

COUNTRY BRIEFING PAPER

WOMEN IN TONGA

by

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The views and interpretations in this paper are those of the author
and not necessarily those of the Asian Development Bank.

This publication is one of a series prepared by consultants in conjunction with the Office of Pacific Operations and the Social Development Division (SOCD) of the Office of Environment and Social Development. The purpose of the series is to provide information on the status and role of women to assist Bank staff in country programming work and project design and implementation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	-	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	-	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AusAID	-	Australian Agency for International Development
CDTC	-	Community Development Training Center
CEDAW	-	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPR	-	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
CRC	-	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CTG	-	Cardiograph
DEARC	-	Distance Education, Research and Communications Center
EPI	-	Expanded Program for Immunization
FPA	-	Family Planning Association
GAD	-	Gender and Development
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HWID	-	Ha'apai WID
IFAD	-	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MAF	-	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
NCD	-	Non-communicable Disease
NGO	-	Nongovernment Organization
NZODA	-	New Zealand Overseas Development Authority
PSSC	-	Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate
SIC	-	Small Industries Center
SPC	-	South Pacific Commission
STD	-	Sexually Transmitted Disease(s)
TA	-	Technical Assistance
TBA	-	Traditional Birth Attendant
TDB	-	Tonga Development Bank
TFR	-	Total Fertility Rate
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	-	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USP	-	University of the South Pacific
WDC	-	Women in Development Center
WHO	-	World Health Organization
WID	-	Women in Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper offers an overview of the social and economic status of women in Tonga. It documents some of their main roles and responsibilities within the development process and analyses their principal needs, problems and concerns against the backdrop of social and economic trends in the country. The paper discusses the government's policies and programs in relation to women and gender and outlines the national machinery for women's affairs. It also includes a summary of selected externally funded women's projects. Finally, the paper proposes ways in which gender and development issues can be incorporated into the Bank's operational strategy and country programs for Tonga. It highlights some of the main problem areas that would benefit from Bank interventions and makes recommendations on how it could assist in advancing the status of Tongan women.

Consistent with the pattern of other Pacific Island countries, Tonga has a small narrow economy driven mainly by agriculture and to a lesser extent fisheries and tourism. Natural resources are limited and commodity prices suffer from low and fluctuating values in the world market. Physical isolation from the major markets and a lack of economies of scale are compounded by vulnerability to natural disasters, especially hurricanes, which can have a very destructive impact on crops and physical/social infrastructure. Tonga's industrial base is extremely limited and traditional export crops like copra and bananas have been virtually abandoned due to adverse economic conditions. The growing liberalization of trade has further undermined the country's capacity to produce these traditional exports at competitive prices.

Tonga's economic success story lies in the enterprising way in which it has expanded its agricultural base and boosted its export earnings by developing niche market crops. Squash and vanilla have largely displaced copra and bananas as the main crops. They have generated employment, boosted rural incomes and, overall, proved very lucrative. In the case of squash, small farmers have shown remarkable diligence and tenacity in the face of stringent requirements in the Japanese market. Other crops such as coffee and black pepper have helped to further diversify the economy but are still in their infancy. Unfortunately, these encouraging developments have not protected Tonga from the vicissitudes of the international economy and the country has remained vulnerable to fluctuating prices as well as to the insecurities associated with producing for niche markets.

As the backbone of the traditional economy, the subsistence sector remains pivotal to national development, both as a source of livelihood and social insurance for the vast majority of Tongans. It is also perceived as a buffer or safety net in the face of downward turns in export markets, prices or investment in the formal cash sector. The expanding cash economy, the shortage of land, environmentally degrading development practices and changing lifestyles (including deteriorating eating habits) are amongst the many changes that threaten the survival of the subsistence economy.

It would seem to be imperative that efforts be made to bolster the subsistence sector in the long-term interests of reducing the country's heavy dependence on foreign aid, overseas remittances and costly and unhealthy food imports. Finding a balance between the exigencies of an

export-oriented economy and the long-term needs of subsistence agriculture, agro-forestry and fisheries would seem to offer a more solid basis for promoting more self-reliant, sustainable and equitable development.

The status of women is inextricably linked to the highly stratified feudal order that lies at the heart of Tongan society. Although gender ideologies proclaim a social superiority for women (based on the cultural obligations of men to their sisters), their overall status is also shaped by factors other than their position as female siblings. For one thing, gender interacts with kinship-based rank to produce very different outcomes for women at opposite ends of the social scale. In addition, the (external and internal) forces of change are eroding some of the more positive aspects of women's former traditional status.

Christianity has been a major influence in both redefining gender relations (including the gender division of labor) and reshaping the moral values. The privileges women traditionally enjoyed as sisters have gradually diminished, giving way to their 'alter ego' as wives within the patriarchal family and as workers/producers within the cash-driven/global economy.

The declining status of Tongan women appears to be further compounded by demographic and social changes, especially large-scale international migration (where women are often left behind to manage as single parents), urban congestion (in Nuku'alofa) and rising poverty/landlessness. Women's traditional roles as family caretakers and nurturers mean that they are directly affected by a lack of basic resources like land, water and cash income. Poor living standards and poor family health have an adverse impact on their work loads, their capacity to care for their children, and their own health.

Tonga faces many economic and social challenges today. Gender issues should form an integral part of all efforts aimed at tackling these. In addition, there are many areas of women's social and economic status that would benefit from improvement, not only in the interests of women themselves, but the whole community. The Tongan government has already indicated its support for activities aimed at improving the status of women but much work must be done if substantive gender equality in all (political, social, economic and legal) areas is to be achieved. It is hoped that the Bank will support this process through positive program interventions, especially at the community level.

What follows below are a few suggested areas for possible action to address the concerns and needs of women in Tonga. Understandably, the Bank may not be in a position to address all the recommendations in its future program of activities. Nonetheless, a broad range of recommendations are offered as some may be of interest to bilateral donors.

1. Mainstreaming Gender into National Planning

The mainstreaming of gender into all government business, including national/sectoral planning and macroeconomic policy, is a central objective of the national women's machinery and is in line with international trends. Unfortunately, the limited gender capacity of the central planning agency and other government departments makes integrating gender into planning and policy work difficult. It is recommended that the Bank consider providing as part of its capacity-building assistance a gender specialist to the Central Planning Office under technical assistance to develop a comprehensive (gender-inclusive) planning strategy. This could be used as a guide or model by other government departments.

In addition, it is recommended that the Bank consider including a gender component in all its institutional strengthening assistance including the proposed TA to the Ministry of Finance.

2. Strengthening Women's Participation in Development

Institutional strengthening measures for gender and development would benefit from a broadly based, holistic approach rather than a concentration of resources in the Women's Development Unit. Building up the capacity of key line ministries/departments would permit a more consolidated approach to integrating gender concerns. It would also allow for a wider spread of skills, better coordination between divisions in development planning and policy making, and a higher chance of success all round. The process could begin with the Central Planning Office, Tonga Trade, and the Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries in view of activities already in place.

It is recommended that any parallel capacity building support for the women's NGO community should be directed towards those organizations that either operate at community level or have strong links with grassroots women. In this way, the Bank would help to ensure that the development agenda for women is determined by the mass of ordinary women in the community and not by a small urban-based elite.

3. Women and Health

Health indicators for Tonga portray a generally favorable picture of women's general and reproductive health. However, women demonstrate higher prevalence rates for obesity and obesity-related health problems, notably diabetes and other non-communicable disease, which are leading 'lifestyle' killers. Hospital obstetric services are also plagued by overcrowding and a shortage of specialist staff, equipment and drugs, all of which are difficult to alleviate because of budgetary constraints.

Other problems include the paucity of accurate and gender-disaggregated health data, and the growing incidence of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease (STD). Women are especially vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies and STDs because of cultural values that limit their ability to control their own sexuality and fertility. The Bank could consider supporting institutional strengthening for hospital maternal and child health services as well as NGO initiatives aimed at improving women's general and reproductive health status.

4. Improving Water and Sanitation

Water and sanitation are crucial development issues in Tonga, just as they are elsewhere in the Pacific. They are also fundamental to family and community health and for this reason are directly linked to the domestic responsibilities of women. Donor assistance is directed towards improving standards in both these areas, but there is still a long way to go towards guaranteeing an adequate and healthy water supply and sanitation system for the mass population. Moreover, while it is generally recognized that the increasing urban drift places an immense burden on existing water, sanitation and housing facilities, less attention is being given to the detrimental effects of agrochemical pesticides associated with squash production and other forms of commercial agriculture.

The Bank could make a valuable contribution by helping to finance the construction of water and septic tanks on the outer islands, hardware (piping) extensions and improvements to the reticulated water systems. It could also facilitate professional water monitoring, research on pesticide run off, and better regulation of industrial waste disposal by the private sector. It is important that women's concerns and needs are given full consideration from the earliest planning stages of any future initiatives undertaken by the Bank, such as the Nuku'alofa Urban Planning Development Project.

5. Women and Agriculture

Contrary to the traditional stereotypes and national accounting indicators, women are vital players in virtually all aspects of agricultural work, including commercial agriculture. These developments are taking place in spite of the special difficulties women face - by virtue of their negligible land rights - in accessing credit.

Despite these trends, women farmers receive inadequate extension support, including training. A major reason for this is the lack of agricultural expertise in the Women's Development Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The institutional strengthening of the Unit would be a valuable form of assistance from the Bank. This could include a scholarship program for women in agriculture and the preparation of a Women in Agriculture Master Plan for the Unit. Training in how to incorporate gender analysis into sectoral planning and policy making would also strengthen the capacity of the Ministry to integrate gender.

6. Women and Handicraft Production

Handicraft production is probably one of the most (culturally, economically and environmentally) sustainable industries in Tonga. As the most important single industry for women (claiming as much as 80 percent of women in the outer islands), it has helped to strengthen the manufacturing sector (which achieved an impressive 14.6 percent growth between 1995 and 1996). Unfortunately, shortages of raw materials limit the activities of women and, in turn, their ability to raise household incomes.

In view of the importance of handicraft production to Tongan culture and household incomes, and its export potential, the Bank could consider support to women's handicraft activities through credit and technical assistance for raw material production. It is also encouraged to help develop the marketing aspects of the industry. Marketing assistance could be mediated through Tonga Trade, which is already integrated into the Bank's assistance program to Tonga.

7. Women and Fisheries

As in other parts of the Pacific, women's fisheries in Tonga suffer from substantial neglect. One important reason for this is that national fisheries policy (and indeed ADB assistance) have been influenced – and circumscribed – by the priorities of the male pelagic fishery which has the more obvious potential to generate large scale export revenue. Women's fisheries, by virtue of their association with the inshore area and household/informal sector, are conventionally seen as less critical to development. As a result, they are starved of resources, training opportunities, and credit support; and the needs and concerns of women fishers are marginalized from sectoral planning.

The Bank is urged to reconsider its approach to supporting this sector. There is considerable scope for supporting women's inshore subsistence and commercial fisheries (including post-harvest business ventures and aquaculture) through technical and loan assistance; and it would seem highly desirable to extend private sector support. Assistance could be directed to capacity building for the de facto women's unit, including the development of a more gender-inclusive data collection system, professional training for women's fisheries officers, and the preparation of a women's fisheries development strategy. As a longer-term objective, the Bank is urged to facilitate the integration of gender into national fisheries policy and programming so that women's fisheries do not remain out on a limb.

8. Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods

Although there is a strong tradition of both subsistence agriculture/agro-forestry and sustainable resource management in Tonga, food security is increasingly becoming a problem. Evidence of poverty and undernutrition is emerging in pockets of both urban and rural communities, and deteriorating diets are having a serious impact on nutritional and health standards. Non-communicable disease has reached alarming proportions and women feature prominently.

In order to promote health and living standards, and reduce the heavy imports of nutrient-weak foodstuffs, the Bank is urged to support government efforts to raise the production and consumption of nutritious local foods. Credit assistance to women vegetable farmers, support for the MAF Women's Development Unit, and a TA for the development of a national food security policy are amongst a number of possible initiatives. These measures could be consolidated by Bank assistance to the government's under-resourced yet valuable agro-forestry programs (e.g. in Vava'u) which are aimed at encouraging replanting of many multi-purpose (medicinal, food, cultural) trees and plants. Women are key players in agro-forestry, just as they are in the general area of household food/health security; and should be involved at all stages of potential initiatives.

9. Women and Employment

The lack of employment legislation and a shortage of employment and wage data are symptomatic of the unregulated labor market in Tonga. Tongan women are especially vulnerable to 'fall-out' from an unregulated workplace environment in view of their inferior employment status (including lower average earnings) and their special reproductive health needs during and after pregnancy.

The Small Industries Center (SIC) has been an important source of employment for women in the past, especially in the traditional female trades like garment making/knitwear. In the absence of employment legislation, there are no legal provisions covering occupational health and safety standards. In view of its plans for developing the Small Industries Center, the Bank is urged to explore ways of ensuring that adequate protection is provided to workers. It could do this by encouraging government to expedite enactment of the draft employment bill and/or by providing technical assistance to devise a formula for applying internationally acceptable standards to private sector businesses operating in the Center. Employment conditions, including occupational health and safety issues and a gender-inclusive employment code for SIC businesses in line with acceptable international standards, could be integrated into the Bank-sponsored Corporate Plan.

10. Women and Credit

The credit needs of women well exceed existing provisions, and gender imbalances in loan disbursements by the Tonga Development Bank persist in spite of women's better repayment rates and overall creditworthiness. A major constraint is the TDB's continued preference for land/property as security, which hits Tongan women especially hard because of their inferior land rights. Women's credit access is essentially confined to the planting of handicraft raw materials, and to a much lesser extent vegetable production. Few women are able to access loans for commercial crops like squash, vanilla or coffee in spite of women's increasingly important role in these sectors.

It is an opportune time for the Bank to expand existing TDB credit facilities for women and it is recommended that the Bank explore the possibility of a special window for women in any proposed loans for the TDB. Security conditions should be flexible enough to ensure that women do not continue to be disadvantaged by the legal and cultural restrictions on their land rights. Appropriate loan conditions would not only promote greater gender equity but would help to correct the current gender imbalances that exist in the loan disbursements of the Bank's own credit line to the TDB.

11. Women and Small Business

Tongan women demonstrate strong organizational and entrepreneurial skills in the informal and small business sectors and there are a few examples of exceptional successes on the part of individual women, even in traditional male domains like pelagic fisheries. However, as a general rule, women trying to run a business are disadvantaged by a lack of business management and accounting skills which can inhibit their ability to run their enterprises efficiently and profitably. Compounding this is the ubiquitous problem of accessing bank loans or other forms of credit.

A more enabling environment needs to be created for women who have the potential to develop successful business ventures. This is an area where the Bank could provide useful support, both through the provision of technical assistance for women's training in business and financial management, and by facilitating a congenial credit line within its ongoing loans program to the TDB. Both actions would be in line with Bank policy.

12. Education and Training Opportunities

Tonga boasts a strong educational ethic, which dates back to the early 19th century, and this has been reinforced by a longstanding policy of free and compulsory primary education and a generous (19 percent) budgetary allocation to education. The tendency of girls to outperform boys is one of the striking features of Tonga's educational system. Yet despite the superior performance of girls, they are under-represented in post-secondary/tertiary education and receive a smaller proportion of scholarships. There are fewer female enrolments into technical institutions and a concentration of girls/women in traditional female subject areas like nursing, secretarial studies and hospitality.

There is ample scope for gender-supportive initiatives by the Bank in this area. In particular, consideration could be given to facilitating a better gender balance in tertiary level education and improving women's training opportunities in core development areas like agriculture and fisheries.

13. Gender Statistics

Government policy and program initiatives on behalf of women (both at national and community level) are impeded by the lack of gender-disaggregated data. There are noticeable gaps in both the informal and formal sector: in subsistence and commercial agriculture (like squash), fisheries, tourism, manufacturing, business, TDB loan disbursements (excluding Women in Development financing), health, and certain areas of education. Data shortages and biases help to keep women's economic activity invisible and undervalued in the national accounts/sectoral reporting. They also inhibit the mainstreaming of gender into national planning and macroeconomic policy.

It is recommended that the Bank explore ways of improving the collection and analysis of gender-based data under its ongoing technical assistance program to Tonga. The gender database that has been installed in the Women's Development Unit could be usefully consolidated and expanded. This could then be used as a base-line resource for all departments. Bank TA should include a training component, which could be extended to departments like Statistics, Finance, Planning, Agriculture, Fisheries, and Labor and Commerce. Priority should be given to those departments (Planning and Agriculture) where institutional strengthening on gender is recommended.

Chapter 1.

BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Tonga comprises 169 low-lying coral and volcanic islands which are located in the Central Pacific. There are three larger island groups and three smaller islands which together share a total land area of less than 700 square kilometers: Tongatapu, Ha'apai, Vava'u, 'Eua, Niuatoputapu and Niuafo'ou. Temperatures and rainfall levels are higher in the northern island groups (Ha'apai, Vava'u, Niuatoputapu and Niuafo'ou), and the main island of Tongatapu along with Vava'u and 'Eua are fortunate to have fertile clay-based soil which allows them diverse cash cropping options. Only 36 of Tonga's islands are inhabited.

Tonga's total population is 97,784 according to the latest (1996) census with women comprising 49.3 percent (48,169). Population growth is low, substantially curtailed by a high and sustained level of international migration. However, internal migration flows - motivated primarily by a search for employment, cash income and education - have led to an unhealthy concentration of people on the main island (70 percent) and in particular in the capital, Nuku'alofa. By 1986, one third of the population lived in Nuku'alofa. This concentration has risen to 68 percent in the subsequent intercensal (1986-1996) period. It has serious social implications.

Tonga's constitutional monarchy represents a unique political system in the Pacific region. The continued strength of Tonga's aristocratic system and its attendant cultural values is almost certainly linked to the fact that the country succeeded (where all other Pacific countries failed) in protecting itself from being colonized by a foreign power. This achievement is a source of great national pride, as is the rich cultural heritage associated with the chiefly based political system. However, recent populist challenges indicate that political stability may not be as secure nor popular consensus as unequivocal, as they were in the past.

Tonga is a small dependent Pacific Island economy with a narrow export base and a heavy reliance on foreign aid and foreign exchange remittances from Tongans living overseas. In spite of this, it enjoys a relatively healthy position in relation to average life expectancy (69 years), adult literacy (99 percent), formal schooling (7.1 years) and per capita GDP (US\$1,973 according to provisional 1996/97 estimates). The country ranks highest (0.7) in UNDP's human development index for the Pacific region which is at least partly attributable to the important priority given by government to the social sector, especially education and health. During the last five years, recurrent expenditure on health has risen by 30.5 percent from T\$5.89 million to T\$7.69 million and on education by 27.6 percent from T\$9.13 million to T\$11.65 million.

There have been many positive features of Tonga's economic performance over the past decade and these are demonstrated not only in absolute terms (by reference to domestic trends) but in comparative terms as well (in relation to other countries of the Pacific Island region). Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy and represents the largest single contributor to GDP. During the past decade there have been some remarkable achievements in the sector, particularly with respect to the development of niche market crops like squash and vanilla. Over the last five years (1992/93 - 1996/97), economic growth has averaged 2.5 percent and Tonga has out-competed many of its Pacific neighbors.

However, Tonga's economy is vulnerable in a number of respects and the country faces significant challenges in the context of a changing, more competitive global economy and the priority being given to market-driven development. In this regard, it is worth noting that Tonga's economic progress, including its growth rates, has varied quite considerably over the past decade, largely as a consequence of fluctuating fortunes in the squash industry. GDP growth fell dramatically between 1993/4 and 1995/96 (from 4.8 percent to 2.1 percent and then to minus 0.09 percent). Paralleling this trend, squash exports took a drastic dive from 17,300 tonnes (worth T\$10.4 million) in 1994/95 to less than 9,000 tonnes in 1995/96 (worth T\$8.2 million). This was an alarming turn of events that was only partially offset by improvements in market prices.

While agriculture remains the most important sector of the Tongan economy, negative growth (minus 5.35 percent) was recorded in 1995/96 and this is expected to continue, albeit with some improvements (minus 1.06 percent) in 1996/97, on account of a decline in vanilla exports. Outside the primary sector, manufacturing has also taken a severe downward turn (from 14.6 percent in 1995/96 to a projected 2 percent in 1996/97), partly on account of the erosion of preferential trade arrangements under the regional SPARTECA agreement.

Tonga's external debt stood at T\$73.8 million in June 1996, claiming a not insignificant proportion of its GDP (31.3 percent) for the 1996/97 financial year. Moreover, this is expected to rise to 34.7 percent of GDP in 1997/1998. This level of external borrowing might not be high by international standards. However, a generally rising trend since the early 1990s is cause for some concern, especially when viewed in relation to other indications of a highly dependent economy such as Tonga's large trade deficits and heavy reliance on foreign aid and remittances. Over the last few years, exports have steadily declined (from T\$22 million in 1993/94 to T\$17 million in 1995/96) while imports have risen (from T\$74.6 million to nearly T\$80 million), leaving Tonga with a substantial (projected) trade deficit of T\$61 million in 1995/96. A high flow of personal remittances (worth T\$49.3 million to the national economy in 1996/97) has been largely responsible for financing the growing trade deficits.

Current market uncertainties and price fluctuations for the two premier exports – squash and vanilla – raise concerns about the long-term viability of these niche market crops and stress the importance of a more diversified economic base. The urgency of this is all the greater because of the uncertainty surrounding remittance (cash) flows in the future. In this regard, it is interesting to note the increasing preference shown by Tongans overseas to remit support in kind (household goods etc. for sale in the informal economy) as opposed to cash.

The mounting pressures to liberalize world trade (and remove existing forms of protection) raise an additional specter of doom for the niche market crops. This is because of the capacity of other countries to move into the market and to produce on a bigger scale (or to produce a more competitive product). These threats compound the risks of being displaced by substitutes/alternative varieties as consumer tastes change.

Migrating Tongans maintain strong ties with family back home and are culturally disposed to responding to requests for financial support. Individual remittances are an investment in preserving a stake in Tonga: a means of protecting land rights, guaranteeing social security benefits (in old age or on return) and preserving an important cultural link for children borne and raised away from Tonga. However, integration into the global economy and other forces of social change are eroding some aspects of Tonga's traditional culture, including the extended family and its supporting

values of reciprocity and redistribution. Whether the 'tradition' of remittances survives these changes remains to be seen.

The National Vision and Policy Guidelines for the government's 7th Development Plan identify a number of key development strategies for the next few years. They aim to enhance the competitiveness of Tonga's exports (including the comparative advantage in niche markets), promote private sector development, boost the efficiency and performance of the public sector, and enhance health, education and other human resource development. Other less market-driven objectives stress the importance of :

- creating a more equitable distribution of government services between the rural and urban areas and reducing the regional development gap;
- managing natural resource use more sustainably and considering the environmental impact of development activities; and
- improving living conditions in the capital Nuku'alofa by better environmental urban management.

This second category of development objective points to some of the emerging problems associated with current development and population trends. It suggests that other solutions must be sought beyond fostering a more diversified and competitive economy.

The subsistence economy and informal sector are home to the vast majority of Tongans. As in most other Pacific societies, women in Tonga play a critical role, with their productive and socially reproductive labor aimed at meeting family, community and cultural needs. Today a gender-based division of labor is still evident and exemplifies the continuing role of women as custodians of both the family and cultural tradition. Women devote most of their time to childcare, domestic work, food production (particularly inshore fishing) and handicrafts (weaving and tapa-making).

The production of handicrafts is steeped in tradition, and as such, has been traditionally undertaken for cultural (including ceremonial) purposes as well as for utilitarian, domestic reasons. Women's products represent *koloa fakatonga* (or wealth) which is indicative of their cultural value and status. Their distribution – especially at crucial stages in the cultural life cycle (births, deaths and marriages) – is also managed and controlled by women.

Tongan men have traditionally been responsible for the production of staple food crops and deep-sea fishing, and they have dominated formal wage employment and other areas of the cash economy such as commercial agriculture. However, for a variety of reasons (including economic and demographic factors), women have become increasingly active in the cash economy/formal sector, both as producers (farming, fishing, handicrafts) and in formal sector wage employment. The commercialization of handicraft production has been a natural outgrowth of women's traditional economic activity and there is considerable scope for this as a sustainable export industry if marketing and other problems can be solved.

Women's involvement in the cash/export sector has extended beyond this more traditional female domain. The new niche crops, notably squash and vanilla, are a case in point where production has been significantly boosted by the skills and commitment of women, both within the male-run household farming unit and as commercial farmers/wage workers in their own right. These

roles are much less acknowledged than their traditional-cultural roles and they have created new challenges. In particular, women face significant difficulties in accessing key resources like land and credit, and they continue to carry the full burden (arguably a greater burden than in the past) of family/community and cultural responsibilities.

This paper explores the more prominent features of women's economic, social, political, legal and cultural status, in particular as this relates to the process of national development in Tonga. It offers the Bank a guide for its future gender and development activities and aims to help shape a more holistic, gender-inclusive approach to its ongoing operational strategies and programs.

Chapter 2. WOMEN AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

A. Demography

1. Population Growth

Tonga's population is very homogeneous with as much as 98 percent of the enumerated population consisting of Tongans and part-Tongans. This proportion has remained the same for the last two (1986 and 1996) censuses.

The latest (1996) census of Tonga records a total population of just 97,784 comprising 49,615 males and 48,169 females. This represents a very low average annual growth rate of 0.3 percent since 1986, and a further decline from the low growth rate recorded for the previous (1976-1986) intercensal period of 0.5 percent. The 1986 census enumerated a population of 94,649.

However, these figures belie substantially higher levels of natural population growth over the same intercensal periods (2.5 percent for 1986/1996). The wide gulf between natural and overall growth rates is due, above all, to the high rates of international migration. The number of Tongans living overseas was estimated in 1993 to be already in the region of 35,000 - 45,000. In addition, the annual average growth rates do not take account of regional variations, particularly the growth pattern on Tongatapu. Table 1 indicates the higher (0.8 percent) annual growth rate for Tongatapu over the 1976/1996 period and the negative growth trends for Ha'apai (-1.2 percent) and the two Niuas (-0.7 percent).

Table 1: Population Distribution and Annual Growth Rates by Island Group and Gender, 1976-1996

Island	1976				1986				1996			
	M	F	Total	Annual Growth Rate (%) 1976-86	M	F	Total	Annual Growth Rate (%) 1986-96	M	F	Total	Annual Growth Rate (%) 1976-96
Total Tonga	46,036	44,049	90,085	0.5	47,611	47,033	94,649	0.3	49,395	48,051	97,446	0.4
Tongatapu	29,333	28,078	57,411	1.1	31,793	32,001	63,794	0.4	33,623	32,954	66,577	0.8
Vava'u	7,722	7,346	15,068	0.1	7,711	7,464	15,175	0.4	8,036	7,743	15,779	0.2
Ha'apai	5,384	5,408	10,792	-1.7	4,495	4,424	8,919	-0.9	4,098	4,050	8,148	-1.2
'Eua	2,359	2,127	4,486	-0.2	2,353	2,040	4,393	1.2	2,566	2,358	4,924	0.5
Niuas	1,238	1,090	2,328	0.2	1,259	1,109	2,368	-1.5	1,072	946	2,018	-0.7

M = Male; F = Female

Source: Government of Tonga Census Reports, 1976, 1986 and 1996

The age structure of Tonga's population can be seen in Table 2. This shows that the country's population is very young with 39 percent being under the age of 15 years, 51 percent under 20 years and 14 percent under 5 years. This has social implications for the future, in particular likely pressure on the job market.

The most outstanding feature of the regional distribution of Tonga's population is the heavy concentration of people living on the capital island of Tongatapu. As Table 3 shows, as much as 68 percent of the population (66979) is living on Tongatapu in contrast to 16 percent (15715) on Vava'u, 8 percent on Ha'apai (8138), 5 percent on 'Eua (4934) and just 2 percent (2018) on Niuatoputapu and Niufo'ou. Population density in Tonga has risen by 8 percent since 1996 from 139 to 150 persons per square kilometer.

However, here too, there are significant regional differences. Although Tongatapu has consistently been the most densely populated island, the gulf has widened over the last 20 years. Table 4 shows that the main island today accommodates around 256 persons per sq.km. while the two Niua are home to just 28 persons/sq.km. In the case of Ha'apai, population density has declined from 98 persons/sq.km. to 74 persons/sq.km. over the two intercensal periods. These trends have important social implications, especially for social services, the labor market, and living standards on the main island.

Table 2: Population by Age Group and Gender, 1996

Age Group	Male	Female	Persons	Sex Ratio
0-4	6,987	6,492	13,479	107.6
5-9	6,539	5,719	12,258	114.3
10-14	6,482	6,039	12,521	107.3
15-19	5,609	5,286	10,895	106.1
20-24	4,445	4,277	8,722	103.9
25-29	3,972	3,785	7,757	104.9
30-34	3,009	2,909	5,918	103.4
35-39	2,244	2,442	4,686	91.9
40-44	1,933	2,189	4,122	88.3
45-49	1,606	1,892	3,498	84.9
50-54	1,548	1,762	3,310	87.9
55-59	1,500	1,508	3,008	99.5
60-64	1,289	1,273	2,562	101.3
65-69	995	976	1,971	101.9
70+	1,457	1,620	3,077	89.9
Total	49,615	48,169	97,784	103.0

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report, 1996

Table 3: Population Distribution by Island Group and Gender, 1996

Island	Male	Female	Total	%
Tongatapu	33,753	33,226	66,979	68.4
Vava'u	8,055	7,660	15,715	16.0
Ha'apai	4,109	4,029	8,138	8.3
'Eua	2,624	2,310	4,934	5.0
Niua	1,074	944	2,018	2.0
Total Tonga	49,615	48,169	97,784	

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report, 1996

Table 4: Population by Island Group, Land Area and Population Density, 1976, 1986 and 1996

Island Group	Population (No.)			Area in Sq.km	Persons/Sq.km.		
	1976	1986	1996		1976	1986	1996
Tongatapu	57,411	63,794	66,577	260.46	220	245	256
Vava'u	15,068	15,175	15,779	119.21	126	127	132
Ha'apai	10,792	8,919	8,148	109.98	98	81	74
'Eua	4,486	4,393	4,924	87.44	51	50	56
Niuatoputapu/ Niufo'ou	2,328	2,368	2,016	71.69	32	33	28
Total Tonga	90,085	94,649	97,446	648.78	139	146	150

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Reports, 1976, 1986 and 1996

2. Migration

A high level of internal migration, particularly movement to the main island of Tongatapu and Greater Nuku'alofa, is largely responsible for the uneven distribution of Tonga's population noted in the previous section. The capital Nuku'alofa is now home to about one in every three Tongans and this heavy concentration is unlikely to subside in the future given present trends. The rate of urban growth is more than five times higher than the rate of population growth in the rural areas. (Haberkm 1996:11)

Table 5 provides a picture of the impact of internal outmigration by enumerating the population living away from its birthplace at the time of the 1986 census. A heavy population drain from the outer islands is visible with Ha'apai and Vava'u losing most in absolute terms and the two Niua being stripped of the largest proportion (45 percent) of population (1648 out of 3702).

Ha'apai recorded a loss of 41 percent of its population (5907 out of 14500) and Vava'u a loss of 25 percent (4692 out of 13864). Migration data from the 1996 census is yet to be released.

Island	Non-Migrants	In-Migrants	Out-Migrants	Net Migrants
Tongatapu	46,051	11,113	3,415	+7,698
Vava'u	13,864	2,232	4,692	-2,460
Ha'apai	8,593	1,229	5,907	-4,678
'Eua	2,849	1,779	1,025	+754
Niua	2,054	334	1,648	-1,314
Total Tonga	73,411	16,687	16,687	0

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report 1996

Government concerns over urbanization trends go back thirty years. In the 1966 census, it was observed that:

The movement of people between the islands especially to Tongatapu has reached a stage where governmental intervention in the supervision and planning of these migrations is urgently required. The drift of young people from atolls of Ha'apai especially and rural areas of Tongatapu to Nuku'alofa is probably indicative of this trend.

Although Nuku'alofa is only a small town, already it has some of the problems usually associated with urbanization, and these problems will become more serious as the high rate of increase continues. The immediate problems are purely physical such as housing and sewerage. This is not to ignore the multifarious social problems that usually go hand in hand with urbanization.

An interesting characteristic of more recent trends in internal migration is that women outnumber men with respect to migration to the Greater Nuku'alofa area. During the 1976-1986 census period, there were 1876 female migrants compared to 1667 male migrants. The 15-24 year age group also predominated, although this is less surprising. Education and employment have been the principle 'pull' factors.

Unfortunately, statistics on external (international) migration are more limited, especially with respect to departures from Tonga. However, data collected by the Department of

Statistics on arrivals and departures in 1995 reveal a substantial net migration of minus 3,036 (41,209 arrivals: 44,245 departures). (Haberkorn 1996:11). During the 1976-1986 census decade, external migration was estimated to be equal to an annual 1.8 percent of the population.

In the broader social context of acute land shortages, population pressure and limited employment opportunities, international outmigration has long been recognized as a safety valve. In addition, high remittance flows have created a major boost to the economy. As Table 6 shows, private (cash) remittances have risen dramatically (by as much as 82 percent) since 1992/93, with the sharpest single increase occurring between the 1995/96 and 1996/97 financial years when their value rose from T\$29.7 million to T\$49.3 million. Importantly, these cash transactions do not include remittances in kind (clothing, household items etc.) which have become an increasingly popular alternative in recent years.

Table 6: Overseas Remittances, Exports, Imports, 1992-1997

Year (Financial)	Private Personal (Individual) Remittances	Exports (f.o.b.) T\$ million	Imports (f.o.b.) T\$ million	Trade Deficit
1992/93	27.1	16.3	67.7	-51.4
1993/94	26.1	22.0	74.6	-52.6
1994/95	*22.0	18.0	89.5	-71.5
1995/96	*29.8	17.0	77.9	-60.9
1996/97	*49.4			

Source: Government of Tonga, Department of Statistics & Budget Statement 1997/98

*Provisional figures only

There are a number of detrimental outcomes from the outmigration flow including the loss for the country of much needed skills. The age structure of migrating Tongans reveals a high proportion (11,370 or 56 percent between 1976-86) in the economically active age range of 20-39 years.

To date, official priorities have leant more towards assessing the economic and human resource implications of external migration. Little attention has been given to evaluating the social impact of this phenomenon. Dislocation at the family and community level is already apparent in problems of school performance and in the burdens being placed on women when their husbands migrate. There is also a suggestion (based on the observations of health workers) that migration may be linked to child health problems. It would seem more than a coincidence that as much as 75 percent of admissions to the pediatric ward of Vaiola Hospital should be children living with grandparents or other relatives, their parents having migrated.

3. Marriage

Marriage is an important institution in Tonga. Many marriages are still arranged today especially amongst higher-ranking men and women.

Unlike many Pacific countries, women's status does not derive simply from marriage and motherhood. Through their role as sisters and paternal aunts, women enjoy a source of status, access to goods and services, and sense of self-worth/esteem independent of their husbands. This status is acquired at birth, and is operational both before and after a woman enters marriage. Today, however, women's status as wives takes increasing precedence over their cultural status as sisters. The overall effect of this for women has been negative.

