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CASE STUDIES ON WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT IN THE KINGDOM OF TONGA

by David C. Wyler
The Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific

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Room 3045, New State
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"CASE STUDIES
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IN THE
KINGDOM OF TONGA"*

BY

DAVID C. WYLER
COUNTRY DIRECTOR/TONGA
THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PEOPLES
OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

* This paper was originally prepared as an essay by Mr. Wyler and used towards his graduate degree from the School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont, in June, 1981.

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CASE STUDIES ON WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT IN THE KINGDOM OF TONGA

FORWARD

In Tonga it is at present very difficult to assess the status of women, for the statistics of the various government departments do not show separate figures for men and women. The concept of "female" as something specific, except in the local traditional view, does not yet exist.

In General, most Tongan women stay at home, clean the house, wash the clothes, and take care of the children; of the women in government civil service, the majority are in clerical, teaching and nursing positions; in the private sector, women work primarily as storekeepers/clerks where they easily outnumber their male counterparts; and no women are found in the highest levels of the government's executive, legislative¹ and judicial branches or in the government's statutory boards - the Electric Power Board, the Water Board, Commodities Board, Bank of Tonga, Broadcasting Commission, and the Tonga Development Bank.

Even though Tongan women have little direct influence in the more powerful, public positions, they do have great influence on the local, village scene. This is particularly evident in the area of rural village development where Tongan women have been and will continue to play the lead role in Tonga's development at the 'grassroots', village level. They are, in fact, creating the basis for future community government by organizing themselves into working units and dealing directly with home, church and community problems.

This paper will deal specifically with women in development in Tonga, and will do this by providing two specific case studies on Tongan women actively involved in village development activities. Prior to the case studies, the reader will be provided with some background information on the Kingdom of Tonga so as to hopefully provide further insight into the topic being discussed.

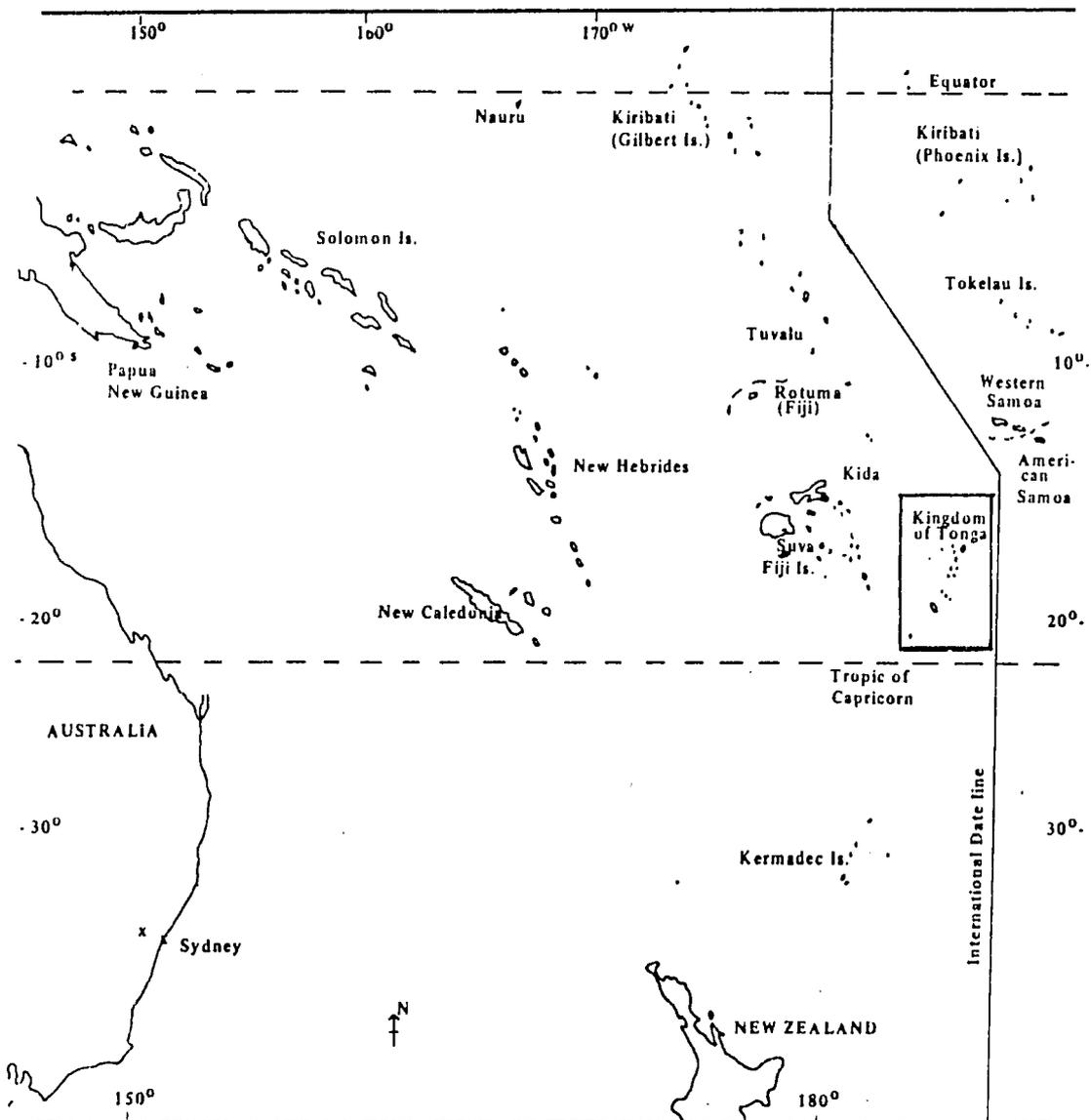
The first study here is a report about how a group of dedicated, hard-working Catholic Sisters have successfully organized a village women's development program that is directed at upgrading village health, improving kitchens, sanitation facilities and gardens, and assisting in craft production through formation of village women's groups, or clubs. Since the inception of this program in 1975, more than 200 groups have been formed throughout the Kingdom.

