

**CASE STUDY – HAVELULOTO VILLAGE, TONGA:**  
**MOBILIZATION OF WOMEN AND COMMUNITY IN**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

It is indeed an honor to present this paper to this august gathering on the general theme of 'Awareness'. The case study I will present focuses on my village Haveluloto in the Kingdom of Tonga and the role of women in mobilizing community participation in environmental awareness matters.

### **1.1 Location**

Haveluloto is a village 2 km from the town center of Nuku'alofa. It is an urban area, which consists by and large of a transient population of people who have migrated south from the outer islands in search of a better education for their children and also for employment and the perceived benefits of the "bright lights" of the capital.

Before I proceed further, here are a few statistics from my village so that you will have a clearer picture of its size and characteristics.

Havelu is divided into 4 administrative sectors which are;

- a) 'Pikipeavela' on the SE of Havelu which consists of 5 blocks
- b) 'Painitu'uaa' on the NE of Havelu which consists of 11 blocks
- c) 'Vaituilua' to the SW which consists of 10 blocks
- d) 'Vaituimate' to the Center & South which consists of 5 blocks

It is into these geographic sectors that the village is being administered by the Noble and the Town Officer. The "blocks" are a group of residential housing and each "block" is overseen and coordinated by a woman.

### **1.2 Population**

4000 – 4500 (1996 Census : 3,305)

### **1.3 Households**

550 – 600 (1996 Census : 508)

### **1.4 Establishment**

- a) 1 Gymnasium
- b) 2 Primary Schools - GPS Havelu -Tofoa / Ocean of Light
- c) 3 High Schools - Tailulu College / Havelu Middle School  
Ocean of Light

- d) 3 Kindergartens - Lepoaki / Ofo 'Iloa / Ocean of Light
- e) 10 Churches - 2 Free Wesleyan Churches / 1 Mormon (LDS) / 1 Church of Tonga / 1 Free Church of Tonga / 1 Constitutional Free Church of Tonga / 1 Seventh Day Adventist Church, 1 Roman Catholic.
- f) Private Businesses - Tui International / Zuvva Holding / Fua Fonua / Tualau Furniture Showroom / 'Esiola Furniture Showroom / Cowley Bread Shop / PAC SALES/ 'Inoke Engineering Workshop and others.
- g) Government Establishment - Tonga Investments Ltd / 1 Police Station (Dog Section)
- h) 10 Community Halls
- i) 6 Kava Clubs
- j) 30 – 40 Individual Shops

## **2.0 The Role of Women in Village Mobilization**

### **2.1 The National Women's Bodies**

It is a well-known fact in Tonga, and I believe that the same is true for most countries in the Pacific, that women play a pivotal role in development activities and also in environmental and conservation initiatives. Women are at the forefront of their respective churches, family groups, Parent Teacher Association's (PTA's) village activities etc... The Pacific women have always known the term 'empowerment' – they have hijacked it a long time ago, particularly in societies where the "fahu" or "vasu" concept still plays a central role in daily life.

The National Women's Council of Tonga was set up by Her Late Majesty Queen Salote Tupou III in 1953 with the objective to 'Work In One Accord' to ensure the development, growth and well being of Tongan Women. This body deals with most domestic matters concerning women. The Pan Pacific South East Asia Womens Association (PPSEAWA) was also set-up in the early 1950's to deal with international issues concerning the women of Tonga.

Hence, women's organizations have had an established history in Tonga and it is this form of organizational arrangement (or variations of it), which has been adopted by church, village and social groups throughout the Kingdom.

In recent years, central government had established a Women's Affairs Unit in the Prime Minister's Office to deal with policy issues concerning women in development (WID) and also gender issues at the national level.

## **2.2 The Haveluloto Village Bodies**

Haveluloto village has earlier this year re-established its Town Council (which has been defunct since 1989). The Town Council consists of the noble as Chairman, the Town Officer as Deputy Chairman and also elected village representatives to sit as an executive committee. Women are also members by virtue of their membership in the Havelu Women In Development Committee and also their leadership of the "blocks" which I have mentioned above.

It must be noted that prior to the re-establishment this year of the main Town Council, it has been the case for many years that the Women's Committee and its affiliated Committees have been in the forefront of development, conservation, environmental protection, village beautification and also awareness initiatives.

