

SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

TWENTY-SECOND REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING ON FISHERIES
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 6-10 August 1990)

PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WOMEN-IN-FISHERIES PROGRAMME
(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

1. In many parts of the developing world the valuable role women play in fisheries as part of their normal day-to-day activities has been acknowledged for some time. Where this is so assistance is being provided to women's groups through specifically targeted programmes involving projects in extension services, social services, training workshops and financial support for cottage industry projects, etc., to help with their unique and specific needs.

2. In the Pacific the role played by women in fisheries has, until recently, been largely overlooked and very few of the many development activities in the fisheries sector have taken the needs of women specifically into account. However, the first steps are now being taken both regionally and within several member countries to evaluate the important contribution made by women from coastal communities, to assess where women can best be assisted to improve their standard of living, and organise and run specially designed workshops and income generating projects. Some recent initiatives include:

- a) The Commonwealth Secretariat sponsored a "Consultation on the Role of Women in Small-scale Fisheries in the South Pacific". Two meetings were held, one at the South Pacific Commission, New Caledonia in April 1989, to prepare the agenda for the second larger consultative meeting held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga in October, later in the same year. This latter meeting was attended by representatives of Women's organisations and Fisheries Departments from British Commonwealth member countries from the region. The aim of the consultation was to bring interested bodies from Pacific Island countries together with the various regional organisations and donor agencies, to discuss ways of supporting and assisting women in fisheries development activities and projects. A range of conclusions and recommendations were made at the meeting covering information and awareness, training and extension, harvesting, aquaculture/mariculture, handling processing and quality control, marketing and distribution, handicraft and manufacture, credit, and health and nutrition.

- b) A two week workshop on Fish Processing and Marketing was held in Port Moresby at the University of Papua New Guinea, in September 1989 for twenty two women from the Papuan Region. The workshop was funded by the International Centre for Ocean Development (ICOD), and organised jointly by the South Pacific Commission, the Women's Division, Department of Home Affairs and Youth, the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources, and the University of Papua New Guinea. A report of the workshop, entitled **Papua Region Women's Workshop on Fish Processing and Marketing**, has been prepared by SPC (April 1990), and distributed to all Government Departments responsible for fisheries and women's affairs. This workshop has stimulated considerable interest within PNG government agencies to further extend their support to women in the village on a Provincial and National level. In this respect the Government of Papua New Guinea (GPNG) has defined an ambitious programme to assist women and has requested SPC assistance with the planning and implementation of many of its component activities. Sub-projects include village level follow-up activities for participants in the Papua Region workshop; a National survey of socio-economic and technical needs of women from selected provinces of the three coastal Regions of Papua New Guinea; and further workshops, inclusive of follow-up support activities, for the New Guinea Islands and Momase Regions.
 - c) Vanuatu and Solomon Islands have expressed their interest in the approach adopted by PNG and similar programmes are envisaged.
 - d). Fiji Fisheries Division ran a fisherwomen's course for sixteen participants in 1988, covering a wide range of topics including harvesting and post-harvest subjects. Other countries in the region are considering appropriate action to help women from isolated fishing communities.
3. These activities highlight the growing awareness and interest within the Pacific, in the valuable role women play in processing, preserving and marketing fishery products, and the lack of socio-economic and technical fisheries projects specifically aimed to improve the daily living conditions of women and their families.
4. The South Pacific Commission encompasses two programmes with mandates directly related to this issue. The Pacific Women's Resource Bureau (PWRB) is responsible for the coordination and identification of programmes relating to women in development within SPC programmes. The Fish Handling and Processing Project (FHPP) within the Fisheries Programme, has the general responsibility to assist countries in the improvement and upgrading of fish handling practices in all sectors of the fishing industry. The present proposal draws on both of these programmes in the development of a fisheries post-harvest project targeted specifically at rural and urban women in the coastal communities of the South Pacific.

Project description

5. The general aim and purpose of the project is to enhance the capability of the Pacific Women's Resource Bureau and Fisheries Programme to assist women in the South Pacific to participate in and benefit from fisheries activities in the region, particularly in the post-harvest sector. This project will therefore serve to develop and implement a programme in post-harvest fisheries activities, to be directed specifically at women from coastal communities. The initial thrust of the project will be directed at women's groups in Melanesian fishing communities where planning for women's activities are at a more advanced stage, with due provision made for the extension of project activities to other countries expressing interest in the programme.