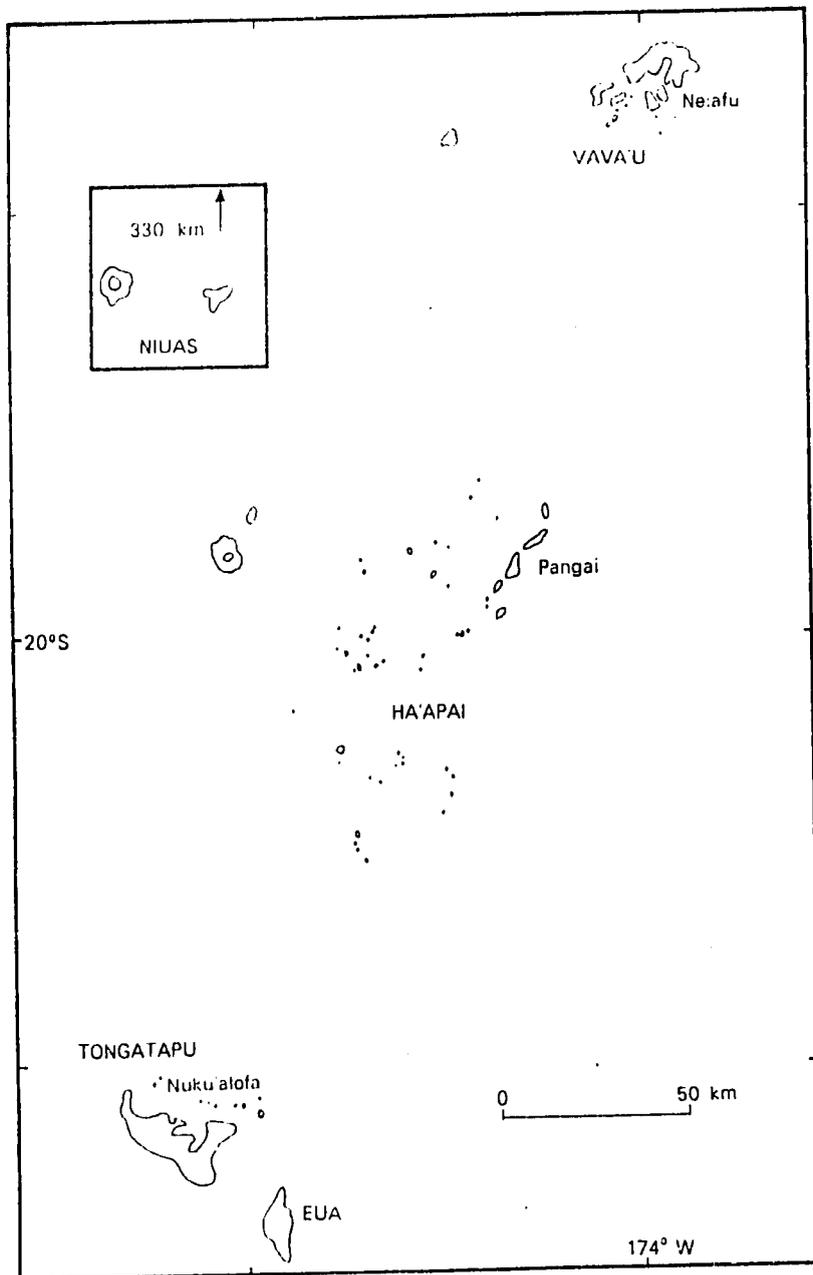
The second study focuses in on one specific village women's group, the Niuola Women's Association of Fua'amotu Village, Tongatapu. The Niuola Women are not only involved in the development of their own village, but are providing technical assistance to other women's groups in other villages and islands as well.

