



AN  
ASSESSMENT  
OF THE ROLE  
OF  
WOMEN  
IN FISHERIES  
IN THE  
REPUBLIC  
OF THE  
MARSHALL  
ISLANDS



Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Australian Agency  
for International Development  
New Zealand  
Official Development Assistance



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REPUBLIC of the MARSHALL ISLANDS

WOMEN'S FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT SECTION  
Secretariat of the Pacific Community  
Noumea, New Caledonia

New Zealand Official Development Assistance  
Australian Agency for International Development

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Original text: English

Secretariat of the Pacific Community Cataloguing-in-publication data

Tuara, Patricia

An Assessment of the Role of Women in Fisheries in the Republic of the Marshall Islands / by Patricia Tuara

1. Women in Fisheries—Marshall Islands 2. Women Fishers—Marshall Islands—Economic Aspects  
I. Title II. Secretariat of the Pacific Community

639.209683

AACR2

ISBN 982-203-604-3

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Published with financial assistance from  
the Governments of Australia and New Zealand

Prepared for publication and printed at the  
Secretariat of the Pacific Community  
Noumea, New Caledonia, 1998.

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# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CMI	College of the Marshall Islands
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FNTC	Fisheries Nautical Training Center
ISW	Ministry of Interior and Social Welfare
JADA	Jaluit Atoll Development Association
JDPF	Japanese Development Project Fund
MIMRA	Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority
NCW	National Council of Women
NTC	National Training Council
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USP	University of the South Pacific
WID	Women in Development
YTYIH	Youth to Youth in Health programme





The Marshall Islands are made up of many atolls and islands scattered over a large area of sea.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Marshall Islands women in fisheries assessment was a joint undertaking of the Government of the Marshall Islands and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

My sincere thanks to the staff of the Ministry of Interior and Social Welfare (ISW) for their hospitality during my stay in Majuro. In particular my appreciation to the Minister of ISW, Mr Brenson Wase, and the Secretary of ISW, Mrs Carmen Bigler. To all those people who gave their valuable time and knowledge during interviews, I am truly grateful. My work in the Marshall Islands would have been impossible without the support of the Manager for the Women in Development Programme (ISW), Mrs Evelyn Lanki. Evelyn did a wonderful job of organising my work itinerary—setting up appointments and arranging my field trip to Arno Arno, and in addition, provided a wealth of information on the local situation.

Funding for the field survey and production of this report was provided by the Governments of Australia and New Zealand.





Ebeye, Kwajalein Atoll.

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Marshall Islands baseline survey on the role of women in fisheries was carried out from 16 May to 1 June 1997. The survey was conducted by Ms Patricia Tuara (SPC's Women's Fisheries Development Officer), with the assistance of Mrs Evelyn Lanki (Manager of the Women in Development Programme, Marshall Islands Ministry of the Interior and Social Welfare). The assessment was requested by the Government of the Marshall Islands in response to a felt need for information concerning the participation of Marshallese women in the fisheries sector.

The main objectives of the field survey were to:

- i) review the social and economic role played by women in the fisheries sector, including activities undertaken in the harvesting, processing and marketing of marine resources;
- ii) provide details on both Government and non-government services available to support the interests of women in the fisheries sector;
- iii) outline the constraints that inhibit the effective participation of women within the fisheries sector;
- iv) provide guidelines to assist the effective participation of women within the fisheries sector.

## 1.1 SURVEY DESIGN

The survey entailed interviews with women involved in fisheries activities, government agencies (dealing with fisheries, women's development, education, health, the media, outer-island development, and commerce), and non-government agencies (including representatives from church groups, business, the media, banks, and the fishing club).

In addition to the two weeks of interviews carried out on the main island of Majuro, a field trip was made to the island of Arno Arno to meet with the local community who are involved in fisheries activities.

A list of the people interviewed can be found in the appendix.

## 1.2 FINDINGS

- i) Women in the Marshall Islands are involved in fisheries in all three areas of harvesting, processing and marketing. The women in the outer

islands are involved in fishery activity on a regular basis.

- ii) Apart from the constraints imposed by society and the environment, the women are prevented from effectively participating in the fisheries sector by lack of, or limited provision of, support services.
- iii) Government fisheries development has focused on providing support to fishermen and not fisherwomen.
- iv) Much of the support provided to women in the sector is via community development projects.

## 1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is the list of recommendations to support the participation of women in fisheries.

### General

It is recommended that:

- 1.3.1 ► Government through MIMRA (as lead agency) improve existing support services to women in the fisheries sector (information, funds, training).
- 1.3.2 ► MIMRA broaden the scope of fisheries development to include the activities of women.

### Specific

#### Awareness

It is recommended that:

- 1.3.3 ► MIMRA, ISW Women In Development (WID) Programme, and the ISW Culture Division co-ordinate a public fisheries awareness programme.
- 1.3.4 ► The Education Department encourage schools to consider setting aside an annual week of activities e.g. a poster contest for children, talks at schools, and so forth.

#### Research

- 1.3.5 ► MIMRA, ISW WID Programme, ISW Culture Division, Ministry of Education,

YTYIH, and religious groups, should document the activities of women in the fisheries sector. MIMRA, ISW and YTYIH could publish project activity reports on women in fisheries. Secondary schools and such groups as the Catholic youth group could encourage students to undertake projects that focus on researching and documenting the activities of women in the sector.