As far as the topic of mobilization of women is concerned, women, as maybe the case elsewhere in the Pacific, occupy a privileged position in Tongan society. They are often the prime movers of projects and initiatives. The social dynamics is such that it is the "in-thing" to participate and that non-participation may incur snide remarks if not the wrath of the other women in the community

Hence, in our village late last year, the women's group of one area of the village, desirous of a better potable water supply for drinking and bathing purposes had requested and obtained from the Canada Fund about 30 x 6000litre ferro-cement water tanks. The village also has access to the much-improved town-water supply from the Tonga Water Board. Private wells are no longer used not only because the underground water supply is reportedly polluted, but that the ground water-lens is difficult to access due to its depth from the surface. Well-water was used at Haveluloto village up to the late 1960's. There was also a large water pumping system and well in operation in the village since 1942 when a U.S. Armed Forces camp was opened on the outskirts of the village at the outbreak of World War II in the Pacific.

I am sure that considering the high-powered delegations attending this "High Level Consultation", what could have been said on this topic has been said and what could have been written has been written. Nevertheless, I will like to tell my story in this case study from a personal perspective (for which I seek your indulgence), in the efforts to mobilize the women of our village.

## **3.0 Waste Management and Catchment Protection in Haveluloto**

### **3.1 Current Environmental Issues at Haveluloto Village**

Lagoon pollution  
Lagoon resources declining  
Lagoon resources safe to eat?  
Animal control (pigs, dogs and cattle)  
Littering  
Waste management  
Rising sea level at the low lying areas (lagoon)  
Youth – alcohol, drug, theft and unemployment  
Community beautification  
Community national obligations to the country  
Water tanks construction

### **3.2 The TEMPP (Tonga Environmental Management & Planning Project) (AusAID / Tonga) – Processes, Outcomes & Awareness**

The Tonga National Women’s Council in association with two other NGO’s in Tonga, the Tonga Community Development Trust (T.T.) and the ‘Aloua Ma’a Tonga were involved in a variety of awareness raising activities:

- ☒☒ Tonga drama competition through Awareness Community Theatre (ACT).
- ☒☒ Pesticides Awareness program
- ☒☒ Implementing and overseeing the building of fence pens for domestically raised pigs
- ☒☒ Monitoring the impact of TEMPP educational activities
- ☒☒ Producing newsletters including “Tokangaekina ‘o Fanga’uta mo Fangakakau” (Lagoon Watch) and radio programs
- ☒☒ Organizing the mass collection of empty drink cans to sell to the recycling center for the purpose of donating these funds to charity.
- ☒☒ Working with women to produce TV programs which raise awareness of women’s development and environment issues in Tonga, including discouraging the use of disposable diapers.

TEMPP provided training to various NGO personnel and government staff, including myself as the Communication, Project and Media Officer at Langafonua ‘a Fafine Tonga. I had attended training in Australia with personnel from the Ministry of Health, Tonga Water Board and Agriculture. We spent 2 months attending a number of courses including a university conducted Environment Impact Assessment workshop, and a Resource and Recovery Education Course run by the Beverage Industry Environment Council. There was a work placement at Sutherland Shire Council Environment Unit. Inspired by this training I then undertook initiatives that were independent of TEMPP and commenced at the conclusion of the project in September 2001. These initiatives which indicate a sustained outcome from TEMPP training and awareness raising activities are described below.

### **3.3 Pilot Project – Community Participation**

During my stay in Australia, I saw new things everyday. For example, in the work place, they have different types of rubbish bins for different purposes and at home they have different types of rubbish bins for rubbish and another for rubbish which can be recycled.

I returned back to Tonga and attended the Havelu WID Committee meeting, one of the main issues that was always reported is the indiscriminate littering which affects the Fanga'uta Lagoon (the village is situated on the lagoon shores). At the same time, a village clean up competition was to be held in a months time. One of the priorities of the village clean up competitions was waste management and new ideas for beautification of village and towns. This was a nation-wide competition sponsored by the PPSEAWA (Pan Pacific South East Asia Women Association).

The national village and town competitions for village cleanliness is a quarterly event which is organized by women's groups throughout Tonga under the general auspices and coordination of PPSEAWA with assistance from the National Women's Council.

It involves entire groups of women from one town or village visiting and inspecting another town or village – looking in particular at kitchens, toilets and bathrooms and also the general state of each dwelling house and allotment in the village or town. The visiting inspection group (which numbers about 50 women on average) awards marks in various categories on pre-printed forms. These forms are then collected and centrally collated and the marks tabulated to ascertain the prizewinner. These reciprocal inspection visits operates on the premise of the “mobilization of shame”.

The success of this exercise had depended on efficient organisation and the leadership of H.R.H. Princess Nanasipau'u, the wife of the Prime Minister, who is not only the President of PPSEAWA – Tonga but she is also the President of PPSEAWA -- International.

Prior to the date of the competition, workshops were held at the initiation of Princess Nanasipau'u emphasizing the concept of the 3'rs (REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE) and the 2R's and 1A (REDUCE, REUSE & AVOID).