Since little is known about Tongan women in general, it is hoped, that this effort will be followed by more indepth studies concerning this most important aspect of Tonga, and, at the same time, it will assist in raising the awareness of Tongan women of their place in Tonga's everchanging society today. As a result, Tongan women will in the near future be able to play a more active role in Tonga's development at all levels of its society.

1 There have been, however, two women previously elected to the Legislative Assembly as Representatives of the People; one in 1975 and one in 1978.

SOUTH WEST PACIFIC





The Kingdom of Tonga

I. THE KINGDOM OF TONGA

A. Geography - The Kingdom of Tonga is an independent nation in the South Pacific, and comprises approximately 160 islands which are divided into three major distinct groups - Tongatapu, Ha'apai and Vava'u (see maps on pages ii, iii and iv). These islands are located between latitudes 15°S and 23°S and longitudes 173°W and 177°W, and are scattered over an area of about 140,000 square miles. Fiji and the Samoas are Tonga's closest neighbors with their locations being about 450 miles northwest (Fiji) and north (the Samoas) of the Tonga group. New Zealand lies 1,200 miles to the south with Australia about 1,500 miles to the west. The total land area of the Kingdom is 289 square miles.

In general, the Tonga Islands lie in a north and south direction in two parallel chains, 12 western volcanic and approximately 148 eastern coralline. The volcanic islands are the most remote islands in the Tonga archipelago with only 4 permanently inhabited. They are generally heavily vegetated (rainforest and grasses), have steep terrain and little arable land. The coralline islands are generally low-lying and flat and with only 32 permanently inhabited. They contain numerous white sandy beaches, and are protected by surrounding barrier coral reefs. Coconut palms are the most prevalent vegetation found throughout the Kingdom. The soil is on the whole quite fertile and productive.

Tonga's climate is subtropical even though it lies within the tropics geographically. Average annual rainfall is 75" (1.9 meters) and the annual mean temperature is 77°F (25.5°C). There are generally two pronounced seasons with June to September being the cool, dry season and November to April the warm, wet season. There is a slight variation between the island groups in rainfall and temperature.

Hurricanes strike the Kingdom, but are generally infrequent. Earthquakes are often felt, but rarely severe. The last major volcanic eruption was in 1946 on the island of Niuafu'ou which necessitated the removal of all its inhabitants. It has, however, been resettled.

B. Political - Tonga is a Kingdom constituted under a monarch, King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, whose lineage can be traced back to about 950 AD. The Constitution was adopted in 1875 and provides for government authority in three bodies - the King-in-Privy-Council and Cabinet, a Legislative Assembly and a Judiciary. There are no political parties. A nobility with 33 titles also exists whose primary function is to act as a hereditary landlord over land estates given to it by the King. The nobility is then responsible for the distribution of land to the people.

This political and social system has provided Tonga with a unique internal stability that is well known around the Pacific. In fact, Tonga is the only nation in the Pacific that has maintained its own internal self-government throughout its recorded history. It has been a member of the British Commonwealth since 1970.

C. The People - The total population numbered 90,085² in 1976, but now is probably closer to 100,000 inhabitants. Approximately two-thirds of this population³ is found on Tongatapu, Tonga's largest island (99 square miles), which also contains its capital city Nuku'alofa. The remaining one-third of the population is

2 Census of Population and Housing, 1976: Table 2

3 Table 1

distributed on 35 islands throughout the Kingdom. In 1976, 50,047 of the local population were 15 years of age or older while 40,038 were younger than 15 years of age which certainly indicates a recent rapid increase in the population.

The Tongan people are Polynesian and remain significantly so today with 98% of the total population still indiginous. The Tongan language is used extensively throughout the Kingdom with English as its second language. With the recent rapid increase in its population, many Tongans have emigrated overseas, and particularly during the 1970's, and significant Tongan communities are now found in New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America.

Tonga's social system is based on the extended family and Christianity. Every individual family member has a specific position, or rank, and this holds true in each social stratum of Tongan society, ie, royalty, nobility and commoner. This rank within the family is based upon two basic factors, sex and age. For example, a woman is always superior to her brother regardless of their age, and older sisters outrank younger sisters and older brothers outrank younger brothers. Priority is always given to sex rather than age. Also, the elderly and the young are highly respected and well taken care of within the family unit. There is no need yet in Tonga for a welfare system.

Christianity first arrived in Tonga in 1826 in the form of European missionaries. Since this time it has become firmly established, and is now the single most predominant factor affecting community life throughout the Kingdom. The official church of Tonga is the Free Wesleyan Church and is also the largest (about 50% of the population belong to this church). Nevertheless, nearly every other major denomination is represented in Tonga.