From Table 7 it is evident that a slightly higher proportion of women over the age of 19 years are married compared to men (65.5 percent: 64 percent). However, women show a greater

tendency to marry at a younger age. Women under the age of 25 years represent 10 percent of all married women. This compares with just 5.6 percent for married men. There are also larger numbers of young girls (247) as opposed to boys (88) who are married between the ages of 15 and 19 years.

Table 7: Tongan (including Part-Tongan) Population by Marital Status and Gender

	Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced/ Separated	Not Stated	Total
Male						
15-19 years	5,463	88	3	3	-	5,557
20 to 24 years	3,603	753	2	22	1	4,381
25 to 29 years	1,848	1,976	8	53	-	3,885
30 to 34 years	785	2,079	8	41	1	2,914
35 to 39 years	364	1,723	15	43	-	2,145
40 to 44 years	187	1,596	11	45	-	1,839
45 to 49 years	116	1,360	26	35	-	1,537
50 to 54 years	87	1,299	46	36	-	1,468
55 to 59 years	83	1,279	59	30	-	1,451
60 to 64 years	77	1,067	86	16	-	1,246
65 to 69 years	53	777	117	23	-	970
70 to 74 years	31	540	86	17	-	674
75 years and over	25	471	249	10	-	755
Total All Ages	7,259	14,920	713	371	2	23,265
Female						
15-19 years	4,976	247	2	11	-	5,236
20 to 24 years	2,806	1,361	4	43	-	4,214
25 to 29 years	1,229	2,391	11	71	-	3,702
30 to 34 years	571	2,155	20	80	-	2,826
35 to 39 years	298	1,918	35	93	-	2,344
40 to 44 years	197	1,774	71	82	-	2,124
45 to 49 years	130	1,561	100	49	-	1,840
50 to 54 years	117	1,391	170	51	-	1,729
55 to 59 years	85	1,142	207	40	-	1,474
60 to 64 years	87	864	271	20	-	1,242
65 to 69 years	65	582	291	16	-	954
70 to 74 years	42	338	285	7	-	672
75 years and over	49	287	582	9	-	927
Total All Ages	5,676	15,764	2,047	561	0	24,048

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report, 1996

Both the last two censuses (1986 and 1996) indicate higher proportions of divorce and separation for women. In 1986, women constituted 61 percent of the total numbers divorced or separated. By 1996, this proportion had dropped slightly to 60.4 percent. The widowed population in Tonga has an even more striking gender factor with over three times as many women widowed than

men (1785 as opposed to 636 in 1986 and 2049 as opposed to 716 in 1996). The proportion of women who are widowed has also risen over the intercensal years from 6.4 percent (1986) to 7 percent (1996). Only 2.5 percent of men were enumerated as widowed in 1996. The gender discrepancy is probably explained by higher rates of outmigration and remarriage for men as well as by higher mortality.

4. Fertility

The tendency towards having large families remains strong in the socio-cultural context of Tonga today. This is in spite of encroaching Western values, health programs encouraging family planning, and the desire of many women to reduce the burden of multiple childbearing.

Statistics on fertility rates (TFR) are variable. According to latest official (1996) figures, the TFR is estimated to be 4.1. This conflicts with unofficial (hospital) health indicators that suggest that the TFR is only 3.5/1000. Both sets of data agree that a rate of 3.5/1000 applies for 1995 and are only in slight disagreement for 1994 (3.7/1000 as opposed to 3.6/1000). As Table 8 reveals, family planning has increased only modestly since 1991 with less than one third of women between the ages of 15 and 44 years using some form of contraceptive by 1996. The table also shows that the preferred method is the injectable contraceptive, Depo Provera, followed by the pill.

Table 8: Family Planning - New Acceptors by Method Used, 1991-1996

Method	Year					
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
IUD	156	147	99	92	142	167
Pill	232	365	395	441	533	417
Tubal Ligation	79	84	46	111	91	107
Vasectomy	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	3
Condom	309	277	338	425	336	275
Ovulation	96	80	190	174	168	154
Depo Provera	743	612	620	766	779	591
Other	134	82	143	158	172	164
Total	1,615	1,647	1,831	2,167	2,221	1,878

Source: Ministry of Health Annual Reports, 1991 - 1996

Table 9: Family Planning Acceptors, Tonga Family Planning Association, Jan - Dec 1997

Contraceptive Method	Number of New Acceptors	Number of Continuing Users	Total Number of Acceptors
Oral Contraceptive	81	24	105
Injectable (Depo Provera)	66	50	116
IUD	5	1	6
Condom	558	113	671
Spermicide	4	2	6
NFP	37	144	181
Rhythm	-	-	-
Total	751	334	1,085

Source: Tonga Family Planning Association, Nuku'alofa

According to reported (mainly official hospital) data, condom use remains limited in Tonga (see Tables 8 & 9). Anecdotal evidence suggests that one reason for this may be the continuing difficulties (embarrassment) of accessing this form of contraceptive at hospitals or health clinics. In line with trends in other Pacific countries, vasectomy is not a popular method of contraception. However, Tonga's poor rates (see Table 8) are noticeably lower than countries like Kiribati and even Papua New Guinea (Demographic & Health Survey, 1996). By contrast, the numbers of women undergoing tubal ligation have risen modestly, although they are also still low.

5. Infant Mortality

The health status of children in Tonga is regarded as generally good, and during the last twenty years, the country has witnessed improvements in its infant mortality rate. The 1986 census recorded 20.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births but by 1991 the rate had declined to 12.2/1,000. However, over the 1994 - 1996 period, for which the latest data is available, hospital health indicators demonstrate a disturbing rise from 12.2 in 1994, to 17.4 in 1995, with a slight improvement at 16.2 in 1996. (see Table 10). Within the region, Tonga records one of the lowest IMR. It also ranks impressively compared to other developing countries, according to UNICEF's global estimates.

Table 10: Maternal Child Health/Family Planning Indicators, 1994 - 1996

	1994	1995	1996
Total Population	94,152.0	96,625.0	97,955.0
Child Bearing Age (CBA) 15 - 44 years	21,112.0	21,764.0	21,978.0
No. of Live Births	2,556.0	2,534.0	2,532.0
Crude Birth Rate (CBR)	27.1	26.2	26.4
Total Family Planning Acceptors	6,139.0	6,692.0	7,223.0
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) (%)	29.1	30.8	33.0
No. of Infant Deaths	31.0	44.0	42.0
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)	12.2	17.4	16.2
No. of Perinatal Deaths	45.0	42.0	40.0
Perinatal Mortality Rate (PMR)	12.4	16.4	15.5
No. of Stillbirths	35.0	29.0	35.0
Stillbirth Rate (SBR)	13.5	11.1	13.5
No. of Spontaneous Abortions (Miscarriages)	82.0	65.0	66.0
No. of Maternal Deaths	1.0	5.0	3.0
Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)	39.2	197.3	118.5
Total Deaths (No.)	459.0	465.0	449.0
Crude Death Rate (CDR)	4.9	4.8	4.6
Total Antenatal Care (No.)	2,679.0	2,633.0	2,592.0
Antenatal Care Coverage (ANC) (%)	97.3	98.1	98.8
Total Postnatal Care (No.)	2,427.0	2,406.0	2,494.0
Postnatal Care Coverage (PNC) (%)	93.6	93.9	96.4
Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) Coverage (%)	93.4	93.4	94.6
Exclusive Breast Feeding (4 months) (%)	54.6	49.2	27.7
Delivery - by Trained Personnel (%)	91.6	93.1	95.0
- others including Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) (%)	8.4	6.9	5.0
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	3.6	3.5	3.5
Natural Growth Rate	2.32	1.98	2.18
No. of Households	15,006.0	16,996.0	17,262.0

Source: Vaiola Hospital, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

Perinatal deaths parallel this trend, rising sharply from 12.4/1000 in 1994 to 16.4/1000 in 1995, with a slight fall to 15.5/1000 in 1996. (Table 10) The main causes of infant deaths are heart disease followed by infections and parasitic disease, bronchia pneumonia and intestinal infections. (UNICEF 1996)

B. Public Health

1. Overall Health Position

Official health data poses many problems, not the least being the inconsistencies and flaws in published statistics, both within individual reports and between one year's report and the next. In particular, there are some serious inaccuracies in the published health indicators (e.g. Infant Mortality Rate - IMR).

There have been a number of positive developments in the health area in recent years. Progress has been made in the development of primary health care and the provision of accessible and better quality health services, especially in the more remote islands/rural areas. Basic health services remain free.

There are a total of four hospitals in Tonga: one referral hospital on the main island of Tongatapu and three district hospitals on the outer islands. 14 health centers and 33 community maternal and child health clinics support these. In addition, there are currently six private clinics operating in Nuku'alofa, one of which specializes in obstetrics and gynecology. In most instances, hospital doctors run these after hours and they cater only for those who can afford to pay for private health care. Antenatal fees, for instance, begin at T\$20 but are reduced as visits become more frequent. Poor employment conditions, including low salaries, are cited amongst the reasons for establishing these private services.

Traditional medicine is still widely practiced but apart from areas like mental health and childbirth (where traditional birth attendants play a quasi-accepted role), it tends to operate discretely and without endorsement or encouragement from the health establishment. As in many other parts of the Pacific, there is a rich body

Table 11: Life Expectancy Estimates, Pacific Island Countries

Country	Life Expectancy (Years)		
	Male	Female	Total
Cook Islands	66.9	72.7	69.8
Fiji	61.0	65.2	63.1
Kiribati	57.7	62.8	60.2
Marshall Islands	59.6	62.8	61.1
Federated States of Micronesia	-	-	64.1
Niue	63.0	68.0	66.0
Palau	65.1	69.1	67.0
Solomon Islands	59.9	61.4	60.7
Tokelau	65.0	70.0	68.0
Tonga	67.6	70.7	69.0
Tuvalu	64.0	70.5	67.2
Vanuatu	61.5	64.2	62.8
Samoa	60.6	66.1	63.1

Source: The State of Pacific Children, UNICEF 1995

of traditional knowledge and experience in areas ranging from minor skin problems (like boils and burns) to asthma, infertility, childbirth and cancer. Most traditional medical practitioners are women.

As is frequently the pattern, women enjoy a higher life expectancy (70.7 years) than men (67.6 years). Table 11 shows that Tonga ranks a close second to the Cook Islands both overall and in respect to women. At 67.6 years, the life expectancy of Tongan men is the highest in the Pacific region.

The five leading causes of morbidity are influenza, diarrhea, acute respiratory infection, infantile diarrhea and bronchio-pneumonia. In 1996, 22 new cases of tuberculosis (and two deaths) were recorded as well and there were sporadic outbreaks of typhoid around the country (total of 19 cases in 1996 compared to 58 cases in 1995).

In recent years (1992-1996), diseases of the circulatory system (including diabetes-linked conditions like heart disease and hypertension) have been consistently responsible for the largest numbers of deaths in Tonga (41 percent in 1996). The other leading causes of mortality are ill-defined conditions (18 percent), malignant neoplasm (cancers) (15 percent), diseases of the respiratory system (7 percent), and endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases (5.4 percent) (see Table 12).

Table 12: Leading Causes of Mortality by Gender, 1988, 1992-1996

Symptom	1988			1992			1993	1994			1995			1996		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Diseases of circulatory system	28	12	40	97	59	156	141	100	49	149	97	44	141	88	58	146
Ill defined conditions				48	25	73	65	14	13	27	40	37	77	29	35	64
Neoplasms	16	7	23	36	26	62	50	39	27	66	34	27	61	27	27	54
Disease of respiratory system	6	5	11	25	6	31	24				11	10	21	17	8	25
Disease of digestive system	3	3	6	14	4	18										
Disease of genito-urinary system							24									
Infectious and parasitic diseases	9	7	16					13	10	23	14	13	27			
Injury and poisoning								17	5	22						
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic disease														9	10	19

Source: Vaiola Hospital, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

Probably the single most important development in the area of adult morbidity (and mortality) in the last decade has been the high number and rising incidence of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, heart disease and other 'lifestyle'-related non-communicable disease (NCD). In 1996 alone, there were 147 (new) cases of diabetes mellitus, 22 (new) cases of hypertension and 36 (new) cases of cardiac disease treated at the referral hospital, Vaiola, on Tongatapu. In addition, a large number of diabetic patients developed hypertension and Ischaemic heart disease.

Unfortunately, with deteriorating diets, higher alcohol and cigarette consumption, and more sedentary lifestyles, Tongans in most parts of the country are at risk of obesity and obesity-related NCDs like diabetes, not only those living on the main island. Improved transportation, including regular shipping schedules, are giving even the more remote islands access to refined and processed foods, and other unhealthy food imports like fatty meat cuts (mutton flaps). On the outer islands, diabetes was responsible for a significant proportion of hospital admissions in 1996: Ha'apai (11 percent), Vava'u (6 percent), 'Eua (2 percent). The disease was also the main cause of death on Niuatoputapu and Niuafu'ou and the cause of 14 percent of deaths in Ha'apai.

One disturbing shift in the disease pattern is the declining age at which it strikes. A growing number of NCDs are affecting young people in their 20s, along with earlier complications. It is estimated that as much as 15-20 percent of the adult population is diabetic in Tonga. Before the establishment of the Diabetes Center a few years ago, there was a high rate of amputations and other complications. At any one time, about 50 percent of the medical and surgical wards accommodated diabetic and other NCD complication cases.

As elsewhere in the Pacific region, official statistics on sexually transmitted disease (STD) are known to represent only a small proportion of the likely total number of cases. For gonorrhea, the pattern of reported cases shows a fairly consistent and sharp rise (over 100 percent): from 38 in 1991 to 86 in 1996. The vast majority of cases are found on Tongatapu.

It is important to stress that these figures do not include cases treated at private medical clinics. Nor do they account for the privately treated cases, which are common due to the shame and stigma associated with having a STD. This is particularly the case for young people who form a sizable proportion of casualties and who often go to great lengths to secure treatment surreptitiously. Giving a false name and address, using the pretext of another illness (like boils) in order to access penicillin, or soliciting the help of relatives working at the hospital are amongst the more typical 'undercover' methods. It is understood that the age threshold for STD cases is as low as 13 years.

Although confirmed HIV/AIDS cases are still low compared to other parts of the Pacific region, this virulent STD is already recognized as being a serious health and social problem in Tonga. By October 1996, there were nine notified HIV cases and 6 reported AIDS cases. (SPC 1997) Hepatitis B is known to be quite common and is directly linked to the incidence of liver cancer.

2. Women's General and Reproductive Health

Health data on women is patchy and suffers from some of the same errors and inconsistencies noted in Section 1. Reporting on contraceptive use and cesarean births (grossly under-reported according to senior obstetric staff) are just two examples of data problems relating to women's health. Serious discrepancies exist between official health data (published in the Ministry of Health Annual Reports) and data collected by public health nurses and not recognized by the Ministry. The latter is considered to be more reliable.

A concern in the area of women's reproductive health is the low level of contraceptive use (or family planning coverage) that has persisted despite modest annual increases in the number of new users during the 1990s. (see Table 8) Between 1994 and 1995, the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) rose from 29.1 percent to 30.8 percent. Latest official estimates (1996) indicate

that a more promising 33 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 44 years are using some form of contraceptive. It is important to note, however, that these improvements may be exaggerated by instances of double entries (i.e. the same woman visiting more than once), an occurrence acknowledged by health officials.

Male contraceptive users are far fewer and the view that contraception is a woman's responsibility is still very widespread. Other disincentives to greater contraceptive use include the cultural pressure to have large families, religious restrictions, and the inadequate information available to women (and men) about safe alternatives. The apparent unwillingness of the medical establishment to address the contraceptive needs of unmarried people, including teenagers, would seem to be another factor underlying the low levels of contraceptive coverage and the relatively high fertility rates.

Table 12 reveals interesting gender dimensions in the mortality trends between 1988 and 1996. In the first instance, women have lagged behind men in virtually all of the major (killer) diseases. However, it can also be observed that the gender gulf has narrowed considerably over the years with respect to diseases of the circulatory system, the leading killer, and neoplasm disease (cancer).

By 1996, the number of men dying from neoplasm disease had dropped to the point of equalizing with women (27:27). Of the 27 cases attributed to women in 1995, 40 percent (11) were related to reproductive health (breast, uterus, cervix and ovary cancers). Evidence from hospital nursing staff suggests that breast cancer cases are commonly brought to the hospital too late, often after traditional medicine has been tried as a first preference.

Only limited gender-desegregated data is available on two disease categories that are socially or statistically significant: sexually transmitted disease and diabetes (and other related non-communicable disease). Of the 86 STD (gonorrhea) cases reported in 1996, 68 were male and 17 female. One woman was amongst the five AIDS victims who had died by early 1996.

In contrast to this pattern, it is generally argued that women appear to demonstrate higher prevalence rates for both obesity and NCD (including diabetes). Of the total 714 cases attending the hypertension clinic at Vaiola Hospital in 1996, 55 percent (396) were women. However, statistics collected by the hospital's Diabetic Clinic show that of the 147 new diabetes cases recorded for 1996, there were a higher number of males (79:68). There is growing concern about the prevalence (and inherent risks) of diabetes and hypertension amongst expectant mothers.

In recent years, both maternal mortality and morbidity in Tonga have become areas for concern. In 1994, only one maternal death occurred, giving a maternal mortality rate of approximately 4/10,000 live births. However, the following year (1995) witnessed five maternal deaths, pushing the maternal mortality rate up to 2/1,000 live births. Of these deaths, three occurred in the outer islands (where isolation and lack of transport for emergency cases can be serious impediments) and two on Tongatapu.

Overall, there is evidence of a growing number of life-threatening conditions as well as pregnancy and childbirth complications. Amongst the more serious problems are post-partum hemorrhage, abnormal uterine bleeding and reproductive tract infections. In 1995, pregnancy complications had the dubious honor of ranking first amongst the five leading causes of morbidity

countrywide. They represented one-third of all hospitalization cases in Tongatapu, Vava'u and Ha'apai. However, these statistics need to be regarded with some caution because of the tendency to include ordinary admissions for childbirth (thereby classifying 'confinement' as an illness!).

Coinciding with this trend, a high number of perinatal deaths, including still births and early neonatal deaths, has produced perinatal mortality rates of 12.4/1,000 in 1994, 16.4/1,000 in 1995 and 15.5/1,000 in 1996. (see Table 10) The figures suggest that women's maternal health status should be of some concern. They point to possible shortcomings in the quality of antenatal and postnatal care available to women as well as in the delivery process itself. It should be noted that the official perinatal mortality rate for 1994 is actually 17.4.

Child birth is essentially under the control of midwives, nurses and, to a lesser extent, traditional birth attendants (TBA), not all of whom are adequately trained. As a general rule, doctors are only involved in those hospital deliveries identified as having complications. This practice is not only common in the outer islands but at the principal Vaiola Hospital which services the largest population. Hospital deliveries claim a high proportion of births compared to home deliveries, which are usually attended by TBAs. (see Table 10)

Hospital obstetric services for women are extremely modest and at the large referral hospital on Tongatapu, they rely on the service of just two obstetricians supported by nursing staff. Staffing shortages, both with respect to obstetricians/gynecologists and midwives, are worse on the outer islands and are aggravated by lack of transport to deal with emergency cases (the Niu'ui Hospital in Ha'apai has recently been promised a boat under overseas aid).

Budgetary constraints are also serious (the allocation for the 1997-98 financial year was spent by December 1997) and with deliveries averaging around 150 per month, Vaiola Hospital suffers from periodic bed shortages in the labor ward which obliges expectant mothers to lie on the floor. After more than 25 years, the labor ward still comprises two delivery rooms, three labor rooms, and one prep room clustered together in a narrow corridor.

There are also shortages of equipment and supplies, including persistent and acute shortages of vital drugs like syntosinon (to prevent excessive blood loss in childbirth and to induce labor). In the absence of an anesthetist (there is only one for Vaiola Hospital), certain drugs (e.g. epidural) are not on offer at all. The obstetrics ward currently boasts two delivery tables, one of which is in need of urgent repair. The ward does not possess an ultra-sound (the only one available in the hospital must be shared for all sections). Nor does it have other (standard) delivery equipment like a cardiograph/CTG, which electronically records the fetal heartbeat, or the basic brand of CTG equipment known as sonicaid (a handheld device to listen to the fetal heartbeat).

Cultural and legal factors affect women's reproductive health status in a number of ways. The pressures on women to bear many children are still evident, and there are no cultural inhibitions about older women (in their 40s) continuing to expand their families. The uncompromising position of the law on abortion restricts the choices open to women in the event of unwanted pregnancies, and can undermine or threaten their health. Fiji, Auckland and Hawaii are the principal destinations for women or girls wishing to have abortions, but this alternative is only open to those women who have the financial means. For poorer women, the choice may simply not be there. This can have tragic results as a recent case of infanticide bears witness.

The social expectations of sexual propriety imposed on women and the lack of confidentiality that exists in a tightly knit society mean that many women are denied access to contraceptives as well as reproductive health information. These mechanisms of control are not only applied to unmarried young women. Even for the large numbers of divorcees, widows and women deserted by migrating husbands, the lack of sexual autonomy can make it difficult to access contraceptives.

One consequence of this appears to be the rising number of pregnancies amongst migration 'widows'. For older women, this inability to control their fertility can have health as well as economic implications. There is an urgent need for a health center or service where women can be sure of getting professional, objective (i.e. non-judgmental) and, above all, confidential advice and assistance.

3. Infant and Child Health

Tonga boasts a high immunization rate for infants (94.6 percent coverage for the six EPI target diseases - diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles, poliomyelitis and tuberculosis in 1996) and the health and nutritional status of children is quite respectable overall. However, it is important to note that the last comprehensive nutrition survey (which reported a high 98 percent of children having weights-for-age of more than 80 percent, and 23 percent of children with more than 120 percent, of the WHO/NCHS standards) was conducted 12 years ago.

Since then, there have been many social and economic developments, including a greater shift towards unhealthy processed foods, increasing disparities in wealth, and a heightened vulnerability to poverty especially among landless and lower income groups. In the last few years, it has become increasingly evident that many children living in urban areas (both on the main island and outer islands like Vava'u) no longer enjoy healthy, balanced diets and that they are consuming fewer healthy traditional foods in favor of white bread and processed food.

Cases of child malnutrition and food deprivation within the poorer sections of the community are also coming to light, although in the absence of any study or survey on poverty it is impossible to know how widespread or severe they are. There have been serious cases of marasmic malnutrition (protein energy calorie deficiency) admitted to Vaiola Hospital, although they number less than 10 a year.

Young children make up around 75 percent of outpatient consultations in all the hospitals around Tonga, with the main health problems being respiratory and gastric infections. Close to 60 percent of children (five years and under) admitted to Vaiola Hospital each year suffer from respiratory infections, including pneumonia and viral chest infections, and 20-25 percent from diarrhea/gastric infections. For the 1992-1996 period, infant diarrhea cases rose from 681 to 923, peaking in 1994 at 1,121, less than 60 cases short of the total number of adult casualties. Diarrhea cases amongst children are food as well as environment-related (for example poor environmental sanitation and hygiene, and overcrowding).

Another disconcerting development is the decline in breastfeeding of infants. The 1986 National Nutrition Survey found that around 83 percent of babies were exclusively breast fed only for the first two months, after which time weaning to solids was increasingly combined with

bottle feeding. By six months, nearly 20 percent of infants were being given a combination of bottle-feeding and solids. Estimates for 1994 and 1995 suggest a continuing pattern of decline, with the proportion of mothers exclusively feeding their babies for 3 months being 55 percent and 49 percent respectively. (see Table 10)

Available evidence suggests that the situation has not significantly improved since then in spite of efforts by health workers and the medical establishment to encourage breastfeeding. On the contrary, for women who do feed their babies, the nursing period is commonly being reduced to just one month. This is particularly the case in urban centers like Nuku'alofa where growing numbers of women are engaged in paid employment. The short period of maternity leave available to civil servants would probably be an important factor here. For women working in the private sector, there is even less protection because of the lack of employment legislation.

In the outer islands, traditional practices of extended nursing appear to be more common. This is probably linked to the fewer opportunities for wage employment available to women and the prevalence of weaving and handicraft production as the main economic activity. Because this is home-based work, mothers are more easily able to manage a full breastfeeding schedule during the course of the working day.

As elsewhere in the Pacific, child (sexual) abuse is not publicly acknowledged as a social problem but is shrouded in secrecy as a source of shame. Known incidents usually invite gossip or discreet discussion within the community and are resolved through traditional reconciliation. Sexual abuse commonly takes the form of incest and involves stepfathers, uncles and other members of the extended family. Tonga is not alone in having its offenders occasionally coming from within the church establishment. Like the incidents of domestic violence and sexual assault registered at the main Vaiola Hospital, child abuse cases are not included in the official reports of the Ministry of Health each year.

4. Teenage and Pre-marital Sexuality

The health problems facing teenage girls in Tonga are in many respects linked to the still rigid cultural and religious mores about female sexuality and social mobility, in particular the taboos placed on pre-marital sex. Today, the cultural expectations of female virginity at marriage remain firmly in place, as does the cultural licence to sexual freedom for boys/men.

But in defiance of this, many young unmarried women, including teenage girls, are claiming a greater social freedom. They are going out at night, unescorted by traditional chaperones, venturing into nightclubs, consuming alcohol, and becoming sexually active at an earlier age. These trends are emerging in a society that is itself undergoing significant social, economic and demographic change, including high rates of urbanization and external migration, a decline in traditional values and institutions like the extended family, and rising levels of alcohol and drug abuse.

The transition is not an easy one and there is a palpable tension between the traditional (parental) expectations of girls and young women and the changing values and patterns of behavior emerging in young people, especially those living in the urban centers. For many parents, there is despair at their inability to 'control' their seemingly rebellious and wayward daughters.

One outcome of this unresolved tension is that there is probably a higher level of illicit and ill-informed/high risk sexual behavior on the part of young women, including schoolgirls. This in turn gives rise to a worrying number of teenage pregnancies as well as greater exposure to sexually transmitted disease. A large proportion of confirmed STD/HIV-AIDS cases is occurring amongst young people.

Cultural constraints on openly discussing sex and sexuality issues within the family relate to the broader mechanisms of control (discussed in Chapter 4) that regulate certain male/female relationships, especially brother/sister, father/daughter and other close relatives like cousins. The controls cover a range of interactions and behavior like (segregated) sleeping areas and general avoidance relationships between brother and sister after puberty.

While there is a need for sensitivity to these important cultural traditions, the lack of meaningful communication between parents and children about sexuality issues in today's world ultimately denies a whole generation of teenagers much needed information and guidance. The resistance to 'sex education' at school and the restrictions on public discussion via the mass media (including radio, television and newspapers) have tended to aggravate the problem, creating an obstructive environment for community-driven initiatives.

Official family planning data is indicative of the cultural barriers faced by young unmarried women and girls. In accounting for the numbers practicing family planning by location and method, the only classification for users given in Ministry of Health annual reports is 'married women'. Together, these factors create a heightened vulnerability for teenage girls to unwanted pregnancies, STDs and unsafe abortions.

While the incidence of teenage pregnancies is not as high as other Pacific Island countries, for example the Cook Islands and Marshall Islands, at least five percent of all pregnancies every year in Tonga are nonetheless occurring in girls under the age of 19 years. There is also hospital and other evidence to suggest that a not insignificant number of pregnancies are occurring amongst schoolgirls who are barely twelve or thirteen years of age. In 1993, 11 out of 101 teenage pregnancies – 11 percent – were born to girls under 15 years of age. There also appears to be a rising trend of 'illegitimate' births, although not all of these can be attributed to unmarried teenagers. In 1993, 10 percent of total live births were to unmarried mothers. Official estimates for 1995 indicate a higher proportion of 14 percent (340).

Despite the social changes taking place within Tongan society, 'illegitimate' births continue to be a source of stigma and shame, particularly for school age girls. This is confirmed in anecdotal evidence of self-administered or traditional abortions, even at very late stages into a pregnancy.

C. Food and Nutrition

Tonga enjoys many advantages with regard to food security and it is generally agreed that there are no serious hunger or undernutrition problems. Natural advantages such as soil quality and climate are reinforced by positive cultural factors. Above all, there is a strong tradition of subsistence agriculture and agro-forestry to supply important household needs like food, medicine, construction materials and household furnishings. This is reinforced by the cultural importance of

food (for eating as well as for ceremonial presentations, redistribution etc.), and the status (and for women, beauty) associated with physical bigness.

These factors combine to produce a strong commitment at the household level to the production of nutritious traditional food, particularly staple root crops like yam and taro. They also underlie a generally regular and reliable supply of food to local markets. However, a fairly balanced traditional diet has unfortunately become increasingly undermined by changing eating patterns, in particular by the consumption of more refined foods (sugar, white bread, flour etc.) as well as other nutritionally-deficient foods high in fat, sugar and salt.

The displacement of fish by (cheaper) fatty meat cuts like mutton flaps (*sipi*) and corned beef is one of the most disturbing trends as is the rising consumption of alcohol and cigarettes. While urbanization has been a major catalyst in the past, improved shipping services are increasingly bringing the outer islands within the orbit of these products.

The heavy dependence on imported food (including sources of protein like meat) is indicative of an emerging food security problem (notably by encouraging high food imports) and is contributing to an escalating trade deficit. The relatively high cost of local meat production underlies the preference for imported meat and this is compounded by shortages and high prices of fish, especially on the main island of Tongatapu.

In 1996, the value of food imports totaled around T\$18 million, representing close to 20 percent of all imports. Meat accounted for nearly 40 percent of all food imported, with mutton flaps and corn beef imports valued at T\$4.5 million and T\$1.8 million respectively. The per capita consumption of flour is estimated to be in the region of 55 kilo a year, or just over one kilo a week.

This dietary shift has had an important impact on health. As discussed in the previous section, the major health problems today are overweight, obesity and associated non-communicable diseases such as diabetes mellitus, heart disease and hypertension. It was also noted that a higher proportion of women appears to be affected by NCDs. The 1986 National Nutrition Survey, which provides the latest comprehensive data, concluded that 39.1 percent of women and 10 percent of men suffered from severe obesity.

The food security situation in Tonga is a fairly positive one if this is defined in terms of staple food production at the national level. However, access to food as well as consumption levels can vary considerably between households/villages, and there is increasing evidence of the difficulties faced by marginal groups in securing adequate food for their families. This is particularly the case for landless and/or low-income households who have to buy most or all of their food.

The threats to food security and the nutritional/health status of Tongans stem from a number of social, economic and cultural factors. Land shortages are a central issue because a high proportion of men, and most women, are landless. Rising urbanization especially internal migration to Greater Nuku'alofa, is putting pressure on available land resources even for residential space. Migrants from the outer islands are probably amongst the worst affected because they have no land rights and fewer kin on the main island and are thus less likely to acquire land through informal leasing arrangements.

For the outer island squatters living in the overcrowded swamp settlement of Patangata (and to a lesser extent Popua and Sopa) in Nuku'alofa, the prospects for growing food are negligible. These in turn mean a greater reliance on less nutritious, imported foods for those who have the financial means, and inadequate food (and attendant health problems) for those who do not.

Food scavenging by hungry children (as discussed in section F) offers disturbing proof that an acute food security problem already exists in the poorer (unemployed and landless) sections of Nuku'alofa's peri-urban community. For these more vulnerable sections of the community, there are no institutional forms of support such as destitution/welfare payments, or food/educational subsidies.

Producing for the export market is also tightening the squeeze on land allocated for food production and exposing farmland (and produce), natural forest and ground/surface water to environmentally degrading practices such as deforestation, intensive cropping and pesticides. As section D shows, such 'man-made' hazards are also evident in the area of inshore fisheries. Overfishing, industrial and sewerage pollution, and mangrove reclamation pose serious risks of resource depletion, including food (fish/shellfish) stock shortages. If unchecked, unsustainable agricultural, industrial and fisheries production could damage the prospects for food security in the future.

D. Water and Sanitation

Water and sanitation are crucial development issues that have direct implications for community and child health. Women play a central role in the management and care of the household. For this reason, the easy access to a clean and safe water supply, a healthy latrine system and a generally sanitary environment are all matters that impinge on their workload and ability to provide for their families. Difficulties accessing water for family drinking, cooking, washing and cleaning place a special burden on women.

The water situation in Tonga has significantly improved in recent years as a result of government efforts and donor support, particularly funding from New Zealand, Australia and Canada for the construction of cement water tanks in the outer lying areas. As Table 13 shows, access to piped (reticulated) water and a fresh water tank system has increased substantially over the past 20 years. In 1986, nearly 74 percent of households used piped water as their main source of water, as opposed to 61.3 percent of households in 1976.

There was also a sharp decline in the number (and proportion) of households using a well as their main source of water from 1,665 to 340 households (12 percent to 2 percent). Out of 16,194 households enumerated in the 1996

Table 13: Households by Source of Water, 1976, 1986 and 1996

Source of Water	Year		
	1976	1986	1996
Piped Supply	8,523	11,100	13,705
Own Tank	2,768	2,715	9,444
Own Well	1,665	340	393
Other	-	730	175
Not Stated	952	206	-
Total Households	13,908	15,091	[16,194]

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Reports 1976, 1986, 1996

Note: The 1996 Census asked households to identify all sources of water. Previously, only main sources were enumerated.

census, 13,705 (or 85 percent) had access to piped water, 9,444 (or 58 percent) had their own water tank, and just 393 (or 2 percent) had to rely on a private well.

According to Tonga's official health indicators, 100 percent of the population have access to safe water. This estimate is misleading especially because of its implied reference to desirable water quality. There is, in fact, ample evidence to suggest that the water quality in Tonga is poor. Indeed, if the definition of 'access to safe water' was to be 'continuous and ready access to uncontaminated, disease-free, drinkable water', then the proportion of the population with access would probably be less than 50 percent. (personal communication, Tonga Trust, 1998)

In many places, ground water is undrinkable and although reticulated systems pump water into local communities and homes, neither the Ministry of Health nor the Tonga Water Board bears responsibility for maintenance. For most people in Tonga, rainwater is preferred but this requires the construction of water tanks. Fortunately, donor assistance and the active work of NGOs like the Tonga Trust have supported community initiatives in this area.

In Ha'apai, only three villages on the main island of Lifuku and two villages on one outer island are supplied with reticulated underground water by the Tonga Water Board. This water is not suitable for drinking largely because of the narrow water lens and heavy demand, which together create a high salt content. Ha'apai's remaining (two) villages on Lifuka and its outer islands rely on rainwater tanks where the availability of water is dependent on adequate rainfall. The recent drought has forced many people to revert to private wells. These have severe quality problems due, above all, to the proximity and poor quality of toilets/sewerage disposal, which seep into the groundwater system. Other culprits include the lack of well protection from roaming pigs and dogs.

Following outbreaks of typhoid in the 1950s and 1960s, private wells servicing the main Pangai-Hihifo community were in fact banned by the Ministry of Health. However, they continue to be used today for drinking and cooking. In 1996, a UNESCO-sponsored survey of 46 wells in Lifuka found that all private wells had 'high counts of total coliform and fecal coliform.' According to the findings, most wells exceeded 2,000 colonies of coliforms per 100ml while many also demonstrated more than 2,000 colonies of fecal coliform. These disturbing results offer unequivocal evidence that the aquifer supplying Lifuka's settlements is 'grossly contaminated'.

