

# **INTEGRATING GENDER IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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# **INTEGRATING GENDER IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: LEARNINGS FROM SOUTH PACIFIC CONTEXTS**

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## Chapter 1

# **Integrating Gender in Agricultural Development Initiatives across the South Pacific: Customs, Values and Intersections**

*Lila Singh-Peterson and Michelle Carnegie*

### **Introduction**

The South Pacific islands are located in the Pacific Ocean, south of the equator and encompass island groups located within the regions of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia (Figure 1). These three regions comprise different and diverse cultures, customs, languages and types of social organisation. For outsiders, the South Pacific induces images of coconut palms, aqua blue water, tropical weather, lush vegetation and relaxed island lifestyles. South Pacific islanders do however, face substantial challenges, such as ongoing climate change impacts (Weir & Pittock, 2017), increasing urbanisation (Keen & Barbara, 2015) and adverse health outcomes associated with under- and over-nutrition (Haddad, Cameron, & Barnett, 2015; Underhill & Singh-Peterson, 2017). Modernity and the enduring drive towards globalised markets and international trade agreements continue to create tension in the region, as many argue that neoliberal market-led development and free-trade agreements are misaligned with the values and ideals of the traditional kinship-based indigenous cultures and economies of this region (see Bargh, 2001; Carnegie, 2013).

A significant issue within this broader context of change in the South Pacific is that of gender discrimination. How to address and overcome this discrimination, and thereby enhance gender equality in South Pacific societies is a prominent issue on the agendas of national governments, international aid agencies and non-government organisations alike. This book specifically contributes to the conceptual and practical understandings of how gender equality and gender equity objectives have been mainstreamed or integrated in research for

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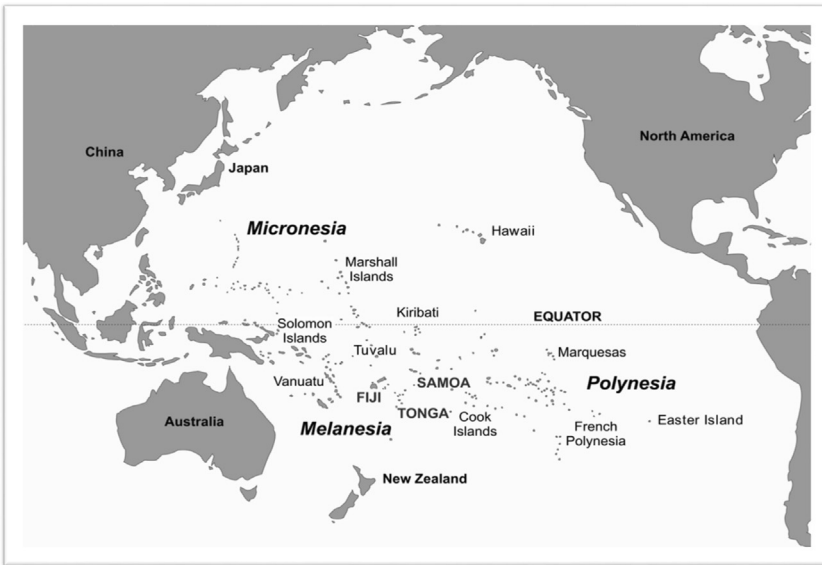


Figure 1. The South Pacific Islands Located South of the Equator within the Pacific Ocean.

development, or development projects in the agricultural sector in various South Pacific contexts.

We refer to the United Nations 1997/2 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Agreed Conclusions, which define gender integration (or gender mainstreaming) as:

the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (OSAGI, 2012, p. v).

The associated concepts of gender equality and gender equity referred to in the following book have been defined by the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#) (2007, p. 92) and are based on the concepts that,

all women and men are free to develop their personal abilities and make life choices without the limitations set by stereotypes or prejudices about gender roles or the characteristics of men and women.

Gender equity, however, is a slightly different concept that has not been so readily adopted into policy circles despite its relevance to applied development settings. The ILO (2007, p. 92) refers to gender equity as:

fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs and interests. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

This book examines the local settings in which gender has been integrated in cropping, livestock and aquaculture-based projects. Through the presentation of predominantly rural case studies from Melanesia (Vanuatu, Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG)) and Polynesia (Samoa and Tonga), this book explores the various ways in which gender equity and gender equality objectives have been constructed, embedded and re-negotiated in applied community settings. To achieve this, the book draws on six case studies of recent field-based research for development, or development activities, which have been funded by international non-profit research organisations, non-government organisations, and by the private sector.