### *Training*

- 1.3.6 ► In the short term, MIMRA should provide training to women in quality-control, hygiene and nutrition, preservation and processing, and marketing. A pilot workshop should be carried out on one of the outer islands where women are involved in fisheries activities on a regular basis.
- 1.3.7 ► In the long term, the Ministry of Education should incorporate marine studies into the school curriculum.
- 1.3.8 ► YTYIH, the Catholic Youth group, and other community groups should continue to provide training.

- 1.3.9 ► MIMRA, in collaboration with ISW and with the assistance of SPC, should develop a Government training programme.

### *Evaluation*

- 1.3.10 ► MIMRA and ISW should keep the focus on small-scale income-generating projects. MIMRA should carry out the feasibility studies on potential fisheries projects for women and review suggestions put forward by representatives of the outer islands.

### *Funding*

- 1.3.11 ► MIMRA, ISW and YTYIH should seek funds from overseas sources to support projects. Donors such as NZODA, AusAID and UNDP are particularly interested in supporting projects which benefit women.
- 1.3.12 ► MIMRA should set up a revolving fund for women.
- 1.3.13 ► YTYIH and other community development groups should continue to provide funds to support income-generating ventures.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFORMATION

### 2.1 GENERAL

This report looks at the participation of Marshallese women in fisheries. In order to understand the degree of participation by women, one needs to look at (a) the roles that women play in Marshallese society as a whole and (b) the socio-economic environment in which they live.

### 2.2 STATUS OF WOMEN

The traditional role of the Marshallese woman is very clearly defined. She is the foundation of the family, responsible for the welfare of its members. Her duties include child care, food preparation, and the execution of the household chores. In addition, she has obligations to community groups such as the church. As a member of a matrilineal society, she has responsibilities as the owner of family land, and as preserver of the ties that bind family lineage<sup>1</sup>.

However, the role of Marshallese women outside the traditional confines is neither clearly defined, nor encouraged. In order to address the inequalities faced by women in terms of access to adequate health, education, employment, and legal services, as well as to promote greater participation in development, the government of the Marshall Islands set up a task force to carry out research and draft a national women's policy. The policy document published in July 1995, addresses seven main areas; culture, health, population, education, land tenure and legal rights, national development, and economic empowerment. The document is well written and provides policy goals and statements, as well as implementation activities and agencies, and linkages for each area<sup>2</sup>.

### 2.3 POPULATION

Marshall Islands' mid-year population figures for 1997 give an estimate of 60 000 inhabitants<sup>3</sup>. This is a significant increase from the census figures of 43 380 (1988) and 30 873 (1980)<sup>4</sup>. 1988 census figures show a population density of 331 people per sq. km for the whole of the Marshall Islands. According to the 1988 census figures, the two islands which have the highest numbers of residents are Majuro with 16 019 and Kwajalein with 8 798 people. Population figures for most of the other islands are in the hundreds rather than thousands.

The Marshall Islands has one of the fastest growing populations in the Pacific. The rate of annual population growth is 4.2 per cent. The main reason for this growth rate is a persistently high fertility rate. 1994 figures show a total fertility rate of 5.7. This figure is a result of child bearing at early ages, inadequate spacing between children, and a continuation of child bearing until late in a woman's life<sup>5</sup>. Nearly 20 per cent of births are to mothers who are under the age of 19 years<sup>6</sup>. 1988 census figures show that over half the population (51%) was under the age of 15 years. The large number of young children increases the domestic responsibilities of women, and restricts their leaving home to seek employment and education opportunities.

### 2.4 HEALTH

Health care services are provided by two hospitals (one each on Majuro and Ebeye), and 69 dispensaries<sup>7</sup>.

The main health problems are caused by lack of sanitation and hygiene, and lifestyle<sup>8</sup>. Protected water supply and human-waste disposal systems are limited to housing areas for government employees, hospitals, and to a few government and mission schools<sup>9</sup>. Illnesses include gastroenteritis, diarrhoea, respiratory problems, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases. Nutritional problems due mainly to the consumption of imported, processed foods include malnutrition, obesity, and hypertension<sup>10</sup>.

According to the Assistant Secretary of Health, the government's health programme promotes consumption of local foods from the land and sea. Projects such as the 'home garden project' discussed later in this report encourage women to grow food crops. Self reliance in food production is not only good in terms of nutritional value, but also reduces the family food bills by reducing the need to purchase expensive foods from the shop. In addition, any

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Social Services, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 1995.

<sup>3</sup> SPC Population & Demography Programme, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Social Services, 1995; Gunasekera and Butuna, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Gunasekera and Butuna, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas, 1989.

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF, 1996.

surplus crops that are produced by the women can be sold to supplement the family income.

## 2.5 EDUCATION

There are no great differences in the female:male ratio of students attending school at the elementary and high school levels of education. 1995 figures for both elementary and high school showed more female than male students enrolled with the ratio of 51 per cent female: 49 per cent male. However, at the college level, female numbers drop below male numbers to a ratio of 44 per cent female: 56 per cent male.

Scholarships for post secondary education are available to both male and female applicants. However, more males than females have been granted scholarships. The success rate at university is equal between the sexes, but the ability to secure employment is more favourable for men<sup>11</sup>.