Water on Neiafu, the main island of Vava'u, suffers from both supply and quality problems. There are only three wells on the island at present, which are insufficient to service a growing urban population. Only about 1,000 people have access to a reticulated water supply and water quality suffers from hardness and a high salt content. An EU project plans to install a new well field (of 18 wells) in order to increase the supply and avoid the problem of upwelling (salt water intake) due to the heavy pressure on the source. This forms part of a T\$2.5 million sanitation and water project scheduled for Vava'u in 1998.

Problems relating to water supply are not only an outer island problem. The reticulated water system used throughout the rural areas of Tongatapu is based on piping systems that were installed some 30 to 40 years ago. Most of these have badly deteriorated, and need urgent replacement on account of advanced corrosion and leaks, which pose serious risks of contamination from inward sewerage seepage. Around 60 percent of the pipes are made of asbestos and galvanized iron.

The overall census picture of toilet facilities in 1996 suggests a fairly encouraging situation. It reveals that only 36 percent (5799) of Tongan households still use a pit-type latrine compared to 56 percent of households (9033) with a mechanical flush toilet system and 17 percent (2799) with a manual flush system. (see Table 14) However, many septic tanks have been poorly constructed, especially with regard to their drain field. This poses real threats of contamination in flat, low-lying areas where drainage is poor, especially in periods of heavy rain when floodwater often mixes with sewerage.

Urban households (with the exception of lower-income families) generally enjoy a reasonable standard of toilet/sanitation facilities - with around 80 percent said to have access to a septic tank or similar system. By contrast, UNICEF suggests that around 30 percent of the rural community have no access to sanitation facilities and over one quarter has access only to pit latrines. (UNICEF 1996:24) These figures may be conservative.

The rural/urban discrepancy is highlighted in outer island areas like Ha'apai. Of a total 2,197 toilet systems in 1997, only 10 percent comprised flush toilets with septic tank systems while as much as 90 percent were pit latrines. As noted above, the proximity of these pit latrines to the water lens (which is close to the surface as well as narrow) poses threats of groundwater contamination, especially in the more heavily populated coastal areas of Lifuka where the lens is higher.

The Environmental Health Section of the Ministry of Health is responsible for rural water supplies, sanitary inspections, solid waste disposal, and food hygiene and vector control. Public health inspectors make household visits for the purpose of assessing sanitation standards and recommending improvements. Water sampling is not regularly undertaken and is based on random sampling when it is, unless there is an outbreak of typhoid.

The lagoon area in Nuku'alofa is not routinely tested although there appears to be anecdotal evidence of contamination from septic and industrial effluent. In the impoverished settlement of Patangata, raw sewerage and rubbish are dumped into the adjacent mangrove swamp area, posing severe health risks from water contamination and a generally unsanitary environment.

According to the government's Environment Unit, there are many informal complaints that shellfish in the lagoon are getting smaller and are harder to find, and that the popular mullet fish also caught by women is in short supply. The bad smell and soft, muddy bottom indicative of a siltation build up similarly point to the deteriorating state of the lagoon. Recently, a large number of fish poisoning cases have occurred, although according to the Unit there is no firm evidence to attribute this to the lagoon. A four-year environment project funded by AusAID intends to use the lagoon as a case study.

Table 14: Households by Type of Toilet Facility, 1976, 1986 and 1996

Type of Toilet	Year		
	1976	1986	1996
Flush (Mechanical)	1,560	4,907	9,033
Manual Flush	4,329	3,366	2,799
Pit	7,306	6,297	5,799
Other Types	203	149	53
No Toilet	267	103	92
Not Stated	243	269	-
Total Households	13,908	15,091	[16,194]

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Reports 1976, 1986, 1996

Note: The 1996 Census asked households to identify all types of toilet facility. Previously, only main types were enumerated.

Two other causes of concern are industrial pollution from factories operating in the Small Industries Center and the impact of agricultural chemicals and pesticides on groundwater quality. The Environmental Impact Assessment Bill, currently under review, will hopefully rectify the lack of environmental regulations governing factory operations in the Small Industries Center. In the meantime, they are subject to very little scrutiny and control. Inspections by the Environmental Health Section Unit take place only twice a year, unless there is a complaint. As a general rule, prosecutions are not made.

The waste disposal system of one of two paint factories is a particular worry. Overflows of liquid waste (containing lead residues) have occurred on many occasions and may well have resulted in seepage into the ground water system and the lagoon. An ongoing problem has been the failure to persuade the company to construct a proper waste treatment unit or even a tank to hold its own liquid waste. At present, the waste is dumped into the government's sludge pad (used for treating septic effluent for the Nuku'alofa township). This has placed a strain on the sewerage disposal system and has periodically meant that household waste has had to wait its turn!

E. The Land Issue

Land is fundamental to Tonga's social and economic development, and above all, the capacity of its people to generate sustainable livelihoods. Under the Tongan Constitution of 1875, land cannot be bought or sold but land use (or a registered lease) can be 'bought' (with gifts accompanying a request) from a noble's estate. More importantly, every boy on reaching 16 years of age is entitled to eight and a quarter acres of agricultural land (commonly referred to as a tax allotment or '*api 'uta*') on which to grow food. He is also entitled to a smaller (quarter acre) town allotment ('*api kolo*') on which to build a house.

Within the context of a quasi-feudal society, the guaranteed allotments under the land tenure system offered a significant measure of economic and social security to commoners in the past. However, over the past twenty years or so, population growth and dwindling land reserves have steadily eroded these land rights. By 1976, land resources had fallen so far short of population levels that only around one-third of eligible Tongan males had received their entitlements. Today, commoners enjoy even less security from the land tenure system and the majority is landless with few, if any, prospects for acquiring land.

This 'disenfranchisement' has had wide sweeping demographic and social effects over the years: encouraging the steady migration flow, both external and internal, creating urban congestion and overcrowding, and sharpening disparities in wealth. It has created an increasing economic vulnerability for commoners.

F. Poverty

According to the conventional and official portrayal of Tonga, poverty does not exist. This position is defended by reference to the strong extended family culture, which provides a form of social insurance for the needy or more vulnerable members of the community.

It is probably fair to say that the extended family system (and its attendant values of reciprocity, redistribution and mutual support) remains a pillar of Tongan society today. However, the institution needs to be seen in the context of a highly stratified society in which access to, and control

over, resources are very unevenly distributed. These structural features of Tongan society influence the ability of individuals to participate in land-based development and income generation, to access credit/loan facilities, and even to benefit from bilateral or multilateral donor assistance.

For those of high rank/social status, Tonga's economic development (including incoming aid flows) has opened up many commercial and other opportunities. At the other end of the scale, it is often a very different story: of people struggling to improve the quality of their lives and to access basic necessities like adequate food, shelter and water, as well as school fees for their children.

The traditional cultural system is increasingly coming under threat from Western values, the cash economy and other forces of social change, particularly in urban centers like Nuku'alofa. In contrast to the more remote communities where there is less reliance on imported foods and other store goods, cash needs in most other parts of Tonga are growing and can be hard to meet. The absence of protective employment legislation, including minimum wage rates, exacerbates the insecurities of those who are dependent on wage employment. For single mothers (including those deserted by migrating husbands), the burden of poverty falls more heavily, especially since opportunities for work can be limited and earnings for women are generally lower.

The feminization of poverty is a recognized phenomenon in many other countries around the world. In the absence of any poverty or income analysis, it is impossible to know whether this pattern applies to Tonga. Having said this, it should be noted that 19 percent of households in Tonga are officially classified (in the 1996 census) as being headed by women, and there are higher proportions of divorced, separated and widowed women than there are men. Women's susceptibility to poverty is evident in their lack of land rights as well as in their poor employment status.

In some areas of Tongan society, there are stark illustrations of poverty. The squatter settlements of Nuku'alofa in Tongatapu and Pangai in Ha'apai offer grim testimonies to wretched living conditions, makeshift lean-to housing (sometimes immersed in mud or swamp) the absence of a decent water supply, inadequate sanitation (toilets), and the lack of money to pay for basic necessities like children's school fees. While food may still be accessible for most people, the amount and quality of food available or affordable varies, and there is evidence of undernutrition amongst some children.

In Pangai, squatter families are usually temporary migrants from the outer Ha'apai islands. They come in to educate their children and live in crude shelters (or a large bunker). They return home once the school term/year is over. Often it is just the women who remain in wait for the children, weaving mats to raise money for the next term's fees while the men return to the island to plant food.

In Patangata in outer Nuku'alofa, many families have also moved in from the outer islands in search of education and employment opportunities. Situated on swampy mangrove land, next to the city's rubbish dump, living conditions are even grimmer. Children can regularly be seen ransacking the rubbish dump for food.

To some extent, this decline in living standards is mitigated by remittances received from relatives overseas (whether in cash or kind). However, there is an increasing tendency on the part of Tongan families overseas to send their children home to be looked after by relatives, or to simply leave them behind when they migrate. In such cases, the financial (as well as the physical and emotional) burden is transferred to family members remaining in Tonga. Almost invariably, these are

women. Money sent home could be inadequate, erratic or slow in coming. It can also stop once a husband has found a new 'wife' in his adopted homeland.

G. Education and Training

1. Literacy Rates

National census data no longer record literacy levels in Tonga because it is generally agreed that a near-100 percent literacy rate prevails, at least in the Tongan language. Gender is not a differentiating factor of basic literacy skills since male/female levels are fairly equal. According to 1993 World Bank estimates, the literacy rate in the English language is 70 percent.

2. Educational Attainment

There is a strong educational ethic in Tonga, which dates back to the early 19th century. The tradition of formal education is anchored in the social and political developments of the time. In addition, the premium attached to education by Tongan parents/communities today has almost certainly been influenced by the all-encompassing social system of ascribed rank (and associated system of land tenure and political franchise) which dominates the lives of every Tongan and which offers limited possibilities for upward social mobility.

For commoners, who make up the vast majority of the population, education has come to symbolize one of the few, and probably the most important means of improving their standard of living and social status. There is thus a solid tradition of family sacrifice and perseverance aimed at providing children with the best education possible.

It is perhaps not surprising then that Tonga has achieved an impressive measure of success in the educational field. In addition to its high literacy levels, there is universal primary education (which is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 14 years) and high enrolments at secondary level education, at least in the earlier years. There have, in addition, been some exceptional performances in external annual competitions such as the Australian Mathematics Competition and Commonwealth Essay Competition.

Interestingly, these educational successes have not been confined to the better-endowed schools on Tongatapu. There has been a conscientious effort by the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education in the outer islands (by relocating teachers, expanding facilities and otherwise strengthening the more remote institutions). This has been part of a broader initiative to ensure a more equitable (inter-island) distribution of resources and, more importantly, to stem the tide of urbanization, particularly internal migration to Nuku'alofa.

Two recent examples of success in this area are the achievements of the only secondary schools on the tiny outermost islands of Niuatoputapu and Niuafu'ou. In 1996, Niuatoputapu High School achieved 81 percent success in the Tonga School Certificate Exam in 1996, ranking second behind the prestigious Tonga High School in Nuku'alofa. The school also achieved distinction and credit passes in the Australian Mathematics Competition. In 1997, Niuafu'ou High School achieved the highest results for the whole country in the Tonga School Certificate Examination (marking entry into 6th Form).

While the early 19th century laws on education suggest an absence of overt gender discrimination, it was only at lower (primary) levels that girls were initially given equal opportunities for education. The first government secondary school, Tonga College, for example, opened its doors just to boys when it came into operation in the early 1860s. It was not until much later that secondary school education became available to girls. Even then, there was still a tendency towards pulling girls out of school after they had completed primary education.

Today, there is little to suggest that opportunities for boys are greater, at least at the primary and secondary school levels. Nor is there obvious resistance within the family or community to the idea of educating girls, although educational aspirations remain circumscribed to some extent by the expectations of marriage and motherhood. Cultural or institutional barriers to the education of girls are more evident with respect to gender-specific curriculum and opportunities at the tertiary level.

One of the more striking features of Tonga's educational system is the tendency of girls to outperform boys. It is a trend that has become much more conspicuous as girls have been permitted to remain longer at school. The achievements of girls are not only a discreet source of pride but make it logical for families to invest in the education of their daughters, particularly in times of mounting economic pressures and limited employment opportunities. The openings for women on the labor market, particularly in professional/white collar jobs in the civil service, will probably encourage the cycle of educational investment to continue.

Because enrolment at primary school level in Tonga is compulsory, it is widely accepted that there is universal access and participation. Total enrolment figures have seen little variation in recent years with figures rising only by 1.2 percent overall from 16,658 to 16,857 between 1992 and 1996. It is interesting to note, however, that this increase has come from male enrolments only. In fact, the number of girls over the 1992-1996 period has declined overall from 7,970 to 7,830. By 1996, girls comprised 46 percent of the total 16,857 pupils in primary school in contrast to boys who made up 54 percent (9027) (see Table 15).

Table 15: Primary School Enrolments by Gender, 1991 - 1996

Year	No. of Schools	Enrolment				Total
		Male		Female		
		No.	%	No.	%	
1991	115	8,666	52.0	7,989	48.01	16,655
1992	115	8,688	52.2	7,970	47.8	16,658
1993	115	8,764	52.4	7,975	47.6	16,739
1994	115	8,794	53.2	7,746	46.8	16,540
1995	116	8,856	53.2	7,796	46.8	16,652
1996	116	9,027	53.6	7,830	46.4	16,857

Source: Ministry of Education, Annual Report, 1995-1996

The pattern of secondary school enrolments over the past six years (1990-96) reveals some fluctuations. A steady rise in numbers took place between 1990 and 1994 from 13,890 to 15,702, attributed partly to the influx of students from overseas, typically the children of migrated parents. However, over subsequent years (1994-96), total enrolments have dropped quite significantly (by 16 percent) from 15,702 to 13,143. (see Table 16)

One contributing factor has almost certainly been the high number of (teenager) school drop-outs (895 or 7 percent in 1996). Generally speaking, there are significant dropout rates amongst secondary school children after the age of 12 years, but more especially for 16-17 year olds. Table 17 shows the disproportionately high number of boys dropping out in 1996, at least up until Form 6 when the tables turn in favor of girls.

Table 16: Secondary School Enrolments by Gender, 1991 - 1996

Year	No. of Schools	Enrolment				Total
		Male		Female		
		No.	%	No.	%	
1991	41	7,025	50.8	6,814	40.2	13,839
1992	40	8,137	53.3	7,116	46.7	15,253
1993	40	8,052	51.7	7,521	48.3	15,573
1994	40	8,082	51.5	7,620	48.5	15,702
1995	40	7,275	51.7	6,794	48.3	14,069
1996	40	6,477	49.3	6,666	50.7	13,143

Source: Ministry of Education Annual Reports 1995, 1996

Table 17: Secondary and Middle School Dropouts by Gender, 1996

Age	Class 7		Form 1		Form 2		Form 3		Form 4		Form 5		Form 6		Form 7		Total		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
10 years																			
11 years	2	1	4	3	0	1											6	5	11
12 years	9	3	17	14	4	1	2	1									32	19	51
13 years	14	4	29	20	19	11	2	2	61	3							65	40	105
14 years	3	0	20	4	20	20	24	17	10	3							73	44	117
15 years			6	4	20	5	22	13	29	6	4	3					62	31	93
16 years					7	5	24	12	28	17	28	30					88	64	152
17 years					0	2	10	4	16	16	32	27	2	5			72	54	126
18 years							0	1	12	7	28	26	4	8	0		48	44	92
19 years									24	3	21	18	10	12	0		43	34	77
20 years										0	13	5	8	4	3		48	9	57
21 years											3	4	3	4			6	8	14
Total	28	8	76	45	70	45	84	50	126	55	129	113	27	33	3		543	352	895
Grand Total	36		121		115		134		181		242		60		6		895		
% Dropout	4		13.5		12.8		15		20.2		27		6.7		0.8		100		

Source: Ministry of Education Annual Report, 1996

In respect of enrolments, gender is significant in three respects. First, the number of enrolments by boys declined much more sharply than it did for girls over the 1994-1996 period. Second, the number of girl enrolments surpassed those of boys for the first time in 1996. Current (1996) estimates therefore indicate that there are now slightly (3 percent) more girls than boys attending secondary school. Interestingly, this pattern is not just a phenomenon of the capital island, but is replicated on all other islands except for 'Eua. Third, the dropout rate for boys is higher than it is for girls (8.4 percent as opposed to 5.3 percent).

The 'repeater' phenomenon reveals only a marginally superior performance on the part of girls. Of the total 1481 children enrolled in Class 6 in 1996, 761 repeaters (51 percent) were boys and 720 (49 percent) were girls. Moreover, repeat rates (as proportions of male/female enrolments) work out to be fairly even at 38 percent.

While it is widely known and accepted that girls outperform boys at school, there is little published data to show this. One of the few exceptions is the Secondary Entrance Examination sat by Class 6 pupils for entry to secondary school. Girls have achieved higher results in all four of the exam subjects, including Mathematics, but especially in Tongan and English. Other indications of the accomplishments of girls are less publicized than they are part of community folklore. Tonga High School, the top performing secondary school, comprises nearly 70 percent girls. It also has a higher proportion of women teachers (28 out of 48 in 1996) and a female principal. In the New Zealand Bursary (7th form) exams, girls achieve 60-70 percent of 'A' and 'B' grade passes awarded to Tongan students and receive some of the best results for the whole of New Zealand.

The lack of gender-desegregated statistics on educational performance (particularly examination ratings) stands out as a conspicuous lacuna in an otherwise fairly meticulous gender-inclusive reporting system by the Ministry of Education. One reason may be official sensitivity about the gender gulf in performance. Certainly, Ministry plans for tackling the problem of 'poor performance' by boys reflect the extent of concern that has been generated by the higher drop-out rates (at primary school), lower literacy rates, lack of confidence, and generally poorer performance and employment prospects of boys.

Current Ministry priorities place emphasis on developing strategies for improving the performance of boys and correcting other gender imbalances. At present, close to 70 percent of primary school teachers are women and in the secondary school establishments, the numbers of female teaching staff are rising. The Ministry plans to boost recruitment of male teaching staff, particularly in the primary schools, and to shift teaching methods away from language-based skills (where boys perform poorly and girls excel) and towards activity-based skills (where boys are more comfortable). In essence, the official view is that boys 'should not be disadvantaged' and the adjustments are thus aimed at 'giving boys an equal chance'.

While insufficient information is at hand to evaluate this development, there are some disturbing (discriminatory) implications if corrective measures are permitted to go beyond what may well be desirable remedial action on behalf of boys.

3. Pre-School Education

Responsibility for pre-school education rests largely with the community and there are still strong expectations of the extended family (and in particular women) to provide early childcare. As more women enter the workforce and the nuclear family increasingly displaces the extended family in the urban areas, these demands are becoming both more burdensome and more difficult to meet. Tonga has a Pre-school Association which was established in 1976 to coordinate and support kindergarten activities but a shortage of funding and materials has been a major constraint on their development. While not responsible for pre-school education, the Ministry of Education has plans to develop formal pre-school programs for early childhood.

4. Primary and Secondary Education

As in other parts of the Pacific, Christian missionaries introduced formal education. In Tonga's case, this took place in the early decades of the 19th century and was spearheaded by the Wesleyan, and to a lesser extent, Catholic Church. Conforming to the general pattern, early

educational efforts were motivated primarily by the imperatives of Christian evangelism and conversion and thus focused on moral and religious issues, especially study of the Bible and Christian teachings. The Wesleyan Church established the first primary school in 1828 (for adults). Over a century later, in 1966, it opened the first church-run secondary school.

The early development of church-sponsored education took place with the support and encouragement of the chiefly elite, notably Taufa'ahau, later King George I, who allied himself with the Protestant/Wesleyan faction. As the number and regional distribution of village schools grew, and (adult) attendance levels rose, the curriculum was expanded to include basic literacy and numeracy.

By 1835, a census of Ha'apai conducted by local chiefs found that 68 percent of the entire population was enrolled in one or other of the group's 54 small schools. While no mention is made of gender, it can probably be assumed from this high proportion that the schools were not only open to men. In this regard, it is interesting to note that both the King and his wife were amongst the first students of the English language. Catholic Church schools, supported by rival chiefs, were initially targeted at boys, but as early as 1866, included a co-educational establishment.

The early origins of Tonga's educational tradition offer evidence not only of the leading role played by the chiefly elite, especially the monarchy, in shaping its development but also the close involvement of the wider community. Both of these factors would seem to have a bearing on the commitment to education of both the government and community today, as well as on the commendable achievements made in the educational field.

By an Act of Parliament in 1876, compulsory education was introduced for all children between the ages of 7 and 16 years. In 1882, amendments to the Act introduced compulsory labor service by all (male) taxpayers for the construction of schools and teacher housing (with T\$10 fines inflicted upon defaulters). Village women were obliged to weave the mats required for classroom floors (with T\$1 fines imposed on defaulters). All parents were obliged by law to buy appropriate books for their children, and were subject to a T\$1 fine if they failed to do so. There were stiffer penalties (fines of up to T\$15) for parents who breached any one of the strict school attendance regulations.

Today, over a century later, primary education remains free and compulsory, although the age range has been modified to cover children between the ages of 6 and 13/14 years. Government plays a dominant role in primary education, owning and running over 90 percent of the 116 primary schools around the country. The proportion of government teachers is similarly high (92 percent) and women contribute as much as 68 percent of primary teaching staff, as well as a much higher proportion (83 percent of all teachers) in the church schools. Teacher/pupil ratios consistently rate at around 1:21 which is impressive when compared to other countries in the region like Fiji. At secondary level, the ratio is further improved (1:15 in 1996).

Non-government primary schools are administered by the Free Wesleyan Church (7), the Seventh Day Adventist Church (2), the Tokaikolo Fellowship (1) and the Baha'i Faith (1). Over 50 percent of primary schools (56) are based on the main island of Tongatapu, with 20 and 30 schools in Ha'apai and Vava'u respectively.

At the secondary level, the balance swings heavily in favor of non-government, mainly church authorities. Only seven (17.5 percent) out of a total 40 secondary schools are government-owned, and non-government authorities are responsible for educating the majority of children (10,088 out of 13,143). The largest number of church secondary schools is administered by the Free Wesleyan Church (10), of which one of the largest - Queen Salote College - is an all girls school. The other main contributors are the Latter Day Saints (9), Roman Catholic Church (4), Seventh Day Adventist Church (3) and the Free Church of Tonga (3).

Regional distribution is heavily in favor of Tongatapu where there are 25 schools. There are six secondary schools operating in Vava'u, five in Ha'apai, two in 'Eua and one each in the smaller islands of Niuaotupulu and Niuafo'ou.

Education, especially basic education, is one of the highest development priorities today in Tonga. This is evident in the budgetary allocations to the sector, which receives the largest expenditure vote of all government Ministries. Recurrent expenditure on education has also continued to climb, rising by 18 percent from T\$9.9 million in 1995/6 to T\$11.7 million in 1996/7.

Primary education claimed close to half the total education budget in 1996/7 (\$5.6 million out of a total T\$11.5 million). At the secondary level, an annual per capita government subsidy of T\$50 is paid to the eight non-government (church) authorities running the majority of secondary establishments. The total budget for secondary education in 1996/97 was T\$2.3 million, representing 18 percent of the total education budget.

Despite the budgetary priority given to education, many schools, particularly those in the outer islands, face problems of inadequate classroom space, shortages of equipment and materials, and poor sanitation and water supply facilities. It is in the non-government (mainly church) schools, where there are more serious resource deficiencies, in particular lack of finance, poor facilities and an unhealthy proportion of unqualified teachers. These problems are reflected in the low standards of the schools (relative to the government schools) particularly at secondary level where church authorities carry the major burden of education.

Other shortcomings in the system relate to difficulties faced by the community in meeting education expenses, especially at secondary level. Much of the burden here falls on women, and even their children, for whom the business of raising school fees and other educational expenses is a full time preoccupation in the weeks before the school year/term begins. Mat weaving and *tapa* making take on almost frenzied proportions at these times and children selling peanuts on the roadside are a familiar sight.

For poorer families, the hardship of providing for basic needs extends to education. Even access to primary school, which is ostensibly free, can present problems because of the many additional costs like school uniforms and stationery that have to be covered. Every child is obliged to donate a number of classroom items including a mat and a broom every year. Parents are also expected to pay for the maintenance of the school grounds, water supply, electricity and even toilet paper. They must contribute food and labor for maintenance/developmental activities, and participate in fundraising activities to meet the capital development requirements of schools.

The Ministry of Education acknowledges the crucial role that parents and local communities play in the education of their children. It estimates that the in-kind and financial

contributions of families and village/urban communities just at primary level have an imputed annual value of around 2.2 million pa'anga (or T\$139 per child).

Curriculum development is a primary area of concern and government efforts have been bolstered by donor assistance from Australia, New Zealand and UNESCO. Since the early 1990s, a generously funded curriculum project to develop primary and secondary level materials in targeted areas, including bilingual (Tongan/English) language learning, mathematics and science, has been sponsored by Australia. Improvement in literacy levels (covering English and Tongan language literacy as well as numeracy) is a core component of the UNDP-UNESCO funded BELS Program.

The formal school system is split between primary school which children attend for six years and secondary school where they transfer for a further seven years. The transition from primary to secondary is marked by the Secondary Entrance Exam, which is taken at the end of Class 6. The overwhelming majority of students (95 percent) sitting this exam are at government primary schools.

Although there is a high number and rising proportion (38 percent in 1996) of children who repeat Class 6 and resit the exam (often more than once), this is not considered by the educational establishment to be a reflection of poor performance or any other related problem. Rather, it is attributed to the intense competition for entry into the higher performing secondary schools (especially the leading government establishment, Tonga High School) and the rising expectations of parents.

The four other important examinations are sat in Form 2 for entrance to higher secondary school (Form 3) and at the end of Forms 5, 6 and 7. The Form 2 Common Examination is compulsory for all government schools and optional for non-government schools. It consists of five compulsory subjects - English, Tongan Studies, Mathematics, Science and Social Science.

The Tonga School Certificate Examination taken in Form 5 is a Tonga-based exam but is assisted in moderation and marking by New Zealand. It offers a diverse range of 13 subjects that extend beyond the more mainstream academic subjects to include computer studies, agricultural science, music and Japanese. The percentage of students qualifying for entry into Form 6 has improved radically (effectively two-fold) in recent years (from 21 percent in 1991 to 41 percent in 1996).

The Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC) is sat at the end of Form 6 and has essentially replaced the former New Zealand University Entrance Exam. Seven of the eleven offered subjects are assessed in Tonga. Overall, candidate numbers have risen steadily over the last six years, climbing from 632 in 1990 to 922 in 1996. Parallel improvements have occurred in the results, with 1996 recording the highest proportion (42 percent) of students qualifying to enter university. The final school-based examination is the New Zealand Bursaries Exam, which is taken in Form 7. A high 70 percent of candidates (76 out of 109) qualified to enter university in 1996.

5. Tertiary and Vocational Education

Despite their superior performance throughout the school system, girls/women are under-represented in post-secondary/tertiary education. There is no university in Tonga and Tongan students eligible for undergraduate, postgraduate or other university study usually study at the

University of the South Pacific in Suva or other institutions in the region, including New Zealand and Australia. Of the 400 students enrolled at the USP Tonga Center (for extension courses) in 1995, 46 percent were girls/women.

The Overseas Scholarship Program provides important opportunities for university or other tertiary level education in a variety of disciplines. The Program is heavily reliant on overseas funding, mainly from Australia and New Zealand, and by far the largest proportion of its awards is allocated to education (40 percent in 1996), followed by medicine (18 percent) and science and technology (16 percent). The overwhelming majority of scholarships (74 percent) are available to government departments, with the private sector, statutory boards and church authorities sharing the balance.

As Table 18 shows, women were awarded a higher number of scholarships in a few areas like health and in some instances (e.g. agriculture, statistics), there was an equal gender distribution. However, overall, women were awarded only 40 percent of government department allocations – which take the bulk of scholarships – and 37 percent (83 out of 226) of all awards allocated by 1997. Even in the female stronghold of education, the distribution of scholarships fell short of gender parity (45:55). In respect of fisheries, lands, surveys and natural resources, printing and public works, not a single scholarship was awarded to a woman in either the government or non-government institutions.

It is interesting to note that there has been only a slight improvement in the overall pattern of scholarship allocation in nearly a decade. In 1989, girls/women were awarded 35 percent of all scholarships. Six years later, in 1995, the proportion was the same; and by 1997, the allocation had improved by only 2 percent (to 37 percent). However, recent insistence on gender equity in scholarship allocation by the two main donors (Australia and New Zealand) augur well for possible improvements in the future in spite of the stiff resistance from the all male heads of departments who are responsible for the scholarship nominations. The National Scholarship Committee also has an exclusively male membership, with the exception of its secretary.

The strengthening of post secondary school education and vocational training has been a priority in recent years. It has met with some success. The Tonga government currently (1996) contributes 53 percent of facilities and training. The focal institution for post-secondary education is the government-run Community Development and Training Center (CDTC) which conducts its own tertiary education and training as well as playing a coordinating/facilitating role with respect to non-formal (technical and non-technical) programs in other institutions.

Amongst the training institutions administered by the CDTC are the German and AusAID-funded Tonga Institute of Science and Technology (formerly known as the Tonga Maritime Polytechnic Institute), the Teachers Training College and the Distance Education, Research and Communications Center (DEARC). The DEARC has been developed with support from Australia, UNESCO, Japan and other agencies and its educational services include masters degree programs. Other training institutions administered directly by government Ministries include the Queen Salote School of Nursing (Ministry of Health) which trains school leavers in nursing (for employment in government hospitals) and offers in-service training for hospital nursing staff. There is also the Tonga Health Training Center, which undertakes health awareness education, and training in areas like public health and midwifery, and the Police Training School (Ministry of Police).

Table 18: Distribution of Scholarships by Gender, 1997

	Diploma/ Certificate Awards		Graduate Awards		Postgraduate Awards		Total Awards	
	No.		No.		No.		No.	
<i>GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIPS</i>	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Agriculture	-	-	2	2	-	-	2	2
Audit	-	-	2	2	-	-	2	2
Planning	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Aviation	3	-	3	-	-	-	6	0
Crown Law	-	-	2	3	-	-	2	3
Education	6	2	13	14	3	2	22	18
Finance	0	1	4	2	1	1	5	4
Fisheries	4	-	1	-	3	-	8	0
Foreign Affairs	-	-	0	1	0	1	0	2
Health	-	-	18	20	1	2	19	22
Justice	-	-	6	2	-	-	6	2
Labor	-	-	4	3	-	-	4	3
Lands	-	-	5	-	-	-	5	0
Police	1	-	-	-	0	2	1	2
Marine	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	0
Prime Minister's Office	0	1	2	1	-	-	2	2
Printing	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	0
Statistics	-	-	2	2	-	-	2	2
Visitors Bureau	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	2
Works	2	-	5	-	-	-	7	0
Total Government Scholarships							102	67
<i>PRIVATE SECTOR</i>							0	0
<i>QUASI GOVERNMENT</i>								
Broadcasting	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0
Cooperative	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	0
Investments	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	0
Telecommunications	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0
Water Board	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	0
Total Quasi Government Scholarships							7	0
<i>NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS</i>								
Anglican	-	-	3	1	-	-	3	0
'Atenisi	2	-	3	-	-	-	5	0
Catholic	3	-	4	2	-	-	7	2
Free Church	-	-	1	1	1	0	2	1
Wesleyan	1	0	8	5	1	3	0	8
Tokaikolo	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	2
Mormon	-	-	4	2	-	-	4	2
Seventh Day Adventists	-	-	2	1	-	-	2	1
Total Non-Government Schools Scholarships							34	16
		Male		Female				
Total Scholarships	No.		%	No.		%		
226	143		63.2	83		36.7		

Source: Ministry of Education Annual Reportt, 1996

These institutions are supported by a variety of church-owned bodies. They include the St. Joseph's Business College, a Catholic training center in business, typing and secretarial skills, and the Monfort Technical Institute, a Catholic center offering early (Form 4) school leavers training

in carpentry, painting, welding etc. The Hango Agricultural College is a center run by the Free Wesleyan Church and provides training in farming.

Table 19: Participation of Women in Technical and Vocational Training Activities, Ministry of Labor, Commerce and Industry, 1987-1992

Program	No. of Work-shops	Participants					
		Male		Female		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Non-technical subjects							
Entrepreneurship Development	5	101	73	37	27	138	100
Book-keeping and Accounting	4	59	61	38	39	97	100
Basic Financial Management	4	48	57	36	43	84	100
Industrial Promotion	1	35	78	10	22	45	100
Private Sector Development Seminar	1	18	82	4	18	22	100
Motivation Workshop	1	nil	0	17	100	17	100
Marketing and Management	1	20	71	8	29	28	100
Export Manufacturing Enterprise	1	20	77	6	23	26	100
<i>Average Female Participation</i>					29		
Technical subjects							
Furniture and Joinery Industry Seminar	1	13	87	2	13	15	100
Automobile Repair Seminar	2	38	98	1	2	39	100
Bamboo Product Seminar	1	42	88	2	12	16	100
Diesel Engine Repair	1	19	100	nil	0	19	100
Welding	1	5	100	nil	0	5	100
Safety Course	1	5	100	nil	0	5	100
<i>Average Female Participation</i>					4.5		
Agriculture							
Root-crop Processing	1	2	10	19	90	21	100
<i>Average Female Participation</i>					90		
Total:	27	494	71	227	33	693	

Source: Adapted from Ganter, E. (1996) *Gender Study: Women in Vocational Training*, Tongan-German Vocational Training Co-operation

Note: These training activities were organized as part of the Small Industries and Entrepreneurial Development Program under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Labor, Commerce and Industry and U.N.D.P.

None of the technical institutions offering vocational and apprenticeship training are closed to women, so, theoretically at least, the full range of courses are open to them. However, in line with cultural expectations and other social constraints, female enrolments are both fewer in number and typically found in the institutions or courses that provide training in traditional 'female' areas like teaching, nursing/health, secretarial/typing, and hospitality. Table 19 shows clear imbalances in participation in government-sponsored technical and vocational training activities, especially in technical subjects (like furniture/joinery, bamboo products and welding) where average female participation was as low as 4.5 percent over the 1987-1992 period. By contrast, women comprised 90 percent of participants for training in the processing of agricultural root crops.

In similar fashion, the non-government agricultural colleges and the construction, engineering (mechanical and electrical) and maritime trades remain predominantly male domains. In some cases, the gender division is starkly represented in exclusive enrolments for men or women, for

example the Catholic-run St. Joseph's Business College (female) and the Montfort Technical College (male).

Women have made some inroads into the traditional male domain. A few women have successfully undertaken trade skills training and an even bigger impact has been made in professional areas like accounting. In 1996, there were more female than male enrolments for the CDTC Accounting Diploma and only slightly fewer numbers (29:31) in the Accounting Certificate program. (see Table 20) One area of concern, however, is the low number of women enrolling in the Diploma of Agriculture (only 1 out of 15 in 1996) which fails to reflect the important role women play in both subsistence and commercial agriculture. This poor access to specialized training also constrains the development of agricultural programs within the Women Development Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and inhibits the process of mainstreaming gender into the program and policy work of the Ministry.