D. Economy - Tonga's economy has been and will continue to be based primarily on agricultural production both on the land and the sea. It is still largely at the subsistence level with coconuts and bananas being the only major exports. However, kava, watermelons and vanilla are growing in importance with tourism and remittances from relatives overseas being the other major source of foreign revenue.

A major problem is the ever increasing demand by Tongans for overseas manufactured products which has caused a great deficit in overseas trade. The Government is attempting to correct this situation by promoting small scale industries and diversifying their agricultural produce, but to date have had little success in combatting this unfortunate trend.

Approximately 37% of the work force is employed with over 50% of these working in the agricultural/fisheries sector⁴. 24% of the total work force is employed either directly or indirectly by the Government⁵.

Tonga's only known exploitable natural resources are its fertile and productive land and ocean and its ever increasing population.

Electricity is only available on two islands - Tongatapu and Vava'u (reaching

4 Census of Population and Housing 1976; Tables 25, and 28.

5 Table 34

perhaps 60% of Tonga's total population), and less than 50% of Tonga's households have what can be regarded as safe and adequate water supply.

In education, Tonga has the highest literacy rate in the South Pacific basin, 98%. All children by law must attend school for a minimum of six years between the ages of six and fourteen. Because of this both men and women have equal access to education. For example, in 1979 the Ministry of Education reported that the total number of students, primary and secondary, in Tonga was 32,307 which was composed of 16,645 men (52% of the total) and 15,662 women (48%)⁶.

II. CASE STUDY I - THE VILLAGE WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF TONGA

A. A Brief History - In the early 1970's the Tongan Government took over the running of all the primary schools in the Kingdom except for a few, but including all which were previously Catholic. The Catholic Diocese of Tonga then upon arranged for several Tongan Sisters, formerly teaching in schools, to train at the South Pacific Commission's Community Education Center in Fiji. This Center's main function is to provide training in home economics for women who on their return home will be community, youth and welfare workers, village women leaders and home economics teachers.

In 1975, five of these Sisters began working with village peoples, mainly Catholic and on Tongatapu. By the end of 1978 and with little to no outside financial assistance, the Catholic Sisters working in this program grew to six full-time and six part-time village workers, and were implementing their program in seven villages on Tongatapu, two villages in Ha'apai, one village on Niuatoputapu, two villages in Vava'u and one village on 'Eua.

By this time the Sisters had learned what worked and what did not. There had been failures in the early years, but these only served to clarify the methods and goals of the program.

In November 1978 the Catholic Sisters began to receive financial assistance from the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP), an American based private voluntary organization, with grant funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). With the experience of the previous three years and the financial assistance from FSP/USAID, the Sisters have since expanded this program so that it has by early 1981 reached thirty one villages on Tongatapu, eight villages in Ha'apai, twenty eight villages in Vava'u, four villages on Niuatoputapu, and it is today continuing to expand to even more villages/islands throughout the Kingdom.

The following is a brief description of this successful and active program.

B. Program Goal and Objectives - The overall goal of the program is to assist the village women of Tonga in the improvement of their living standards.

The specific objectives of the program include:

1. to upgrade village health by improving home kitchens, privies, water supplies and gardens

⁶ Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1979: Table 1

2. to provide family planning aid and information
3. to teach craft production and other income producing skills, and
4. to assist the village women in becoming more self-sufficient in meeting the developmental needs of their homes and communities.

C. How the Program Works - The activities of the Sisters in the implementation of this program fall into two general categories: education and inspection. These activities include conducting village seminars, making team visits to Ha'apai and Vava'u, and holding monthly and annual home and community inspections.

1. Education

(a) Village Seminars - In the early stages of the program (1975-1978) the Sisters had to actively approach women's groups in the villages which were already formed and working together primarily in producing traditional household goods and dress, and request them to allow the Catholic Diocese's village workers to conduct a seminar on village development. Today the Sisters only conduct seminars in villages where the women specifically request their assistance.

The seminars are open to all women who wish to attend and are held in some central location in a village, usually a community center. This allows for larger attendances which today are attracting more men and youth. Heavy emphasis is placed upon the comprehensive improvement of village life which includes such activities as cultural awareness, role of the woman in the home, family and community, child care, nutrition, cooking, personal hygiene, budgeting, communications, marketing, income generation and the importance of family life.

The participants are exposed to the procedures for holding a meeting and forming into groups. There is no set limit for the number in a group, but most groups average about seven or eight members. Group committees are to be elected annually and include at least a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. There are currently over 300 groups with 2000+ members involved in this program throughout the Kingdom.

The women are also introduced to the concept of establishing goals and objectives. Heavy emphasis is placed upon the fact that decisions of the groups must be made by majority vote. Some villages form into only one group, while most divide and form into two or more groups. Each of these are encouraged to set their own goals and objectives on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual basis.