The fact that less females than males enter secondary and post secondary education may be due to pregnancy or cultural constraints. Traditionally, parents encourage boys to continue their education and discourage girls from doing so<sup>12</sup>.

## 2.6 THE ECONOMY

The economy relies heavily on the financial aid it receives from the United States. Most of the \$70 million received annually as grants, funding and aid is spent on Majuro<sup>13</sup>. Local industry is small scale, with income generated from copra production, tourism and the sale of handicrafts. With limited fertile soil, agricultural production is low. However, a majority of the population is involved in subsistence activity—growing papaya, banana, pandanus, taro, yams, sweet potato, breadfruit, raising pigs and chickens and catching reef fish<sup>14</sup>. Fisheries activities bring in income and these will be discussed in the sub-section below.

Decisions concerning economic development are made by men. Although nearly 50 per cent of the population are female, they do not exert much influence on decision-making concerning national development. Few women are in high-level decision-making positions within government<sup>15</sup>. The National Women's Policy addresses the need to encourage greater participation of women in development decision-making, so that their needs and issues of concern are promoted.

## 2.7 THE FISHERIES SECTOR

Developments in the fisheries sector have not reached government expectations. The oceanic tuna

fishery generates total revenues of approximately \$50 million annually, but only \$2.5 million of this figure remains in the Marshall Islands as licence fees and spending on goods and services by the fishing fleet. The coastal fishery provides food and income for mainly outer island communities, but its contribution to development is difficult to quantify<sup>16</sup>.

With the aim of encouraging local income-generating fisheries ventures, the government has encouraged both artisanal fishing activities and aquaculture. A look at past and present government support shows that it is provided to large-scale commercial fisheries projects. The focus is upon providing equipment to support male-dominated artisanal fishing activities. Overseas donors have funded a number of fishing projects. For example Japan, through the Japanese Fishing Agreement with the government of the Marshall Islands, has provided cool stores, flake-ice machines, fishing gear and other equipment to support fisheries projects on both Majuro and the outer islands. Under one Jaluit Atoll Development Association project, the Japanese will provide a boat, establish a fish base, and provide fishing gear. The fish will be exported to Kwajelein and Majuro<sup>17</sup>.

In terms of aquaculture, support has been given to clam farming, black pearl oyster farming, trochus production, seaweed farming, sea-cucumber cultivation, and sponge farming<sup>18</sup>. All of the aquaculture projects are operated by men.

In order to reap more economic returns from their marine resources on a sustainable basis, MIMRA commissioned the help of consultants to put together a five-year national fisheries plan. The plan looks at three areas: the industrial fishery; the coastal fishery; and the institutional restructuring required to fulfill the objectives of the plan<sup>19</sup>. The plan aims to privatise government projects, putting the responsibility of developing marine resources in the hands of local governments. The emphasis is on developing decentralised 'community fisheries projects' rather than centrally administered and controlled 'national government fisheries projects'. Through this community approach, the participation of all members of the community (men, women, and children) is encouraged.

<sup>11</sup> Brenda Ailuk, Director of Scholarships, pers. comm.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Social Services, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Stanley, 1989.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Social Services, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Asian Development Bank, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Vice President of JADA, pers. comm.

<sup>18</sup> Danny Wase, Director of Fisheries, pers. comm.

<sup>19</sup> Asian Development Bank, 1997.



Handling for tuna, Majuro.



*The kai (freshwater clam) fishery brings in income to women of the Ba Province, Fiji. A Fijian women dives for kai which she then stores in a sack.*

## 3.0 THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

### 3.1 PACIFIC OVERVIEW

Women within the Pacific have been involved in fisheries activities for many years. However, the type and degree of participation varies from one island country to another depending on socio-cultural limits. Nevertheless, the main aim of women's fishing activity is to provide a regular supply of food for the family diet. Where there is a surplus, the seafood is sold and the money is used to supplement the family income.

For those women who engage in the harvest of resources, there are similarities in the resources exploited, the gear used, and the techniques employed. Apart from using their hands, women use rudimentary equipment such as coconut fronds, sticks and baskets to reef glean for shell fish, molluscs and seaweeds. To catch reef fish, they may use spears, traps, nets, and hand lines, fishing either standing in the lagoon or on nearby rocks, or from boats.

Once the seafood is collected, the women are responsible for post-harvest activities. Those living on atolls, where freezing facilities are scarce, employ a range of preservation techniques such as drying, salting and smoking to preserve the catch for future consumption or export to the main island for sale. In a number of countries, the trade in shells provides a steady income. The women in the Cook Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu are active in collecting trochus shells. The meat of the trochus is consumed after extraction by boiling, and the shell is either sold as ornaments or jewellery to tourists, exported overseas, or processed locally into button blanks and buttons. In the Solomon Islands, shells processed in Malaita are used in traditional exchange ceremonies.

The marketing of marine products is, in many communities, the sole responsibility of women. The women may sell their own catch or that of other fishermen and women. Apart from fish, shellfish, shells, sea urchins, lobsters, crabs, and seaweed are sold. The handicrafts made for sale on atoll islands often incorporate shells, sharks' teeth, coral and other sea life, as evidence of the close relationship the inhabitants have with the sea.

In addition to harvesting, processing and marketing marine resources, women also make and mend fishing gear (nets and fish hooks).