Table 20: Enrolments in Community Development Training Centre (CDTC) Programs for 1996

Program	Male	Female	Total
Agriculture Diploma	14	1	15
Accounting -			
Diploma	10	14	24
Certificate	31	29	60
Tourism and	5	6	11
Hospitality Certificate			
Total	60	50	110

Source: Ministry of Labor Annual Report, 1996

H. Legal Rights and the Political Status of Women

1. Women and the Law

In many Pacific countries, customary law is applied alongside or in conjunction with formal (Western) law with respect to important areas like land distribution and fishing rights. By contrast, codified Tongan law embodies a combination of English law, 19th century Christian (essentially Protestant) ethics and, according to Jalal, only 'those aspects of customary law that were useful to the ruling classes.' (1998:40)

Unfortunately, the lack of gender analysis on customary law (prior to European contact and the codification of Tongan law) makes it impossible to fully understand the impact of the transition on the status of Tongan women. Certainly, in some areas relating to the controls on female sexuality/fertility (e.g. abortion), women's status under the law has declined.

Constitutional Rights

Article 4 of Tonga's Constitution (Act No 3, 1976) states that 'There shall be but one law in Tonga for chiefs and commoners for Non-Tongans and Tongans. No laws shall be enacted for one class and not for another class but the law shall be the same for all the people of this land.' This has generally been interpreted as an affirmation and guarantee of women's equal legal status. However, this is not in fact the case. In order to guarantee such protection, a specific prohibition of gender discrimination is required.

In the absence of such safeguards, the Constitution thus implicitly sanctions discrimination in any area of social, economic or political life. This inequality before the supreme law

of the Kingdom is reproduced, sometimes quite explicitly, in a number of other (subordinate) laws like the Tongan Nationality Act.

Unlike the Constitutions of other Pacific Island countries like Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the Tongan Constitution carries no general affirmative action provision that could be invoked in favor of women.

Nationality and Citizenship

Tonga's Nationality Act (repealed and amended on successive occasions since 1915) is discriminatory against women on several grounds. Children of Tongan women are assumed to take on the nationality of their fathers. Thus, while automatic citizenship rights are granted to children born in Tonga of a Tongan father (or born overseas if the father was born in Tonga), they are only entitled to the same rights through their mother if they are borne out of wedlock.

Similarly, citizenship rights through naturalization are automatically conferred on non-Tongan women marrying Tongan men. In the reverse situation, Tongan women are not permitted (as a matter of course) to pass on their nationality to their husbands should they marry non-Tongans.

CEDAW

Tonga has not yet ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and ratification is by no means assured in the near future. This process will require the Tongan Government to ensure - through legal and other measures - that national law and policy guarantee the equality of women.

Discrimination in the area of land law poses one of the most conspicuous transgressions of CEDAW. However, its elimination - in the interests of gender equality - is unlikely to win easy support at the highest decision making levels of government, notably Cabinet. This is largely because of the political sensitivities surrounding land and the broader social implications of land reform.

There would seem to be an urgent need for education and awareness raising about CEDAW amongst women's groups at the community level. To date, there appears to have been only one national workshop held to jointly address the issues of CEDAW and the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). This took place prior to the global women's meeting in Beijing.

The Women's Development Unit, which forms part of the Prime Minister's Office, does not consider CEDAW a priority, and it has put work on hold pending the completion of other projects. If a submission is made to Cabinet by the Unit, it will almost certainly contain reservations, for example over land rights.

Land Rights

Tonga is the only Pacific Island country in which land legislation expressly discriminates against women. (Jalal 1998:56) Under the Constitution and the Land Act, all land belongs to the King. However, in accordance with the principles of patrilineality (inheritance through

the male lineage) and male primogeniture (eldest legitimate male), Tongan men enjoy proprietary rights to an '*api kolo* (town allotment) and an '*api 'uta* (tax or country allotment).

Women's land rights are both tightly circumscribed and indirect. Rights to inherit land are restricted to temporary inheritance in the event of all male lines dying out (Section 111 Constitution), and succession rights for widows until they die ('life interest' rights). Even these nominal land rights are limited by the social controls governing women's sexuality. For instance, in order to retain a life interest in her deceased husband's allotment(s), a widow is not permitted to remarry or to engage in sexual relations.

Faced with these legal conditionalities, many widows accept that they must make a choice between retaining their land/property and having a relationship/companionship. When opting for the latter, they simply move off the land and out of the family home. Those who defy the odds (against legal and social sanction) and try to combine both 'privileges', run the risk of facing legal action from their in-laws as well as ostracism in the community.

For the minority of widows whose deceased husbands are owners of hereditary estates, land rights are even less secure. Sexual behavior is not an issue here but nor are there any life interest rights at all - and therefore no entitlement to remaining on the property. Available evidence suggests that land litigation periodically includes cases aimed at evicting widows on the grounds of their 'adultery' (sic) or their lack of 'life interest' rights.

While women in Tonga are seriously disadvantaged by virtue of the rules of inheritance, the widespread convention of informal leasing provides some respite. However, informal arrangements are highly tenuous as they are bound up in the complexities (and vagaries) of kinship relationships and eroding cultural practices. In particular, women's informal land rights are dependent on the goodwill of male kin (and their wives), and the resilience of customary forms of mutual care and reciprocity.

A case in point is the *fahu* system, which requires brothers and maternal uncles to take care of their sisters, or sisters' children, even after the men are married. In theory (and even in past practice), the *fahu* system might be seen as a check against institutionalized male privilege in the land system. However, the extended family system (along with its kin-based ties and obligations) is no longer as strong an institution as it was in the past, especially in more urbanized environments like Nuku'alofa.

The shift to a more commercially-driven society is just one of the many forces of social change linked to the emerging tensions between the nuclear family (where husband and wife are primarily concerned with the interests of their own – biological – children) and the extended family (where a man has obligations to his sister and sister's children as well as to his wife and children). This conflict of interest is becoming increasingly apparent in land litigation where local legal opinion in Tonga points to a growing number of cases involving civil action to evict the child or children of a man's *fahu*. Such action is usually either the result of a family dispute or in order to make way for an income-generating lease to a non-relative.¹

¹

Personal communication, senior magistrate, Nuku'alofa, February 1998.

Gender inequalities in the land tenure system assume added significance when related to the land shortages in Tonga and the security requirements for accessing development loans (land remains the preferred source of collateral and is still a prerequisite of larger loans). The disadvantages faced by women also take on more meaning when considered in relation to the opportunities now available to plant commercial crops like squash (which can generate handsome household incomes); and the fact that women are making such an important contribution to agricultural development.

The changing structure of the family is a social phenomenon that may well aggravate the gender discriminatory land system for many women. High rates of migration (both internal and external) and divorce rates are resulting in larger numbers of female-headed households. These women are especially susceptible to poverty. More equitable land rights would provide them with a greater measure of economic security.

Employment

The lack of employment legislation in Tonga denies both male and female workers protection over basic conditions of employment like working hours, wages, sick leave and health and safety in the workplace. Women are probably more vulnerable because of their generally inferior employment status as well as their special needs as women workers.

The lack of legislated maternity protection for women (and other employment provisions that recognize and value their childbearing and child nurturing roles) might seem something of an irony given the 'respect' and 'superior social status' so commonly proclaimed for women in Tongan society. At a practical level, it constitutes an indirect form of discrimination against women since it is only women who bear children and who are expected to carry the burden of child care.

The absence of protective legislation disadvantages women in a number of practical ways. It can compromise their ability (right) to work, their job security, their earning power and ability to provide for their families (particularly single mothers), and their health (because in the absence of adequate maternity provisions, many women are forced to return to work prematurely).

An Employment Bill has been in draft form since 1995. If enacted, the legislation will help to improve women's employment status. Aside from general stipulations relating to hours of work, overtime, annual holidays, public holidays, sick leave and health/safety provisions, the Bill provides for maternity leave (40 days leave along with mandatory job protection).

Perhaps one of the most interesting and progressive features of the Bill is the equal pay provision. Under Part III, section 24, it states that 'rates of remuneration for work of equal value shall be determined without discrimination'. Under the 'interpretation' provisions, the definition of discrimination specifically includes gender.

Divorce

Tongan law relating to divorce combines some of the traditional features of a fault-based system (such as desertion, adultery, willful refusal to consummate and insanity) with the more progressive, no-fault condition of irretrievable breakdown. This not only gives divorce petitions a

greater chance of success but also removes some of the more antagonistic and confrontational aspects of divorce proceedings. Tonga only requires a two-year period of separation as a ground for divorce.

According to Jalal (1998: 265), separation and desertion were the principle grounds for divorce until the Tonga Divorce Act (cap. 29) was amended in 1988 to include irretrievable breakdown. Since then, many divorce applications have been based on this concept (defined in the amendment as 'unreasonable behavior') and in practice used to cover, *inter alia*, violence of husbands towards their wives. Jalal suggests that this new provision may explain the rising numbers of divorce between 1990 and 1991. As many as 968 divorces were granted between 1985 and 1992. (*ibid.*)

Sexuality and Women's Legal Rights

Social control over women's sexuality is a common feature of the law in many countries of the Pacific. In Tonga, apart from the example of land law noted above, the Maintenance and Custody laws offer two further examples of how women's legal rights are tied to (and circumscribed by) social expectations of sexual propriety. Importantly, these expectations are not directed towards men and they thus sustain a double standard of sexual morality.

Under the Maintenance of Deserted Wives Act (cap.31), a woman can be disqualified from receiving maintenance if she is found to be committing adultery. This ruling can be invoked irrespective of whether she is separated or divorced, or has been deserted by her husband. It also applies even if her husband has himself remarried or is having sexual relations/is in another relationship. (Jalal 1998: 364)

As a general rule, custody rights over children are given to women in Tonga, reflecting the cultural assumption and expectation that they are the principle nurturers and caretakers of children. However, as in other countries of the Pacific like Fiji, the courts in practice demonstrate additional expectations of appropriate sexual or moral conduct on the part of mothers. Evidence of adultery or 'promiscuity' (in Tongan referred to as being a *fokisi* meaning fox) or any other 'improper' conduct, such as alcohol consumption, cannot only be used to discredit a woman but is considered evidence of her unfitness to care for her children. Custody rights can thus be withdrawn from women found to be in another relationship or having sexual relations despite the fact that they are living apart from their husbands, or might have been forced to leave an abusive relationship. No such moral or sexual standard is applied to men in custody cases. (Jalal 1998:314-315)

Violence Against Women

It is difficult to offer a precise picture of the extent to which crimes of violence against women are a problem in Tonga. A major reason for this is a lack of data especially in the case of domestic violence which, true to the general pattern in the Pacific, is not classified as a separate offence. This means that violence against women in the home is subsumed under the general category of common assault in the Criminal Offences Act (cap 18), somewhat ironic given the fact that police records include a separate category for women **committing** assault. Tonga has no legislation providing for non-molestation orders for the protection of women in abusive relationships.

Domestic violence, in particular criminal assault of women by their husbands, is a becoming increasingly common in Tonga. Wife abuse occurs at all levels of Tongan society, and is not confined to the lower end of the social scale or to the economically disadvantaged groups.

However, for reasons of cultural protocol, violence committed by men of traditional rank or social standing is less likely to run the risk of police intervention and prosecution.

According to an informal survey conducted for the Nuku'alofa Police District, a total of 450 complaints of violence were made by women over an 11-month period in 1996. The overwhelming majority of these complaints were from women who had been (verbally or physically) abused by their husbands/partners. Whether for cases of domestic violence or sexual assault like rape and incest (for which only a handful of cases are reported each year), the vast majority of incidents go unreported for a variety of social, cultural and personal reasons. According to a senior police officer at the Police Academy, 'you have to be blind not to see domestic violence happening in Tonga. But with everyone related to each other, the problem is denied because of the shame.' (personal communication, 1998)

Not surprisingly, there is little open discussion of the problem, and - with the exception of one or two women's groups - even acknowledgment of its existence. For most women, there is a reluctance to prosecute their husbands at all. However, women in Nuku'alofa regularly request the help of police to 'deal with' a violent husband. This usually means asking police to detain him overnight (or until he has sobered up) but specifically not to prosecute him. It is only in cases of violence causing bodily harm or grievous bodily harm that the victim might be denied this discretionary right to decide whether or not to prosecute.

In respect of offences of sexual violence, the reluctance to report is also related to the cultural and social environment. This can be seen in cases of incest where clearly defined cultural controls have traditionally regulated certain relationships between the opposite sex within the family (for example, father/daughter and brother/sister). These taboos would probably heighten the sense of family shame felt about an offence being committed. With rape cases, there are the usual inhibiting factors (relating to social attitudes, police/legal procedures, and personal feelings of guilt and shame) but these are almost certainly aggravated by a cultural climate that is still strongly disapproving of female independence/social mobility before marriage, especially pre-marital sexual activity.

The tougher moral regime applied to girls and young women appears (paradoxically) to reflect assumptions about promiscuous behavior at an early age - perhaps harking back to early pre-Christian days when young unmarried women enjoyed a more liberal sexual environment. These assumptions can undermine the protection of girls and women under the law. For instance, unlawful carnal knowledge (defilement or statutory rape) in cases of girls who are over 12 years (and under 16) is 'almost always assumed to be consensual, a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship.' (Jalal 1998:100).

Tongan law prohibits a range of sexual activities including rape, indecent assault, incest and homosexuality under the Criminal Offences Act (cap.18). The law on rape is covered in two separate sections of the Act (sections 118 [1] and 118 [3]). There is one positive feature of the law on sexual offences that distinguishes Tonga from most other Pacific Island countries. This relates to the rules of evidence. Under section 33 of the Evidence Act (cap.15), no evidence or cross-examination relating to a victim's previous sexual experience (other than that with the defendant) is permitted as a general rule. Specific conditions govern the discretionary right of judges to allow such questions. (Jalal 1998:126)

However, there are many features of Tonga's sexual offence legislation that deny women adequate protection under the law. In keeping with the general pattern in the Pacific, the

crime of rape is based on a very narrow definition of non-consensual sexual intercourse, precluding acts of sexual violence like forced penetration with foreign objects. Marital rape is not a crime unless a woman is legally separated, and although corroboration (through medical evidence for example) is not laid down as necessary, it is commonly required for a conviction. Both the definitional problems of rape and the non-criminalization of marital rape form part of a recent submission by the Catholic Women's League for the reform of Tonga's rape legislation.

Lenient sentencing for sexual offences and other assault cases, and the use of traditional forms of reconciliation or forgiveness (known as *fakamolemole* in Tonga) to reduce sentencing and even to encourage charges to be dropped, are matters of concern for women's rights activists throughout the Pacific. Although the maximum sentence for rape is usually life imprisonment, this translates only into around 14 years and is rarely delivered. Tonga prescribes a maximum 15 years imprisonment along with 10 years for attempted rape and incest, and two years for indecent assault.

According to Jalal (1998:100) 'Tonga appears to have a better sentencing record for child abusers.' She cites two cases of unlawful carnal knowledge of girls under the age of 12 years which received 15 year prison sentences. Another case of attempted rape of a girl under 12 years was awarded a five year sentence.

Unsympathetic and traditional attitudes within the police force towards women victims of violence are a problem in Tonga, just as they are elsewhere. However, the strong representation of women in the force, notably in the middle-senior ranks, is a positive feature. Until recently (1998), Tonga had a woman Deputy Police Commissioner, and while there are no women at Superintendent level, approximately 40 percent of Chief Inspectors and three out of the seven Assistant Chief Inspectors are women.

In addition, a few recent developments would seem to be encouraging for women. The first of these is the gender-sensitization programs conducted for the Tongan police through the support of British Aid (Suva-based Pacific Regional Human Rights Resource Team) and AusAID. One outcome of the AusAID-funded Crimes Against the Person training is that women victims of spousal abuse are more likely to meet with police support when requested.

There are two other positive developments that have occurred recently. In the first instance, there are a growing number of domestic assault cases heard in the Magistrates Court that are now resulting in custodial sentences of one-three months, as opposed to the small fines or suspended sentences common in the past. Secondly, a 'no drop policy', which removes decision-making (and counseling) over domestic assault cases from the police, and effectively ensures that they proceed to court as a matter of course, has been implemented.

The advocacy work of the Catholic Women's League and its Legal Literacy Program have played a critical role in bringing about these important policy changes as well as the gender-sensitivity training noted above.

2. Access to Positions of Power and Authority

Women in Tonga are marginalized from the political process and institutions, and indeed from virtually all institutional forms of decision-making and authority in the public domain,

notably government. Women have had the right to vote and stand for election since 1951 when an amendment to the 1875 Constitution overturned the original franchise barring them (along with non-taxpaying males) from voting. In spite of this 'emancipation', women nevertheless remain conspicuously invisible from the corridors of political power close to one half a century later.

Although two women, Tupoumoheofo, the 12th Tu'i Kanokupolu, and Queen Salote, the 21st Tu'i Kanokupolu (1918-1965), occupied the most powerful position of monarch, their accession to the throne was only possible because of the absence of male heirs. Moreover no woman has ever been given a hereditary noble's title.

Outside inherited power (or ascribed rank), the area of political office is similarly 'no woman's land'. Only a handful of women have ever been elected to the Legislative Assembly for brief spells in the past. There has never been a female member of Cabinet or the highest executive authority, the Privy Council (both of which bodies are appointed by the King); nor has there been a female Governor of Ha'apai or Vava'u (also appointees of the monarch). No woman has been elected (or stood for election) as a town or district officer.

Table 21: Membership of Boards/Statutory Organizations/Government-linked Corporations by Gender, 1998

Board/Committee/Corporation	Membership		
	Male	Female	Total
Tonga Water Board	8	1	9
Sea Star Co. Ltd.	6	0	6
Tonga Electric Power Board	6	0	6
Tonga Development Bank	8	0	8
Bank of Tonga	3	0	3
Tonga Broadcasting Commission	7	0	7
Tonga Telecommunication Commission	6	0	6
National Reserve Bank of Tonga	6	1	7
Tonga Investment	4	0	4
Leiola Duty Free	4	1	5
Tonga Timber Co. Ltd.	7	0	7
Total	65	3	68

Source: Government of Tonga, Ministry of Finance

Although a few women occupy positions of seniority in the Civil Service, men overwhelmingly dominate representation on government committees and statutory boards. As Table 21 shows, most of the key boards/organizations have no women members at all. Only a few venture to include a token woman, and invariably this is a woman of high rank.

As in other aspects of life in Tonga, women's political rights and status are shaped by the broader social and political system, in particular the aristocratic or feudal structure. This inter-relationship can be clearly seen when considering the right of women to stand for political office. The Legislative Assembly consists of the (all-male) Cabinet, seven elected representatives of the (all-male) hereditary nobles, and just nine representatives of the people (the majority non-titled electorate referred to as commoners). Because there are no female nobles, women wishing to participate in a national election can effectively contest only the nine seats available to the 'people's representatives'.

While it is true to say that this marginalization is not exclusive to women, but also applies to thousands of enfranchised (commoner) men, women contestants have to face (and overcome) the additional obstacle of a political culture that tags all decision-making, authority and political power as male prerogatives. For the handful of women willing to challenge this tradition, the

task is made more difficult because of the extent to which women themselves have internalized this norm.

Such is the degree of apparent acceptance, at least on the part of elite or influential women, that the lack of women's political representation is usually not depicted as evidence of political discrimination or subordinate status. Rather, it is justified by reference to the lack of effort by women themselves or, ironically, to the 'highly respected status' of Tongan women. In this way, women are paradoxically being done 'a favor' by their exclusion from political office since this would be 'disrespectful' to them.

Chapter 3. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

A. Employment and Work - General Trends

In line with long-standing trends in other Pacific countries, official statistics (including census data) in Tonga have helped to create a distorted picture of women's economic roles and development contribution, both absolutely and relative to men. Part of the problem has derived from focusing on formal cash sector activity, where women feature less. Concepts like 'economically active' have also been problematic because they have tended to negate much of women's productive and social labor (whether as household managers, subsistence farmers/fishers or managers of cultural obligations including the informal redistribution of goods).

Because most of women's work takes place in the subsistence or informal sector and involves primary responsibility for childcare and household labor, their 'work' continues to suffer from a lack of social recognition and imputed value in the national accounts. Other definitional distortions reinforce this 'invisibility' of women's productive laboring and help to perpetuate the myth that women either do not 'work' (but 'stay at home') or are not as 'economically active' as men. In the agricultural sector, the term 'farmer' in official reports means only men who are farmers; women farmers are referred to simply as 'women'. Women are, moreover, typically said to undertake 'light jobs' and play the role of 'helper' to their (working) husbands.

Under the 1986 census, women were only classified as 'economically active' if they spent **most of their time** engaged in an economic activity (these activities included unpaid subsistence work but excluded housework). This definition ensured that many women were reduced to being 'economically inactive' simply because their activity (say farming or handicrafts) was a secondary activity combined with child care/housework which claimed the larger portion of their time.

Under the latest 1996 census, the definition of 'economically active' is less exclusive (though it still discounts housework if this is not combined with some farming, fishing or handicrafts). This shift in definition needs to be taken into account when comparing data over the 1986-1996 intercensal period, because it is likely to be one of the factors underlying the higher numbers of women deemed 'economically active' in 1996. Apart from census data, the Labor Force Surveys offer some idea of workforce trends. However, it is advisable to restrict comparative analysis to the two surveys of 1990 and 1993 and not to extend it to the national censuses because of significant definitional differences. (Notable amongst these is the different age threshold used - 10 years and 15 years respectively).

While employment data on women suffers from shortages, conceptual inconsistencies and gender biases, localized research findings over the years have repeatedly established that women spend a significant number of hours a week engaged in productive activities like handicrafts, agriculture and lagoon fishing. The informal sector is pivotal to Tonga's development and women feature prominently in a wide range of activities including agriculture/agro-forestry, fishing, weaving/*tapa* making, marketing/trading and small-scale entrepreneurial activities.

The flea market in Nuku'alofa - a thriving Saturday business - is dominated by women (many from poorer families) who sell a wide variety of goods including clothing and household knickknacks. Increasingly, small stalls (sometimes a single table selling just one or two items like perfume and soap) are being erected on the roadside outside private homes. These too are organized and run by women (with the help of their children) and their proliferation has prompted local observations that 'nearly every house in Tonga has become a *fale koloa* (small shop)'. This flourishing informal sector trading not only reflects the increasing tendency for remittances to be sent 'in kind' rather than in cash, but also the enterprising spirit of ordinary women.

The gender biases in the definition of work, including the continuing exclusion of women's unpaid domestic labor, are reflected in the latest (1996) census findings. Of the total number of persons enumerated as economically active, 64 percent are men (21,695) and only 36 percent (12,213) women. (see Table 22) By the same token, only 42 percent of all women over the age of 15 years (12,213 out of 29,284) are considered economically active, compared to 75 percent of men (21,695 out of 28,818). This means that as much as 58 percent of women over 15 years (17,071) are not considered to be economically active. Table 23 confirms that the vast majority (66 percent) of these 'economically inactive' women engage in unpaid housework while the bulk of 'economically inactive' men (59 percent) are students.

Table 22: Economically Active Population aged 15 years and above by Gender, 1996

	Male	Female	Total
Total Economically Active	21,695	12,213	33,908
Total Employed	18,402	11,004	29,406
Full Time Employed	8,597	4,721	13,318
Mainly farming, fishing and handicraft production	7,986	1,051	9,037
Some farming, fishing and handicraft production	1,763	5,211	6,974
On Leave	56	21	77
Unemployed	3,293	1,209	4,502

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report 1996

Table 23: Not Economically Active Population aged 15 years and above by Gender, 1996

Non-Economic Activity	Male		Female		Persons	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Housework only	1,264	17.80	11,312	66.3	12,576	52.00
Student	4,197	58.90	4,206	24.6	8,403	34.70
Disabled	299	4.20	246	1.4	545	2.30
Retired/Old	1,240	17.40	1,272	7.5	2,512	10.40
Not Stated	4	0.06	-	0	4	0.02
Others	1,363	19.10	1,307	7.7	2,670	11.00
Total	7,123	100.00	17,071	100.0	24,194	100.00

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report, 1996

Women's economic marginalization in the national statistics is evident in other respects. The total number of employed women is just 11,004 compared to 18,402 men. As Table 24 shows, women's official employment in agriculture and fisheries is negligible (a total of 119 women for both industries!). The Table also shows that by far the largest proportion of employed women are found in the manufacturing sector (6,290 or 57 percent), followed by education (965 or 8.8 percent) and public administration (945 or 8.6 percent). By contrast, the largest sectoral employer of men is agriculture (8,795 or 48 percent) followed by public administration (2,756 or 15 percent).

The numbers of women in the wholesale and retail trade are not appreciably lower than those of men (848 as opposed to 1,112) and women surpass men in 'financial intermediation'. Perhaps less surprising is that women feature more prominently than men in the areas of education, health and social work, and hotels and restaurants.

Table 25, which classifies the employed population according to principal occupation, also reveals some interesting trends. One of these is the narrow gender gap for technicians (908 women compared to 1020 men). Less surprising are the higher numbers of women clerks and service workers. Confirming the indications in Table 24, the largest number and proportion of employed women are craft and related trades workers (6,274 or 57 percent) while the majority of men are skilled agricultural and fisheries workers (9,848 or 54 percent). Men also dominate (four-fold) the occupational categories of legislators, senior officers and managers (434 compared to 102 women) as well as professionals (1,256 as opposed to 880).

Table 24: Distribution of Employed Persons by Industry and Gender, 1996

Industry	Male		Female		Persons	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	8,795	47.8	91	0.8	8,886	30.2
Fishing	1,039	5.7	28	0.3	1,067	3.6
Mining and Quarrying	38	0.2	5	0.0	43	0.1
Manufacturing	420	2.3	6,290	57.2	6,710	22.8
Electricity, Gas and Water	407	2.2	97	0.9	504	1.7
Construction	485	2.6	15	0.1	500	1.7
Wholesale and Retail Trade	1,112	6.0	848	7.7	1,960	6.7
Hotel and Restaurants	239	1.3	307	2.8	546	1.9
Transport, Storage and Communications	931	5.1	278	2.5	1,209	4.1
Financial Intermediation	244	1.3	292	2.7	536	1.8
Real Estate, Renting and Business Ac.	79	0.4	42	0.4	121	0.4
Public Administration and Defence	2,756	15.0	945	8.6	3,701	12.6
Education	756	4.1	965	8.8	1,721	5.9
Health and Social Work	135	0.7	375	3.4	510	1.7
Other Community, Social and Personal	864	4.7	269	2.4	1,133	3.9
Private Households with Employed Persons	74	0.4	113	1.0	187	0.6
Extra-Territorial Organisations/Bodies	28	0.2	44	0.4	72	0.2
Total	18,402	100.0	11,004	100.0	29,406	100.0

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report, 1996

Table 25: Distribution of Employed Population aged 15 years and above by Main Occupation and Gender, 1996

Occupation	Male		Female		Persons	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Legislators, Senior Officers and Managers	434	2.4	102	0.9	536	1.8
Professionals	1,256	6.8	880	8.0	2,136	7.3
Technicians/Associated Technicians	1,020	5.5	908	8.3	1,928	6.6
Clerks	838	4.6	1,440	13.1	2,278	7.7
Service Workers, Shop & Marketing Sales	906	4.9	1,019	9.3	1,925	6.5
Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers	9,848	53.5	97	0.9	9,945	33.8
Craft & Related Trades Workers	1,766	9.6	6,274	57.0	8,040	27.3
Plant & Machine Operators & Assembly	1,000	5.4	37	0.3	1,037	3.5
Elementary Occupations	1,056	5.7	240	2.2	1,296	4.4
Armed Forces	278	1.5	7	0.1	285	1.0
Total	18,402	100.0	11,004	100.0	29,406	100.0

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report, 1996

It is evident from Tables 24 and 25 that gender is a key variable influencing job distribution on the labor market and that there is a conspicuous degree of occupational segregation. As is the case in many other countries, Tongan women are typically found in a small range of occupations involving low-paid menial or subordinate jobs, or jobs involving caring/serving or traditional (manual) skills, for example clerical/secretarial, service/sales and craft work. This pattern is especially significant given the success of girls (relative to boys) at all stages of the school system. In the professional area, such as in the civil service, women are more typically found in teaching and nursing jobs and are under-represented in managerial and higher level administrative positions. (see Table 26)

As the following sections illustrate women are the preferred source of labor for a range of jobs requiring dexterity, precision and patience, including vanilla pollination, coffee bean harvesting, and fish/seaweed processing. The narrow range and type of employment available to women have no legal foundations and essentially derive from deeply rooted (and mostly patriarchal) cultural values and conventions. In fact, unlike most other countries of the region, including Fiji and Western Samoa, there are no work restrictions on women laid down by law for the simple reason that the country has no labor legislation of any kind. (The controversial Employment Bill has been awaiting Cabinet approval since 1995.)

One of the more noticeable trends on the labor market over the past 20 years has been the marked increase in the numbers of women officially estimated to be engaged in formal employment, especially during the period of the last census (1986-1996). Over the 1976-1986-1996 intercensal years, numbers have grown dramatically from 2,743 in 1976 to 11,004 in 1996,

Table 26: Women in the Civil Service, 1997

Government Ministry	Levels 1-2 (senior)	Levels 3-9 (middle)	Levels 10-14 (lower)	Total Women at All Levels
Agriculture and Forestry	1	9	48	58
Ministry of Ports and Marine	nil	2	7	9
Post Office	nil	3	15	18
Prime Minister's Office	3	13	51	67
Printing Department	nil	1	27	28
Audit Department	nil	3	10	13
Civil Aviation	nil	1	27	28
Central Planning Department	nil	8	7	15
Crown Law Department	1	3	4	8
Customs Department	nil	1	8	9
Ministry of Education	1	121	648	770
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	6	8	3	17
Ministry of Fisheries	nil	1	13	14
Ministry of Finance	1	7	33	41
Inland Revenue Department	nil	4	14	18
Ministry of Justice	nil	2	14	16
Labor, Commerce and Industries	nil	9	24	33
Lands, Survey and Natural Resources	nil	4	21	25
Government store supplies	nil	nil	2	2
Governor's Office Ha'apai	nil	nil	2	2
Governor's Office Vava'u	nil	1	5	6
Ministry of Health	nil	40	444	484
Palace Office	nil	nil	5	5
Tonga Traditions Office	nil	nil	2	2
Ministry of Police	1	9	66	76
Prisons Department	nil	nil	6	6
Statistics Department	1	10	18	29
Tonga Visitors Bureau	nil	5	14	19
Ministry of Works	nil	2	19	21
Total	15	267	1557	1839
Distribution of Women (%)	0.8	14.5	84.7	100

Source: Compiled from the Tonga Civil Service List, 1997

representing 14.7 percent and 37.4 percent of the total number of persons employed. While definitional changes in the census have contributed to this, a rising number of women have been entering the workforce over this period. In some occupations, such as the service industry, women's share in the labor market has risen particularly sharply (from 31.8 percent in 1976 to 53 percent in 1996). By contrast, men's employment has risen much more slowly in numerical terms from 15,833 to 18,402 and declined proportionately from 71.7 percent to 62.5 percent.

Unemployment trends have fluctuated over the past two decades covering the three national censuses partly as a consequence of changing definitions. Having improved from 13 percent to 9 percent between 1976 and 1986, the rate has again taken a downward turn to reach a high 13.3 percent in 1996. Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years bear the brunt of unemployment but there is also a gender pattern. By 1986, women recorded the much higher rate of 18.7 percent compared to men of 6.4 percent and in the capital Nuku'alofa, women's employment rate was estimated to be 50 percent more than men's. However, the 1996 census suggests that this situation has reversed and that men face greater difficulty than women in entering the labor market. They now register an unemployment rate of 15.2 percent as opposed to 9.9 percent for women.

Income and earnings data is unfortunately piecemeal and sporadically collected so that it is difficult to come to any reliable conclusions about gender trends. Private sector companies are not required to submit details of their wages/salaries to government and the Ministry of Labor does not even collect wage data on the companies operating in its Small Industries Center. Although a Household Income and Expenditure Survey was undertaken in 1992/93, the report is incomplete and, according to the Statistics Department, it is unlikely to be released: the income data is regarded as unreliable and the expenditure data is now very outdated. Another survey is planned for 1999.

However, there have been two Labor Force Surveys undertaken to assist the national planning and policy making process and these have both included gender-desegregated earnings data. The second and latest survey was conducted in 1993/1994 and involved the enumeration of 3,300 households and 18,300 individuals. A number of observations can be made about the data collected on average earnings and hours worked as reproduced in Table 27.

First, it is evident that in the agriculture and fishing industries, women earned much less than men (\$77.91 as opposed to T\$81.51) although they worked longer hours (44.4:43.2 hours per week). They also received a larger proportion of their total earnings in kind than men. If the in-kind input is eliminated and only average cash earnings are compared, the gender wage gap is wider (\$74.90: T\$80.96). The second observation that can be made is that in the trade, restaurants and hotels industry group where women predominate (1,011:671), and their hours of work are higher (45.5:43.3), there is a very large gender wage gap (\$62.97:82.86). A similar pattern can be found in the finance/insurance industry group.

The unregulated employment environment in Tonga, notably the lack of employment/wage legislation and the prohibition of trade unions, makes all workers, male and female, vulnerable to unscrupulous employers as well as to health and safety hazards. Until 1984, a 'maximum' wage rate applied, and although the concept of minimum wages was later approved, no minimum rates have ever been set in Tonga, largely on account of opposition from the business community.

Table 27: Average Earnings and Hours Worked by Gender and Industry, 1996

Industry Group	Number of Paid Employees			Average Earnings Per Week									Average Hours Worked		
				Cash (T\$)			Kind (T\$)			Total (T\$)					
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Agriculture and Fishing	624	207	831	80.96	74.90	79.45	0.56	3.01	1.17	81.51	77.91	80.62	43.2	44.4	43.5
Mining and Quarrying	10	9	19	60.36	67.91	63.97	-	-	-	60.36	67.91	63.97	47.2	20.3	34.5
Manufacturing	205	221	426	85.13	49.47	66.61	-	-	-	85.13	49.47	66.61	40.3	36.9	38.5
Electricity, Gas and Water	308	55	363	78.95	59.78	76.03	-	-	-	78.95	59.78	76.03	38.3	43.0	39.0
Construction	679	22	701	91.30	88.92	91.23	0.18	-	0.18	91.48	88.92	91.40	43.0	40.0	42.9
Trade, Restaurants and Hotels	671	1,011	1,682	82.86	62.97	70.90	0.11	0.09	0.10	82.97	63.06	71.00	43.3	45.5	44.6
Transport, Storage and Communication	324	101	425	87.97	73.46	84.52	1.21	-	0.92	89.18	73.46	85.44	47.4	37.3	45.0
Finance, Insurance, etc.	86	140	226	110.65	68.56	84.61	8.57	1.32	4.09	119.22	69.88	88.70	37.2	40.4	39.2
Community, Social and Personal Services	5,198	3,324	8,521	108.02	103.83	106.39	0.13	0.16	0.14	108.18	104.00	106.55	39.8	36.0	38.3
Total	8,104	5,091	13,195	99.94	89.99	96.10	0.29	0.28	0.29	100.25	90.28	96.40	40.8	38.5	39.9

Source: Government of Tonga, Department of Statistics, Labor Force Survey, 1993/94, Oct. 1995

The Small Industries Center established by the Department of Labor and Commerce typifies the unregulated employment environment that prevails in the country. Businesses licensed to operate in the Center have to comply with few conditions, and health and safety standards are irregularly monitored. In the absence of legislation, there are in fact no clear guidelines as to what these standards should be. The only clear stipulation appears to be the construction of separate toilet facilities for men and women and - if a factory expects to employ a lot of women - the provision of an indoor lunch area. According to the Ministry of Labor, average daily wage levels in early 1997 ranged from T\$5 for new recruits to T\$15 for experienced skilled workers.

