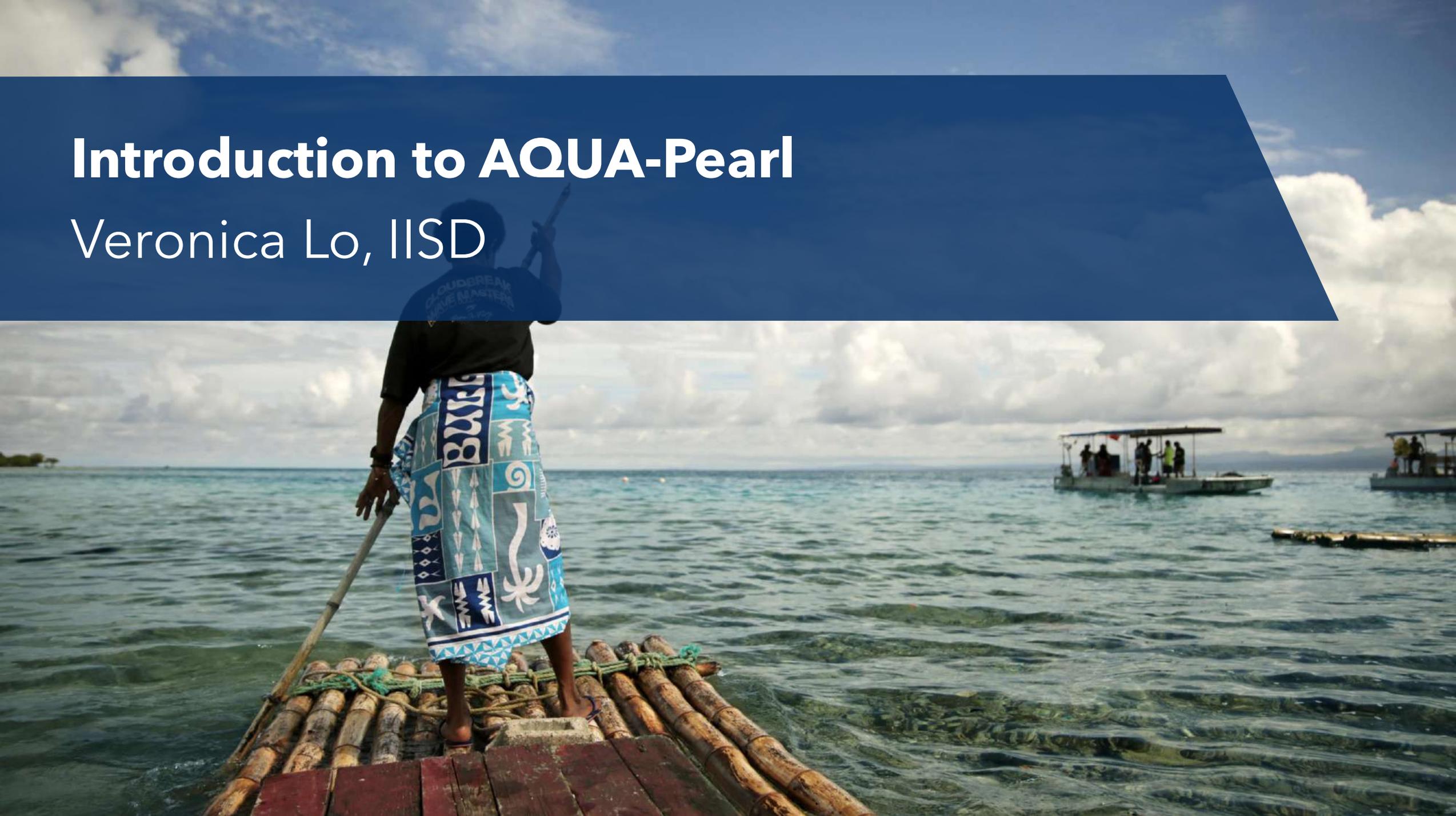


Sakiusa Niwa Kiti
SPC/IISD Expert



Introduction to AQUA-Pearl

Veronica Lo, IISD



AQUA-Pearl at-a-glance



Enhance community & ecosystem resilience to climate change in Fiji by upscaling gender-responsive & inclusive community-led nature-based approaches to aquaculture