6. To undertake the planning and implementation of regional, sub-regional and national activities in this sector will involve a substantial commitment of time from SPC personnel. The national groups most directly motivated to enter into this sector - government departments responsible for women's programmes and NGOs focusing on women's issues - lack the technical expertise to present effective proposals for funding agency consideration or to execute a programme of technical assistance. The same restriction applies to the PWRB. Within SPC Fisheries, the Fish Handling and Processing Officer (FHPO) has a full range of duties which would not permit the diversion of sufficient effort to fully undertake this responsibility.

7. To effectively tackle the broad aims described above it is proposed to establish one new extra-budgetary (i.e. non-core) position within the Fisheries Programme. This officer, to be designated the **Women's Fisheries Programme Officer (WFPO)**, will be responsible to the Fisheries Coordinator, and operate under the technical supervision of the FHPO (see Appendix 1 - Proposed duty statement for the Women's Fisheries Programme Officer). Close consultation and liaison with the PWRB will be maintained to ensure compatibility with the overall objectives of women's programming at the Bureau. The WFPO will be responsible for identification of priority areas for project development, and will proceed with planning and implementation of the projects, including identification of donor funding. These will include country needs studies, training workshops, and follow-on extension activities. All project identification and development will be carried out under the supervision of SPC fisheries staff and in consultation with the PWRB. In addition, the programme will be monitored by an internal steering committee consisting of representatives of the Fisheries Programme and the PWRB, as well as the SPC Director of Programmes.

8. A broad 2-year programme of activities has been tentatively identified and will comprise the envisaged work programme for this position. Priority tasks would include:

- a) A sub-regional planning meeting for Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands has been identified to capitalize on the high degree of interest in women's fisheries projects shown within Melanesia.
- b) The GPNG's programme would be given a high priority due to the advanced status of activities within the country. This would consist of:
 - i. assist with follow-up activities for participants of the Papua Region Women's workshop on Fish Processing and Marketing held in September 1989. This activity requires urgent input in support of the participants back in their home communities.
 - ii. organise and conduct similar workshop on Fish Processing and Marketing for New Guinea Island Region; arrange follow-up activities at the village level; train field extension officers and to help them carry out village level income generating activities for carefully identified women.
 - iii. similar activities as ii above for Momase Region
 - iv. train a counter-part officer from the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources to continue the work programme in the absence of the WFPO (while on assignment in other countries) and beyond the required input of the WFPO.

- c) develop and undertake work-programmes for Vanuatu and Solomon Islands based on the sub-regional planning meeting, with the first activity in each country likely to be a needs assessment survey.
- d) respond to ad hoc requests from other countries in the region.

Action to be taken

9. The meeting is invited to:

- i) *discuss the merits of instigating a programme of activities for women from fishing communities in the South Pacific, and*
- ii) *asked to approve and recommend the establishment of a Women-in-Fisheries Programme, as proposed, within the Fisheries Programme.*

10. A funding source to support the WFPO post and the work programme for an initial period of two years has been identified, and rapid recruitment to the position should be possible, subject of course to the endorsement of the RTMF recommendation by the South Pacific Conference in October.

Appendix 1

Proposed duty statement for the Women's Fisheries Programme Officer

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: The Women's Fisheries Programme Officer will be responsible to SPC's Fisheries Coordinator and required to:

1. Assist in the improvement and upgrading of fish handling practices for women from coastal fishing communities through the provision of expert advice on all technical aspects of post-harvest fisheries; conduct country needs studies; organise and conduct suitable training programmes and workshops; and, arrange follow-up extension activities.
 2. Assist with the development of comprehensive training packages in fish handling, processing and marketing for use in regional and village level training workshops, including lecture notes, handouts, visual aids, etc.
 3. Promote the use of and assist with the development of appropriate processing techniques suitable for income generating activities for women.
 4. Work in close consultation and cooperation with the SPC's Women's Bureau and ensure that there is proper integration between the Programme and other SPC women's projects in the Region.
 5. Perform such other duties as requested by SPC's Fisheries Coordinator.
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