## **Gender Statistics in the South Pacific**

Gender statistics for South Pacific countries have been compiled to varying degrees on a range of sectoral issues such as gender violence, public life and decision-making, employment, health and education ([Pacific Community & Asian Development Bank \(SPC & ADB, 2016\)](#)). Data sources include national population censuses and household surveys, as well as global indices that allow for measuring and monitoring gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, the United Nations Development Programme's composite Gender Inequality Index (GII), developed in 2010, 'captures the inequalities women face in reproductive health, education, political representation and the labour market' and in 2017, data were available for 160 countries ([UNDP, 2018](#), p. 6). Of the case study countries featured, in 2017 Fiji ranked 79th on the GII out of all 160 nations, Samoa ranked 82nd and Tonga 96th. Vanuatu was not assessed while PNG ranked 159th, second last to Yemen ([UNDP, 2018](#)). PNG's ranking can be attributed to a lack of women holding parliamentary seats between 2010 and 2017, and to women's comparatively low level of secondary education (9.5 per cent) in comparison to men's (15 per cent).

The issue of gender violence is particularly important in the South Pacific and has accordingly drawn much attention from policymakers and international funding bodies. Pacific Island countries have some of the highest rates of gender violence in the world, and these are likely to be under-estimated due to the propensity of victims not to report violent incidents to authorities ([PIFS, 2016](#)). With respect to the case study countries profiled in this book, available data

indicate that 64 per cent of women in Fiji, 60 per cent in Vanuatu and 40 per cent in Tonga have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (SPC & ADB, 2016). Approximately 40 per cent of women in Bougainville, PNG, have experienced the same (Jewkes et al., 2017). Recent experiences of physical and/or sexual violence (during the last 12 months) were experienced by 44 per cent of Ni-Vanuatu women, 24 per cent of Fijian women and 19 per cent of Tongan women (SPC & ADB, 2016), as well as by 12 per cent of women in Bougainville, PNG (Jewkes et al., 2017). Prevalence surveys are unavailable for the whole of PNG, however, estimates of gender-based and sorcery-related violence against women are extremely high (with two in three women affected) (Thomas, Kauli, & Rawstorne, n.d.).

The Bougainville study surveyed both women and men and showed that men's experience of both physical and sexual violence is similar to women's (41 per cent), although men experience a greater lifetime prevalence of physical violence (20.6 per cent versus 11.1 per cent; Jewkes et al., 2017). Additionally, SPC and ADB report (2016, p. 4) report that 'emotional violence by an intimate partner – behaviours such as humiliating, intimidating, and threatening harm – is also widespread, with the two highest lifetime rates in Vanuatu (68%) and Fiji (58%)'.

Progress in reducing the rate of gender violence is slow in the South Pacific, as elsewhere in the world. This is despite evidence and broad-scale acknowledgement of the urgent need to break the cycle of discrimination and negative social norms condoning violence, which are symptomatic of gender inequality and broader social inequality issues.

## **Rural Development and Subsistence Agriculture in the South Pacific**

Agriculture has been identified as one of the main growth prospects for the Pacific islands (see Reddy, 2007). Reddy's economic modelling of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa found that despite the small island sizes, agricultural output could be increased via gains in agricultural technology. Scaling issues, lack of export commodities and distances to markets have been identified as some of the main barriers to increasing the volume of agricultural exports (CIA, 2018), while issues relating to transport and water infrastructure have been identified as challenges in rural Fiji for semi-subsistence farmers engaging in local agricultural markets (see Singh-Peterson & Iranacolaivalu, 2018).

Countries such as PNG, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji all have sizeable mineral resources, in addition to rich soils, and coastal and offshore marine reserves. These resources create opportunities to diversify economies beyond agriculture (SPC & ADB, 2016). In contrast, the less-populated Polynesian nations of Samoa and Tonga have less industry and are traditionally agriculturally oriented economies that are additionally reliant upon marine reserves and remittances. Over time, remittances from expatriates and family members living overseas have become increasingly important to these island economies – which in turn create further dependency on foreign markets and policies.

Agriculture, which includes forestry and fishery activities, makes a relatively significant contribution to Fiji's FJ\$6.7b GDP, contributing about 8.3 per cent, which has decreased since 2001 from 12.1 per cent (Government of Fiji, 2016). Similarly, in 2017, the agricultural sector has contributed just over 10 per cent of the GDP in Samoa, almost 20 per cent of the GDP in Tonga, over 27 per cent in Vanuatu and 22 per cent in PNG (CIA, 2018).