Village households (~150) & community members, policymakers, private sector, other stakeholders



JHP, IISD, WCS, SPC, MoFF
Funded by IDRC & Global Affairs Canada
Part of IDRC's AQUADAPT-SEAPAC consortium



AQUA-Pearl Objectives

- **Understand current & future climate risks** for aquaculture in Fiji & role of gender-responsive nature-based approaches
- **Scale-up nature-based aquaculture in Fiji**, learning from a pilot community-led oyster project
- **Identify entry points for policy alignment**
- **Synthesize lessons learned to inform replication & scaling up** across other Pacific Island State



Nature-based Aquaculture

Process of creating **food resilience** using **inclusive and sustainable** aquaculture practices that are **restorative** (direct ecological benefit) and help ensure **sustainable livelihoods** for coastal communities



Progress to Date

- **Research** on GESI challenges, policy alignment, innovative farm practices
- **Monitoring** of oysters to determine baseline levels of pathogens
- **Advocacy** for a shellfish Quality Assurance program
- **Communications** to inform the adoption and scale-up of nature-based aquaculture practices



Early Impacts

- **Consent** from a community following engagement processes to operate two farms and implement watershed restoration activities
- **Collaboration** with a cross-sectoral Quality Assurance Committee to advance seafood safety and provide access to markets
- **Policy integration of nature-based aquaculture** into Fiji's National Aquaculture Strategy
- **Commitment to scale up** community-led bivalve farms by the Ministry of Fisheries & Forests, and support from the Ministry of Health
- **Innovations to aquaculture practices** that will enable higher yields and the potential to develop seagrape-oyster polycultures





Next Steps

- Planned trainings on NbS, Business Planning, and GESI
- Watershed restoration
- Implementing a testing program to obtain Fiji's first shellfish initiative certified to meet food safety requirements
- Communications: GESI report, policy brief, Fiji Pearl Oyster website and news article

A person is seen from behind, standing on a traditional bamboo raft on a vast, blue ocean. The raft is constructed from numerous thick, cylindrical logs or bamboo poles. The person is wearing a dark t-shirt and light-colored pants. In the distance, another smaller boat with a canopy is visible on the horizon. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds, and the overall scene is bright and open.