In an unregulated workplace environment Tongan women are probably at greater risk of discriminatory employment practices, including lower wages, because of the cultural values that influence job opportunities (viz. type and level); the gendered labor market that exists (whereby women occupy 'women's' jobs); the fewer opportunities available for training/post-secondary education; and the fact that they have to combine paid employment with a childbearing role and other family responsibilities.

The lack of legislated maternity protection (outside the civil service) is itself proof of women's inferior employment status and their greater vulnerability on the labor market. Further evidence can be found in the craft-related occupations, where the majority of women work according to the 1996 census. Long hours of employment in handicraft production do not usually result in significant incomes and delays in payments are common. According to a recent study of 'Eua, Niuaotupapu and Niuafo'ou, income levels from handicrafts amounted to less than T\$500 per annum. (Haines 1995:9)

Wages and salaries data collected by the Statistics Department for the manufacturing sector are only analyzed according to type of activity, island and institutional sector. There are no gender classifications. However, from the latest published survey findings (1994), it is interesting to note that in the predominantly male trades such as publishing and printing, chemical and chemical products, non-metallic mineral products, fabricated metal products, transport equipment and

furniture-making, average weekly wages ranged from T\$50 to T\$80 per week. By contrast, weekly earnings in trades like textile and clothing manufacture, where women are conventionally employed, were less than T\$45 per week. This pattern is reinforced by the 1993/94 Labor Force Survey results, which reveal that average weekly earnings for men and women in the manufacturing sector were T\$85.13 and T\$49.47 respectively.

In the absence of a more comprehensive picture (including data) of women's economic activity, it is impossible to know how seriously they are affected by their marginalized position on the labor market. However, the growing importance of the cash economy, women's limited land rights, and the rising number of female headed households suggest that restrictions to women's employment and their lower earnings are likely to have a social impact that reaches well beyond the negative effects for individual women.

B. Women in the Civil Service

The Civil Service is an important employer for women, and women comprise approximately 46 percent of the Civil List. In principal, the human resource management policies of the government are non-discriminatory and there is equality of employment opportunities. Both recruitment and promotion are officially based on 'merit and suitability'. There have been some encouraging developments in recent years. According to the Ministry of Finance, women today comprise 20 of the 31 senior officers in the Prime Minister's Office, and 15 out of 22 in the Central Planning Department. In other areas like law, health and engineering, women are also emerging as professionals in larger numbers. Ministry sources indicate that there are currently six women lawyers working in the Crown Law Department, a female Registrar of the Supreme Court, and 10 women doctors.

However, two of the less positive features of women's employment in the Civil Service are their limited access to the most senior levels and the shortcomings of their employment conditions. In spite of the high performance of girls right through the school years and in post-secondary education, the proportion of women in positions of seniority and authority has not improved significantly during the last two decades. Today, there is only one woman in the Civil Service who is employed at the most senior level (level 1) and this appointment is in reality level 2 since she is responsible to a male Head of Department. There are, by contrast, 22 men occupying level 1 positions. At the second most senior level (level 2), the 1998 Civil List reveals a slightly better representation of women (8) in relation to men (34).

Promotion prospects beyond a certain point can be poor even for women who have accumulated many years of experience. To take one example, a highly qualified and experienced woman has effectively remained at level 2 for over 20 years, in spite of changes to her official position. The reasons for this 'glass ceiling' on women's occupational mobility are many, and they include an apparent reluctance on the part of women themselves to apply for senior positions. Another potential contributing factor is that men dominate most of the decision-making structures relating to recruitment, appointments and promotion. The Civil Service Staff Board and the Scholarship Committee are typical of this pattern, as are the majority of statutory boards and government committees (see Table 21). Less typical is the Human Resource Management Unit of the Establishment Division whose complement of senior staff (4) includes three women.

Women's representation in the Civil Service improves in the middle levels (levels 3-9), but it is in the lower levels (levels 10-14) where they are most heavily concentrated. This pattern of distribution can be seen quite clearly in Table 26 where the distribution of women in the three (senior, middle, lower) categories is 0.8 percent, 14.5 percent, and 84.7 percent respectively. In the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, for instance, there is one woman employed at senior level, 9 at middle level, and 48 at lower level. In the Ministry of Fisheries, there is no woman at senior level, one woman at middle level, and 13 women at lower level.

Apart from their overall tendency to occupy lower status/lower earning jobs, women employed in the Civil Service probably enjoy better employment conditions (including job security) than they do elsewhere in the public sector or in the private sector. Under the Civil Service regulations (Estacode January 1995) women are granted maternity leave on full pay for only 30 days. However, this entitlement can be substantially increased by their right to use sick leave entitlements (42 days on full pay and 48 days on half pay) and annual leave, if they can be certified as medically ill.

Although there is some anecdotal evidence of nursing mothers being permitted time off during the working day to feed their babies (or to visit sick children) there is no formal provision for either of these practices. Nor are there childcare or nursing facilities on the job. In several other Pacific countries like Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, female civil servants are now entitled to (paid) nursing breaks of a few hours a day.

C. Women in Agriculture

Women's involvement in agriculture/agro-forestry is given token acknowledgment in official data and reports. The conventional wisdom today remains that women do not engage in any substantive capacity in agricultural work. Where they do participate, it is ostensibly in a supportive or subordinate role (i.e. helping their husbands or performing less crucial, light jobs like cooking for male workers). Usually, their work takes place in the subsistence sector. This denial of women's important role in agriculture and agro-forestry is emphatically depicted in census data. According to the 1996 census, only 91 women were found to be employed in agriculture, hunting and forestry, as compared with 8,795 men. These 91 women represented 0.8 percent of employed women and just one percent of the total number of persons employed in the sector.

In some respects, women **are** actually marginalized from work in the agricultural sector. For one thing, their role is often part-time because of their traditional household-related responsibilities. More important, however, the patrilineal land system denies women the right to 'own' land and essentially vests control of their access rights with male kin. Although women have enjoyed the right in law to lease land since 1994, the distribution of leases for farming/agricultural purposes reveal that there is still a disproportionately low number of women benefiting from this land reform. Between 1992 and 1997, there were just 9 out of a total 72 farming leases issued to women.

Cultural values continue to portray most agricultural jobs (especially jobs that are perceived as *ngaue* - dirty, sweaty, and heavy work) as inappropriate for women. Yet, the idea that all *ngaue* is a male domain is a myth that flies in the face of increasing deployment of women in jobs that are demonstrably 'dirty', 'sweaty' and to some extent even 'heavy'. Several studies have indicated that women's active involvement in the agricultural sector, whether in subsistence or commercial activities, has long superseded official numbers. Today, gender roles continue to exist in agriculture

and agro-forestry but the division of labor does not preclude women from participation in *ngaue* to anything like the extent that is typically proclaimed. For example, land clearing, planting and harvesting are still assumed to be men's work, but it is only heavy physical jobs like land clearing (cutting trees and bush) and fence building that are still usually undertaken only by men.

Women (and children) participate in virtually all other farming jobs like planting and planting preparation, harvesting and post-harvest processing. These jobs can be physically strenuous, time-consuming and labor intensive. In the area of agro-forestry, gender divisions appear to relate less to jobs than to garden location and species, and even here there is a degree of flexibility or overlap.

In principle, women manage and control the cultivation of vegetables, fruit trees, and a wide range of medicinal, cultural and ornamental/fragrant (often multi-purpose) trees/plants in the immediate vicinity of the household ('*api kolo*). In addition, they are responsible for the cultural and income-generating handicraft species like the paper mulberry (*hiapo*) and pandanus, which usually grow in the male bush garden area ('*api 'uta*). They assist with the cultivation of food crops in the '*api 'uta*, usually weeding and harvesting, and they contribute to the commercial farming of vegetables (and other crops like peanuts) at all stages after the land is cleared. They also feed the pigs and raise the chickens. Men are responsible for tree/plant/crop species (with the exception of handicraft plants) in the '*api 'uta* including staple root crops and multipurpose trees like coconut, mango and breadfruit.

In today's context of more commercially oriented agriculture, high rates of male outmigration, female headed households, and greater economic pressures to meet basic needs, women have expanded their roles. They are not only 'assisting' their husbands but also taking on key roles in both cash crop and export-oriented production. On the island of Niuatoputapu, 80 percent of total income derives from women's handicrafts, including a special finely woven mat unique to the island. In Ha'apai, it is said that school fees are more often than not paid by the women of the household. The demise of the copra industry (which has put men out of work) and the unreliability of the weather (which can prevent fishing) has left women's weaving as the single most important source of income for most families.

While poorly documented, there is increasing evidence of independent women farmers, especially amongst those who are heads of households and/or leaseholders (for example widows or the wives of men who have migrated). For the small minority of women who enjoy proprietorial land rights, or who lease land in order to farm commercial crops like squash or vanilla, involvement in the agriculture sector extends beyond participation in all stages of the production process. These women are plantation managers and they have responsibility for employing farm labor.

Squash

As Tonga's premier agricultural cash crop, squash is seasonal and labor intensive. Each season extends over an eight to nine-month period and involves three consecutive planting and harvesting schedules timed to meet outward-bound shipments to Japan. Harvesting begins from around late September and runs to early December. The opportunities of women for involvement as independent farmers in squash production are limited, largely on account of their negligible land rights and, in turn, their difficulty accessing loans or credit.

Yet, the conventional projection of squash as a male industry belies the contribution which women have played in its development and success. Interestingly, the view of squash as a 'male' industry persists in the absence of any hard data. To date, there has been no attempt (whether through census analysis or sectoral/industry surveys) to investigate and quantify the role women are playing in production and marketing of this important export crop.

The Research Division of the Ministry of Agriculture believes that women would probably comprise between 5 and 10 percent of total squash producers in Tonga today. Such women would probably fall into one of three categories: women farmers who are able to access land through their husbands or natal families; women farmers who have the means to lease land and hire farm labor; and women who participate on an unpaid basis as farmers within the household production unit (organized by their husbands). This estimate therefore excludes women hired as farm labor at different stages of the production cycle.

Women undertake a variety of jobs in squash production and by participating as part of the household production unit help to subsidize the relatively high costs of production. The heavy manual jobs of land clearing (which is nowadays becoming increasingly mechanized), chemical spraying (for disease control), weeding and transporting of squash remain predominantly male activities. However, women, often accompanied by their children, participate on a fairly equal basis with men in fertilizing the land and then in the intensive planting work that has to be completed in the space of just 1-2 weeks once the land has been cleared. They also take part in the 6-week harvest period.

Another important contribution of women to squash production occurs at the post-harvest stage when the vegetables are prepared for export. Although young men are sometimes employed at harvest time, village labor gangs more commonly comprise women. In particular, women dominate the post-harvest jobs of cutting and cleaning the stalks (to get rid of insects at the stalk base), cleaning the squash, and packing them into boxes. Incomes range from T\$15 to T\$20 a day.

One of the interesting trends to emerge has been the responsibility given to women for much of the quality control of squash, including product selection and quarantine inspection. This critical process involves screening and grading in packing houses where women have to a large extent displaced the expert supervisors initially recruited from New Zealand. Quarantine officers undertake a last round of rigorous inspections. In 1997, women made up two-thirds of the quality control personnel hired by two of the largest exporting companies. They also headed two out of the three Ministry of Agriculture quarantine teams.

Vanilla

From the earliest stages of vanilla production, women were recruited for the critical job of pollination, whether as unpaid family labor or hired farm labor. Today, while men remain largely responsible for cultivating the vanilla plants, the labor intensive and highly skilled work of pollination continues to be performed exclusively by women. This delicate process is painstaking and done entirely by hand every day over a 3-4 month period. It requires patience, concentration, precision and speed.

To bear fruit, male and female vanilla flowers must be cross-fertilized which requires carefully scraping of pollen from the male flower and brushing it onto the female flower. However, the stigma is only receptive for a number of hours in a single day beginning very early in the morning. This requires close monitoring (to ascertain when flowering begins) and fast work (once flowering is underway). Women are recognized as fast, efficient workers, and farmers hiring farm labor show a clear preference for them. Average earnings for a day's work are T\$10.

During the peak years of a farm's production cycle (years 6-8), pollination contributes by far the largest number of labor hours per acre and one woman might pollinate between 200 - 400 flowers a day. Moreover, based on Tonga's 50 tons of cured vanilla exports in 1997, the Ministry of Agriculture acknowledges that a staggering 10 million flowers would have been pollinated by women during the course of the year. (This calculation is based on the fact that each flower produces one vanilla bean and there are 200 beans per kilo).

Women are also heavily involved in harvesting and post-harvest work, notably the curing and marketing of vanilla beans. Both harvesting and curing require special skills. At the harvesting stage, it is crucial that only matured beans are harvested in order to ensure effective curing and a high quality export product. Curing is a specialized process involving boiling (at a controlled temperature), fermenting, sweating, and sun drying (over a period of up to three months).

Women are not confined to jobs like pollination and curing but are increasingly becoming vanilla farmers in their own right. On Tongatapu, there are two women who run very successful vanilla farms, one of 6 acres and the other of 8 acres. In Vava'u, recent efforts by the Ministry of Agriculture to revive the vanilla industry have resulted in the formation of farming collectives which set their own targets and generally control the production process, technically assisted by agricultural extension officers. There are currently 45 such groups in Vava'u.

An interesting development in this project is that a growing number of women are becoming active group members as well as expressing a desire to farm and manage their own vanilla crops (as opposed to assisting their husbands). In Nea'fu, women comprise 45 percent of group membership (9 out of 20 members). They have their own vanilla plots (with 6 acres already planted) and are organizing their own loans from the Tonga Development Bank. The women hire labor as required but otherwise do the work themselves, assisted by their children.

Coffee

Coffee is a relatively new crop and is still in experimental stages although it is sold on the local market and shows significant export potential. Women have been employed to harvest coffee since the government's first research activities began 12 years ago. The harvest period lasts from 6-8 weeks and involves long hours of standing in the hot sun and performing tedious work. Not all the beans on a single branch ripen at the same time and so care must be taken to pick only the fully ripened beans. Women workers are paid 40 (Tongan) cents a kilo of beans. According to the MAF Research Division, a 'good picker' can earn around T\$20 a day although average daily earnings are closer to T\$16-T\$18.

In Ha'apai, promising developments in the coffee industry are attributed by Extension staff to the organizational and production skills of women farmers. The MAF Officer in Charge acknowledges that after two years (1995-97) of targeting men, women appear to be better suited as

growers. Eager to take on the actual planting of coffee, women in Ha'apai are organizing themselves into their own farming groups. They plant the seedlings (supplied by MAF Extension), conduct their own inspections, harvest, pulp (peel the skins) and sun dry the beans before packing and storing.

Sun-dried beans fetch T\$5 per kilo while T\$1 per kilo is paid for ripe beans. Of 96 new coffee growers registered in Ha'apai in 1997, 30 percent are women. The remaining male farmers (70 percent) are mostly assisted by their wives. The average recommended size of coffee farms is one-quarter acre, which can accommodate about 250 plants. However, farm sizes are being increased to one acre, with a view to encouraging better crop management as well as intercropping (of food crops) in the early stages.

Pandanus and Paper Mulberry

A variety of pandanus and paper mulberry (*hiapo*) species form the crucial raw material base for the skilled weaving and craft work undertaken by women in Tonga. The traditional division of labor for all species has always been heavily weighted towards them. Once men have cleared the land, women usually take charge from the initial planting of the seedlings through all subsequent stages of the production process, including marketing. However, in more recent times husbands sometimes assist their wives with certain jobs, for example by cutting down the plants in the bush, transporting pandanus to the sea for soaking (to bleach it) and beating the bark (*tutu*) for the *tapa*. On the outer islands of Ha'apai and 'Eua, there are also indications that men are beginning to grow *hiapo* as a commercial crop.

It is difficult, in the absence of further research, to know what the implications of these developments are for women producers. However, it is understood that in Ha'apai, at least, which has the lowest per capita income in Tonga, the involvement of men results from the lack of employment and income-earning opportunities. It is widely recognized that raw material and handicraft sales are almost the only means of ensuring that important cash needs like children's school fees can be met.

Both pandanus and paper mulberry suffer from regular shortages, especially in Tongatapu. These shortages are a constraint on women's weaving, *tapa* making and handicraft production. The issue of land access is of some relevance here, notably the lack of women's independent land rights and the fact that men enjoy territorial control over the '*api 'uta* where the raw materials are grown. This authority means that men make the decisions over crop selection and placement. In this regard, it is interesting to note that women's pandanus plants have traditionally been confined to the edges of a family plantation, where they are said to act both as a boundary and as a windbreak.

It is the expansion of commercial agriculture, especially squash production, that probably has the greatest potential to undermine the production of these raw materials. While not officially acknowledged, MAF extension staff in Tongatapu and Vava'u confirm that women's handicraft plants/trees are often destroyed in the process of large-scale land clearing (by bulldozers) for squash planting. In some parts of Tongatapu, where land pressure is acute, there have also been cases of *hiapo* trees being displaced by (male) food crops.

D. Women in Fisheries

As in the case of agriculture, there is little formal acknowledgment of women's involvement in the fisheries sector in Tonga. There is, for example, scant discussion of their roles and contribution to fisheries development in the 6th National Development Plan, save a cursory acknowledgment of their role as food producers. The lack of statistics make it impossible to quantify women's contribution to national economic development. Yet in the absence of adequate (gender-based) data and information, the 1996 census concludes that women make up only 4 percent of total employment in fishing activities.

Women's fisheries are both marginalized and neglected. Various factors contribute to this, not least of which is the influence of a long-standing male culture on attitudes, practices and policy in the sector; the priority attached to commercial, export-oriented fisheries (which is identified with men); and the lower regard given to subsistence or informal sector fisheries (which are associated with women).

Gender Division of Labor and Women's Inshore Fisheries

Pacific Island cultures have traditionally demarcated male and female roles within the fisheries sector, although a certain amount of overlap has sometimes occurred in practice, particularly in more recent times. In principle, men were traditionally responsible for deep sea fishing beyond the reef while women were assigned the fishing grounds of the inshore area, inside the reef or in the lagoon areas. Both roles were important as well as complementary. Certainly, women's fishing activities were an integral and valuable component of household production and - given the nutritional value of their products - contributed to maintaining the health of their families and communities.

In Tonga, the gender division of labor in fisheries more or less conforms to the Pacific pattern of a spatial division as well as a demarcation in fishing activities and methods/technology. Essentially, men engage in offshore reef and deep sea fishing, and in activities involving boats like trolling and longlining, diving or night time excursions. They use more sophisticated and less labor-intensive fishing gear like fishing nets, fish fences, spears and diving apparatus.

On the other hand, women are typically engaged in gleaning, foraging and fishing within the confines of the inshore area, primarily inside the reef, on the sandflats at low tide, and within the lagoon area. Generally they use more rudimentary utensils like knives and plastic containers, although fishnets, fishing lines and even spears are sometimes used. Language distinctions are suggestive of a gender hierarchy, with the word *toutai* (meaning fishing) used only to refer to men's activities and the word *fangota* (meaning collecting or gathering) used to describe women's fishing activities.

Women's inshore activities produce a nutritionally rich harvest including sea slugs like jellyfish (*kolukalu*), sea cucumber (*lomu*, *muli'one*, *ngou'a*) and sea urchin (*tukumisi*); octopus (*feke*) crayfish (*'uo*); edible seaweed (*limu*); and a wide variety of shellfish, ranging from ark shells (*kaloa'a*), venus clams (*to'o*) and small clams (*kaipo*) to turban shells/green snails (*'elili*), sea mussels (*kuku*), trochus (*takaniko*) and spider conches. Most of their activities are aimed at producing food for

the household, and their daily catch represents an important and popular source of family protein, especially in the outer islands where fish continues to be the main source of food. Women can spend a significant part of the day engaged in what is fairly tedious, time-consuming and labor intensive work, fitting in their fishing with their other household work and child care, and scheduling it around low tide.

To some extent, women's subsistence fisheries are not as critical to family survival and well being on the main island of Tongatapu, and more especially Nuku'alofa. The problems of pollution (particularly in the lagoon areas), urban drift, higher levels of wage employment and other features of urban lifestyles including dietary changes have also affected their activities. However, it has been estimated that urban women can still spend up to five hours a day gathering shellfish. Certainly, for the coastal communities, landless families and lower income households on the main island, the resources of the sea and women's inshore fishing remain important sources of food and income. A case in point are the squatter households settled along the coast of Nuku'alofa.

Women's fisheries not only aim to satisfy the immediate food needs of their families but are also intended to help meet important cultural obligations, including special occasions that demand generous contributions of food. Aside from the more ceremonial occasions for family 'giving', household catches are typically shared with relatives and other families in the village. These practices would seem to be significant on a number of levels. They contribute to food security and preserve the redistributive values inherent in Tongan culture. Less positively, they make additional demands on women's labor (more time has to be spent fishing in order to ensure a larger harvest) and contribute to overfishing and stock depletion.

Not all women's fish products are consumed or given away, and an increasing proportion of the catch finds its way to local markets for sale. This is particularly the case for the capital Nuku'alofa where there is a large community of wage earners more willing and able to buy fish and fish products for household consumption. Women are responsible for their own marketing and they also sell their husbands catch. Many appear to have control over household incomes. The sale of shellfish appears to be a lucrative business. At the largest market in Nuku'alofa, women sell a range of species at T\$5 per (large) bag.

While data is limited, it is evident that women's inshore fisheries are generating significant incomes for individual households (daily incomes from market sales of shellfish can tip the scales at T\$200). The failure to quantify and calculate the economic value of these informal sector transactions means that an important, albeit small-scale, area of artisanal-commercial fisheries remains excluded from the national accounts. This exclusion in turn helps to maintain the overall invisibility and marginalization of women's fisheries. The lack of research means that there is little understanding of women's needs. Marketing infrastructure on the outer islands, for example, is inadequately developed and what is available in Nuku'alofa is in need of expansion and upgrading.

Tongan women engage in various post-harvest activities ranging from simple gutting, scaling and cleaning of shellfish etc., to more complicated processing and preserving methods like salting and drying. Basic processing of fish products is done for the household as well as for sale on the domestic market. Women take responsibility for preparing their husbands catch for the family meal - cleaning, scaling and cooking - and in the outer islands, they also preserve fish (for example, salting and drying octopus) for sending to their relatives in Nuku'alofa and overseas. There appears to

be a great deal of interest amongst women to develop their skills and knowledge in fish preservation and processing.

Commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture

Contrary to popular belief, commercial fishing and aquaculture are not exclusively male domains. Women have played a critical role in the experimental development of *mozuku* seaweed exports and in the now 'deceased' *beche de mer* export trade. They have also been important players in the expansion of fresh fish exporting which lies at the heart of export fisheries development in the sector. The seaweed industry is still in its infant stages but holds considerable export potential particularly in the Japanese market where it is popular as a food. However, the greatest revenue potential lies in the pharmaceutical/medicinal properties of its oil extracts which have already been used as a core ingredient for hair cream, body lotion and face cream and are believed to cure balding, wrinkles and even cancer.

Mozuku (limu tanga'u) exports to Japan for the six month period between July 1997 and January 1998 were 420 tons and the Ministry of Fisheries is optimistic of being able to export 1,000 tons in 1998. It also sees the industry as creating employment and income generating opportunities for women. From the initial stages of the seaweed experiment, women have been recruited to harvest, clean and pack. It is laborious and wet work, and requires them to be on their feet and continuously bending for long hours.

They earn 25 (Tongan) cents per wet kilo harvested and delivered. For those women hired to process the seaweed, the work of cleaning, packing and loading is also manual and it takes place over two (day and night) shifts. Fisheries officials estimate that approximately six tons of seaweed are processed on a daily basis. Earnings are set at T\$17 per shift.

The *beche de mer* industry has also had a history of women's involvement, at least for those species found in shallow water. In some areas, for example the small island of Tuha in Ha'apai, women are known to have abandoned handicraft making in favor of collecting and drying *beche de mer* because of the relatively higher incomes. Since the ban on exports due to overfishing, the women have returned to weaving activities.

One of the most recent developments in commercial aquaculture is the cultivation of the black lip oyster (pearl farming). Exploratory work has so far been confined to Vava'u and is still at an experimental stage. The Ministry of Fisheries envisages recruiting women for pearl farming in the future although it is unlikely that they would be used for the diving jobs (to access the oyster shells suspended under rafts in deep sea). Other tasks that are important to the cultivation process and to ensuring a superior quality product and high premium (like cleaning the shells and rafts at regular intervals) are expected to be assigned to women.

Women in Tonga have already proven their ability to be leading players in the competitive world of export fisheries. The General Manager and co-owner of one of Tonga's most successful bottomfish companies, Alatini Fisheries, is a woman. Formed in 1990, the company originally began exporting deep-sea snapper but it is now beginning to move into the tuna market. The company exports eight varieties of fresh snapper and its main markets are the USA (including Hawaii) and, to a lesser extent, Japan. On the factory floor, women are strongly represented in

processing (unloading, weighing, grading and packaging as well as filleting for the local market) and in office administration.

Significantly, women in the company are not confined to subordinate jobs but represent most of middle as well as senior management. Four out of the five supervisors for the company are women (including the Financial Controller) and they are encouraged to take responsibility, and to be involved in management decisions. According to the General Manager, women are chosen because they are more reliable and committed, as well as being faster, more efficient workers. They have good organizational skills, show initiative and a capacity to solve problems. They also handle pressure well.

Coastal Fisheries and the Resource Crisis

Official fisheries policy today articulates a clear desire to forge a balance between commercial fisheries and the subsistence needs of the community. The main clash of interests is not seen as being between the demands of the commercially/export-driven economy and the needs of the conservationist-minded subsistence resource user. Rather, it is seen as being between the overzealous individual householder (keen to acquire a high-income return from the resource) and the food requirements of the rest of the community. In this sense, Tonga appears to be rather different from other Pacific Island fishing nations.

One reason for this anomaly may well relate to the fact that resource ownership rights (and by implication resource management responsibilities) are not vested in local coastal communities, as they are in other Pacific Island islands, but in the monarchy. This atypical system of fishing rights is consistent with Tonga's land tenure system and overarching social system, as well as with the cultural ethics of sharing because it effectively gives every Tongan the right to fish in any waters (while denying actual ownership rights).

Unfortunately, in today's context of market-driven production, fishing in local fishing grounds by 'outsiders' (those who do not belong to the adjacent village or island, and many of whom are commercial operators) poses serious risks to food stocks in some coastal areas. It also has adverse implications for women as the main harvesters of food in the inshore area, placing them under greater pressure to go further afield (as well as to spend more time) in search of food for their families. A 1995 survey undertaken in Ha'apai confirmed the concerns of local villagers about the impact on food stocks of operations by commercial fishers from Tongatapu as well as the perceived futility of committing themselves to a conscientious conservation regime.

In fact, environmental problems, especially resource depletion, probably pose the biggest single threat to coastal/inshore fisheries development and in turn to food security and community livelihoods today. The problems are already acute, especially in the vicinity of urban areas, and they appear to be the product of years of unregulated overfishing by an increasing number of commercial fishers (targeting both local and export markets) as well as the use of more efficient fishing technology.

It is worth noting that as early as 1992, the Bank observed that the artisanal fisheries were 'probably close to fully exploited'. The Ministry had limited information on stock levels and no systematized method of allocating or policing appropriate access rights in order to prevent overfishing and maintain sustainable stock levels. (ADB 1992:89) A similar conclusion was drawn by the World

Bank in 1993 when it observed that 'coastal fisheries has suffered from over-exploitation of traditional species...' and that 'much of the nearshore waters show signs of being over-fished' (World Bank 1993:11)

The resource crisis has called for drastic measures. These include a complete ban on the export of seven species of sea cucumber, a closed season (August-February) for turtle and mullet fishing, a prohibition on the use of diving apparatus for fishing, and minimum size stipulations for the harvest of lobsters, giant clams and *beche de mer*. Convictions (under the 1994 Fisheries Regulations) are supported by stiff penalties (fines ranging from T\$10,000 to T\$50,000) and public awareness programs have been followed by prosecutions for illegal fishing in both Vava'u and Ha'apai.

Unfortunately, there has been no gender analysis undertaken of unsustainable fishing practices. This would seem to be a major handicap. However, fishing methods and technology criticized for their over-efficiency and now subject to (formal or informal) regulation – for example, the use of diving apparatus, fish fences, fishing spears, gill nets and dynamite especially though by no means exclusively in Tongatapu – are largely controlled and used by men. Irrespective of this, it would seem to be vital that the concerns and knowledge of women, in their capacity as key resource users in the inshore area, are taken into account in any environmental education or legislation initiatives devised for local fishing communities. There are at present no regulations to cover the harvesting of most of women's inshore marine products.

The pollution of the lagoon area in Tongatapu poses another environmental threat to women's inshore fishing, and in turn to family food security. Data is limited. However, there is a wide degree of acceptance amongst public health and fisheries officers that contamination from sewerage seepage (including effluent from the main referral hospital) and other practices like land reclamation and settlement overcrowding have affected the quantity and quality of shell fish harvested from the lagoon. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the lagoon is increasingly becoming out of bounds as a source of food supply, one effect of which is to require women to find alternative fishing grounds further afield.

E. Self-Employment and Women in Business

Tongan women are very active in small-scale informal business activities but their presence is also becoming increasingly visible in medium-to-larger-scale formal sector business. In respect of the latter, the significance lies not so much in the numbers of women than in the pioneering moves being made into traditional male strongholds. The fisheries sector already has at least three sizable commercial operations owned and managed by women which have successfully taken on the challenge of seafood processing as well as the export of fresh fish.

Probably the most lucrative woman-run business is Tongasat, an enterprising venture into satellite real estate. Her Royal Highness, Princess Pilolevu, has a major stake in this. In agriculture, there are similar examples of women who are emerging as competent squash, vanilla and handicraft exporters. A few women run hotel and restaurant businesses and a young (28 year old) woman currently holds the position of Managing Director of a well-established construction company that supplies local quarrying, cement, shipping, stevedore, and heavy machinery services. She is in charge of 48 employees (43 of whom are men) and her responsibilities extend to a joint venture with a large New Zealand construction company.

The most pervasive and persistent problem facing women entrepreneurs, whatever the scale of their business, is the difficulty of accessing bank loans or credit, particularly with regard to conventional security or collateral requirements. The more economically or socially disadvantaged women inevitably encounter the most obstacles in trying to get a small business started. The skills and dedication that women bring to business and loan management are possibly their strongest 'asset', as are their unique organizational abilities nurtured in the course of performing cultural/social roles. However, there is a serious need to develop women's professional accounting skills and for their access to formal training opportunities in business and financial management. For the more established businesswomen, the lack of skilled workers is a problem that is not helped by the limited training scheme openings available to the private sector.

There are 278 registered cooperatives in Tonga (as at January 1998). Women are active members in a number of these including one of the largest, the Friendly Island Marketing Cooperative (FIMCO) which markets handicrafts, vanilla, squash and rootcrops. In keeping with the official wisdom that 'women don't go fishing', there are no women members of any of the three fishing coops. According to the Department of Cooperatives (1996), the participation of women is 'valued as one of the most potential strengths of the Cooperative Movement in Tonga'. Significantly, the most successful cooperatives are the ubiquitous village consumer stores (*fale koloa*), 80 percent of which are managed by women.

In 1996, in response to this success, the Department recruited two women cooperative extension officers, followed by a further two appointments in 1997. (The total complement of extension officers in 1998 is 23) The women's officers are assigned to promote women's involvement in cooperatives as well as to assist women members. In addition, the Department has a formal commitment to encouraging women's participation at decision-making level.

There are two cooperatives that are exclusively open to (and run by) women members. The *Paki moe To'i* (Multi-purpose Cooperative) is based in Lapaha, in the Eastern Division of Tongatapu. It was one of the earliest cooperatives to be established – registered in 1977 as a consumer store – and with a membership today of 54 members, it operates a handicraft center (which has had problems) as well as a successful store. The Women Multi-purpose Cooperative Ltd is based in Nuku'alofa (formed in 1991) and has just 34 members. It runs a very profitable consumer store.

Chapter 4.

CULTURE AND GENDER

A. Traditional Social Structure

A rigid stratification system lies at the heart of the traditional Tongan social order. Early social organization basically took the form of ruling monarchs from three chiefly lineages which in order of supremacy were the Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Ha'atakalaua and Tu'i Kanokupolu. Chiefly families (*hau'eiki*) who formed a landed aristocracy with hereditary titles occupied the next level, followed by their spokesmen or 'talking chiefs' (*matapule*). At the bottom ranked the vast majority of Tongans who were commoners (*tu'a*) followed by the slaves. (Taufe'ulungaki 1991:6-7)

Land ownership was not vested in the community but in the monarch, although it was distributed for use by titled, hereditary male chiefs. In exchange, these chiefs offered labor, warriors and tribute (*inasi*) as a mark of their allegiance. The concept of chiefly rule presupposed a reciprocal relationship whereby chiefs gave leadership and protection in exchange for labor, allegiance, duty and obedience. Political groupings of titled chiefs (based on a sub-ranking system according to blood ties and marriage connections with the ruling dynasties) were known as *ha'a*.

Within each chiefly estate resided a chief's subjects or *kainga*, a kinship group related by blood or marital ties to him but which sometimes included non-relatives who claimed membership on the grounds of residence. *Kainga* were sub-divided into social units known as *fa'ahinga* whose blood relatives did not necessarily live together. The basic social unit was the extended family (*famili*) made up of the immediate family together with grandparents, uncles, aunts and unmarried cousins. (ibid.)

As Taufe'ulungaki explains (1991:7-8), the concept of rank – based on an inherited, immutable status commanding respect – is 'pivotal to an understanding of the Tongan socio-political structure'. The social rank of an individual was determined most importantly, but not exclusively, by kinship or blood ties. Seniority and gender were also key factors such that at all levels sisters outranked their brothers and older siblings outranked younger siblings of the same sex. The superior rank of women was attributed to their ancient mystical powers, which were passed on through successive generations from mother to daughter.

Together, these variables interacted with the principles of secular power and authority to create the highly complex power relations that underpinned the *kainga* and *famili* as well as the wider socio-political order. Bott has usefully described the *kainga* as embodying a system of hierarchical ranking based on the twin principles of patrilineal authority and ceremonial rank.

The special status accorded to sisters (which extended beyond mere respect to rights and privileges) represented a check against what might otherwise have been a more extreme male-dominant social order. A good example can be seen in the example of the Tu'i Tonga himself who represented the supreme political authority in Tonga but who was outranked both by his eldest sister, the Tu'i Tonga Fefine, and her eldest daughter.

Further down the hierarchy, this dichotomy was reproduced, for example within the *famili* where the authority figure of the father found himself outranked by his sisters, more especially by his eldest sister (*mehekitanga*) who held the highest rank within the family and enjoyed *fahu* status. The *fahu* has been described as having 'unlimited authority' over others within her kin group, including the right to demand goods and services from her brothers, mother's brothers (maternal uncles) and other kin over whom she had *fahu* status.