(b) Small Grants - Upon completion of the seminar, each newly formed group is provided a small cash grant of \$10 to \$20 which is used as "seed" money for village improvements. The group will then invest this money for any project mutually agreed upon among its members, with the proceeds also divided according to their own rules. The grant money is part of the FSP/USAID assistance provided for this program.

The methods of income generation and goals vary widely, but this flexibility allows each group to determine its own needs and how they may best be fulfilled. Some of the most common and lucrative methods

include the production of and selling of handicrafts, renting movies and showing them in the villages, holding 'kava club' nights and concerts, and making Tongan food/desserts and selling them locally.

One group, through their original investment of \$20 in a kava night, eventually raised \$2,000 with which they electrified their own homes. Another group raised \$900 from their \$20 grant which they used to obtain a loan to build water catchment tanks for their homes. Many groups use their profits to buy water sealed toilets, to reticulate water into their homes, renovate home buildings, or to purchase needed household items such as cooking pots and tableware. Finally, some groups choose to open a bank account with their money and add to it funds raised from other sources.

The amount of funds generated through these activities is often quite large. For example, from November 1979 to October 1980, \$3,175.00 was given to women's groups on Tongatapu and Vava'u in the form of \$10 and \$20 grants, and from this was generated \$57,186.05!!⁷ Besides serving as a small but noteworthy contribution to the Tongan economy, this program functions as a basic lesson in capitalism. It teaches women how to handle financial transactions, speak effectively in front of groups, improve their living conditions, and develop a sense of self-reliance.

(c) Community Centers - An integral part of this program has been the provision of community centers in villages of greatest need and where deserving active VWD⁸ groups are found. To date, two community centers have been built in villages on Tongatapu, Ha'alalo and Lapaha.

These centers are multipurpose and cater to the entire community as well as adjacent communities. For example, these centers often serve as additional school rooms for the local government primary schools, women's groups use them as a place to produce traditional handicrafts, men use them for packing agricultural produce for overseas shipment, church services are sometimes held in these as well as choir practice and home economic classes. Another major function of these centers is providing adequate facilities for the raising of local funds by the VWD groups (eg, showing movies, dances, kava clubs, etc.).

These buildings were constructed and will continue to be on land provided either by the church or the community (ie, the government, noble or King), and by volunteer labor from the villages. The funds for the building materials are provided for by FSP/USAID. Once completed, their operation and maintenance are taken care of by the VWD groups in their areas. For example, the Ha'alalo center is run by five VWD groups from two villages, and the Lapaha center by nine groups from one village.

(d) Traditional Needs/Skills - Not only do the Sisters encourage the village women to raise funds locally for the improvement of their homes/villages, but they are also encouraged to improve their provision

7 FSP Progress Report September 1, 1980 thru February 28, 1981: Appendices A and C

8 VWD - Village Women's Development

of traditional needs for the home. The Tongan culture demands that each woman has certain types of floor mats, ceremonial mats (for both floors and dress), tapa cloth, and kava drinking utensils. As a result, the Sisters encourage the women to plant additional pandanus and mulberry plants on their land, and to set goals each year for a minimum number of various types of mats and pieces of tapa cloth to be produced by each member of the groups.

The results of this effort to date are quite amazing. An assessment⁹ of this program's activities in October 1980 showed that for the time period November 1978 through October 1980, 180 women's groups with 1,137 members in 31 villages on Tongatapu planted 6,244 pandanus trees and 28,063 mulberry trees. During the same period these same women produced 1,120 tapa cloths (each 100 feet in length), 3,123 floor mats, 3,472 ta'ovala (dress mats) and 16 finely woven wedding mats.

In Vava'u¹⁰, for the time period November 1979 through October 1980, 97 women's groups with 577 members planted 1,079 pandanus trees and 8,543 mulberry trees. They also produced 212 pieces of tapa cloth, 939 floor mats, 1,067 ta'ovala and 57 fine ceremonial mats.

These efforts has also ensured the handing down of the traditional skills of mat making and tapa production from the older women to their younger counterparts.

• Inspection

(a) Monthly and Annual Home and Community Inspections - Each month the Sisters visit the homes of each group member. However, because of the rapid growth of this program since late 1978, they sometimes must stretch these visits over a two month period. This visit, or inspection, has various purposes. It ensures that each group's goals and objectives for the month have been reached, and to organize help if they have not. It ensures that the day-to-day cleanliness of the home and surrounding environment is being carried out. Sometimes the women have handicrafts which they want marketed and the Sisters assist them with this. They also advise the women on the quality of the handicrafts, and suggest ways to improve them.

Sometimes the Sisters arrange for one group to accompany them on an inspection of the homes of another group so as to facilitate the exchange of ideas. This sharing of ideas often proves quite beneficial for the women are quick to seize on new ideas and adapt them to their own needs or circumstances.