As far as the preparations for Haveluloto village were concerned, meetings were held by the Town Officer and the Women's Committee. It was suggested that the new initiative to be adopted by the village was to implement the separation of waste as to what can be safely burnt, recycled and what can be disposed of in the Government dumpsite. Hence, the idea was to have separate bins for the various types of rubbish.

One of the main problems in Tonga as I assume is the case elsewhere in the region is that there is now a marked increase in the use of disposable nappies (diapers), plastics in the form of wrapping and soft-drink bottles, aluminum foil and other non-biodegradable products.

The challenge is of course how to address the problem of waste and its impact on the environment and public health, including water resources, given the very limited resources that are available in both the national and the local level.

The Government is at present, through the National Waste Management Committee, attempting, with aid funding, to relocate the present waste reception facility to the rural areas, and redesign it so it does not cause pollution to the local environment, and also to try and improve the present waste collection system from the villages.

It is considered important that communities be encouraged to participate in addressing this problem. Hence the need to mobilize the women with what little local resources that are available.

The issues as I see it, are that waste must be collected from the village, separated into its respective components and then collected again for appropriate disposal. All this needs commitment from all concerned in the community in order for such a project to be successful and sustainable. This needs to happen with little or no money available, so creative solutions, innovation and understanding of why it is important is necessary, to gain the co-operation and input of the community.

In the Haveluloto project, we had to seek a donation of drums from BP Oil Company and from the business community in the village. This meant they became involved and aware that waste management was an important issue for the village. As everyone contributes to the creation of the waste problem, so everyone should contribute to the solution. The drums have been distributed to strategic locations in the village where business or people living in the vicinity of the drums are requested to care for them and for the eventual disposal of the rubbish collected.

The village women's committee have also been successful in seeking the permission of the Estate-Holder / noble in demarcating the strip of land fronting onto the lagoon as a reserve to act as a buffer-zone and to minimize the pollution of the Fanga'uta lagoon.

As is common in PIC's, people often do not feel any responsibility for land outside their home compound, and especially outside their home village.

A description of the process of village mobilization is provided here as it is a low cost/no cost community – based strategy that could be applied in any similar village context in Tonga, or elsewhere in PIC;s.

From feed back from some of the community they were not aware much of the environment. ***All they care about was to keep Tonga clean for the tourist.*** It's true, when I went to one Primary School for my radio program and asked the kids (class 6): Why do we need a clean environment? All they said was: for the tourist!!! ***For the tourist, but not for ourselves!*** Even I used to think like that but I know more now. I started off with the Havelu community so that other communities might see our new idea and copy it. I held a consultation with the Town Officer, the Committee and some men

who were interested to listen, and told them about the new idea how to minimize some of the littering problems. It should be emphasized that we should **keep Tonga clean not only for tourists but because it is our home.**

A survey was conducted at first by the sub-committee members from each block of the village to establish what kind of litter was being scattered around Havelu. In the meantime funding was sought to support the waste minimization program.

I wrote letters to all the private businesses in Havelu, with the signature of the Town Officer and I signed for the Chairlady as she was away at the time, and distributed it to the private businesses. In the letter I asked for sponsors to contribute into the Committee's Environmental Programme and Village Beautification.

Some businesses did not respond but the following contributions were made:

- ☞☞Tupulekina Technology Ltd. (Fua 'o e Fonua Store) contributed 2 drums
- ☞☞Tui International (they import the popular E2 soft drink) donated \$100.00
- ☞☞Zuvva Holding Company Ltd donated \$200.00
- ☞☞Esiaola Furniture Showroom donated paint
- ☞☞South Pac Sales Painting Ltd donated paint
- ☞☞BP Oil Depot donated 18 drums
- ☞☞Pac Sales Ltd donated paint

A local mechanic expressed regret that he could not afford to make a financial contribution. He was advised that he could help by fixing the drums with lids and painting them different colors: six drums painted red with instructions written in Tongan for aluminum cans only; other six were painted green for plastic and glass bottles; and six drums painted yellow for rubbish only such as plastic bags. In mid September 2001, the drums were placed outside the hospital, near the lagoon, next to a vegetable market, in front of the Town Officers residence, and outside the house of the mechanic who fixed the drums.

Altogether the Haveluloto community as I have stated above consists of 31 blocks, each with their own chairperson, secretary, and treasurer, and all belong to the Havelu Women In Development Committee, which consists of a Chairperson & Deputy, Town Officer, Secretary & Deputy, Treasurer and Deputy, Advisor, Executive Members (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer of each block). Similar Women In Development and church-based village committees exist throughout Tonga and have been functioning for many decades, and involve men, women and youth.