B. Traditional Status of Women and the Gender Division of Labor

Gender relations and the status of women cannot be understood in isolation from the wider social order for they are intimately connected. Above all, the strong mediating role played by social class (or traditional rank) makes it necessary to guard against making superficial generalizations about the position of women. The overarching importance of inherited rank has a significant influence on the status of women and it creates fundamentally different outcomes (viz. status, rights, economic-political power etc.) for women depending on 'where they sit' within the social system. This is illustrated most pointedly with respect to women of chiefly rank (*hau'eiki*) and women of non-chiefly or commoner rank (*tu'a*).

Knowledge about the traditional status of women prior to the impact of European and missionary contact is fairly fragmentary. There are also differences of opinion and interpretation. However, from the records of early (foreign) observers, it appears that women enjoyed a greater degree of individual freedom and chiefly women exercised a fair amount of economic and political power. Unlike other parts of the Pacific, women ate with men (rather than after them), drank *kava*, went to sea (on long voyages by canoe), participated in important religious ceremonies and boxing feats, and even sometimes went to war. (Ralston 1996: 110-112).

Engagement in productive labor was determined primarily by rank, and only secondarily by gender. Chiefly women did not undertake 'work' but more commonly played a supervisory role over the laboring of commoner women. Subsumed under this female hierarchy, a gender division of labor applied, delineating different jobs for men and women although with probably more flexibility than is generally acknowledged.

In particular, men are said to have borne the burden of hard physical agricultural labor (planting, hoeing and harvesting of crops), canoe making and house construction, and fishing. Commoner women, on the other hand, are said to have undertaken 'light' agricultural work (especially in their home gardens), spent long hours gleaning the reefs and collecting seafood from the inshore lagoons, and engaged in the craft of *tapa* making and mat weaving. Recent archaeological evidence (based on research in the Atele area of Tongatapu) suggests, however, that contrary to conventional wisdom commoner women almost certainly participated in heavy agricultural work (especially hoeing and weeding) and were even responsible for carrying heavy loads of produce home from the garden. (Spennemann 1996:101-103)

The durable craft products of women not only had an important utilitarian function (clothing, bedding, house furnishings etc.) for they also constituted wealth (*koloa fakatonga*) and as such played a critical (and legitimizing) role at key ceremonial occasions such as births, deaths and

marriages. Chiefly women played a prestigious (and quasi-political role) not only by supervising or managing the production process but also by controlling the distribution of this wealth.

Two aspects of the traditional division of labor contrast sharply with the division of household responsibilities today: and that is that neither childcare nor cooking were the primary responsibilities of women. While women were probably responsible for most child care-related responsibilities, men/boys also participated, both in their capacity as fathers and grandfathers, and as older brothers. This nurturing role of men was considered 'perfectly proper' and 'natural' and was reinforced by their responsibilities to provide food, protection and other support to their sisters and their sisters' children. Men undertook all the cooking with the exception of certain chiefly dishes, which were prepared by women. (Ralston 1996:112-113)

While political power was essentially a male prerogative, it would be wrong to see women as entirely marginalized from the political process; or as being unable to exercise political influence. Certain chiefly women (for example women from the chiefly Kanokupolu lineage) were, according to Ralston (1996:115), 'openly and personally involved in active political careers and in the political fortunes of their close kin' while others were able to extract tribute or generally exercise political and economic authority over commoners.

In other respects, the scope for women to exercise political power derived from their higher personal rank (whereby sisters outranked their brothers under the *fahu* system). Although they could not usually inherit land or formal chiefly titles, they were often able to exercise influence over important decisions and otherwise wield power discreetly or covertly. One concrete manifestation of this power was the ability of a sister to choose marriage partners for her brothers (and later their children). Given that marriage was not simply a commitment between two individuals but involved a much bigger (and more complex) union between families and kin, women were, through this practice alone, well placed to influence lineages, shape political alliances and determine political fortunes (or misfortunes).

This power was reinforced by a woman's position of superior rank as a mother since descent traced through the female line was 'as influential, if not more influential, than descent traced through men'. Thus, 'at all levels of chiefly society the rank of the mother was more important than that of the father in determining the rank and political fortunes of the next generation.' (op.cit:114)

The establishment of the Christian church and the cash economy had a marked impact on the social and political landscape of Tonga. Their effects on the status of women were both adverse and beneficial. On the one hand, the new era encouraged

**Table 28: Tongan Population
by Religious Affiliation, 1996**

Religion	Total Membership	%
Free Wesleyan Church	39,703	41.30
Catholic	15,309	15.90
Latter Day Saints	13,225	13.70
Free Church of Tonga	11,226	11.60
Church of Tonga	7,016	7.30
Tokaikolo	2,919	3.00
Anglican	720	0.70
Seventh Day Adventist	2,381	2.40
Assembly of God	1,082	1.10
Tonga Konisitutone	845	0.80
Gospel Church	63	0.06
Bahai Faith	595	0.60
Moslem	35	0.03
Others	830	0.80
Refuse to answer	10	0.01
None	61	0.06
Total	96,020	100.00

Source: Government of Tonga, Census Report , 1996

the greater domestication of women, devalued their traditional *koloa*, gave primacy to their more subordinate status as wives, eroded their land rights and marginalized them from the 'modern' political process.

On the other hand, the right of a (chiefly) woman to succeed to the throne was institutionalized and the *fahu* system retained at least a measure of women's former mystical status and social and material privileges. More importantly, the gulf between the status of chiefly and non-chiefly women narrowed with the enshrined rights for commoners under the 1875 Constitution and through the erosion of chiefly (female) powers over the production and distribution of goods and services by their lower ranking 'sisters'.

C. Female Sexuality and Marriage

As with other aspects of women's status in Tonga, the controls on female sexuality were traditionally linked to the overarching social system, in particular the system of rank. In general, the sexuality of both men and women was perceived as something to be enjoyed and sexual activity was generally encouraged. Probably the greatest amount of sexual freedom was enjoyed by unmarried non-chiefly women and any women who were separated or widowed. These women were effectively free to make sexual liaisons of any duration. Controls were greater amongst young chiefly women and married women, both of whom experienced less freedom than their male counterparts. Unlike other parts of the Pacific, there appear to have been few, if any, controls (such as seclusion) relating to menstruation, pregnancy and early maternity. (Ralston 1996: 111-112)

Marriages were traditionally arranged and objections expressed through elopement rather than outright disagreement or refusal. They were also celebrated unions between whole families/kin groups rather than just two individuals. A flow of goods especially valuables or *koloa* in the form of fine mats and *tapa* gave legitimacy and endorsement to the union. Women represented an economic and political asset in marriage. However, the *fahu* system injected a unique dimension into the institution in Tonga.

However, the *fahu* system injected a unique dimension into the institution in Tonga. Most notably, it created an imbalance between the two 'marrying' families by elevating the status (privileges, rights and power) of the family into which a woman married. In essence, her *fahu* position (in relation to her brothers and her mother's brothers) entitled her to continue to receive goods and services even after marriage. Her children duly enjoyed this right as well. For this reason, the presentation of goods on marriage (mentioned above) was essentially from the bride's family to the bridegroom's family, with no expectation of reciprocity.

The advent of Christianity has probably been the single most important influence on accepted norms of female sexuality. Christianity institutionalized monogamous marriage and the related concept of legitimacy. It also imposed a stringent sexual code upon women and promoted the institution of the patriarchal family. Female sexuality was permitted legitimate expression only within marriage and any sexual activity outside the institution, whether before (premarital sex) or after (adultery) was deemed morally reprehensible. Moral transgressions tarnished a woman's reputation and brought strong social disapproval. As Chapter 2 Section H demonstrates, these social controls were subsequently reinforced by legal sanctions, which tied the mores of female sexuality to women's land rights.

Christian values continue to be the foundation of contemporary standards of sexual morality. Virginity, for example, is still theoretically a requirement for women on marriage although it is less likely to be put to the test (through rituals on the wedding night) than it was in the past. So too, Christian values give strength and legitimacy to the patriarchal family unit and in the process are helping to shift the balance between women's status as 'wives' and 'sisters' in favor of the former. Because of their subordinate status as wives, this means an overall diminution of women's status.

D. The Patriarchal Household and Early Socialization

In accordance with tradition, the power dynamics inherent in Tonga's socio-political system associate men with secular or temporal power. This is mirrored in the patriarchal family unit where they are the assumed and accepted heads of households and the father/husband is accorded respect as well as power and authority. Men's obligations to their sisters and their sisters' children (who outrank them) do not limit either their authority or their property rights in any substantive way.

The early socialization of children also reflects the authoritarian nature of Tongan society, and conformity to cultural norms is vigilantly nurtured within the patriarchal family. During early childhood, the values of respect (*faka'apa'apa*) and obedience (*talangofua*) are strongly encouraged. In particular, respect and obedience are taught with regard to parents, especially the father as head of the household. Questioning of parental (especially paternal) authority is not tolerated and deviant behavior (in the form of answering back, questioning or the lack of automatic compliance with instructions) can be severely punished. Children are also discouraged from participating in adult conversation, termed *kau'italanoa* (or butting in).

This social distance between parents and their children and the supporting regime of rules that govern children's behavior, attitudes and values, allows little opportunity for (two-way) communication between parents and children. It also discourages open criticism and independent thinking. This continues at school where induction into the values of respect, obedience, loyalty and duty are rigorously applied to the wider social order, in particular towards the King as the ultimate source and highest level of (secular) power and authority.

Both at home and at school, this broader process of socializing children into the norms of a rigidly stratified society is mediated in different ways. It happens more explicitly through teaching or formal instruction, and less obviously through ceremonial rituals, the myths of origin, and other oral traditions illustrating chiefly feats of conquest, wisdom and purity of lineage etc.

Within this general framework, gender is a subordinate, albeit significant, factor in the socialization process. Boys and girls are taught – by observation and participation – their expected roles within the division of labor. Typically, girls are taught household work, childcare and traditional craft skills like weaving, while boys are initiated into outdoor jobs like collecting firewood and coconuts, and light agricultural work. However, one of the more distinctive features of socialization in Tonga is that boys are taught to respect, protect and care for their sisters. These cultural rules are directly linked to the institution of the *fahu* which lays down the superior rank (viz. interests, rights and obligations) of a sister in relation to her brother.

The dynamics of family relations and gender socialization include an interesting paradox. While girls ostensibly enjoy higher status than boys (by 'outranking' them), they are subjected to tighter controls with regard to their social mobility, sexuality and overall independence.

Girls are expected to stay at home and to venture out only with parental permission. Outside school and church, they are given fewer opportunities for social intercourse, whether escorted or not. These restrictions are applied particularly with the onset of puberty and last until a young woman is married. As discussed in other sections, sexual purity (virginity) at marriage is still expected of women, although this is becoming increasingly difficult for parents to enforce.

Chapter 5. SUMMARY OF WID-RELATED GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS

A. Government Policies on Women and Development

Tonga's plans for a National Policy on Women have their origins in a Cabinet decision of February 1993 when it was agreed that a policy be developed. At that time, Cabinet also agreed that a Women's Unit be formally established under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, which was already responsible for coordinating women's activities. A third and final decision related to the establishment of a National Committee on Women's Affairs to review and co-ordinate issues of concern to Tongan women.

In 1995, a Bank funded small-scale technical assistance provided institutional strengthening and capacity building assistance to the Women's Unit. The TA assisted the Women's Unit prepare a draft National Women's Policy for discussion amongst women groups prior to its submission to Cabinet. The study addressed the developments outlined above and made concrete recommendations relating to the formulation of a National Women's Policy and institutional strengthening. One outcome of the TA was the preparation of a development policy statement for submission to Cabinet. Its aim was to elicit a clear and formal commitment by the Tongan Government to supporting women's participation in the development process. This would then be implemented with the active support and involvement of a number of key departments, notably the Central Planning Department, the Women's Affairs Unit of the Prime Minister's Office, and the Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry, Fisheries, Education and Health. In its draft form, the statement read as follows:

- In order to maximize the development of the country, the Government will work to ensure that women's skills are utilized and further developed and to ensure that the costs and benefits of development are shared equally by men and women.
- The Government will give priority to disadvantaged women.
- Recognizing that women have very important roles to play in the family, the Government will support women in, but not confine women to, these roles.
- Recognizing the importance of non-governmental organizations to mobilize women for their own and their families' benefit, the Government will support the work of NGOs in fostering women's development.
- In order to ensure that women have full responsibility to contribute to and benefit from development policy and programs, Government will work to ensure that all government departments and agencies integrate considerations of the contribution of and impact on women into their planning processes. Where possible, government will provide the opportunity for women to be involved in the various phases of policy and program design, implementation, evaluation and monitoring.

There has only been limited progress on the above recommendations. Perhaps the most tangible achievements have been the establishment and consolidation of the Women's Affairs Unit. However, five years since the groundbreaking decision of Cabinet, neither a National Women's Policy nor a National Committee on Women's Affairs has eventuated. In 1997, NZODA provided funding for two officers to complete the Policy. Due to other commitments, notably the important work of compiling Tonga's Seventh National Development Plan, it has not yet been possible for them to complete the first draft of the Policy.

However, work has proceeded with the support of UNDP and UNIFEM. It is expected that a first draft will eventuate within the next few months, after which time a national consultation involving women's groups from around the country is proposed. A final draft of the Policy will then be written and submitted to Cabinet by August. By identifying the key areas of concern to Tongan women and formulating appropriate strategies, the development of a National Women's Policy is an important step towards ensuring a meaningful commitment to gender issues on the part of the Tongan Government.

Tonga's forthcoming Seventh National Development Plan (1996-2000) offers an ideal opportunity to integrate gender considerations into planning, especially since the Plan is being developed alongside the Women's Policy in the Central Planning Department. Indeed, Tonga has a rare chance both to give the Policy some 'teeth' as well as to inject some concrete gender guidelines into sectoral planning, thereby making a reality of the broader mainstreaming objective. It is certainly expected that the Seventh Development Plan will be an improvement on its predecessor.

The national development objectives of the Sixth Development Plan (1991-95) cater to the interests of the environment (by 'ensuring the continued protection and management of natural resources for sustainable development') as well as to the health of the community. They also stipulate the desire to 'achieve a more equitable distribution of incomes and a more equitable access to goods and services between regional community groups and between income groups'. However, no mention of women is made at all, whether as contributors to national development (both overall and within particular sectors) or even as beneficiaries of the development process. Only under the social development objectives is there a commitment to directing 'more assistance to women's development groups, particularly in isolated island communities'.

There is ample scope to provide a consolidated gender component in Tonga's next (7th) National Development Plan. This need not be confined to a general statement or broad objectives on women but could include some solid gender data and analysis, including profiles on women's issues and activities, in each sectoral chapter. The Bank-sponsored report of 1995 makes the further recommendation that Cabinet be asked to approve the inclusion of a separate chapter on Women's Development in the 7th Development Plan. The chapter could provide a statistical summary, a review of progress over the previous plan period, an outline of government policy, a list of priorities, and a summary of programs and policies aimed at meeting the priorities. The idea would seem to have considerable merit and the chapter could usefully complement (and reinforce) the objectives and content of the National Women's Policy.

B. National Machinery for Women's Affairs

1. Women in Development Center

Tonga has had a Women in Development Center (WDC) within the Prime Minister's Office since 1993. Previously known as the Women's Affairs Unit, its establishment followed a decision by Cabinet in February that year that 'the Prime Minister's Office is to continue to co-ordinate women's activities in Tonga and to formally designate a unit to work for women's activities'.

As a small unit, the Center carries responsibility, on behalf of the Tongan Government, for women and development issues. It is also expected to play a coordinating role with respect to both government departments and NGOs in the community. A number of important early recommendations were made by an NZODA mission to strengthen the institutional capacity of the WDC. While none of the mission's recommendations materialized immediately, specific calls for the development of an action plan and gender training for WID focal points in a few key departments have been subsequently addressed in a UNIFEM-sponsored assistance program to the Center.

Since its inception, the WDC has undertaken a number of activities. An ongoing activity has been to provide secretariat and other support services (including training and the management of a revolving fund) to *Langafonua 'a e Fefine Tonga*, the umbrella women's NGO group. The Center has also produced WINFO Tonga, a bimonthly (and since 1998, a quarterly) newsletter, and disseminated information through a radio program; hosted a number of women's meetings; and provided support to NGOs. In the aftermath of the global women's meeting in Beijing, and following numerous consultations, the Center selected four of the critical issues identified in the Platform of Action: institutional strengthening and capacity building (specifically the strengthening of national machinery, the collection and dissemination of information and the strengthening of information networks); economic empowerment and sustainable development; gender and development; and strengthening and empowerment in the social sectors.

On the basis of the priorities selected above, the Center identified three areas to contribute to government activities within the Corporate Plan of the Prime Minister's Office for the period 1996-2000. These areas were the provision of policy and advice on women's affairs; support to women's groups; and the identification of issues of special significance to women. Goal 12 of the Corporate Plan formally states the intention to improve the quality of service to Tongan women and this is consolidated by the Center's own strategic objective of promoting the full and equal participation of men, women and children in economic, social and cultural development through facilitating policy formulation and monitoring program implementation.

The amount of time and resources allocated to one women's NGO, albeit an umbrella organization, is a questionable feature of the WDC's work program. During the past year, a major priority of the Center has been to provide assistance to *Langafonua 'a e Fefine Tonga* (National Council of Women) through developing its project proposals, providing secretariat support, coordinating training programs/activities and drafting its constitution. It is a non-voting member on most of *Langafonua's* subcommittees.

As an autonomous body, *Langafonua* is able to access its own donor support (including assistance from UNIFEM over drafting a Constitution) and as Tonga's oldest women's organization (in its previous incarnation) is well placed to be self-sustaining. While it plays a pivotal

role and coordinating function amongst women's NGOs, it is debatable whether its institutional strengthening needs are best served (or should be served) by the government's WDC. The relationship between the two bodies is officially described as 'complementary' whereby the Center is a 'coordinating agency' and the organization is an 'implementing agency'.

A key initiative of the WDC, in line with a New Zealand ODA recommendation, has been to develop Action Plans (both three-yearly and annual). The current (1997-98) Plan lays down five rather broad objectives. They are as follows:

- **Objective 1: To facilitate the consultation and the development of a comprehensive policy for the advancement of women and their families.** The main strategy identified to achieve this objective is the consolidation of the Center's database and the publication of a Statistical Profile of Men and Women of Tonga. It is expected that this will encourage the use of gender-based data in development planning and that the profile itself will be used in development planning and policy formulation.
- The Statistics Department has completed a Statistical Profile based on the 1996 census. The profile not only offers the first statistical overview of women but also represents an important step towards encouraging the integration of gender considerations into all aspects of sectoral review and development planning. However, the profile is weakened by the shortage of gender-desegregated data available in the census.
- **Objective 2: To set up a multi-sectoral advisory committee on women's development.** The membership of this committee is supposed to be based on a selection of women from government, the private sector and the wider community as well as prominent individuals and women leaders. It is aimed at developing advisory policies and facilitating representations to government meetings and planning/policy interventions on women/gender issues.
- The committee has not yet been established; nor has any alternative advisory body. This is especially unfortunate given the small budgetary allocation (\$5,000) that government has set aside every year to facilitate its work. The WDC has decided to await the completion of the National Women's Policy (by the Central Planning Department) before establishing an advisory committee. In the meantime, the committee's budget has been reallocated to other activities, primarily conference attendance and organization.
- **Objective 3: To improve networking, collection and dissemination of information of women's issues at local, national and regional levels.** The production of a quarterly newsletter, networking with NGOs, government and other parties, accessing web site information and working with the media are amongst the main strategies identified to achieve this objective. The Center has produced a series of bi-monthly newsletters.
- **Objective 4: To strengthen the institutional capacity of the national NGO umbrella body.** This objective is to be achieved through workshops, consultations, technical assistance and networking. The primary beneficiary is the *Langafonua*, a national

NGO charged with overseeing and coordinating the activities of other women's groups in Tonga. One of the main forms of Center support for *Langafonua* is in the development of its constitution. This process has been underway for some time.

- ***Objective 5: To improve women's participation in the formal sector and the mobilization of resources to the informal sector to make women's work more cost-effective.*** This objective is not very clear and its strategic input appears to be based primarily on acquiring funding assistance and information.

A major handicap of the WDC is its limited staff and budgetary constraints. There are currently only two principal officers (one at level 2 and the other at level 9 in the civil service) working in the Center along with two junior support staff. While the Center head holds a position of seniority (Deputy Secretary) in the Prime Minister's Office, she, like the rest of her staff, are expected to undertake other department work.

According to the Center, staffing limitations are an ongoing problem and a priority need is therefore for staffing assistance, in particular the appointment of an information/networking officer whose responsibilities would include liaising with NGOs. The 1997/98 budget is T\$10,000 and the Center is therefore heavily reliant on donor assistance. Financial and technical assistance from the UNDP, UNESCO, NZODA, SPC, UNIFEM, AusAID and the Taiwanese Government have considerably improved the capacity of the WDC to develop its program and meet staff training needs.

While staffing and budgetary limitations place obvious restrictions on what the WDC can achieve, the problem would appear to go further than this. In particular, there is an urgent need to elevate skills and expertise in gender analysis, planning and programming as well as in mainstream disciplines like economics and development studies. Staff training and development undertaken to date has been restricted to fairly piecemeal, albeit conscientious, assistance from the Suva-based regional UNIFEM office, and would appear to fall short of the more comprehensive requirements of a strong women/gender and development program.

It is unfortunate that the WDC has not itself been able to develop such a crucial strategic document as the National Women's Policy but has had to enlist the support of the male Director of Planning to spearhead the process. While the decision has been justified as a tactical move (on the part of the WDC and UNIFEM) to sensitize the Planning Development about gender issues, this rationale would seem to be questionable for such a critical exercise.

Similarly, it would seem to be imperative that there is appropriate staff/expertise within the WDC to be able to develop statistical profiles on women and gender surveys and to give direction in the more specialized task of mainstreaming gender into development planning and sectoral policy.

Training of gender and development focal points in government departments has begun on a small-scale under UNIFEM assistance. However, there would seem to be a very real need for the Center itself to be able to play a meaningful role in this process – one that goes beyond a basic coordinating function. It will be difficult to achieve this in the absence of staff who are competent to work closely with economists and other development specialists in the Central Planning Department and the line Ministries, as well as in the banks and business world of the private sector.

In the long term, there is considerable scope for a central women's unit to foster a consolidated and integrated community/government approach to women's development. There is also the potential to develop within government a greater sensitivity to gender issues; to encourage concrete action aimed at integrating gender considerations into the mainstream business of government; and to provide policy advice and review in all areas that have (direct or indirect) implications for women's status and well-being. However, as it stands at present, the Women's Development Center has only a limited capacity to achieve these more ambitious goals.

The placement of the WDC within the Prime Minister's Office would seem to have a number of advantages relating to its centrality and proximity to the primary source of authority/power within government. However, at present these benefits are negated by the Center's human resource constraints - in particular the limited number of skilled and experienced staff available (full-time) to develop its women's portfolio.

Consultations and ongoing liaison with outer island and rural women and their organizations are vital if Center programs and policy are to be shaped by the needs and aspirations of women on the ground. One observation of the Bank's study in 1995 was that at the grassroots there is little knowledge of the women's unit or its activities and staff in the Unit need to develop closer links with grass roots women's activities.

2. *Langafonua 'a e Fefine Tonga* (National Council of Women)

Langafonua 'a e Fefine (literally meaning nation building by women) was originally established as a non-government organization by the late Queen Salote in 1953. It is Tonga's oldest national women's organization and was mainly concerned with raising community living standards and self-sufficiency by encouraging women's productive and leadership skills, and income-generating potential. Mat weaving, *tapas* making and other traditional craft skills were the focus of activities along with home gardening and home improvements.

Two striking features of the organization in its early days were the strong leadership and close involvement of the late Queen, and the pervasiveness and vitality of the network throughout the country. *Langafonua's* present incarnation brings the organization under the leadership of the present Queen, Halaevalu Mata'aho.

Langafonua's present incarnation brings the organization within the direct orbit of government. Reconstituted a few years ago as a National Council of Women, it officially functions as a coordinating NGO body or umbrella organization. In this capacity, it has a close, collaborative link with government, in particular the Women's Development Center within the Prime Minister's Office. As discussed above the institutional strengthening of *Langafonua* has become a major priority of the Women's Center, just as it has for a number of donors.

At this stage, it is difficult to predict whether the reorganization of *Langafonua* is in the best interests of women. Certainly, the concept of an umbrella NGO is, in principle, a positive one with much to be gained from the interlinkages and cooperation between women's groups. On another level, the closer interaction between government and NGO women has the potential to promote greater understanding of (and sensitivity to) women's issues on the part of government decision makers. It could encourage better coordination of women's activities and more efficient management

of resources, as well as provide women with greater leverage to influence, and actively participate in, the formulation of policy.

However, much will depend on the leadership and *modus operandi* of *Langafonua*, including its willingness and ability to meet the needs of, and take direction from ordinary women in the community. Success will also be contingent upon the organization's ability to remain an autonomous body, independent from government direction or influence and accountable, above all, to its membership. A successful partnership need not compromise the organization's independence, nor the interests of ordinary women.

At present, *Langafonua* has a membership of just 22 women's organizations in addition to representatives from the Women's Development Center, Prime Minister's Department, and at least two other government Ministries. Work on its new constitution, supported by UNIFEM and the WDC, has been something of a protracted process.

C. Externally-Funded Women's Projects

As indicated in other sections, there has been a wide range of multilateral and bilateral donor assistance to Tongan women and their NGOs. Assistance, whether in the form of modest grants or larger-scale funding, has both directly targeted women and been mediated indirectly through community-oriented projects. These broader initiatives have addressed a variety of development needs such as water/sanitation, environmental management and agro-forestry, which usually have implications for women's health, well-being and productive/reproductive roles within the household and community.

Tonga's principal multilateral and bilateral funding agencies include Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO, the South Pacific Commission, British ODA and Japan.

There is an increasing tendency on the part of certain donors to insist on some form of gender component in their assistance programs. The European Union, for example, has such a commitment at the policy level (with respect to its development in Vava'u where it is the lead donor). The UNDP has taken more practical steps, through the establishment of a Gender Support Facility, to ensure that gender considerations are given due attention in development programming and planning.

As two of Tonga's oldest bilateral donors, New Zealand and Australia have formally instituted a gender equity principle in their scholarship awards programs. More recently, the Pacific Office of UNIFEM has undertaken gender workshops and training with the Central Planning and Statistics Departments, the Women and Development Center, Tonga Trade (in the Ministry of Labor and Commerce), and *Langafonua*, (the coordinating women's NGO). This training is part of a regional project - Strengthening Institutions for Gender Responsive Development.

The following project outlines cover just a selection of women-specific projects. They do not include any activities aimed at strengthening of the national women's machinery - largely undertaken by UNIFEM - which are discussed in the previous section.

1. Women's Legal Literacy

Legal literacy for women is a relatively recent initiative in the Pacific and much of the work has been undertaken by the Pacific Regional Human Rights Resource Team (RRRT). Funded under British aid, RRRT has a human rights/legal literacy program managed by its head office in Suva. In Tonga, the inter-related issues of legal rights, women's rights and human rights are probably more controversial and sensitive than they are in many other countries of the region. This is especially when compared with those countries where there are democratic traditions and a social space has been created for an independent labor movement, women's rights activism and a free press.

Given the very different social and political environment prevailing in Tonga, the work of the Catholic Women's League to promote women's legal literacy and human rights should be seen as particularly courageous. An essential part of the League's philosophy is that women need to be encouraged to be leaders and to participate in the decision-making process. In order to correct the imbalance of power, and to develop women's leadership potential, they not only need to be educated, but also taught how to be confident, assertive and self-reliant.

While this thinking runs against the tide of traditionalism in Tonga (and in particular the norms of a political culture which vests authority and leadership in men), the League's approach is not confrontational. Instead, it is aimed at building partnerships across the social, generational and gender divide in order to promote a more just society. According to the League, 'the social hierarchy and patriarchy in our culture results in women continuing in a subservient role. Therefore the Legal Literacy Project is of utmost importance to women, in learning about their legal and their human rights. It is our belief that human rights bring about freedom and liberation from repression.'

The League's work thus represents a strong grassroots initiative to empower women. It has involved well-attended community workshops in the outer islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai. A small group of women including a woman police officer, a woman lawyer and the League's Legal Rights Training Officer comprise the core of the local resource team. The Officer has a coordinating/organizing role as well as training and counseling responsibilities. Funding has come mostly from the UK and New Zealand.

The issues of community and domestic violence are priority concerns of the League and they are given attention in the literacy workshops and other awareness-raising efforts. Amongst the League's longer-term plans is the establishment of a Crisis Center aimed at tackling the problems of incest, rape, teenage pregnancy, abortion, domestic violence and alcohol and drug abuse. Counseling sessions for women victims of domestic violence and desertion are already underway.

One of the major successes of the literacy program to date has been the adoption of a No Drop Policy by the Police Department and approval by the Crown Law Office of a submission for legal reform on rape.

2. Raw Material Production for Handicrafts

The shortages of raw materials for weaving, *tapa* making and handicrafts undermine women's productive potential as craftworkers within the household and national economy. They also

affect the capacity of women to generate income and protect the livelihoods of their families. This is especially the case in Ha'apai and other outer island groups like the Niuas where women's handicrafts are usually the most consistent, and often the only, source of family income. Ha'apai experiences the highest loss of population through internal migration to the capital, Nuku'alofa, and has the lowest per capita income in the whole of Tonga.

Women's efforts to stimulate raw material production are constrained by a number of factors such as land and credit access as well as by the relatively high price of pandanus/paper mulberry seedlings. In Ha'apai, women have made a concerted bid, with the help of Canadian funding, to boost the local supply of raw materials by establishing group nurseries. This forms part of a longer-term goal to enable women to secure a regular income from producing handicrafts for the market.

The development has been ably marshaled by a local women's group known as Ha'apai WID (HWID) which was formed in 1993 and has a total membership of 32 women's groups comprising more than 600 members. Its Executive Committee has representatives from a wide range of women's, youth and other community groups as well as various government departments including agriculture, health and labor. The group's primary purpose is to meet the development needs of women in Ha'apai.

HWID is currently working with fourteen women's planting groups comprising a total membership of between 120-140 women. It distributes the working budget of T\$1,600 to each group which takes responsibility for its own production schedule, land preparation, fencing, and the purchase of over 800 paper mulberry and pandanus plants for half-acre farms. So far, the experiment has involved only seven of the groups.

The coordinating work of HWID covers the purchasing of necessary equipment like a chainsaw (which is accessible to all groups for fence preparation), monitoring group activities and conducting regular plant inspections during the one-year before harvesting. In return for this assistance, and in order to build up the capacity of HWID to fund further development itself, the farming groups donate one-tenth of their harvest. The rest of the plants are shared out between the women farmers.

There are just two small handicraft outlets on Lifuka, the main island of Ha'apai, one of which is the modest HWID office in downtown Pangai. Raw materials and craftwork are also sent to Nuku'alofa for sale. However, there appears to be an ambivalence about doing this because of the long waiting period before sales money is received, the lack of control over the retailing process, and the effect of high freight costs on handicraft prices.

HWID plans to take its development project a stage further by building a handicraft center for displaying and selling craft work as well as for training. With the development of tourism, the group believes that a center will provide greater opportunities for local women to earn an income from the sale of their handicrafts, encourage the use of local raw materials, and in the long term improve living standards in Ha'apai. The Handicraft Center is to be built with Australian assistance. Combined with the ongoing production of raw materials, this promises to create an important development opportunity for women in the outer islands.

The HWID is also involved in communal vegetable gardening (including the production of staple food crops like yam) and a Canada-funded kitchen project for poor families.

3. Gender Support Facility

This facility is an initiative of the UNDP and represents an important mechanism for advancing the status of women in Tonga and promoting greater gender sensitivity in development programming and planning. Based on an agreement with the Government of Tonga, the facility permits 25 percent of total UNDP funding assistance to be allocated to gender projects/components. It forms part of a global UNDP directive that has prescribed a 20 percent allocation for all its offices.

In Tonga, the facility is to be used to incorporate gender concerns into the formulation and implementation of two projects currently being developed: a retirement benefits scheme and a labor market efficiency project. It will also enable resources for technical assistance to be channeled into ongoing institutional and capacity building work for the government's Women in Development Center and coordinating women's NGO body, *Langafonua*, and to support gender mainstreaming initiatives in collaboration with UNIFEM and other donors.

In respect of a prospective retirement benefits or pension scheme, a sensitivity to gender considerations would seem to be especially important given the different (and unequal) status of women in the area of employment. The greater restrictions on women's access to employment, their lower earnings and their poorer job security are amongst the many features of the labor market that can and should be examined in the interests of creating an equitable scheme.

Similar structural differences in the economic and social status of men and women could provide a useful starting point for gender analysis in the UNDP's labor market study. Differences are especially marked in resource access (viz. land, credit, training), the division of household labor (viz. the traditional expectations on women as wives and mothers) and informal sector employment (viz. the concentration of women in the poorly supported 'fringes' of the economy).

The importance of a gender support facility would seem to be two-fold. In the first instance, by formally integrating a commitment of funds into development assistance projects, efforts to build greater gender equity in Tonga are given a significant, practical boost. In essence, a specific resourcing facility can help bridge the gulf between rhetoric and reality. Secondly, the principle of requiring ('requesting') a proportion of funds to be set aside for gender-related activities makes an important statement to the Tongan Government and the donor community, as well as to Tongan women, about the level of UNDP's commitment in this critical area.

4. Tonga Agro-forestry Project

A key feature of this New Zealand-funded project is the development of a participatory approach to village level agro-forestry planning (in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) and the drafting of a National Master Plan for Agro-forestry. Additional activities involve data collection on crop/tree growth and yields, and workshop-based research on the availability of species considered to be important to the community, and the reasons for their declining availability or loss.

Gender analysis with respect to determining access, control and responsibility for the important species is a central component of this Tonga-wide project. More fundamentally, research has extended to consultations with women farmers and includes commendable attempts to draw on their knowledge and experience (through separate workshops). The recommendations of women for training (in seed germination, planting, pest control, garden composting etc.), the supply or subsidy of seedlings and/or establishment of community nurseries, and the provision of low-cost animal-proof fencing have also been documented as part of the project.

The NZODA Tonga Forestry Project represents a clear attempt to overturn the conventional top-down approach to development by allowing donor/state interventions to be shaped by the knowledge, concerns and needs of the community. A welcome feature of this participatory approach is the incorporation of a gender perspective. Combined, these two elements signal a worthy attempt to encourage more sustainable and equitable development in the agro-forestry sector.

D. Other Government Policies and Programs

1. Women and Credit

1.1 Tonga Development Bank

The Tonga Development Bank (TDB) is the main source of credit for women in Tonga although in the outer islands, its lending is primarily financed under the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the New Zealand Women's Development Fund. Since 1983, the TDB has targeted women for assistance under a special Women in Development lending portfolio. This facility was initially applied only to women's groups in the main island, Tongatapu. It was extended during the early 1990s to the outer islands (Ha'apai in 1991, 'Eua in 1992, and Niuafu'ou in 1993) in line with the TDB's broader aim of improving living standards and alleviating poverty in the outer islands, and promoting greater (regional) income equality.