Clearly agriculture is an important sector across the South Pacific not only due to its commercial value, but also due to the prevalence of subsistence economies. In Fiji, for example, census data show that over 50 per cent of the population are engaged purely in subsistence activities (Government of Fiji, 2016). For other South Pacific nations, semi-subsistence agriculture supports almost the whole population. For instance, in Samoa over 97 per cent of households in 2015 were identified as agricultural households with only 2.5 per cent of all households in rural and urban areas not producing any food for consumption (Government of Samoa, 2015). This reflects in part the dispersed geography of the region, and the lack of paid employment providing an alternative to subsistence livelihoods, particularly on rural islands.

Subsistence farming provides some food security for families and communities, enabling subsistence farmers to increase or decrease their involvement in the cash economy as opportunities arise or decline (Barnett, 2011; Campbell, 2015). As the South Pacific is prone to cyclones and extreme weather events, adverse weather conditions continue to compromise subsistence farmers' levels of food security and have undermined their capacity to develop sustainable livelihoods (Ahmed, Diffenbaugh, & Hertel, 2009).

## **Integrating Gender Equality Objectives within Agricultural Development Initiatives**

Reflective of global initiatives such as the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the *1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, both government and non-government organisations have recognised gender equality as an important component of achieving inclusive and equitable development outcomes in the South Pacific. They have supported the mainstreaming of gender into research and development initiatives in various forms for over 40 years, with many bilateral and multilateral aid agencies more recently adopting specific and mandated gender sensitive foreign aid policies. For example, Australia focuses over 80 per cent of its aid funding on projects located in the Indo-Pacific region that must be aligned with gender equality objectives (Australian Government, 2018).

Accordingly, ensuring that gender equality objectives are prioritised within agricultural development policies, programs and projects in the South Pacific, as elsewhere, is now seen as a necessary strategic investment. Embedding gender equality principles into the international development agenda has been promoted as 'smart economics' by the World Bank. This approach recognises the potential for women's substantial role in increasing productivity if assets and

resources are allocated fairly, leading to enhanced development outcomes for current and future generations.

The World Bank's smart economics approach has underpinned numerous development reports outlining gender and economic development strategies over the past two decades, including *Enhancing Women's Participation in Economic Development* (World Bank, 1995), *Global Monitoring Report 2007: Confronting the Challenge of Gender Equality and Fragile States* (World Bank, 2007), *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan – Fiscal Years 2007–2010* (World Bank, 2006) and *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (World Bank, 2011). In these and other strategy documents, the reasons proposed to invest in women, and in gender equality, narrowly reflect the assumed ability of women to absorb greater workloads and paid work responsibilities, leading to increased productivity, and efficient use of resources.

The predominant focus on women's participation in markets has, however, been criticised for failing to address the impact of such development initiatives on women and girl's current workloads, including unpaid household, care and subsistence agricultural work which sustain families, communities and societies (Chant & Sweetman, 2012). Zuckerman (2007) points out that increasing women's participation in land, labour, product and financial markets, which if increasingly privatised, may lead to far greater benefits for corporations, than for women and girls. Fundamentally, however, improving efficiencies in agriculture and closing the gender gap to address inequality are not contrary objectives, and can in fact be reinforcing (Quisumbing et al., 2014). This is especially so if the policy focus expands from simply focusing on how women can contribute to economic development objectives, to better reflect how development can create conditions to foster progress in gender equity and women's empowerment.

Most commonly, according to Grown, Addison, and Tarp (2016), donors seeking to integrate gender equity and empowerment objectives in development initiatives take a two-pronged approach. First they make direct investments to integrate gender into specific women and girls' development activities; and second they promote a gender mainstreaming approach across all development programs and policies. Donors invest in women-focused development projects intending to create favourable conditions to overcome intra-household power and entitlement imbalances; and at the same time incorporate generic gender mainstreaming approaches to assess and monitor the impact of activities on both women and men. However, integrating or mainstreaming gender equity and empowerment objectives into development projects in a way that leads to genuine change presents many challenges. While in theory gender mainstreaming should tackle embedded power relationships and gender roles and relationships throughout the social structure in families, communities, markets and the state, it often falls short, allowing underlying gender inequalities to continue to be reproduced (Rao & Kelleher, 2005).