The Havelu Women In Development Committee hold a meeting twice a month, and block representatives are expected to attend. If they cannot attend, they send a proxy. The representatives report on their own activities such as 'beautification' and 'clean up'. During the recent meetings, most of the issues raised by leaders of the blocks have been related to problems with littering. For the purposes of the waste characterization survey they were asked to find out what type of rubbish was being littered in their areas. They

returned to their respective blocks and consulted with the residents and reported back to the next HWDC meeting. 3 weeks later it was reported that the litter was comprised predominantly of: peanut packages, twisties & bongo packages, cigarette butts, aluminum cans, plastic soft drink bottles, alcohol glass bottles, used diapers, aluminum foil etc.

Rubbish drums that had been placed by the main waterfront in Nuku'alofa during TEMPP activities had been used by passersby to dump their own household rubbish, so the Havelu drums were placed near responsible households who kept watch that the drums were used only for communal litter. "Waste watch" was generally encouraged in the community:

One of the locals told me he was on his way home when he saw a foreign shop owner walk over with a full knitted bag which we use for picking up rubbish, and dumped it in the red drums that collect the plastic and glass bottles. The package was full of seafood shells and some unbelievable food scraps, which were already rotten. He told me that he went to confront the foreign shop owner with the bag, but he pretended that he didn't even know what the local was talking about.

It took some time and repetition of the message for people to get used to the system and start picking up litter and putting it in the drums. Participants in a weekly HASH run helped set an example by collecting litter as they ran around the village.

When the drums are full, the contents are sorted and sent to various destinations.

- ✍️ Cans are taken to the one and only recycling (Private Owned) plant, which ship it overseas, and money received is collected to be used for the beautification of Havelu.
- ✍️ Plastic bottles and some glass bottles are emptied twice a week and have to go to the dump because there is no recycling strategy available.

As for the plastic bottles, it is too much and it only increases the unnecessary solid 'waste' in the Kingdom. I had an idea to collect the plastic bottles in Havelu and put them to one side and ask the public to come and take what they needed and try to broadcast a television program and ask the public: how are we going to battle against this unnecessary solid waste in Tonga. How did it get to Tonga? How can we ship it out of Tonga? How could we look at only one side of receiving payment for it coming into Tonga but not including the impacts on the environment? How can we make those people see what they have done for their business benefit but not the environment? Another good example is the Royal Beer Factory in Tonga, they produce glass bottles and plastic bottles for Zingo soft drinks. They recycle the glass bottles but not the plastic bottles.

It's the same as the Coca Cola Company in Tonga, they recycle the aluminum cans but not the plastic bottles.

The only thing that would make the Coca Cola Business in Tonga do their job properly is to educate the people and encourage them to participate in public and make them see how important it is to be aware of what is right and what is not right. If the people don't care the government won't care. If it is something important for the people, the government will act on what matters to the people.

Glass bottles such as 'Ikale and Royal Beer is recycled by the factory and the returner receives 10 seniti for each bottle.

During the TEMPP project, a section of the lagoon foreshore had been fenced off and the WID committee is desirous of improving the Haveluloto beach area by:

Eventually establishing a park for children, and 'Fale Tonga' (traditional hut) for people who will use it for picnics and resting. Since it's already fenced by the Lagoon Watch Project, it will be easier for the community to maintain it. The park will be locked at night time and opened in the day time. No drinking alcohol will be allowed in that area. The objective of establishing the park is to promote environmental friendly and awareness for Havelu Community, since it is located next to the Lagoon shore. This is at present very high on my wish list!

#### **4.0 Lessons Learnt**

It is important in a case-study such as this to see what lessons may be learnt in the mobilizing of women, and the rest of the community, in the interests of environmental protection, conservation and awareness at the village level. This is important because the same issues may also apply where it is mobilization in other areas such as the protection of water supply and water sources, and the general environment. Domestic waste contributes to groundwater pollution in many parts of Tonga, and community awareness and action is necessary to reduce the serious impacts.

To this end, I make the following general observations:

- ☞☞ That mobilization requires a clear statement of objectives and what is needed to be done by whom? By when? And to what end?;
- ☞☞ That such an understanding requires effective and responsive leadership at all levels – from national to village;
- ☞☞ That there must be closer cooperation and communication between the Village Women's Committee and relevant Government Departments, churches, local schools, businesses in the village, traditional leaders, village elders and all stakeholders (as all will have a part to play);
- ☞☞ That it is extremely difficult to work with women and to ensure their continued support, and commitment. However women can be mobilized by appealing to their sense of pride in the village and to their heritage;

✍✍ That the sustainability and eventual success of such a project will depend on the availability of money, time, resources and the cooperation of stakeholders. And it also depends on the clear understanding that if these measures are not taken the community and the environment will suffer in the long term.

✍✍ That community organizations that are already in place, have a tradition of effective decision making and management, and should be included, utilized and supported in national environmental protection programs.