The vast majority of women's loans are for handicraft production and the cultivation of pandanus and paper mulberry trees (the raw materials) in both the main and outer islands. No loans are issued for women's fisheries or food processing, although this is by convention rather than policy. The only area of agriculture offering women a credit line appears to be small-scale vegetable production. The IFAD micro-credit line is in the last year of its third round and includes a loan facility of T\$2.2 million administered as a revolving fund. The facility is expected to finance around 5,000 loans to small producers (farmers, fishers etc.) and groups, and is specifically aimed at providing assistance for poorer households and other economically disadvantaged groups in the outer islands. Women are identified, both in an individual and group capacity, as targets for the project, with a prescribed maximum loan of T\$5,000.

Over the first three years (1993-96) of IFAD III, more than 60 percent of loans (both with regard to numbers and amount) were allocated to small holder farmers. As Table 29 shows, the number and amount of women's loans have steadily risen over the same period, particularly the loans provided to individual women. While women's proportion of total loan disbursements remains fairly modest, it can be seen that this has increased marginally over the three year period, especially in respect of loan numbers. More significant, however, is the fact that women's share in the benefits of the IFAD credit line is substantially higher than it is for TDB loans in general.

The decision to provide lending services to women's groups, as opposed to individuals, was the result of a number of factors, amongst these the fact that *tapa* production and mat weaving, the major activities being financed, were usually collective or group activities. In addition, the cooperative spirit was seen to be a means of enabling poorer women to get a 'leg up' from others in a lending group. Although income generation was the purpose of the facility, it soon became

Table 29: International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Credit Line, Tonga Development Bank, 1993-1996

Target Groups	Sept. 1993 to Dec. 1994		Jan. to Dec. 1995		Jan. to Sept. 1996	
	Number	Amount T\$000	Number	Amount T\$000	Number	Amount T\$000
Small Holder Farmers	1,526	980	1,952	1,525	2,176	1,763
Small Scale Fishermen	66	45	85	59	107	90
Individual Women Borrowers	431	276	712	407	853	584
Women's Groups	100	142	116	162	131	192
Other Groups	4	6.1	5	6.3	5	6.3
Small Rural Enterprise	62	96	73	102	89	136
Total	2,189	1,545	2,943	2,261	3,361	2,771
*	24.3%	27%	28%	25%	29%	28%

Source: Planning, Marketing and Research Division, Tonga Development Bank, March 1997

apparent that women were manufacturing products like mats and *tapa* for cultural or ceremonial purposes such as meeting social obligations for births, deaths and marriages. Over time, this has come to be seen as less of a problem because of the 'wealth' they represent as social assets or as a form of savings. So much so, in fact, that traditional forms of wealth or *koloa* (*tapa*, mats etc.) have become increasingly acceptable as collateral.

Women's access to TDB loans is no longer restricted to groups. In 1993, following the success of the group lending scheme, individual women became eligible for assistance. Unfortunately, the limited and to some extent conflicting gender-based data on loan disbursements makes it difficult to assess the impact and success of this additional credit line for women. TDB reports indicate that by March 1995 individual women's loans (1,002) comprised 68 percent of all women's development loan accounts and 58 percent of the total women's portfolio. Individual borrowers had one of the best arrears ratios (6.9 percent).

However, other bank sources suggest that for 1995 as a whole, individual accounts (mainly for handicrafts and mulberry/pandanus cultivation) claimed as much as 89 percent of the total number of WID loans. Similarly, according to published figures, by September 1996, the number of individual loans had dropped to 835 and proportionately to 60.5 percent of total accounts and 43.5 percent of the total portfolio. (The arrears ratio had also deteriorated to 12.1 percent, which was higher than the average of 9.6 percent for all WID accounts). (see Table 30)

Unpublished data on loan disbursements suggest that the proportion claimed by individual loans in 1996 is probably much higher, closer to 85 percent of total WID loans. According to TDB staff, women have been able to access individual loans for businesses as diverse as retail

stores, agriculture, livestock, tourism and taxi services. Women are also sometimes co-borrowers with their husbands, and not all of them are small-scale borrowers.

The Women's Development Fund is co-managed by the TDB and the women Extension Officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF). MAF women's officers are responsible for identifying and endorsing eligible income-generating projects, monitoring group progress in the field, and seeking additional sources of loan funding. They are advised about loan

Table 30: Tonga Development Bank WID Loans Portfolio, September 1996

Women in Development	Total No.	Total Portfolio T\$	Arrears No.	Arrears Amount T\$	Monthly Repayment T\$	Arrears Ratio %
Individual Loans*	835	528,269	264	64,128	4,479	12.1
Handicraft Loans	499	655,249	132	49,754	4,524	7.6
Group Loans*	15	15,941	10	752	105	4.7
Vegetables/Mulberry/Pandanus Loans	10	3,616	8	1,749	22	48.4
Other WID Loans	19	10,785	8	777	62	7.2
Total	1,378	1,213,860	422	117,160	9,192	9.6

Source: Tonga Development Bank

* Individual and group loans would also include handicrafts

applications and appraisals as well as other bank procedures by the TDB. There are no specific guidelines covering women's development loans apart from a few basic requirements laid down by the IFAD and New Zealand assistance programs. In essence, the credit line is expected to target women who would otherwise be deprived of lending facilities. It operates as a quasi revolving fund whereby all loan repayments are reinvested for future lending. A minimum group membership of three women is required to qualify for a loan and groups are expected to be managed by a committee, which takes responsibility, amongst other things, for organizing the loan security. Maximum group loans are T\$1,500.

It is widely recognized that one of the main constraints women face in trying to access bank loans or other forms of credit is the stringent collateral or security conditions that often apply. In Tonga, TDB lending conditions stipulate a minimum contribution of 25 percent (in cash, kind or labor) from each borrower, and security in the form of fixed assets (land, buildings), removable assets (boats, engines, vehicles, livestock, furniture), or (in the absence of either) third party guarantees. Women's poor land rights place them at a serious disadvantage with respect to bank security requirements for land and/or property (housing), both of which are traditionally under the control of men. They are also less likely to own the conventional type of removable assets.

Social assets such as *tapa* and mats have become an acceptable form of security, thereby compensating for these disadvantages. The TDB nevertheless usually only applies this more flexible condition to small loans. There is still a preference, in practice, for fixed assets like a house or car and for a second person to act as guarantor. For larger amounts (over T\$10,000), land and/or property become obligatory, and credit access for women is thus contingent upon the goodwill and consent of a male (landowning) guarantor. Even for those women who enjoy informal access to land

(through their fathers or other male kin), the lack of a land title (confirming ownership) remains an impediment. Few women have formal leases in their own name. Unfortunately, recent developments suggest that more stringent lending conditions, in particular demands for fixed assets like land as security, are increasingly being applied by the TDB to its women borrowers. This does not augur well for women in Tonga, especially for those from poorer families.

Table 31 indicates the changing regional distribution of women's loans, in particular the dominant number of outer island allocations but the higher loans and proportion of disbursements to Tongatapu, at least until 1994. Apart from being encouraged as part of the Outer Island Credit Project, the increasing predominance of outer island lending is also attributed to the heavy reliance of women outside Tongatapu on handicraft production, especially mat weaving, as a source of income.

**Table 31: Regional Distribution of Tonga Development Bank
Loan Approvals for Women's Development, 1991-1994, 1996**

Year	Tongatapu			Outer Islands			Total T\$
	No. of Loans	Amount Approved T\$	%	No. of Loans	Amount Approved T\$	%	
1991	34	76,700	57.1	38	57,500	42.8	134,200
1992	45	97,898	68.1	50	45,777	31.8	143,675
1993	268	490,767	77.9	231	139,233	22.1	630,000
1994	608	483,849	32.6	981	785,078	52.9	1,483,000
1996	No. Loans	Amt. Approved T\$	%				
Tongatapu	167	236,787	47.5				
Ha'apai	141	122,454	24.5				
Vava'u	49	45,668	9.2				
Eua	42	29,724	6.0				
Niuaatoputapu	70	58,680	11.8				
Niuafo'au	7	5,100	1.0				
Total	476	498,413	100.0				

Source: Tonga Development Bank

Since 1994, the overall decline in loan approvals (as evident from Table 31) has hit the outer islands, especially Ha'apai whose number of approvals dropped by nearly 60 percent in 1996. Unpublished TDB data for 1996 suggest that while Tongatapu still receives the largest share of WID disbursements (both regarding number and amount), there are some large allocations being made to certain outer islands, especially Ha'apai and Niu'atoputapu.

The TDB recognizes the multiplier effect of providing a credit line to women because their development projects usually benefit their households and communities rather than just themselves. Whether they target school facilities, water tanks or toilets, women's activities almost always have a positive impact on community livelihoods. Yet despite this, women's development loans claim a negligible share of total TDB loans and they continue to lag far behind the disbursements for agriculture (which takes the lion's share of bank lending for squash) and industry/business. (Table 32)

In 1988, there were just 11 borrowers and a nominal women's loans portfolio of T\$15,000. The average loan size was T\$1,363. By the early 1990s, the situation began to look more promising as the portfolio rose steadily from 1.1 percent of total TDB loans in 1992, to 2.8 percent in 1993, and then again to 6.2 percent in 1994. (see Tables 32 and 33) By 1994, following the introduction of individual loans and a greater access to lending facilities for women in the more remote outer islands, both the number and amount of loan accounts had risen to very sizable proportions (1,598 loan accounts worth T\$1.5 million.). By contrast, the average size of loans dropped (from T\$1,363 to T\$928). (Table 33)

Table 32: Tonga Development Bank Loan Approvals, 1992-1996

Sector	1992 Amt T\$000	1992 as % of total TDB loan approvals	1993 Amt T\$000	1993 as % of total TDB loan approvals	1994 Amt T\$000	1994 as % of total TDB loan approvals	1995 Amt T\$000	1995 as % of total TDB loan approvals	1996 Amt T\$000	1996 as % of total TDB loan approvals
Women Dev.	153	1.1	630	2.8	1,483	6.2	1,125	4.9	521	3.4
Agriculture	9,233	68.8	13,421	60.2	17,040	71.5	12,481	54.1	8,719	57.0
Industry and Business	3,840	28.6	7,643	34.3	4,657	19.5	9,015	39.1	5,578	36.0
Other	186	1.4	588	2.7	662	2.8	424	1.9	303	2.0
Total	13,412	100.0	22,282	100.0	23,842	100.0	23,045	100.0	15,121	100.0

Source: Tonga Development Bank

Yet, these encouraging developments have not continued since 1994. As Table 32 shows, the allocation to women's development dropped both in value and proportionately (from 6.2 percent to 4.9 percent) between 1994 and 1995. It dropped again, more drastically, between 1995 and 1996, from a loan portfolio of T\$1.2 million representing 4.9 percent of the total TDB portfolio of T\$23 million to T\$0.5 million or 3.4 percent (of total loan portfolio of T\$15.1 million). Although it is evident that TDB loans as a whole declined appreciably during this period in accordance with a tighter lending regime, the rate of this fall was proportionately far greater for the women's portfolio than it was overall (54 percent as opposed to 34 percent).

Data for 1996 and 1997 are unfortunately incomplete, but there is every indication that the trend is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Unpublished TDB data reveal that the bank allocated a similar amount for women's development loans (\$0.51 million) for 1997 and that it has budgeted for a women's portfolio of approximately T\$0.6 million for 1998. This disappointing pattern of loans to women is particularly surprising given the high regard the TDB has for its women borrowers. The bank has openly acknowledged

Table 33: Tonga Development Bank Loans to Women 1988-1996

Year	Number of Loans to Women	Amount T\$ 000	Average Loan Size	Total TDB Loan Portfolio T\$000	Women's Loans as a % of Total Loans
1988	11	15	1,363	NA	NA
1989	113	165	1,460	NA	NA
1990	65	154	2,369	NA	NA
1991	72	134	1,861	NA	NA
1992	102	158	1,549	13,412	1.1
1993	499	630	1,262	22,282	2.8
1994	1,598	1,483	928	23,842	6.2
1995	1,236	1,125	910	23,045	4.9
1996	491	521	1,061	15,121	3.4
Total	4,187	4,385	1,047		

Source: Tonga Development Bank

that the WID loans performance has 'improved substantially over the years' due to a high level of attendance by women at business advisory workshops (40 percent of participants at 39 workshops in 1994 alone) and their improved banking and organizational/management skills.

Women are seen as highly motivated and generally more conscientious about managing loan funds than men. According to a senior TDB officer, they quickly grasp the basic principles of accounting and are more conservative with household finances. They are also more realistic about likely cash flows because they often have a better handle on household obligations. When dealing with joint (husband and wife) loan applications, bank officers will tend to 'get down to talking with the wife' after the husband has introduced his 'dream'. The high levels of 'household and social consumption' by women borrowers support these observations (especially the accumulation of handicraft products for distribution on cultural/social occasions). Overall, some 10.53 percent of households in Tonga have been beneficiaries of women's access to TDB credit.

The impressive repayment rates of women borrowers are another tangible mark of their creditworthiness. While Table 34 reveals that the number of WID accounts in arrears rose 3.5 fold between 1991 and 1994, there has been a steady improvement in women's arrears performance over this period. By 1994, only 7.3 percent of the total WID portfolio was in arrears and this represented a mere 1.5 percent of total TDB arrears. This record is particularly impressive at a time when a very high proportion of TDB loans, particularly for tourism and other subsectors of the industrial and commercial sectors, have proved to be 'non-performing' and required legal action.

Table 34: Tonga Development Bank WID Arrears Performance, 1991-1994

As at Dec.	No. of WID Accounts in Arrears	Amount of WID Loans in Arrears T\$	% of Total No. of WID Accounts in Arrears	% of Total WID Portfolio in Arrears	WID Arrears Amount as a % of Total TDB Arrears
1991	123	31,357	47.1	23.3	0.9
1992	66	11,088	19.0	7.7	0.2
1993	133	35,422	23.3	5.8	0.9
1994	437	91,635	30.6	7.3	1.5

Source: Tonga Development Bank

Further evidence of the success of women borrowers can be found in the performance evaluations of the IFAD credit line subscribers. Between 1994 and 1996, women's group enterprises generated higher and more consistent incomes to the household than all other groups, notably farmers, fishermen and rural business entrepreneurs. This is indicative of the growing importance of both the handicraft industry as a major income earner for outer island households as well as women's roles in safeguarding living standards. It has led the Planning, Marketing and Research Division of the TDB to conclude that 'women's group enterprises is [sic] a very economically viable projects in the Outer Islands.'

Such confidence is further justified by the evaluations of the May-August 1997 quarter. During this period, women's groups operated at an average profit of T\$5,095, the highest ever recorded, in comparison with borrowers for agriculture, fishing and small rural enterprises who recorded average profits/losses) of T\$1,765, (T\$48) and (T\$1,485).

1.2 Other Rural Credit Schemes (Central Planning Office)

The Central Planning Office administers two small funds with potential to support women's activities. New Zealand, Australia and Canada are the principal donors with smaller funding contributions coming from France, Germany, Netherlands and Japan. Both funds have been in operation since 1981.

The Rural Business Development Fund is aimed at providing assistance to people wanting to venture into small-scale businesses, with priority being given to activities that have export, import-substitution or employment-creating potential. Projects are funded on a 50:50 basis (donor/applicant) for Tongatapu and 60:40 basis for the outer islands. They require a loan component (contingent upon TDB screening).

Donor specifications vary. New Zealand, for example, stipulates that a business must be environment-friendly and rural, and it targets individuals who are unable to get a bank loan for lack of the required security. This should presumably advantage women.

However, data available for the last few years suggests the contrary: that disbursement of assistance under the Fund is biased in favor of men both in respect of the number and volume of grants. This is probably partly due to the fact that collateral requirements still apply, albeit only for the TDB loan component. For the two financial years 1995/96 and 1996/97, six grants totaling T\$58,956 were issued to men's projects (e.g. *kava* pounding, panel beating, cattle, beach resort, agricultural water supply) as opposed to just three (totaling T\$21,710) to women (mechanical workshop, sewing factory). (see Table 35)

Table 35: Central Planning Department Projects by Gender, 1995-1998

Year	Type of Project	Gender Male/Female (M/F)	Amount T\$	SCDF*/ RBDF**	Donor
1995/96	Landfill	F	24,150	SCDF	Canada
	Cement Water Tanks	F	11,700	SCDF	Canada
	Agricultural Road	M/F	15,857	SCDF	Australia
		(community)			
	Agricultural Road	M/F	15,857	SCDF	Australia
	Cement Water Tanks	F	15,475	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	11,200	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	18,200	SCDF	New Zealand
	Village Water Supply	M/F	9,400	SCDF	New Zealand
	School Science Room	M/F	22,429	SCDF	New Zealand
	Village Water Supply	M/F	10,000	SCDF	New Zealand
	School Toilets	M/F	7,967	SCDF	New Zealand
	Agricultural Road	M/F	15,857	SCDF	Australia
	Agricultural Road	M/F	15,857	SCDF	New Zealand
	Agricultural Road	M/F	9,770	SCDF	New Zealand
	Toilets	F	9,620	SCDF	New Zealand
	School Indust. Art	M/F	6,853	SCDF	New Zealand
	Village Water Supply	M/F	8,650	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	11,050	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	22,110	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	12,200	SCDF	New Zealand
	Toilets	F	23,356	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	13,650	SCDF	New Zealand

Year	Type of Project	Gender Male/Female (M/F)	Amount T\$	SCDF*/ RBDF**	Donor
	Cement Water Tanks	F	7,800	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	30,090	SCDF	New Zealand
	Agricultural Road	M/F	15,857	SCDF	Australia
	Agricultural Road	M/F	15,857	SCDF	New Zealand
1996/97	Cement Water Tanks	F	5,100	SCDF	Canada
	Cement Water Tanks	F	14,300	SCDF	Canada
	Village Water Supply	M/F	8,760	SCDF	Canada
	Toilets	F	18,700	SCDF	Canada
	Village Water Supply	M/F	10,000	SCDF	New Zealand
	Village Water Supply	M/F	10,000	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	24,000	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	16,920	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	20,485	SCDF	New Zealand
	Agricultural Road	M/F	13,640	SCDF	Australia
	Wharf	M/F	15,857	SCDF	Australia
	Agricultural Road	M/F	15,857	SCDF	Australia
	Village Water Supply	M/F	10,000	SCDF	Australia
	Village Water Supply	M/F	10,000	SCDF	Australia
	School Sanitation	M/F	7,031	SCDF	Australia
	Village Water Supply	M/F	12,211	SCDF	Australia
	Agricultural Road	M/F	15,857	SCDF	Australia
	Village Water Supply	M/F	24,054	SCDF	Canada
	Cement Water Tanks	F	17,550	SCDF	Canada
	Toilets	F	18,700	SCDF	Canada
1997/98	Village Water Supply	M/F	10,000	SCDF	New Zealand
	Cement Water Tanks	F	16,250	SCDF	New Zealand
	Village Water Supply	M/F	5,910	SCDF	New Zealand
	School Home	M/F	15,000	SCDF	New Zealand
	Economics Room				
1995/96	Agricultural Water Supply	M	10,000	RBDF	Australia
	Kava Pounding	M	10,000	RBDF	New Zealand
	Panel Beating	M	7,456	RBDF	New Zealand
	Workshop				
	Mechanical Workshop	F	9,000	RBDF	New Zealand
	Sewing Factory	F	4,740	RBDF	New Zealand
1996/97	Cattle Project	M	11,500	RBDF	Australia
	Beach Resort	M	10,000	RBDF	New Zealand
	Milk Production	School	5,550	RBDF	Australia
	Agricultural Water Supply	M	10,000	RBDF	Australia
	Sewing Factory	F	7,970	RBDF	Canada

Source: Central Planning Department, Tonga

* SCDF = Small Community Development Fund

**RBDF = Rural Business Development Fund

Year	Summary Table T\$								
	Prog.	Male only			Female only			Total	
		No.	Amount	%	No.	Amount	%	No.	Amount
1995/96	SCDF	nil	nil	0	13	210,601	100	13	210,601
1996/97	SCDF	nil	nil	0	9	135,755	100	9	135,755
1997/98	SCDF	nil	nil	0	1	16,250	100	1	16,250
1995/96	RBDF	3	27,456	67	2	13,740	33	5	41,196
1996/97	RBDF	3	31,500	80	1	7,970	20	4	39,470

Funding assistance under the Social Community Development Fund offers a good illustration of how women are equated with community development. The Fund is aimed at promoting self-help at the village level and assisting lower income earners improve community standards of living. Although applicants are expected to contribute a portion of project costs, donors absorb the bulk of the financing. This varies according to the project but, by and large, cement water tanks, agricultural roads and similar community-based projects require only a nominal input from the applicant.

In contrast to the Rural Business Development Fund, the pattern of disbursements demonstrates the prominence of women as beneficiaries, particularly with respect to cement water tanks, toilets, and (together with men) village water supplies and agricultural roads.

1.3 Credit Union Movement

Credit unions provide a potential source of efficient credit delivery to the community as well as a means of enhancing living standards and self-reliance. Tonga's credit union movement comes under the jurisdiction of the Department of Cooperatives and is officially (and somewhat quaintly) referred to as the Thrift and Credit Sector. Unfortunately, faced with financial difficulties for some time, it is acknowledged by the Department to be in a highly unsatisfactory state. Many credit unions have folded, having accumulated heavy losses.

At the end of 1996, membership of registered credit unions totaled 630, over 50 percent of which were concentrated in Tongatapu. Sixteen new credit unions were registered in 1997. Unlike the consumer store cooperatives, where women play a prominent and successful role, there are no credit unions that cater exclusively to women.

2. Women and Agriculture

The participation of women in agriculture is acknowledged by government in its inclusion of a separate women's unit within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). The Women's Development Unit is one of six sections comprising the Extension Division and was established over twenty years ago. Today, it works closely with about 300 women's groups as well as with the Tonga Development Bank where it assists in the administration of a credit line for women, usually for the manufacture of mats and *tapa*.

The most obvious problems of the Women's Unit relate to inadequate staffing and budgetary provisions. The ADB report of 1995 aptly described the Unit as the 'poor cousin' of extension activities, with around three times more officers assigned to mainstream work than to women's development. It further observed that some women's groups were only able to see their MAF officer 'once or twice a year'.

Today, staffing, training and demonstration facilities, vehicles and even money for petrol continue to be depressingly inadequate. Out of around ten officers shared between seven districts on the main island, only one has agricultural training to diploma level. Many of the other staff have considerable field experience but little or no formal background in agriculture or agro-forestry. Training is usually confined to short-term (10-month) courses in community development

run by the South Pacific Commission in Suva. In Vava'u, the Women's Unit is fortunate to have two full-time officers, one of whom has a Diploma in Tropical Agriculture.

The Extension budget for the Ministry is close to T\$100,000. However, the Women's Unit has no program budget to speak of, since the tiny allocation of T\$4,000-\$5,000 per annum is expected to cover two salaries, the housing allowance of a Japanese volunteer, petrol and office supplies. The one vehicle available to facilitate village/district visits and training sessions by women officers is in an advanced state of disrepair. It is often 'borrowed' for other extension work. In both Ha'apai and Vava'u, the Women's Units have no budget.

The shortcomings of the Unit go beyond staff/skill shortages and lack of money. In 1967, it was established as a Home Economics Section in the Extension Division with a mandate to provide women with training in gardening, sewing, nutrition and cooking. Today, despite the change in name (Women's Development) the traditional home economics approach still shapes much of the agricultural (sic) program for women. A current priority, for example, is training in nutrition, weight loss, cooking and sewing machine repair and maintenance. The new training facilities recently built under Japanese aid consist of a kitchen, and there are plans to offer cooking demonstrations once the budget can stretch to buying the necessary ingredients!

The Unit's main objectives are in fact a little broader than this, although they are still restricted to fairly traditional (women's) areas in agriculture: the improvement of the health and nutritional status of the family; income generating activities of women's groups; assistance in accessing loans for *tapa* making, weaving etc.; women's home (vegetable) gardening and fencing; and planting of fruit, cultural and ornamental trees, in particular pandanus and paper mulberry species, for which nursery seedlings are supplied.

Despite the critical role played by women in commercial agriculture, there appears to be little evidence of Ministry attempts to integrate women or mainstream gender. The Ecological and Sustainable Farming Section which focuses on areas like organic farming and agro-forestry is one of a number of core programs that could quite easily do this. The Section holds awareness-raising meetings at district level and training courses on organic farming (including the environmental and health hazards of agricultural chemicals and fertilizers). These are essentially conducted for male farmers.

A similar situation applies to the training courses in vanilla curing and squash production (planting, fertilizing and post-harvest handling). This marginalization of women from these important extension services deprives them of important opportunities to acquire information and skills, and in turn to improve their productivity. They thus become dependent on whatever second hand information/skills 'trickle down' from their husbands or other male kin.

Chapter 6. NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS FOR WOMEN

Women's organizations in Tonga have always been community-oriented with their primary concern being to serve the needs of family and community as opposed to advancing the status of women as a group. Women's needs and concerns have therefore been very much moulded by a wider social and community-driven agenda. They have also been fairly conservatively defined, tending to reinforce traditional, domesticated roles (of dutiful wife and mother) and traditional skills (weaving, *tapa* making etc.).

In all these respects, two social forces have had a major influence: the Christian church and the ideology of the *fahu* - a cultural belief system that portrays women as enjoying superior status within Tongan society by virtue of their rights and privileges as sisters within the extended family system. Today, the church continues to play a prominent role in many women's organizations, both directly and indirectly. The ideology of the *fahu* also retains its influence, underpinning the acceptance by many women of the existing social order (notably the superior political status of men and their privileged land rights) and generally discouraging advocacy on women's rights.

It would probably be fair to say that women's organizations can still be broadly classified into those which are church-based or linked, and which have a purely religious agenda, and those which are associated with one or other of the Christian churches but which do not necessarily come under church leadership or sponsorship. The second category of organization also emphasizes familial values and the importance of women's traditional responsibilities for family/community welfare, domestic work and child rearing.

However, the character and style of the women's movement are beginning to show signs of adjustment. Tonga is undergoing immense social and economic change and this is contributing to increasing dislocation within the family and wider community. Domestic violence, sexual assault, teenage pregnancies, and alcohol/drug abuse are widespread problems. So are material hardship and poverty. While not all new, these problems form part of a much harsher and more turbulent social landscape today: one that is inevitably demanding fresh (and to some extent less traditional) responses from women's organizations.

One important point of departure already evident can be seen in the emerging challenge to some of the more discriminatory and/or abusive features of the dominant patriarchal culture. The successful work of the Catholic Women's League in promoting women's legal rights is the best example of this 'new wave'. Other initiatives may follow in the future although this may take some time given the sensitivity of the issues and the reluctance of many women to challenge entrenched cultural norms.

The following profiles on a selected number of women's organizations give an indication of the range of activities being undertaken. The selection does not include either the Catholic Women's League or the Ha'apai Women in Development, both of which are discussed in relation to specific projects in section C (1 and 2) above.

1. *Tonga Trust*

The Tonga Trust is a well-established NGO committed to promoting self-reliant and technologically appropriate development with particular attention to the needs of the poor and people living in the rural and outer island areas. Established in 1984, the organization has a membership of some 2,600. While the Trust's Board of Directors includes representation from the two main church communities (Wesleyan and Catholic), the organization engages purely in secular development activities.

In seeking to promote sustainable grassroots development, the Tonga Trust gives priority to village-based projects in four main areas: women in development; water supply and health; environment and natural resources; and training and institutional development. The Village Women's Development Program (VWD) is the longest serving project and works with about 270 women's groups in 60 outer island villages. Membership for Ha'apai, Vava'u and 'Eua is estimated to comprise some 2,000 families.

Home improvement (including kitchens, toilets, gardens and water supplies) is the foundation of the program and a primary goal is to empower women to be able to meet their needs and the needs of their families, thereby improving the quality of their lives.

2. *Diocese Village Women Development*

Established in 1975 by Catholic sisters, the Diocese Village Women Development was originally established to cater mainly for the needs of Catholic women. However, it soon became closely associated with the work of the Village Women's Development program of the former FSP organization (which today operates under the Tonga Trust).

The Diocese has a membership of approximately 3,000 and is involved in a wide range of activities aimed at promoting family values, strengthening traditional craft skills of women, and raising the standard of living through home improvements, in particular the construction of houses, kitchens, toilets, fencing and cement water tanks. Although not part of the core program, the broader social issues of domestic violence and the regional anti-nuclear struggle have featured on its agenda at different times.

3. *Ala'ua Ma'atonga Association*

This non-denominational organization is a local branch of the London-based Associated Country Women of the World. Established in Tonga in 1995 with just 100 members, it now has around 800 members. The basic aim of the Association is to work with grassroots women to improve the quality of their lives.

The Association has undertaken some important work with marginal women and their communities, especially families living in poorer low lying/squatter settlements on reclaimed mangrove swamp land on the periphery of Nuku'alofa. In the settlement of Popua, the Association has provided assistance to many families (some of whom are female-headed households) in the form of land preparation and building materials (soil/gravel mix, fencing etc.). Other support activities relate to improving water supplies, kitchen construction and income generating projects.

4. *Fefine'i Fonua 'O Tonga*

The *Fefine'i Fonua 'O Tonga* was established in 1973 and its main objectives are to improve the status of women, empower women, and improve the quality of their lives. Its membership is estimated to be around 1,500 and its activities include a village development program and training in leadership skills and small business management.

5. *Pan-Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association of Tonga (PPSEAWA)*

As indicated in its name, the PPSEAWA is part of a wider regional (Pacific and South East Asian) network. It has approximately 100 financial members, over 60 of whom are active.

Amongst the Association's goals is the desire to strengthen the bonds of peace, friendship and mutual support amongst women, to assist local charities and to improve the status of Tongan women in all areas. Its activities include weaving, handicrafts, cooking and vegetable farming.

6. *World Federation of Methodist Women (WFMW), Tonga Unit*

This is one of Tonga's oldest women's groups and represents the largest single church-based NGO with a membership of more than 3,000. As the name implies, the organization is the Tongan branch of a global network of Methodist Women (WFMW) and as such it receives financial support from sister affiliates.

The group's declared aims reflect a fairly focused spiritual and evangelical agenda: to 'assist in establishing Christ's Kingdom among all peoples and in all areas of life. To share the abundant life of Christ through evangelism, healing ministries, education and social services. To assist in the promotion of the missionary spirit throughout the world and to share fellowship and offer help in the building of a Christian community'.

7. *Women's Department, Free Wesleyan Church*

This is another church NGO with a strong Christian mission: 'to know Christ and to make him known'. However, group activities do not only include Bible study groups and prayer meetings. Volunteer work and choir competitions are amongst other, more socially oriented, activities.

8. *Women's Federation for World Peace*

A relatively new organization, the Women's Federation for World Peace has a very small membership (12 in 1996) and its main objective is 'to enhance the image of women and promote sound values among youth, families and in society.' Moral education is a core activity.

9. *Seventh Day Adventist Women's Ministry*

The program of this Nuku'alofa-based organization is not confined to religious activities but includes health awareness, cooking classes and marriage counseling.

***Chapter 7.* THE BANK'S STRATEGY AND PROGRAMS**

A. The Bank's Policy on Gender and Development (GAD)

The Bank's GAD policy reflects a recognized need to integrate gender considerations into all its operations. The policy is based not only on equity arguments but also on sound economic logic. Investments in women are now recognized as crucial to achieving sustainable development. Economic analysis recognize that low levels of education and training, poor health and nutritional status, and limited access to resources not only depress women's quality of life, but limit productivity and hinder economic efficiency and growth. Hence, promoting and improving the status of women needs to be pursued for reasons of equity and also because it makes economic sense.

The Bank's GAD Policy adopts 'mainstreaming' as a key strategy in promoting gender equity. Gender considerations are mainstreamed into all Bank activities, including macroeconomic and sector work, and lending and TA operations. This means that gender concerns are overtly addressed in country strategies and country programming work, as well as in the Bank's loan and TA operations. Mainstreaming of gender considerations is promoted at all stages of the project cycle from identification through post-evaluation.

The Bank recognizes that failure to address the factors which limit women's participation in the development process or to consider the role of women in projects where they are potential beneficiaries or contributors run the risk of limiting the effectiveness of its development assistance programs. The Bank's policy on GAD takes a pragmatic approach and has been guided by the specific (cultural and socioeconomic) conditions and requirements of individual DMCs. In some instances, for example, assistance for projects in social infrastructure that directly benefit women (such as health, education/training or water supply) have been regarded as appropriate to local needs as well as to the development objectives and priorities of a DMC. In other cases, the creation of employment and income-earning opportunities in specific sectors like agriculture have been deemed more suitable.

The basic principles and spirit of the Bank's GAD policy are reinforced in its Medium-Term Strategic Framework (1992-1995) which includes improvement in the status of women as one of its five development objectives. Under the Framework, Bank programs and projects are directed to:

- (i) incorporate a country-specific approach to gender issues;
- (ii) assess the needs of women on the basis of gender/social impact analysis at an early stage of project preparation;
- (iii) allocate a portion of project resources to ensure concrete and quantifiable benefits to women; and
- (iv) finance target and stand-alone projects for women where these are considered appropriate and feasible.

B. Country Strategy and Program Implications: GAD Concerns

Tonga joined the Bank over twenty five years ago and since then has had a total of 15 loans worth US\$47.8 million approved. There have been three multi-project loans, two of which have been considered 'generally successful' in that they are believed to have achieved their aim of serving the development needs of the outer islands. Administered through the Tonga Development Bank (TDB), project loan disbursements have, inter alia, promoted cash earning potential amongst small farmholders and fishermen, improved local shipping services, and helped to boost educational opportunities, the standard of health services, local market facilities and industrial employment. A major concern arising out of these projects has been the high level of arrears and costs of micro-lending which has adversely affected the TDB's profitability.

The Bank has three loans to Tonga currently in operation. These provide finance for a Transport Infrastructure Project (approved in 1994), an Outer Islands Agriculture Development Project (approved in December 1995) and a Second Power Development Project (approved in December 1996). There are an additional three loans that are tentatively scheduled for 1998-2000. These comprise a fifth loan for the Tonga Development Bank (1998), a loan for the Small Industries Center Expansion (1999) and a loan for a Nuku'alofa Urban Development Project (2000).

The other component of the Bank's program in Tonga is technical assistance (TA). Since Tonga joined the Bank, grants totaling T\$10.53 million have been provided to 42 projects. Of these, eight grants have been directed to project preparation with the balance being advisory and operational. The recent TA program for the country has focussed on economic and financial management. There have been encouraging outcomes from those advisory TAs to line Ministries that have offered assistance in specific technical areas. However, assistance for institutional strengthening and human resource development has sometimes been compromised by the lack of local counterpart staff, which restricts the ability of the Bank to transfer knowledge and skills.

The Bank's operational strategy for Tonga has four main components: public sector and public enterprise reform; private sector development, including infrastructural support; agricultural diversification; and human resource development. Overall, emphasis is given to economic growth and this will receive concrete support through an ongoing loans program directed at the agricultural and fisheries sectors, credit to the Tonga Development Bank, and infrastructural development. Ongoing technical assistance is also scheduled for the Ministry of Finance, essentially to continue major reforms aimed at establishing program budgeting and improving economic planning capacity. As mentioned above, upcoming loans are planned to provide credit to the Tonga Development Bank, develop the Small Industries Center and support urban development in the capital, Nuku'alofa.