There are two vehicles in the program now, one on Tongatapu and one on Vava'u. These have facilitated every aspect of the program, and particularly the inspections. For example, in Vava'u the Sister in charge brought eighteen village women from the outer islands to visit a number of homes and villages. They saw what was being accomplished, and are now determined to carry out similar improvements in their own homes and villages.

9 FSP Progress Report, September 1, 1980
thru February 28, 1981: Appendix C

10 Appendix A

The annual inspection is a much grander occasion. Group members display with pride what they have achieved during the year. The annual inspection team will include, besides the Sister in charge, other Sisters, district and town officers (the government representatives found in each district and village throughout the Kingdom), medical officers, FSP representatives and wives of the nobles. Women from other villages are invited and it is often the annual inspection that inspires an adjacent village to approach the Sisters and ask for a seminar in their village.

(b) Team Visits to Ha'apai and Vava'u - Village worker team visits to both Ha'apai and Vava'u have been organized annually since FSP/USAID began assisting the program in late 1978. This team usually consists of at least seven members: three full-time Sisters from Tongatapu, one full-time Sister from Ha'apai/Vava'u, two selected VWD group leaders from Tongatapu and the FSP Assistant Country Director.

These annual visits have a variety of purposes. First and foremost, they show these outer island areas that they are part of a wider movement, and they strengthen morale. The visits coincide with the annual inspections of these groups, and, thus, provide an added dimension to these. They allow the Project Director to see what has been achieved in these areas, and make changes that are necessary. It gives FSP a chance to see the program in person and collect statistical data. The two group leaders from Tongatapu are chosen as persons identified by the Sisters as people who may become permanently involved in the program on a full-time basis, and so these visits provide them with a valuable training/learning experience.

Equally as important is the transfer of ideas that occurs on such visits. This tends to be a two-way transfer where both the members of the visiting team and the local VWD groups are constantly visually and verbally exchanging ideas and information with one another. The visits are busy times; usually every member's home is visited and inspected in Vava'u and Ha'apai. This includes both the outer island locations as well as the main islands. All of this entails working twelve hour days for a minimum of one to two weeks in each area. This personal interest and involvement is typical of this program and an important reason for its success and continual growth.

D. Conclusions - The Village Women's Development Program currently being implemented by the Catholic Sisters is easily the most active and effective women's and community development program in Tonga today. What started out to be primarily a small Catholic village women's development program has since turned into a large ecumenical program that is still growing and expanding today. Over 50% of the women participants in this program now come from non-Catholic religious affiliations (eg, Wesleyan Methodist, Church of Tonga, Anglican, Mormon, etc.).

It is not a specialized program in one or two areas, but an integrated development process. Women are forming into groups, electing committees, establishing goals and objectives for themselves and their groups, planning and implementing income generating activities, improving the living standards of their families and communities as a result of utilizing the locally raised funds for the betterment of their homes and surrounding environments.

The program has facilitated the cooperation of village women and men, both young and old and of various religious affiliations, and from different villages and islands in the Kingdom. It has also facilitated the cooperation of the village people, the Catholic Sisters and Tongan Government representatives also working in the rural areas who previously had little or no contact with one another. For example, in Vava'u the Ministry of Health's public health officer often participates in the monthly and annual inspections, and in Ha'apai the Ministry of Agriculture's home economics officers are now beginning to use the VWD program and women's groups as a starting point for the implementation of their programs.

The projected end product, which by the way can be seen in a few of the women's groups at present, is that many village women's groups throughout Tonga will be capable of bettering their living standards without being dependent upon the Sister's leadership and supervision as well as foreign financial assistance.

III. CASE STUDY II - THE NIUOLA WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

The village women's group known as the Niuola Women in Development was formed in 1972 in the village of Fua'amotu, a village of approximately 1,800 residents and located at the southeastern end of the island of Tongatapu. Fua'amotu is approximately one mile from the Kingdom's international airport and fifteen miles from the capital, Nuku'alofa.

The name of the group at this time was not Niuola Women in Development, but the Kolisi Tutuku 'o Fua'amotu (ex-college students of Fua'amotu) because the majority of the women forming the group were ex-students of Queen Salote College, a prestigious Wesleyan secondary school for girls located in Nuku'alofa. The members numbered thirty (30) and were composed of women from four different religious affiliations in the village as well as young and old, and married and single/widowed.

The goals of the Kolisi Tutuku 'o Fua'amotu were to encourage the production of better quality handicrafts as a source of income for the village women and to raise their awareness of their roles as housewives and mothers. Particular emphasis was directed towards the women of the village who were school dropouts. A committee was elected and consisted of a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, and monthly general meetings were held by the group as a whole.