Furthermore, what tends to be overlooked in mainstream development circles is the appropriateness of transferring projects that have been successfully



implemented in other countries to new sites without due consideration of locally embedded social norms, cultures and traditions. For example, tasks and responsibilities are often assigned to women and men according to cultural, religious, ideological, practical and economic considerations. Gender roles determine how resources are distributed and responsibilities shared and are important to consider within a local context when designing and implementing agricultural development projects. Without this, perverse impacts of development projects are observed. Literature from gender studies situated in Melanesia present observations from women that as their income generation increases, the men in the household lessen their contribution to the household, or opt out completely (Eves, 2016). Further, Eves (2016) identifies that marital discord and violence can result when men withdraw their contributions, and women consequently assume more responsibility to provide for their household. Other projects narrowly focus only on increasing women's access to market opportunities and paid employment, thereby inadvertently increasing work burdens and devaluing women's contribution to diverse economies through their reproductive and community activities (see McKinnon, Carnegie, Gibson, & Rowland, 2016). From these combined experiences, it is clear that applying the principles of integrating gender and gender mainstreaming to bring about better tangible and sustainable outcomes in practice is indeed challenging.

The South Pacific case studies presented in this edited collection were selected to contribute new knowledge to the applied field of progressing gender equality in agriculture. Each case study has been co-designed and implemented by international and local South Pacific partners, outlining the approach taken to meaningfully integrate gender objectives, activities and strategies into projects. The case study authors also provide an appraisal of the conceptual framework and methodology they have adopted in their project, and the lessons learned. It is our hope that future researchers and development practitioners can draw on these lessons as relevant to their own work, and in doing so, build from the knowledge and experiences presented in this book.

## **In Consideration of Custom and Intersectionality**

The tensions between tradition and modernity are evident in the South Pacific and are reflected in changing gender roles, voice and empowerment and the influence of custom (Jolly, Lee, Lepani, Naupa, & Rooney, 2015). The interpretation of the concept of custom is not by any means homogenous, but in fact dynamic, and often contested. Schedule One of the PNG Constitution refers to custom as:

the customs and usages of indigenous inhabitants of the country existing in relation to the matter in question, at the time when, and the place in relation to which the matter arises, regardless of whether or not the custom or usage has existed from time immemorial. (Papua New Guinea Consolidated Legislation, n.d., pp. 104–105).

This definition is relevant to other parts of the South Pacific as it notes that customs are essentially practices of indigenous people that can differ temporally, and spatially.

Custom and tradition across the South Pacific are, to varying degrees, celebrated for their capacity to provide social protection and cultural identity (Jolly et al., 2015; Macintyre, 2017). In many parts of the South Pacific, custom is central in determining access to key economic resources such as land, water, forests and sea. Most South Pacific nations have largely retained customary land ownership, with customary land comprising between 81 and 98 per cent of land in the case study countries (Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), 2008). Customary land enables the majority of the population to continue to pursue semi-subsistence livelihoods but additionally contributes to a sense of place, and a sense of identity. Land in many parts of the South Pacific is not considered purely in terms of its physical productive ability, but encompasses the natural and spiritual world associated with it. Customary values around sharing and reciprocity, respectful conduct, social responsibility for the wider group, valuing time allocated to strengthening social and community relationships, and practices of redistributing wealth have been core to land tenure arrangements, and as Slatter (2012) notes, are not that distinct from values attributed to human rights, and social equity.

Recent investigations into human rights in the South Pacific have also highlighted the relationship between custom and human rights. The approach has generally been to examine this relationship at the formal level by identifying how custom is recognised in the laws and legislation of South Pacific nations, and the subsequent application of these laws (see Farran, 2009). What is unclear, however, is how women and men who are engaged in development activities experience custom through daily interactions. Depending upon an individual's social position, these interactions can be empowering or restrictive in terms of voice and agency, and govern the distribution of resources and services. As the scope of custom across contemporary South Pacific nations is to varying degrees pervasive, and elusive, the case studies presented in this book illustrate the significance of custom in everyday life. They also provide some insights into how agricultural development projects and their beneficiaries interact with customary values, structures and processes.

Just as customary regimes are dominant institutions that determine social stratification within a society, we note that gender is only one of the social factors that intersect to determine an individual's social position. The concept of intersectionality recognises the multiple social factors at play, including gender, which combine to determine how someone experiences their day-to-day interactions and power relations with others (Hankvisky, 2014). Accordingly, we draw on the concept of intersectionality to explain how social categories such as gender, age, birth order and lineage intersect to influence development outcomes for individuals and groups, as well as to foreground the social diversity within and between different contexts.