Apart from direct involvement in fishing activity, women can be found employed as crew and scientific observers on fishing vessels, as staff in both public and private fisheries organisations, as marine studies lecturers and students in educational institutions, and as researchers who document the activities of women in the sector.



*The marketing of marine resources is often the exclusive domain of women. Here a woman sells shellfish in Tonga.*



*Women of Wewak, Papua New Guinea sell their value-added products of fish cakes and fish burgers.*





*Collecting shellfish is the main form of harvesting carried out by women in Majuro. Processing of fish includes salting and drying of reef fish. A basket of clams and a fish drying tray are shown in this picture.*

# 4.0 THE PARTICIPATION OF MAJURO WOMEN IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

The information provided in this section is gathered from discussions from firstly, women living in Majuro who are involved in fisheries activities, and secondly, those who provide support to such women.

## 4.1 HARVESTING

Harvesting activities are restricted to the lagoon and inner reef areas. Collection is by hand. Stock harvested includes shellfish, such as cowrie, top-shell, clam and trochus, and crustaceans.

A number of women engage in clam farming.

Bottom fishing is carried out but this is usually in the form of recreational, competitive fishing.

In general, it is culturally taboo for Marshallese women to engage in diving, netting, trapping, pole-and-line fishing, or longlining.

Women believe that marine stocks are decreasing in Majuro, stating that they are finding it more and more difficult to collect shellfish and crabs.

## 4.2 PROCESSING

Processing is the main fisheries activity conducted by Marshallese women.

Primary processing takes place in the form of gutting, scaling, cleaning of fish and shellfish for family consumption, and sale.

Methods of cooking for family consumption include boiling, frying, and barbecuing.

Preserving methods used are salting, drying and smoking of fish caught by men.

Salting and bottling of small clams is carried out for family consumption and for sale.

The making of shell craft is popular.

## 4.3 MARKETING

There is no fish market in Majuro. Instead the women sell their produce through stores and other outlets.

Fresh and processed fish and shellfish (clams) are sold at local stores and at the road side. The main markets

are in Majuro (for Majuro, Jaluit and Arno). The price of salted and dried fish is \$1–\$1.25 per fish, while the price of smoked fish is \$3 per pound. The price of a basket of clam is \$5–\$10<sup>20</sup>.

Shellcraft are sold at handicraft outlets in Majuro (Women's Handicraft store, Youth to Youth in Health, Catholic Busy Hands store, and one other store opposite the Catholic church).

## 4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Participation of women in fisheries

- collecting shellfish and crustaceans by hand in the lagoon and inner reef area,
- processing raw fish and shellfish (cleaning, gutting, scaling etc.),
- seafood cooking by boiling, frying, and barbecuing,
- salting, drying and smoking fish, and shellfish (such as clams),
- making shellcraft, and
- marketing seafood through retail stores and handicraft outlets on Majuro.

Development constraints

- declining marine resources in the lagoon and inner reef areas,
- no seafood market,
- competition from outer islands when selling handicrafts,
- lack of information re services available to women (loan schemes),
- no women's fisheries projects in Majuro,
- no provision of support (eg no training, or equipment).