The handicrafts produced were sold at the only handicraft store in Nuku'alofa at this time, the Langa Fonua Handicraft Centre, and at the open air market also in Nuku'alofa when cruise ships visited the Kingdom. The village women were then encouraged by the group to use the earnings from this new and/or expanded source of income to improve their homes, particularly in the improvement of their cooking facilities/equipment, clothing and payment of their children's school fees. Monthly and annual inspections were held by the members of the Kolisi Tutuku 'o Fua'amotu in each of their homes as well as in non-member homes in much the same manner as described in Case Study I, and for the same purposes.

In 1974-75, the scope of this group's activities changed as well as their name. The Kolisi Tutuku 'o Fua'amotu changed their name to the Niuola Charcoal Production and Development of Fua'amotu, and, hence, became involved in production of charcoal while continuing their home development program as well.

Two hundred acres of coconut plantations had to be cleared for the approaches¹¹ and runways of Tonga's international airport located near Fua'amotu village. For a time the coconut logs were left where they had fallen. Then a Fua'amotu village woman and member of the Niuola group, Ms. Temaleti Vakasiuola, had the bright idea of turning them into charcoal. She persuaded the Tonga Public Works Department to pick up the logs and had them delivered to her land. She then interested her sisters and other women members of the Niuola group into starting up a charcoal production scheme. With the Tongan Government providing them an export market in New Zealand for this charcoal, it seemed that this small enterprise had a good future.

As a result of this development two additional goals were added to this group's program: 1) to lease the land zoned for airport approaches for bananas, pineapples, papaya, and other cash crops which did not exceed the airport limit of twelve feet height on the approaches; and 2) to turn the dead logs into charcoal for sale to New Zealand as well as locally.

A large kiln, a log splitter and two chain saws were provided for the Niuola women by the Tongan Government, and so by December 1974, the Niuola Women were in full production of charcoal. This venture also allowed for the increase in involvement of more community members, and particularly the men, by creating additional employment opportunities.

This activity progressed very well for about five months during which time many shipments of charcoal were made to New Zealand and a new smaller, more appropriate kiln (made out of a 44 gallon oil drum) was developed by one of the women members. However, in April 1975 the New Zealand market was closed down and caused the collapse of this charcoal producing scheme. The women, nevertheless, continued with their cash crops, handicrafts and home improvement activities.

Over the years the Fua'amotu village area was termed a "typhoid area" due to frequent cases reported and identified there of people stricken with this deadly disease. In response to this, the Niuola Charcoal Production and Development women's group of Fua'amotu decided to carry out a health survey in Fua'amotu as a first step in the improvement of this situation. After completing this task in 1977, the following results were obtained: the typhoid 'carriers' were identified and treated accordingly; 69 homes were found with no toilets at all; only 27 homes contained running water from taps; only 4 homes had flush toilets; and the village water supply system was poorly maintained and insufficient to meet the daily fresh water needs of Fua'amotu. These results were then presented to the Tongan and New Zealand Governments for consideration for assistance.

The New Zealand and Tongan Governments were quite pleased with this prompt and effective survey carried out by the Niuola women, and as a result, in 1978 the New Zealand Government provided Fua'amotu with a new water supply system including two 5,000 gallon water storage tanks, pump, tank stands, and pipes and taps for 275 homes in the village. It also provided for the same kind of assistance to a close neighboring village, Nakolo.

Also during this same time period, the Niuola women began receiving technical assistance from an ex-American Peace Corps volunteer engineer who specialized in low-cost building techniques. He introduced to the Niuola women a low-cost ferrocement building method to construct both portable structures as well as stable unmovable structures. With the women's recent heightened awareness of the many

¹¹ This effort is now limited to only yams and taro because the bananas and papayas attracted a large number of birds which proved hazardous to incoming and outgoing aircraft

health problems in their village, they decided at this time to implement a prototype low-cost, ferro-cement privy project where, under this man's supervision, the women and men of the Niuola group would construct 30 privies for each of the group's members. The privies would be portable structures built from ferro-cement slabs and posts (also containing coconut husk fibers), and would also contain pour-flush toilets and septic tanks. Hopefully, this idea would then encourage others in the village to improve their toilet facilities as well.

With financial assistance from two overseas private agencies, ICCO (Inter-church Coordination Committee for Development/Netherlands) and FSP (the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific/USA), the Niuola women have constructed to date 26 privies containing not only septic tanks but also flush toilets, sinks (hand basins) and shower facilities. The remaining four privies have not been constructed due to Niuola members moving overseas and land problems.

In addition, a low-cost, ferro-cement demonstration house (with four rooms and approximately 500 square feet floor space) was built by the ex-volunteer and Niuola members which utilized locally produced coconut timbers in its construction. The total cost of this home which has cement floors, walls and roof, was less than T\$3,000 (US\$3,500). This home also included a 5,000 gallon underground ferro-cement water storage tank.