Gender-Responsive Aquaculture

Georgia Exell, IISD



Gender Gap Analysis



Gendered Climate Change Impacts



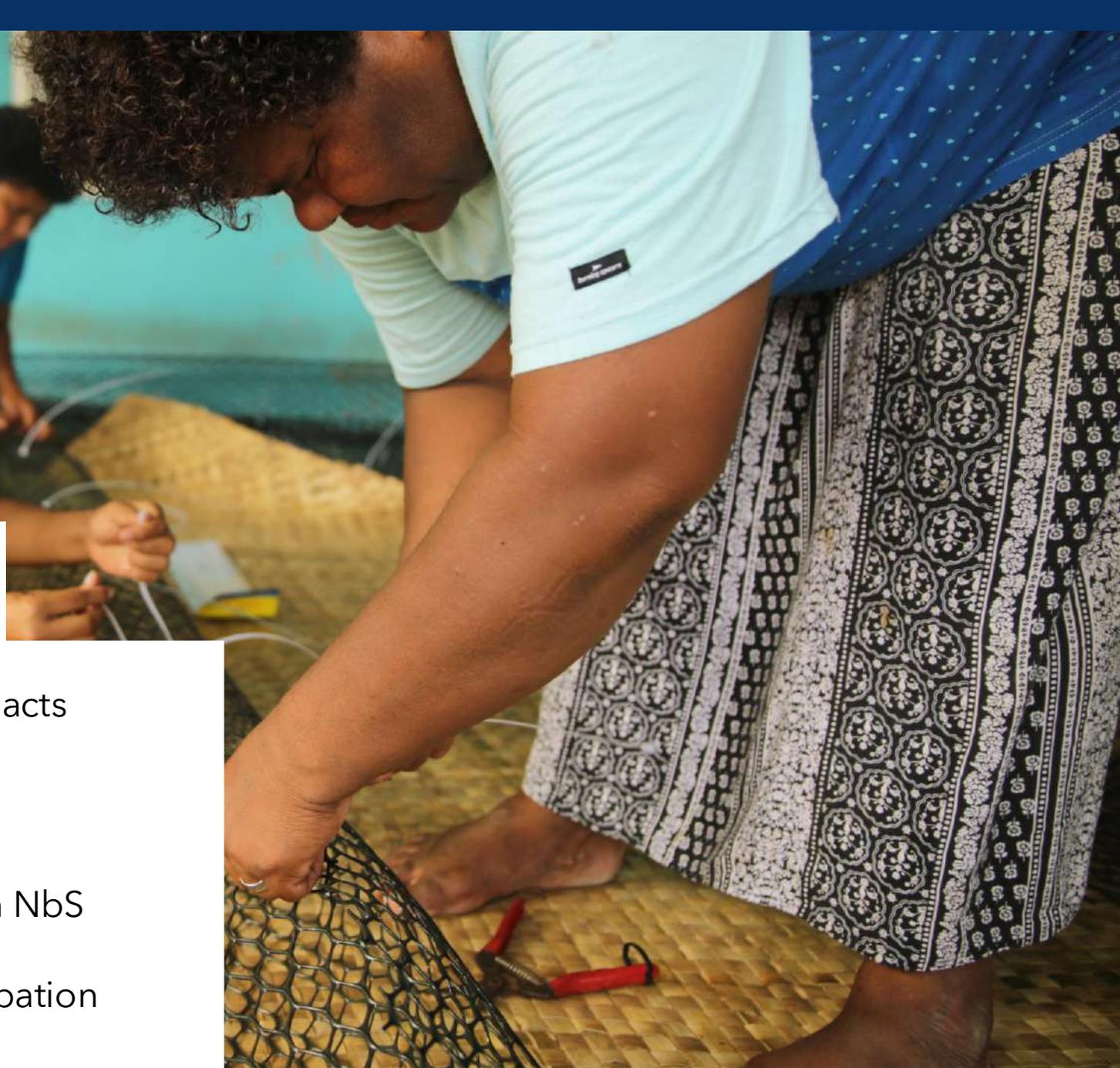
Barriers to Access



Transformative Approaches with NbS



Entry points for women's participation





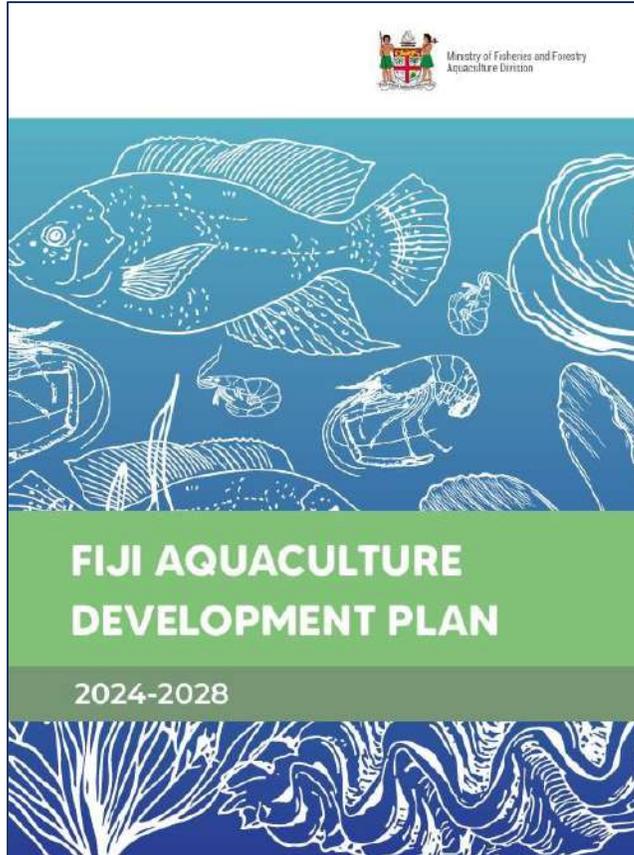




Fiji's vision for a sustainable and equitable aquaculture industry

Prashneel Chandra, MoFF

Fiji's Vision for Sustainable and Equitable Aquaculture



Increasing the current value of aquaculture from \$11.1million per annum to over \$132million by 2028.