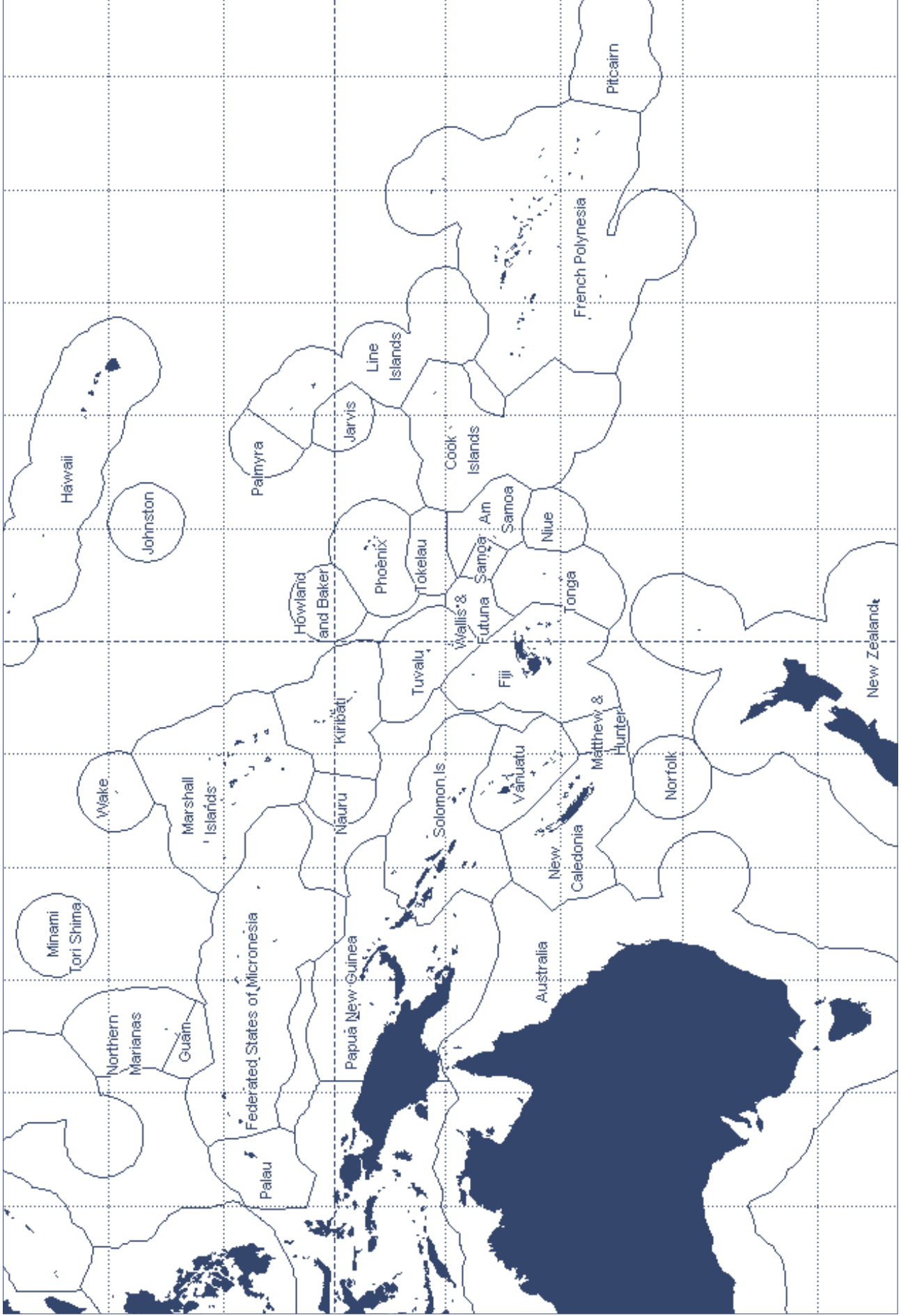
Training requirements

- seafood hygiene, handling, maintaining seafood quality,
- setting up small-scale income-generating ventures,
- novel methods of shellcraft.

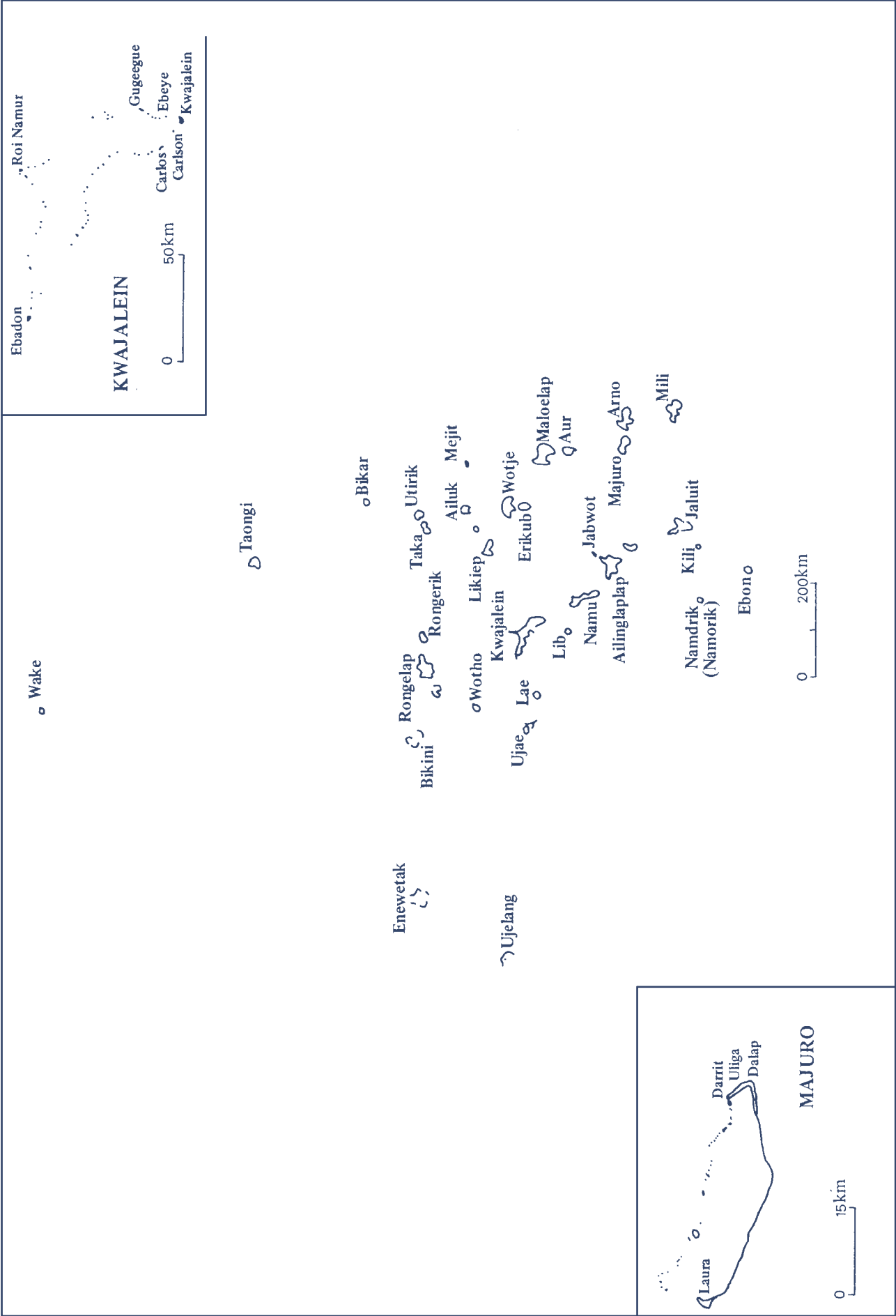
Development interests

- set up a seafood market,
- provide support services to women involved in fisheries,
- research overseas markets especially for shellcraft.