The Niuola women and men learned these new low-cost ferro-cement construction methods well, and, obviously, put them to good use immediately by building the 26 privies in their own village. They could also see the broader application of these building techniques throughout the villages of the Kingdom because of their use of locally available materials and simplicity (ie, villagers could learn these construction methods in one day). As a result, the Niuola group began to offer its services free to visit and train other villagers, and particularly to other women's development groups.

It was at this time, also, that the Niuola Charcoal Production and Development of Fua'amotu women's group officially changed its name to the Niuola Women in Development. Its emphasis was placed on individual home development as well as training other villagers in various skills that would enable them to become more self-reliant in the betterment of their living standards.

In early 1979, a 20 member women's group, the Kautaha Laupeafai (Talk and Do It Group), from the village of 'Utulau, a small village located in Tongatapu's Western (Hihifo) District, invited the Niuola women to visit their village and train their group to build low-cost, ferro-cement kitchens. The Niuola women accepted this invitation, and in one day trained the 'Utulau women and men to build a 14' x 10' coconut wood framed, ferro-cement building. Since this initial one day instruction, the Kautaha Laupeafai women have on their own constructed 17 additional kitchens and renovated 2 others for each of its twenty members.

During the same time period, a small village, Ha'akio, located in the northern island group of Tonga known as Vava'u, requested the Niuola group to instruct its villagers in these low-cost building techniques. Because of the time involved travelling to Vava'u and its remoteness, the Niuola Women in Development sent one man from their village to provide the necessary assistance.

He instructed the Ha'akio women and men in development in building one kitchen, similar to the ones built in 'Utulau, and one underground water tank. This village has since constructed 13 underground water tanks (3,000 gallon capacity) on its own.

At this same time (1978-79), the Niuola women decided that possibly the best way of providing the training that so many of the villagers need in Tonga was to build a community training center. This center would be constructed in Fua'amotu and provide the opportunity for village people, men and women, from any location in Tonga to come and learn various skills that they could use in their own homes and communities. This center would provide training in such areas as low-cost building construction/carpentry, sewing, cooking, handicraft production and others as the needs arise.

A weekly sewing class has already been begun in the demonstration house for the Fua'amotu village women, and is taught by a Niuola member who is a professional seamstress by trade. Also, the Niuola women have planted yam and taro plantations so that when the actual construction of the center commences, they will be able to feed the village laborers sufficiently and at minimal cost. The construction of this center is expected to begin in late 1981, and will hopefully be completed and in use by mid-1982.

In 1980, the Fua'amotu village water supply system that was recently provided for by the New Zealand Government and under the control of a village selected water committee, fell into a state of nearly continuous disrepair due to insufficient maintenance and attention given to it by the committee. Because of this situation, the town officer and water committee approached the Niuola Women in Development and requested the women to take over the responsibilities in managing and maintaining the operation of this water supply system. Even though the Niuola women have never had any previous experience in such an area as running and maintaining a village water supply system, they readily agreed to this request, and have since gotten the system functioning properly again. They have hired two village men on a part-time basis to maintain the pumps and tanks, and have established a village fee collection system that is now operating in the black!

It is obvious that all these activities could not have been carried out successfully if the group did not have strong and capable leadership. This has been provided for primarily through the Niuola Coordinator, Ms. Temaleti Vakasiuola, but also by the fact that the group as a whole relies heavily upon the creativity and energy of its individual committee and group members. Throughout the life of this group the membership has been maintained at 30 members maximum. The women feel that if they were to allow the number of members to increase, their effectiveness as a development minded and organizing women's group would diminish. Nevertheless, even with a limit in the number of members it can have, its policy is to remain active in the village and to involve as many non-member villagers as possible in the planning and implementation of their activities as well as be the direct beneficiaries of their activities. The previous study indicates that this certainly is the case with the Niuola Women in Development in Fua'amotu.

Conclusions - As a venture to involve village women and men in the development process, the Niuola Women in Development of Fua'amotu has been and continues to be very successful. The 30 members of Niuola are village women, and their development activities have always been primarily geared for other village women both in their own village of Fua'amotu and other Tongan villages as well. A key aspect of their effort has been the emphasis placed upon the participation of men and youth in the many individual home and community improvement activities undertaken by the group.

A second strong feature of the Niuola Women in Development is the training provided. This has reached not only the women members but also other women in their village and other villages throughout Tonga. Further proof of their commitment to this feature is the soon-to-be-constructed community training center in Fua'amotu where the Niuola women (and men) will provide a training program for Tongan villagers in various areas of home and community improvement skills.

The Niuola Women in Development has been involved in many development activities both in its own village and outside, but it has never lost sight of their primary objective and that is the improvement of the individual homes on a day-to-day basis. Once the homes are attended to properly then the community as a whole can be dealt with. This is the message the Niuola women are communicating to the other villagers of Tonga, and their efforts to date vividly illustrate what can be accomplished through this method of awareness raising, education and eventual self-reliance.

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