

Mainstreaming gender into fisheries and aquaculture in Samoa

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It is widely recognised that development and governance processes are only effective and sustainable if both women and men participate in and benefit from such processes. Samoa Fisheries recognises the importance of mainstreaming gender into its work, and the Pacific Community (SPC) provides ongoing support in this area.

In recognition of the importance of mainstreaming gender into its work, Samoa Fisheries conducted a gender analysis to: 1) evaluate the impact of community aquaculture on household incomes; and 2) analyse the roles of men, women and youth within the community, as well as their commitments to daily household tasks. This work was carried out within the framework of the project 'Improving community-based aquaculture in Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Samoa' (FIS/2012/076), which was coordinated by SPC, with funding from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research. The present study is one of several ongoing gender mainstreaming initiatives being carried out by Samoa Fisheries, in collaboration with SPC, and aims at ensuring women benefit equitably from all development projects.

The Coastal Fisheries, Advisory and Aquaculture sections of Samoa Fisheries participated in three weeks of training and mock trials on conducting gender surveys and analyses. Emphasis was placed on capacity building of staff in gathering qualitative data. The training also underlined the importance of power relation dynamics, decision-making, and access to resources, and allowed a better understanding of the impact of aquaculture and fisheries activities on women and men.

Although the project originally focused on tilapia aquaculture, it was enlarged to cover village-owned fish reserve activities under the Samoa Fisheries' Community-Based Fisheries Management Program (CBFMP), as well as other aquaculture activities involving freshwater and marine species (e.g. tilapia, giant clams, trochus and sea grapes). The study also allowed the collection of information on gender perspectives in the setting up of fish reserves within the villages that had approved village fisheries management plans under the CBFMP. More than 60 surveys were carried out in villages and with private and individual tilapia farmers from Upolu, Manono and Savaii islands.

Findings from the study reflected entrenched gender roles, with women spending more time than men in carrying out family care activities (e.g. looking after children and the elderly) or household chores, including the preparation of meals. As expected, men spend more time than women



Fisheries staff and Ana Laqeretabua (second from left) conducting an interview with one of the participants. (Image: Ulusapeti Tiitii, Samoa Fisheries)

on productive or paid activities, which is in line with the gender roles traditionally assigned to men and women in Samoa. Men also appeared to spend more time than women on community activities such as village meetings and communal gatherings. On tilapia farms, however, feedback from key informant interviews reflected that management responsibilities were fulfilled by both women and men, with women spending slightly fewer hours than men on productive activities.

The training and results of the study led to a shift in the understanding of Samoa Fisheries staff on the role of women in aquaculture activities, and will ensure that women are included as key informants during training activities, consultations and other activities conducted in communities. The training was an eye opener for staff in terms of the valuable contribution of women to aquaculture activities, a contribution that had not been properly recognised before.

Acknowledgements

Samoa Fisheries would like to acknowledge, with much appreciation, the continuous support from Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and SPC, which made this work possible, as well as the great contribution from the two consultants who shared their knowledge and expertise during the training and study.

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