<sup>20</sup> Ritok Jack, a women who collects, processes and sells seafood in Laura, pers. comm.



The Marshall Islands are situated in the Central Pacific region.



Only the main atolls and islands are depicted in this map of the Marshall Islands.

## 50 THE OUTER ISLANDS SITUATION: EXAMPLES

The 1 225 Marshall Islands with a total land area of 181 sq. km. are grouped together in 29 atolls, five low islands, and 870 reefs. Nineteen atolls and four islands are inhabited<sup>21</sup>. The disparity between the economy on Majuro and that of its outer islands is quite marked. A complete understanding of the involvement of Marshallese women within the fisheries sector would therefore need to take into consideration the different environments of the inhabited atolls and islands within the Marshall Islands group.

This section takes a brief look at the 'development' situation of only six of the many outer islands belonging to the Marshall Islands. This sample is based on the accounts of discussions held with the Majors of the five respective islands, as well as a description of the field trip made to Arno Arno on 24 May 1997. Although limited in geographic scope, the account provided identifies the conditions and constraints of outer island or atoll life.

The areas covered include:

- details of natural resources on each atoll,
- main development activities,
- fisheries development activities for men and women,
- development constraints, and
- areas for assistance in training and development

In the past the national government was responsible for making all the decisions on outer-island development. However, this situation changed and responsibility is now in the hands of local government. Although this move has been seen as positive, the local government's development plans are constrained by lack of finance. Two or three times a year, the Mayors' Association meets to discuss development projects. The local government is responsible for implementing development projects, with the national government providing technical assistance.

### 5.1 ARNO ARNO ATOLL

Situated close to Majuro, travelling by boat, the SPC Women's Fisheries Development Officer, Evelyn and the Iroji of Arno reached Arno Arno in about three hours. The trio met with 15 to 20 women from the community to find out more about their activities (particularly in fisheries).

Arno has a lagoon filled with fish and seafood. However, the land resources are limited to coconut trees, and other atoll vegetation. Electricity in the community is provided by domestic generators

or solar panels (belonging to a few houses). The Marshall Islands Maritime Resources Authority (MIMRA) cool store has its own electrical generator. Few homes possess refrigeration. Water is supplied from rain-water catchments, and ground-water wells.

In terms of development activities, Arno Arno has few. The community feels that the government provides little development assistance, and the island is often overlooked when government mobile teams travel around the atolls. One short-term project—the *Pandanus project*, was implemented by the local government. Lasting for one year, the project promoted the planting of pandanus for use in the making of handicrafts, and for the thatching of buildings. The project ended when funding terminated.

Possibly the largest development activity on Arno Arno is the MIMRA fishing project set up as a local fishermen's project. Funded by the Japanese government, the project's cool store holds locally caught fish in storage before it is exported to the Majuro market.

The women on Arno Arno collect shellfish, crabs, clams, and trochus mainly for family consumption. As the residents tend to cook over an open fire, cooking methods are rudimentary and include boiling (sometimes in coconut), frying, and barbecuing. The women also use the traditional method of cooking in an earth oven, whereby fish and other foods are wrapped in leaves, buried in a hole in the ground, and covered with hot stones. Other methods of processing include salting, drying and smoking of fish; and the making of shellcraft. In terms of marketing, the women sell their processed (salted, dried and smoked fish) through their husbands locally or in Majuro. In addition, their shellcraft is sold through outlets in Majuro. There are no fishing projects for the women on Arno Arno.

The development constraints include limited outlets and markets, as well as transportation costs.

Areas for assistance include training in seafood hygiene and handling, and maintaining seafood quality. The women expressed interest in a Kwajelein local-government project that involves women processing fish for export. The Arno Arno women are interested in processing local fish for export too.

<sup>21</sup> Levy, 1996

<sup>22</sup> Marshall Islands Guidebook, n.d.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley, 1989.

## 5.2 WOTJE AND ERIKUB ATOLLS

Wotje is known as the garden of the Marshalls and is the sub-district centre for the northern atolls<sup>22</sup>. Unlike most atolls the soil is good for growing crops. The population is 600 inhabitants. Water is supplied by underground sources. There is no refrigeration, and solar panels provide electricity. The uninhabited island of Erikub is a natural turtle hatchery<sup>23</sup>. In addition, the waters surrounding both Wotje and Erikub are filled with fish.

Main development activities include the growing of agricultural crops (such as watermelon), harvesting of marine resources (fish and turtles), copra production, and the making of handicrafts. Agricultural goods tend to be exported to Likiep, Arno and Mili, while marine resources, handicrafts and copra are exported to Majuro. In addition to possessing agricultural and fisheries resources, Wotje also has about 239 historical military sites where remnants from the war are seen as tourist attractions. The island has plans to promote tourism but as there are no hotels, at this stage visitors to the island reside with the local people. Payment for accommodation is made in kind (clothing or equipment) rather than cash.

