

Conclusion

From this research, it is evident that women in Samoa are still being excluded from the decision-making process when it comes to rural fisheries development. Nowhere in the Fisheries Management Plan was there any mention as to how women's actions could play a valuable part in the development of rural fisheries or in the conservation and management of the marine life in Auala. It is believed that the situation is similar in most other Samoan villages. The prawn project that followed just proved how valuable women are in rural fisheries development and how their initiative and

action contributes to the sustenance of Samoa's marine environment as well as local economy and well-being. Since women's roles are dictated by the *fa'a Samoa* (as we have seen in their land rights), it is very difficult for them to go beyond tradition for the mere sake of change and development. Together with various organisations that support women and their efforts to sustain the local Samoan environment, terrestrial and marine, the future looks bright for women in rural fisheries development as well as the involvement of women in any environmental, social, economic, and political interests and efforts they decide to pursue in the future.



Women in Fisheries Network focuses on successful management of marine resources

by Phillippa Teakel, Co-ordinator of the Women and Fisheries Network

The Women in Fisheries Network was founded in 1992 by a group of women concerned with raising awareness of the importance of the role of women in semi-subsistence marine resource activities. Women in Fisheries has a Board of Trustees consisting of women who work in the areas of marine resources, environment, and women and development. The members range from fisherwomen to scientists and researchers who are concerned about the role women play in marine communities. Projects run by Women in Fisheries are conducted as issues arise in the community, and balanced between research projects and grass roots activities for women who live in both rural and coastal areas.

'Women in Marine Resource Management'

In January 1998 the Women in Fisheries Network held a week-long workshop entitled *Women in Marine Resource Management*, which provided women from the community with an opportunity to develop skills in training others. The emphasis was on successful management of marine resources. Several women's organisations were interviewed prior to the workshop, and participants for the workshop were selected from their members. The workshop was aimed at women who are already working in some capacity in the community. Twenty-two participants from Viti Levu, Lau, Gau, and Rotuma attended the workshop in all.

The workshop had two purposes:

1. to provide workshop participants with information on issues which affect women in marine communities, and look at some solutions to these issues; and

2. to teach some skills in training adults, so that workshop participants would be encouraged to take their information back to their communities and inform others.

The first two days of the workshop were divided into information sessions convened by skilled resource staff. They were followed by small-group discussions on issues identified as areas of concern. Sessions included the ecological functions of corals, mangroves and seagrasses, and the major issues threatening them; approaches to integrated coastal management; waste-management issues and solutions; and income-generating activities for women.

The following day was spent looking at adult education and methods of training people in the community. This provided some formal, low-key skills for women who already have experience working with community groups. On the last two days of the workshop, speakers from the community presented information to participants which would assist in providing solutions to some of the issues identified earlier in the week. Projects such as fuel-wood planting were discussed, and other speakers talked on subjects such as the impact of eco-tourism, uses of herbal medicines, and income-raising activities such as worm farming and citrus growing.

By the end of the week, the workshop participants had learned much about the issues and concerns of coastal communities. They had been provided with some solutions which they could implement in their own regions, and had been introduced to some skills in adult education which would assist them to pass on their knowledge to others. This was a very successful workshop. Follow-up sessions targeting some of the issues will be held during the year.