Reducing the value of imported seafood by around 70% by 2028.



Increasing export earnings of cultured marine products from around \$5million to over \$80million by 2028.



Promoting Fiji aquaculture brand and our environmentally sustainable practices.







Community-Led Aquaculture

Rosi Batibasaga, WCS





A Human Rights Based Approach to Community-led Aquaculture

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

‘Free’ means the absence of coercion or manipulation.

‘Prior’ means that consent will be sought sufficiently in advance of any authorization, including respect for the time requirements of consultation and discussion processes.

‘Informed’ means that full information about the proposed activities, including their scope, purpose, outputs, and risks is provided in an appropriate and easily understood format before consent is sought.

‘Consent’ means collective decision made by the right holders and reached through a customary decision-making processes of the communities.







The Role of the Private Sector in Community-led Aquaculture

Justin Hunter, JHP



The greatest threat to our marine environment is poverty





Private Sector: Balance between conservation and economics



The crucial role of women; stewardship leads to community and ecosystem health

Circular Blue Economy

- Creates income through protection rather than extraction
- Integrates sustainable aquaculture in partnership with the private sector
- Shares the benefits, costs and risks to develop sustainable aquaculture in a fair and transparent manner





Quality Assurance: How protocols and policy change collide

Roko Vuiyasawa & Sakiusa Niwa Kiti,
SPC/IISD Experts



GAF₉ QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

By

ROKO VUIYASAWA (Lead Consultant: AQUAPearl)

SAKUISA KITI (Consultant AQUAPearl)

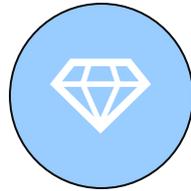
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Savusavu Bay



Collection Site: Savusavu Bay, Vanua Levu, Fiji



Industry Partner: JHunter Pearls (Savusavu)



Sampling Periods: Wet (Nov – April) and Dry periods (May to October)



Testing Total Coliforms & E.coli at IAS testing Facility. CODEX



New Testing Protocol Submitted to farmers from MoH



Receive health certification from MOH



Ecological Role of Oyster Grid Lines

- Provide hard surfaces that attract marine life
- Fish use grids for shelter and feeding
- Sponges colonize, enhancing biodiversity
- Sea grapes (*Nama*) grow around structures, supporting food & livelihoods



Why is quality Assurance (QA) Important in Aquaculture

- Builds Consumer trust through safe, high-quality products.
- Opens access to export markets by meeting global standards.
- Protects farmers' livelihoods and strengthen



Role of QA Within the AQUAPearl Project

- Establishes standardized testing and monitoring for oysters.
- Connects community-based farmers to accredited labs and certification pathways.
- Ensures sustainability by linking farm practices to national food safety systems.



How will a nationally endorsed set of guidelines/regulations for QA in oyster aquaculture benefit Fiji

- Protects public health by reducing risks from contaminated seafood.
- Strengthen Fiji's credibility in international trade.
- Provides consistency across farms and operators.
- Creates a pathway for long-term growth in aquaculture.



How do you see QA enhancing the role of women in aquaculture?

- QA creates structured roles (monitoring, data collection, lab work) where women can contribute meaningfully.
- Training in QA builds technical and leadership skills.
- Women gain visibility and voice in decision-making processes.
- Increased income and recognition empower women and strengthen community resilience.



Conclusion – QA as a Pathway for Women in Aquaculture

- QA builds trust, protects livelihoods, and opens markets
- AQUAPearl links communities to national food safety systems
- National guidelines strengthen Fiji's competitiveness
- QA creates new opportunities for women in technical and leadership roles
- Key Takeaway: "Quality Assurance empowers women, protects communities, and secures Fiji's future in aquaculture."



ANY QUESTIONS?

VINAKAVAKALEVU!

DISCUSSION



Speakers



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Vinaka!



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