In the past, with the assistance of MIMRA, the community of Wotje tried to start a clam project. Unfortunately, the project did not succeed, because although Wotje had wild stocks of clam, there were no qualified technicians to monitor them.

According to the Mayor, fisheries activities are divided between men and women, with the men concentrating on fishing, and the women on processing of marine resources. To prevent the over-exploitation of stocks, harvesting is restricted to local residents. Seasonal restrictions are used in the harvest of turtles. Apart from using the traditional methods of cooking, the women also use salting, smoking and drying when processing seafoods. In addition, they make shell and other handicrafts. Marketing of marine resource products is done through outlets in Majuro and Kwajelein. There are no fisheries projects currently in existence in Wotje. Interest was expressed by a group from China, but as yet, no proposal has been provided.

In terms of community development groups, Wotje has about four or five women's groups which fundraise through the sale of cooked foods, and the cleaning of land. In addition, there is an active youth group which has organised (through Youth to Youth in Health) training in farming and fishing techniques.

The main constraint to development is the inability to market produce on a regular basis. The cost of air-

freighting goods to other islands is very high, and boats only travel every three months. Due to marketing restraints, rather than harvesting or producing surplus stock, the community produces only enough to meet consumption needs. Another constraint is the difficulty in acquiring bank loans. All loans need a guarantee of repayment. As the income from agriculture and fishing is not provided on a consistent basis, it is often difficult for growers and fishermen to guarantee repayment.

Any plans to assist Wotje would need to address the constraints mentioned above.

## 5.3 AILUK ATOLL

400 people reside on the island of Ailuk. The people have no refrigeration (they would like the Namdrik type of solar-powered refrigeration), and use generators for electricity. According to the Mayor, three outer island atolls have 24-hour electricity (Jaluit, Kili, and Ailinglaplap), and three atolls have solar refrigeration (Namu, Ailinglaplap, and Likiep).

The main sources of income for the community are the sale of handicrafts and salted fish. There is presently no fisheries project on the island.

As with Wotje, the men harvest and the women process marine resources. Fresh fish is caught for local consumption, while salt fish is sold at markets in Majuro and Kwajelein. The women make shell and other handicrafts which are sold in Majuro, Kwajelein, and overseas.

The main constraint to development is the cost of transporting produce to markets in other islands.

In terms of development plans, the community is interested in developing both pearl-oyster and clam farming. Proposals have been submitted to the Ministry of Resources and Development. In addition, the local government has requested visits by the ISW mobile team, and the Youth to Youth in Health team to assist in community development.

## 5.4 EBON ATOLL

Ebon is blessed with both a wealth of agricultural crops (including bananas, coconuts, papaya and taro) and waters filled with marine resources. The population is between 800 and 900 inhabitants.

The main source of income is derived from the sale of copra.

Men harvest fish. Women collect shellfish, and make shell and other handicrafts. Shellfish are marketed in

Kwajelein, while shell and other handicrafts are marketed in Majuro and Kwajelein.

A number of fisheries projects are being investigated. One is the marine-sponge project. Targeted at Ebon Youth, the plan for this small project is to export sponge overseas. At the present time, MIMRA is providing technical information and the Japanese Development Project Fund (JDPF) is carrying out a feasibility study.

## 5.5 NAMDRIK ATOLL

Namdrik is similar to Ebon in terms of natural resources (agricultural crops and marine resources) and population size (800 to 900 inhabitants).

The main sources of income are derived from the export sales of bananas and handicrafts (in particular the finely woven mats).

As with Ebon and other islands, the men in Namdrik tend to carry out fishing while women concentrate on processing of catch. However, the women also collect shellfish (such as the cowrie shell) which is sold in Kwajelein. The shell and other handicrafts they collect and produce are sold in Majuro and Kwajelein. Namdrik has a pearl-oyster project in operation.

The main constraints to development include the high cost of transportation (both air and sea), and the limited availability of markets. The community could export fish and bananas to other islands but does not have a market. (This is probably in part due to competition for markets from other islands).

The local government is interested in shrimp farming. According to the Mayor, this is one area in which the women could be involved.

In terms of development assistance, the island is in need of a pearl-oyster hatchery. At the moment the people send their oyster shells to Hawaii, and as such must meet transportation and hatchery-processing costs. Training is needed in the areas of pearl-oyster cleaning and shell drilling.

## 5.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### Participation of women in fisheries

- processing fish caught by men,
- collecting shellfish and crustaceans,
- seafood cooking by boiling, frying, and barbecuing,
- salting, drying and smoking,
- making shellcraft.

### Development constraints

- high cost of freight (air and sea),
- limited markets,
- difficulty in acquiring bank loans.

### Training requirements

- seafood hygiene, handling, and maintaining seafood quality (Arno Arno),
- processing fish for export (Arno Arno),
- pearl-oyster cleaning and shell drilling (Namdrik).

### Development interests

- developing pearl-oyster and clam farming (Ailuk),
- marine-sponge project (Ebon),
- shrimp farming (Namdrik),
- a pearl-oyster hatchery (Namdrik).



The College of the Marshall Islands in Majuro has plans to develop a marine studies curriculum.