The following are a number of areas of the Bank's operational program that have GAD implications.

1. Women, Credit and the Tonga Development Bank (TDB)

In its 1995 Strategy Paper for the Pacific, the Bank states its intention to reduce 'impediments to business' and to 'improving access to basic business services' as part of its private sector development strategy. The Revised Strategy for the Pacific: Policies and Programs for

Sustainable Growth 1996 notes that while the provision of small-scale finance has proved 'particularly problematic' for development finance institutions in the region, 'small credit programs are an important complement of outer island development'. The Bank accordingly indicates that it will 'explore the possibility of promoting rural and outer island schemes, drawing on successful examples elsewhere (eg the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh).' It is important that the Bank's GAD objectives be integrated into these plans so that women are given a fair chance of both participating and succeeding in private sector development, and of improving their access to credit facilities.

The Tonga Development Bank (TDB) is the principle source of credit for Tongan women and offers two credit lines to women/small producers which are donor-funded: The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the New Zealand Women's Development Fund. Although there have been steady improvements in the gender distribution of loans since the Bank first targeted women for assistance under a special Women in Development lending portfolio, women's needs and demand for credit well exceeds existing provisions. Gender imbalances in loan disbursements persist in spite of women's better repayment rates and overall creditworthiness. A major constraint is the TDB's continued preference for land as security.

It is hoped that recent moves to establish more stringent and commercially-driven loan criteria in the TDB will not penalize small farmers and women, both of whom are already disadvantaged by security requirements. The Bank should encourage the TDB to take a more flexible approach to these requirements where this is appropriate rather than having inflexible stipulations relating to land or other fixed assets which disenfranchise the smaller and poorer groups, including women. Bank criteria might be more appropriately guided, for example, by factors such as past performance or record. The additional advantage of this would be to safeguard against cronyism in the loans system.

The Bank has provided the TDB with four loans totaling US\$8.45 million since its inception in 1997. In addition it has approved five technical assistance grants (TA) worth US\$723,000. The last ADB credit line of T\$4.95 million (effective from July 1990 and now closed) was administered jointly with loan assistance from the World Bank (IDA) amounting to US\$3 million. The funds targeted development projects in the agricultural, industrial and service/tourism sectors with capital and structural projects being eligible for development finance. These included agricultural equipment, machinery and vehicles, boats (including motor engines), other vehicles, and tourism construction. Loans were set at a minimum of T\$10,000.

According to the TDB's Project Completion Report (October 1997), loans from T\$10,000 to T\$50,000 predominated, accounting for 46 percent of the total portfolio. Construction loans (particularly for tourism) received 61 percent of the credit line; and Tongatapu benefited from as much as 96 percent of all loans.

The nature of the targeted projects (capital/structural development) and the large minimum loan size (\$10,000) have not created an enabling environment for women borrowers. Not surprisingly perhaps, the Bank's credit line has benefited few women overall. Women received only six out of a total of 74 loans disbursed in 1996.

Recommendations

1.1 Credit Lines for Women

It is an opportune time for the Bank to help expand TDB credit facilities for Tongan women. In the interests of gender equity, and in view of the generally better performance of women borrowers, the Bank is urged to explore some specific mechanisms for micro-credit delivery to women. Most important, security conditions need to be more flexible to take account of the legal and cultural restrictions on women's rights to 'own' or lease land. In the past, the TDB has been willing to accept women's handicrafts (*koloa*) as security assets, but this more generous policy has been applied selectively and only with regard to smaller loans.

As an immediate step, it is recommended that the Bank include a gender component in future loans to the TDB along with a TA to provide training for women both before borrowing and during the loan cycle, in accordance with the TDB's own recommendations. The Bank is also encouraged to expand credit facilities to women (particularly poorer women) in the outer island or rural areas who are more reliant on self-employment because of the limited job opportunities. For many of these women, handicrafts provide a solid productive base but credit constraints restrict their ability to engage in small-scale farming of raw materials.

In this respect, the Bank's attention is drawn to the commendable efforts made under the IFAD and NZ credit lines to provide development finance to vulnerable groups in the community. This assistance has helped to meet women's needs for micro-credit and to tackle the issues of low incomes and rural poverty in the community. The creditworthiness of women is evident in the strong performances amongst IFAD borrowers, as well as in the household incomes generated by women's handicraft production in island groups like Ha'apai.

The Bank can also support women's active participation in the agriculture sector by considering a rural micro-credit line for women farmers. At present, the overwhelming proportion of TDB funding for agriculture is directed towards men, with women's credit access confined to handicraft raw material production, and to a much lesser extent vegetable production. With the exception of the minority of women who form part of the social elite, there are few women able to access loans for commercial crops like squash, vanilla, coffee or vegetables. This discourages them from moving out of employment as farm labor and into self-employment as independent producers.

2. Urban Development

Water, sanitation and housing are crucial development, livelihood and community health issues in Tonga, and women are the main players in all areas. Despite official claims to optimum standards, the mass population of Tonga does not in fact enjoy an adequate and healthy water supply and sanitation system. Moreover, official monitoring of water quality falls well short of providing satisfactory safeguards for community health standards. Due to staff and budgetary constraints, the Environmental Health Unit of the Public Health Division is unable to perform more than ad hoc water sampling. These problems are likely to intensify as the rising urban drift puts greater pressure on existing services in centers like Nuku'alofa. The squatter settlements of peri-urban Nuku'alofa and Pangai provide stark evidence of this, stressing the need for urban development strategies that cater to the basic needs of the poor.

Attention should also be directed to the detrimental environmental impact of agrochemical pesticides associated with squash production and other forms of commercial agriculture. Evidence from agricultural extension and research officers (in the outer islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai as well as in Tongatapu) suggests that this feature of sectoral development already poses a disturbing threat to water safety and food sources, and in turn the health of the community. The hazards extend to the peri-urban communities of the main islands.

According to the Environmental Health Unit, water monitoring related to agrochemicals is not done anywhere outside the main island; and on Tongatapu it involves only 20 random samples taken once a year. The Section would like to be able to increase the sampling to at least twice a year and to extend the process to the outer islands, especially in the squash growing areas of Vava'u and 'Eua. At present, the limited resources available (there is an annual working budget of T\$125,000 to cover sanitation, garbage disposal and water supply) make it difficult even to manage the current responsibilities. Each sample costs US\$150 and is sent to Australia for testing. No testing was undertaken in 1997.

The Australian Center of Integrated Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is to fund a project on pesticide residue analysis in Tonga in the near future which will in particular examine residues in soil and food crops. However, this initiative urgently needs to be boosted by a more comprehensive research program (including data collection) on pesticide run off into soil, groundwater and lagoons, as well as by protective policy measures.

Recommendations

The Bank is urged to address some of the fundamental problems relating to water, sanitation and housing standards in its urban development program for Tonga. A loan (US\$10 million) and technical assistance are tentatively programmed for Nuku'alofa Urban Development under the Bank's social infrastructure assistance to Tonga. The project includes a Nuku'alofa Urban Development Master Plan Study. As family caretakers, women are principle stakeholders in water and sanitation services. Their concerns and needs should be given full consideration from the earliest planning stages. Similarly, attention should be given to assessing the special needs of the poorer communities, particularly the urban squatters of Tongatapu and Ha'apai who endure impoverished and insanitary housing conditions.

The Bank is also urged to improve industrial waste disposal practices by the private sector. These are currently unregulated, and as such pose environmental and health hazards in urban areas like Nuku'alofa which are becoming increasingly industrialized.

2.1 Improvements to Water Supply

The Bank might wish to consider a number of interventions as part of its urban development assistance. There is an urgent need to upgrade the reticulated rural water supply. There are serious leakage problems associated with the corrosion and aging of the piping system. According to the senior environmental health inspectorate, close to 60 percent of rural water pipes need replacement. In view of the high levels of contamination of groundwater already confirmed by comprehensive testing in island groups like Ha'apai, these leakages would appear to pose a major health hazard if they remain uncorrected. The Bank could make a valuable contribution by helping to finance the construction of water and septic tanks on the outer islands and hardware (piping) extensions to the reticulated water systems.

2.2 Institutional Strengthening

Institutional strengthening is recommended for the Environmental Health Unit. This would improve the capacity of this relatively marginalized, yet very important, section of the Health Ministry to safeguard water and sanitation standards throughout the country. In particular, the Section would like to be able to extend its current water sampling program (related to agrochemicals) beyond the once a year testing of 20 sites in Tongatapu. Its immediate aim is to double the testing occasions (to twice a year) and to extend the program to the outer islands, especially the squash growing areas of Vava'u and 'Eua.

While the costs of this additional sampling are quite modest (estimated at around US\$10,000) they are prohibitive for the Unit given its nominal working budget.

2.3 Housing Credit Line for Women

Housing assistance for low-income families, in particular garden fencing – to keep out pigs – and kitchen construction are commonly referred to as priority needs by grass roots women. Women's gardens are typically confined to town allotments but roaming pigs often compromise their efforts to grow vegetables, fruit, medicine and cultural plants. The ubiquitous Tongan pig also poses a health risk to the community in urban and rural areas alike.

So too, the lack of basic indoor kitchens undermines standards of family hygiene as well as increasing the work burdens of women. It leaves many women cooking under a tree outside or on a dirt floor with smoke billowing into their eyes. The kitchen is a multipurpose structure in Tonga - used for the preparation of food, family meals, food storage, handicraft production and a living area. It is also an area where women spend a large proportion of their day.

Within the proposed urban development project, opportunities could be explored for including a squatter rehabilitation component. A small credit line for housing could provide basic, albeit crucial, support for low-income women and their families. One option might be a revolving fund administered through an established NGO like Tonga Trust/Village Women's Development which has a long experience of community development and has acted as a guarantor for women's loans in the past.

3. Small Industries Center Development

Established in 1980, the Small Industries Center (SIC) is a 20-acre industrial site that services small-scale industries in peri-urban Nuku'alofa. It provides basic physical infrastructure (including roads, water, electricity and sewage) and was designed with the aim of boosting the industrial sector, reducing dependence on agriculture, creating employment opportunities, and promoting import substitution and exports. It has steadily expanded over the past two decades, largely under donor assistance, including five loans from the Bank. Today there is a small 'sister' center in Vava'u.

Textiles/garments (including woolen knitwear and leather jackets) and footwear have been the most prominent activities, but other operations, including food processing (beer, snacks), mechanical/electrical goods, and industrial products (paints, construction materials and chemicals), have also featured. In more recent years, there has been a noticeable shift towards natural resource

processing, for example fish exports (in Nuku'alofa) and vanilla processing (in Vava'u). Despite some significant failures amongst manufacturing businesses (resulting mainly from external factors such as the loss of preferential trading under SPARTECA in the Australian and New Zealand markets), the current demand for industrial space in the Nuku'alofa Center cannot be met by available facilities.

As part of its support for private sector and export development, the Bank's pipeline of assistance includes a proposed loan (US\$2 million) and technical assistance (US\$0.25 million) for the further expansion of the SIC. The project is intended to finance the construction of a second SIC in Tongatapu and expand the facilities in Vava'u. The ADTA will assist government in the preparation of a Corporate Plan. Amongst the policy issues to be addressed will be a review of the Industrial Incentives Act and institutional and management reform. The provision of new facilities and services for small industries is intended to improve SIC operations and to benefit Center tenants and prospective entrepreneurs. The creation of employment opportunities is considered to be another important outcome, helping to service the existing reserve of unemployed persons, particularly women.

Recommendations

3.1 Employment Code

There are a number of social/gender implications arising out of the SIC development. Before proceeding with its plans for the Center, the Bank should ideally address these. As discussed in chapter 3 section A, the SIC typifies the unregulated employment environment prevailing in Tonga. Health and safety regulations are virtually non-existent and employment conditions are largely left to the discretion of employers. This includes the special needs of women workers like maternity leave. The Bank is strongly urged to incorporate employment conditions (including occupational health and safety issues) as a component of its Corporate Plan. In the continued absence of employment legislation, it could, proactively, draw up a gender-inclusive employment code for SIC businesses in line with acceptable international standards.

3.2 Environmental Standards

Industrial pollution from factories operating in the SIC is a recognized environmental and health problem, especially the impact of liquid waste on the lagoon and groundwater system. However, the SIC is not subject to systematic scrutiny in the area of environmental standards. Inspections by the Environmental Health Section are irregular and arbitrary, legislative protection is sorely deficient, and there is no history of prosecution. Given the importance of the lagoon as a source of food (and especially a fishing ground for women), this negligence has direct gender and community health implications.

The Bank is strongly urged to address this problem under its upcoming technical assistance. The TA could assist with developing appropriate environmental guidelines and standards for the Center. Expressed community concerns about poor standards emphasize the need for a rigorous Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be integrated into the Bank's proposed Corporate Plan for the SIC. In particular, the Bank should insist on the safe disposal of industrial effluent by the private sector and support the design and implementation of appropriate disposal methods.

C. Further Opportunities to Support WID

1. Mainstreaming Gender

The mainstreaming of gender into all government business, including national/sectoral planning and macroeconomic policy, is a central objective of the national women's machinery and is in line with international trends and Bank policy. However, in order to achieve this, it is crucial that the central planning agency as well as individual government ministries develop the capacity (notably the professional skills) to integrate gender into all their planning and policy work.

Gender awareness training - targeted at selected individuals in the planning office and other departments like agriculture - is already underway under the auspices of UNIFEM and the SPC. While this is an important step in the right direction, the training does not appear to extend to the more comprehensive and specialized skills required of gender analysis and gender-inclusive policy making and planning.

Recommendations

1.1 Technical Assistance

It is recommended that the Bank consider providing a gender specialist to the Central Planning Office under technical assistance as part of its capacity building activities. Her duties might extend to assisting key line Ministries like Agriculture and Fisheries which would directly benefit from the integration of gender considerations into their sectoral planning and policy work. A gender TA is considered to be particularly appropriate for the Planning Office because two of its officers (one of whom is the Director) are currently responsible for drafting a National Policy on Women. As home to the National Development Plan, the Planning Office also offers an ideal location to develop a blueprint for gender planning. This could be used as a guide by other government departments.

In addition, the Bank is urged to consider including a gender component in all its institutional strengthening assistance. The current TA in respect of the Ministry of Finance is a case in point.

2. Women in Agriculture

Contrary to conventional wisdom, and the implications of the national accounting system, women are vital players in virtually all aspects of agricultural work. In reality, cultural values underpinning the gender division of labor impose very few practical restrictions on women's activities in agriculture and agro-forestry. In the context of an increasingly commercially driven economy and high rates of male out-migration, the integration of women into cash/export crop production is gaining ground. These developments are taking place in spite of the special difficulties women face in accessing credit.

To some extent, there is evidence of a gendered labor division emerging within key commercial industries like squash and vanilla. Jobs assigned to women reflect stereotypical perceptions of women's 'natural' dexterity and aptitude. Post-harvest work (particularly quality control) in squash, and pollination in vanilla, are just two areas dominated by women. Despite these trends, there appears to be little training or other extension support directed towards women farmers. An important reason for this is the lack of agricultural expertise in the Women's Development Unit,

which makes it very difficult for women extension officers to provide professional assistance. On the other hand, 'mainstream' fieldwork by the Extension Division continues to work on the assumption (myth) that agriculture is essentially an all-male domain. Women farmers thus unfortunately fall between two stools.

There is an urgent need to improve the regulation of agrochemical/pesticide use in the agricultural sector, especially squash production. There are already concerns within the community about the possible links between emerging health problems and the use of chemicals. Legislative protection and the enforcement of safe practices are deficient and there is limited knowledge (including data) about the nature and extent of chemical-related health or environmental risks. Inadequate education on the hazards associated with routine chemical spraying and a poor understanding by farmers of the dangers of failing to use protective clothing and equipment pose additional worries. The cost of equipment is a major disincentive to complying with guidelines provided by MAF Extension workers.

Handicapped by staff shortages and small budgets, the MAF Extension Division is unable to develop a more comprehensive educational package and to use delivery outlets like television and radio in a more sustained fashion. Financial constraints also inhibit the Division's efforts to promote organic farming, which it considers to be a more sustainable basis for long term sectoral development, as well as to offer important (niche) marketing opportunities.

Recommendations

2.1 Institutional Strengthening

The institutional strengthening of the Women's Development Unit of MAF would be a valuable form of assistance. The Bank might like to consider funding a scholarship program for women in agriculture at diploma, degree and post-graduate levels. This could be done in conjunction with a TA aimed at other aspects of institutional strengthening, including the possible preparation of a 'Women in Agriculture Plan' for the Unit. The main divisions of the department would benefit from training in gender awareness (which has been provided only to selected staff by the South Pacific Commission) and, more important, training in the integration of gender analysis into programming work.

2.2 Research, Training and Community Education Assistance

It is recommended that the Bank consider providing TA support for agrochemical research in the squash industry and the development of a routine and comprehensive water sampling program on both Tongatapu and the outer islands. Water monitoring should be particularly directed to those areas engaged in farming commercial crops that make routine use of pesticides. These recommendations should be considered in conjunction with those submitted for urban development (water and sanitation). The Research Division of MAF would also benefit from training/skills upgrading in environment-friendly (natural) pest control methods and in developing a more integrated pest management system.

The Bank is urged to include an environmental/health education component in its agricultural sector program for Tonga. It should also support government efforts to encourage the safe use of agrochemicals and pesticides. The component should ensure that women are included by virtue of their direct role as workers/farmers in the industry and because of the implications for their

workload (as family caretakers) of any health afflictions affecting their husbands. As a longer term goal, the Bank is advised to support Ministry efforts to promote organic farming.

3. Women's Handicrafts

Handicraft production has considerable potential as a sustainable industry. It is a major source of women's employment and income, especially in the outer islands, and women are the main players in the cultivation of the raw materials (pandanus and paper mulberry species) required for weaving and *tapa* making. Unfortunately, the perennial shortages of pandanus and paper mulberry represent a serious constraint on women's activities and consequently limit their ability to generate money to meet basic household needs. On some of the outer islands, such as Ha'apai and the Niuas, where there is a dependency on handicrafts as the sole or main source of cash income, the shortage of materials is felt more acutely.

There is no single explanation for the shortages. Male control over the *'api uta* (farm tax allotment) where the raw materials are usually grown gives women little influence over crop selection or placement. This has been aggravated by the move into squash farming that frequently results in the destruction of plants when the land is cleared.

In view of the importance of handicraft production to Tongan culture and household incomes, as well as its export potential, the Bank is strongly advised to consider making appropriate interventions. Building women's capacity to produce for the market and community would go a long way towards strengthening this important area of the informal and formal economy. It would also be in line with the Bank's GAD policy. The use of organic farming methods could, in addition, enhance the (export) marketability of women's handicrafts and would be in line with current Extension objectives.

Recommendations

3.1 Overcoming Raw Material Shortages

The Bank is urged to help boost the planting of raw materials by supporting the fledgling nurseries of the MAF Extension Divisions and/or individual women's groups. A credit line to women's groups (through the TDB) would offer seed funding for the purchase of seedlings/plants and essential farming equipment along the lines of the Canadian-funded Ha'apai scheme. This could be consolidated by technical assistance through the Women's Development Unit of MAF Extension.

3.2 Handicraft Marketing

On the marketing side, it is recommended that the Bank expand its support for the energetic work underway in Tonga Trade, a unit of the Ministry of Labour and Commerce undergoing Bank-sponsored institutional strengthening. Tonga Trade is already exploring the export market potential of women's handicrafts as well as consulting with women's groups in the outer islands about their needs and problems. In order to facilitate the development of a comprehensive marketing strategy and work program, a formal component that promotes and supports women's activities in this sector should be integrated into the Bank's technical assistance to Tonga Trade at the earliest opportunity.

Consideration should be given to a separate gender budget facility as well as handicraft training (both with regard to production and design) and credit components for the benefit of small-scale women producers in the outer islands. A gender component should be built into the Bank's proposed TA to Tonga Trade.

4. Women and Fisheries

Fisheries have been earmarked as a sector with significant growth potential for the national economy in view of the immense and under-utilized pelagic resources within an estimated 720,000 sq.km. exclusive economic zone. Since 1992, fish exports have surpassed vanilla, making the industry the second largest export to squash. In 1996, the value of fish exports was officially put at T\$4.16 million.

Overall, the predominant pattern has been for fisheries development to be fashioned by the issues and concerns of male-based commercial/export fisheries. Government policy or donor-funded programs have generally aimed at improving catch levels, developing the export potential of the sector, and improving the standards of fish handling/preservation/marketing through post-harvest training. A large part of the Bank's own assistance to fisheries development in recent years has been channeled to a single tuna company in the private sector.

Current Ministry priorities are to expand the tuna fishery, sustain the encouraging development of the snapper fishery, and develop commercial aquaculture (primarily pearl oyster cultivation and the seaweed industry). Concern about stock depletion problems, and the corresponding need for prudent resource management, are the only practical constraints on an otherwise commercially driven development agenda.

Women's fisheries suffer from a lack of institutional support and are generally marginalized from sectoral planning and policy making. At its most basic level, this marginalization is expressed in their 'invisibility', specifically the lack of official recognition for the contribution of women fishers to household food security and cash incomes. The implications are far-reaching. The lack of gender-based data legitimizes the exclusion of women's fisheries from the national accounts, and starves them of resources, training opportunities, and credit support.

Women's fisheries fall under the jurisdiction of the Extension Division of the Ministry. There is no separate unit, no formal women's fisheries program, no separate budget line and no female professional fisheries officers. Of the 16 or so Extension officers, a single woman is responsible for virtually everything and anything to do with women's fisheries in the entire country, in addition to having other Extension responsibilities. All of this is inimical to the interests of development in Tonga as well as to its women fishers.

The Ministry of Fisheries appears very willing to support women's fisheries. However, anticipated activities are largely confined to creating employment opportunities (e.g. seaweed harvesting and processing, and pearl oyster farming) and post-harvest training workshops. As they stand at present, the allocation of staff, technical and financial resources give little reason for confidence in the capacity of the Ministry to give serious attention to the needs of women fishers. Recent work on a national fisheries plan (funded by FAO/AusAID) is a case in point. This offered an ideal opportunity for gender-inclusive planning. Unfortunately, there was no women's fisheries or gender expert on the team of consultants.

The inadequate provision of training, advisory, extension and technical support services is particularly problematic in the more remote or isolated islands where outreach programs are hampered by a lack of transport and negligible budgets. In 1995, an SPC study observed that a major obstacle faced by women with respect to increasing their catch levels was that they had difficulty accessing appropriate or adequate fishing equipment, for example boats, cooler boxes (to chill fish), fishing spears and snorkeling gear. The study also highlighted the need for training of women fishers, especially with regard to seafood handling, processing and marketing.

In 1996, the SPC's Women's Fisheries Development Project organized a workshop in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries. Significantly, this was the first time such training had ever been offered exclusively to women fishers in Tonga. Recent initiatives of the Ministry, ably marshaled by the only woman Extension officer, have taken women's training a further step forward. One outcome has been the successful (SPC/UNDP-sponsored) training workshops in seafood preservation and processing through smoking, with demonstrations on how to build a simple smoke stove.

At present, official surveys conducted annually of inshore fisheries collect no gender-specific data, and compared to the comprehensive analysis of (male) fin-fish landings (viz. volumes, values and fishing methods) and stocks, assessments of shellfish and other inshore seafood supplies are based on little more than guesswork. A Tonga Country Report on Inshore Fisheries in 1995 observed that 'As far as data permits, it appears that ark shells are still plentiful in certain areas although local depletions have occurred. It may be also that the size of the shells is decreasing. There is little information on the status of venus clams and other shellfish species.'

The lack of surveys or studies of women's fisheries, and the shortage of gender data, make it unrealistic to expect gender-responsive planning and policy-making in the sector. But there is ample scope for rectifying this. Studies and data on shellfish (landed catches etc), for example, would assist the Department in its current efforts to replenish depleted stocks by hatchery breeding (giant clams, green snails and trochus). They could also be a basis for extending the facility to other (women's) species such as sea cucumber (*lomu*), sea urchins (*tokumisi*) and ark shells (*kalo'a*).

There appears to be considerable interest on the part of Tongan women to establish small businesses and to produce for the market (including the export market) in this sector. However, this will require further training in areas like business management and accounting skills, fish preservation/processing, marketing and quality control, and sustainable resource use. The Ministry of Fisheries is willing to explore the income-generating/small business possibilities of fish preserving and processing, for example dried salted fish (tuna jerky) and smoked fish. (In other countries of the Pacific like Kiribati, tuna jerky - processed by i-Kiribati women - has proved a successful export.) Other possibilities include the preservation and processing of shellfish, seaweed, sea cucumber (*lomu*) and sea urchins.

Apart from some serious and long-term planning, any attempts to develop women's participation in small-scale businesses will require support from the Tonga Development Bank (TDB) and/or donor agencies. Women will need to be assured of better access to loans or other credit facilities, market information, and business development support. At present, there is no budgetary provision in the Ministry for supporting women's fisheries activities and the TDB does not provide loans to women wishing to establish seafood businesses.

In the past, the former Tongan Fishing Association - established in 1988 with more than 100 registered members - endeavored to tackle the technical and financial needs of fishers as well as to establish a comprehensive system of data collection. The Association built up a membership of close to 3,000 of which fewer than 100 were women. It has been defunct for some years although it remains solvent and there are plans to revive it.

Recommendations

The Bank is urged to develop greater gender equity in its assistance program to the fisheries sector. It could do this by supporting women's inshore subsistence and artisanal-commercial fisheries through technical and funding assistance as well as by encouraging gender integration into national fisheries programming. While the long term objective should be to encourage the mainstreaming of women's fisheries, building the capacity of the Ministry to address the immediate training and other needs of women fishers would be an important step towards correcting the traditional biases in the sector.

4.1 Institutional Strengthening

Institutional strengthening for the women's fisheries section of the Ministry would provide a strong foundation for future Bank support. It should include improving the gender capacity of the Ministry's database, integrating gender into resource management and conservation initiatives, and developing a Women's Fisheries Policy. Under the present circumstances, it would seem advisable for be a separate women's policy. However, the possibility for integrating women's fisheries into national policy should be explored concurrently.

The Bank is encouraged to support the training initiatives in post-harvest handling, preservation and processing that have been spearheaded by the Women's Fisheries Development Project of the South Pacific Commission. Co-financing with the SPC's Fisheries Division could be explored.

4.2 Women's Fisheries Profile

A Bank-sponsored profile on women's fisheries, including the status of women's inshore stocks, would be a valuable source of information. It would also help to shape a more gender-inclusive fisheries policy. The profile could take the form of a national survey and include a detailed investigation of women's fishing practices, species, knowledge and needs, as well as a basic gender-based census and time-use study. This would meet the wishes of the Fisheries Department in Ha'apai (where the last fishing survey was conducted in 1984) as well as the Ministry's interest in identifying sectoral needs at the community level. The findings of the study would provide a more precise picture of women's roles in the sector as well as their contribution (viz. time and value) to food production, marketing and income generation. The study could also make recommendations for addressing the needs of women fishers and for integrating women into mainstream fisheries activities.

4.3 Women and Aquaculture

In addition, the Bank could explore ways of supporting women in the fledgling seaweed export industry, where they already form the core labor force for harvesting and processing. Similar support could be directed to the anticipated pearl farming development in Vava'u, where women are expected to be recruited for certain skilled jobs in the near future.

5. Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods

Although there is a strong tradition of both subsistence agriculture/agro-forestry and sustainable resource (especially land) management, food security is a problem in two major respects. First, despite the conventional and somewhat simplistic view that Tongans are 'over-fed' rather than 'under-fed', there is evidence of poverty and under-nutrition emerging in pockets of both urban and rural communities. Second, changing eating patterns are having a deleterious impact on nutritional and health standards and, in particular, are encouraging a reliance on unhealthy imported meat products. Non-communicable disease has reached alarming proportions, with women featuring prominently.

Tonga's first national food and nutrition policy was introduced in late 1995 and is administered by a National Food and Nutrition Committee which is based in the Central Planning Department and acts in an advisory capacity to government. Recent activities have focused on a successful National Weight Loss Competition and promoting healthy diets and lifestyles. Amongst the objectives of the Committee are the establishment of a food and nutrition database and the promotion of local (nutrient-rich) food (including fish/seafood) production and consumption. A supporting Plan of Action for nutrition lists household food security as a key outcome of a multisectoral effort to make 'sufficient foods (safe and nutritious) regularly available to all people.' There is, however, no national food security program per se and no formal integration of food security as a core component of development (and sectoral) macroeconomic policy.

While nutrition education at the community level has the potential to nudge people into healthier eating habits in Tonga, the higher price of fish (around T\$3.00 per kilo) remains a major disincentive for people to abandon (or reduce) their consumption of cheaper fatty meats (\$2.00 - \$2.50 per kilo of *sipi*). Other, policy level, interventions such as import regulations or minimum wage protection, would seem to be worth considering if consumption patterns are to be expected to change.

Women are key players in promoting household food security and family welfare and this makes them logical choices for any community-targeted initiatives, including credit programs where they have a good track record. Other desirable measures like improved maternity conditions and nursing breaks for working mothers would help to counter the decline in breastfeeding, and in the process strengthen food/health security for infants. Such steps would also bring Tonga into line with other Pacific countries like Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Recommendations

5.1 Improving Household Security

Many supportive measures can be adopted to give backbone to the government's food and nutrition policy and to support individual, community and institutional efforts already underway to improve household food security in Tonga. Low-income small farmers, including women, can be helped to raise production levels, increase self-sufficiency in food, and safeguard family and community health standards. Improving access to land (through land reform), extension services (especially after natural disasters), income security, credit and markets (through better infrastructure), and food processing technology are just some of the ways of doing this.

In order to promote health and living standards, and reduce the heavy imports of nutrient-weak foodstuffs, the Bank is urged to strengthen government efforts to raise the production and consumption of nutritious local foods. Two possible interventions might be to extend the current TDB credit line to women vegetable farmers and to support the MAF Women's Development Unit subsistence-related work in the rural communities.

In the long term, food security and sustainable livelihoods can be enhanced by priority being given to safeguarding the natural environment and its resources from any degrading farming, fishing and industrial practices. The Bank is urged to be mindful of this in all its ongoing macroeconomic and sectoral programs for Tonga. More specifically, it might consider providing assistance to the government's under-resourced agro-forestry programs (e.g. in Vava'u), which are aimed at encouraging replanting of many multi-purpose (medicinal, food, cultural) trees and plants. Women are key players in agro-forestry, just as they are in the general area of household food/health security, and should be involved at all stages of any initiatives.

5.2 Technical Assistance

The Bank is also advised to encourage the formal integration of household food security into sectoral planning and macroeconomic policy. To this end, it might consider technical assistance for the development of a national food security policy. The TA could include a poverty survey that would help to identify some of the main problems faced by sections of the community in meeting basic (including subsistence food) needs. It is recommended that the survey have a gender component. This would, *inter alia*, help to identify the specific problems of women household heads/migration 'widows' in providing for their children and other dependants.

6. Women and Health

Health indicators for Tonga portray a generally favorable picture of women's health, including their reproductive health. However, women appear to demonstrate higher prevalence rates for obesity and obesity-related health problems, notably diabetes and other non-communicable disease, which are leading 'lifestyle' killers. Hospital obstetric services are also plagued by overcrowding and a shortage of specialist staff, equipment and drugs, all of which are difficult to alleviate because of budgetary constraints. In the outer islands, the lack of (sea) transport is a significant impediment to providing pregnant women with quality health care and is occasionally responsible for deaths in childbirth.

Women's reproductive health status is vulnerable to cultural values that limit their ability to control their own sexuality and fertility. In particular, social disapproval of pre-marital sexual activity seriously limits the access of young women to contraceptives and reproductive health information. These values trickle into the school system where there continues to be a reluctance to incorporate a meaningful sex education program into the curriculum. In such an environment, the risks of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease are high.

Health data is deficient in a number of respects and there is very little that is gender-desegregated. There is an urgent need to correct this so that women's reproductive and other health problems can be adequately addressed. The findings of an AusAID-sponsored KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices) survey undertaken on behalf of the Family Planning Association (FPA) in 1997 are currently awaited and these should help to fill some of the information gaps. The FPA

intends (pending funding) to target young people in an education drive, to produce educational materials, and to upgrade its health services for women, including counseling and pap smears. In the long term, it would like to be able to offer a well-equipped and serviced health clinic for women.

Recommendations

6.1 Institutional Strengthening

In order to improve the health status of women, institutional strengthening is recommended for hospital maternal and child health services. The Bank is also encouraged to support the work of community-based organizations like the Family Planning Association, especially in its efforts to develop a health clinic for women.

Chapter 8.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to provide an assessment of women and development issues in Tonga. It has offered a profile of women's social, economic, legal and cultural status and endeavored to explain the links between women's changing roles and status and the broader dynamics of Tongan society. The paper has commented on some of the main features of women's subordinate status and the constraints on gender equality in what is one of the more socially complex Pacific societies. The overall purpose has been to identify ways in which the Bank might play a constructive and more gender-sensitive development role.

Many changes are taking place in Tonga today: in the social, cultural, economic and political domains. Integration into the world economic system, accompanied by material and individualistic values, is affecting society on many levels. The impact of commercially driven development is threatening the viability of the subsistence sector, notably the traditional sources of (marine and land-based) food and household materials that have sustained people for generations. Land shortages are acute and economic inequalities are growing. And, contrary to the established wisdom, both urban and rural poverty are emerging realities.

The winds of social change are also challenging traditional values, practices and institutions, including the cultural pivot of the extended family system. A generation of young people is growing up in a very different and, in many respects, confusing and alienating social environment. Tongans today face a more turbulent political climate, involving unprecedented populist challenges to the distribution and use of political power and authority.

The status of Tongan women today bears many cultural trappings of the past. In particular, it continues to be strongly influenced by an overarching quasi-feudal social system which vests control of resources and political power in an institutionalized (and predominantly male) elite. Women's subordinate land rights encapsulate the fusion of social and gender hierarchies, and these have more serious implications for their economic security today. Christianity remains a dominant force, exerting its influence on gender relations through the prescribed values of the patriarchal family and the controls on women's sexuality.

Yet aspects of women's status are changing, often in adverse ways and as a consequence of changes taking place in the development arena. As caretakers of the family, women bear the burden of negative 'fall-out' from development-induced change. They feel most acutely the dislocating effects of household violence and alcohol abuse, which are increasingly taking root in the country. Demographic change, in particular the high rates of external (male) migration and the rising number of female headed households, is placing new burdens on them. And as economic development becomes more market-driven, women are taking on increasingly important roles as producers and workers in key sectors of the formal economy, as well as in the informal sector. Alongside these trends, cultural institutions like the *fahu* system, which provided women with elevated status and rights in the past, are losing their influence.

Government support for a National Women's Policy and national women's machinery is an important achievement in the context of Tongan society. It provides a significant basis on which

to build a more solid and tangible commitment to improving the social, economic, legal and political status of Tongan women. The Bank is strongly urged to help enhance women's status, promote gender equity and move women from the 'fringes' to the 'mainstream' of development. This would be consistent with both government and Bank policy. Moreover, in view of women's key roles as resource users, household managers and custodians of the family, it would also help to create a better balance between growth and export-driven development, and development aimed at self-reliance and the satisfaction of basic needs.

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