*A retail store in Laura, Majuro sells fresh and dry salted fish.*



*The Ministry of Interior and Social Welfare, Majuro is responsible for implementing many community projects through its Community Development Division.*



*The handicraft centre in Alele, Majuro sells shell and other forms of handicraft produced by women.*

# 6.0 NATIONAL SERVICES AVAILABLE TO PROMOTE AND ASSIST WOMEN IN FISHERIES

## 6.1 GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS

### 6.1.1 Ministry of Interior and Social Welfare

The Ministry includes the offices of the Interior, Outer Island Affairs, and Social Services. The office is made up of four main divisions looking after the following areas; local government and land management, election and registration, administration and budget, community development and cultural affairs.

Under the Local Government and Land Management Division, the Ministry works with the local governments to put together projects for assistance. In terms of fisheries projects, there are Japanese-funded government projects on the islands of Arno, Ailinglaplap, Namu, Likiep and Jaluit. At the present time there is not a lot of involvement by women. In terms of future fisheries projects, the Minister suggests looking into such ventures as reef fish (mullet and rabbit fish), the making of value-added products (e.g. tuna jerky, etc.). Other farming, and seaweed farming. These projects provide opportunities for the involvement of women.

The Community Development Division is comprised of the sub-divisions of Sports and Recreation, Youth Bureau, Women's Development, Population and Family Life Education, and Community Nutrition. Representatives from this Division work closely together in ensuring that assistance is provided to members of all communities. Six representatives form the Mobile Team which visits outer island communities to provide assistance in the areas of health, family planning, nutrition, women's development, sport and recreation, gardening, team is an effective form of community outreach, and can provide information to those who are interested in providing assistance to communities.

### 6.1.2 Ministry of Resources and Development

This Ministry merged the Ministries of Works, Resources and Development in 1996. The four divisions of the Ministry comprise; the Marshall Islands Maritime Surveillance Agency, Marshall

Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA), Marshall Islands Development Authority, and Marshall Islands Tourism Authority. Under these divisions are the three sub-divisions of the Dept of Works, Policy, Planning and Administration, and the Dept of Resources and Development.

MIMRA is the division which is responsible for marine resources development. It has been active in acquiring overseas funds to support fisheries projects. The Japanese projects (discussed in section 2.7 of this report) are examples of such projects. MIMRA's training programme is provided as required to support fisheries projects and includes training in the preparation of fish for export to other islands. The Fisheries Nautical Training Centre is part of MIMRA's training programme. Because fisheries projects tend to be targeting male-dominated artisanal fisheries ventures, support in the form of training and equipment is provided to fishermen.

MIMRA is currently looking at privatising government fisheries projects. With the assistance of consultants, the Authority is putting together a five-year national fisheries development plan. The plan has been discussed in section 2.7 of this report.

## 6.2 INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### 6.2.1 Alele Public Library

Apart from one book on handicrafts, I did not find any information documenting the fishing activities of women. *Handicrafts of the Marshall Islands* by Carol Curtis makes reference to the making of shell handicrafts in the Marshall Islands.

### 6.2.2 Alele Museum

During my visit to the Museum, there was a marine display which featured photos, and displays of shells and shellcraft, navigation charts, fishing lures, and traditional canoe projects (examples from Majuro, Namdrik, Likiep, Ailuk, Jaluit and Enewetak). The Museum is educational for both locals (particularly school children), and tourists alike. Such displays are effective in promoting an awareness and understanding of the fisheries sectoral activities.

### 6.2.3 Assumption High School

*Knowing our ecosystem* is a two-year project which is being implemented by Assumption High School. Part of the curriculum of this project is promoting an awareness of the marine environment. According to the Acting Principal, the children will be taught different aspects of the marine sector; 9th grade will study the lagoon, 10th grade the land, 11th grade the reef and 12th grade the ocean. This marine education will incorporate learning in english, maths and science. In addition, with the assistance of the Catholic Men's Fellowship Club, students of this school have been taught traditional fishing methods.

This school which is provided by the Catholic Church is possibly one (if not the only) school which has marine studies as part of its curriculum.

### 6.2.4 National Training Council

The Council is a government-funded training project which is responsible for ensuring that all sectors of the economy possess trained personnel. Funds are used to upgrade staff in both the public and private sectors. The aim of the Council is to ensure that local people are provided with the skills that will enable them to replace expatriate personnel in their fields of employment. Examples of courses that are provided through the Council include training in automechanics, carpentry, electrical engineering, welding and small-machine maintenance. Very few women have participated in the training of the Council. Those who have entered the welding and electrical courses have dropped out before the completion of the courses. According to the Director, there is a need for training that is applicable to the needs of women.

Kam Wase (Director of the Council), says that the government has plans to consolidate all training under the umbrella of the National Training Council. Under this plan, the NTC will co-ordinate training, provide funding, and will certify both training and instructors. The proposal for this plan may be approved this year.

### 6.2.5 College of the Marshall Islands (CMI)

CMI does not offer courses in marine studies at this time. In the past, the College did offer such courses but due to lack of lecturers, these are no longer provided. However, the President is interested in developing boys' interest in marine studies curriculum covering such courses as environmental protection, and marine science. At the time of our dis-

cussion, the President was seeking assistance from other education institutions which have a marine studies curriculum.

### 6.2.6 Fisheries Nautical Training Centre (FNTC)

The Fisheries Nautical Training Centre was established in 1994 in pursuing practical training in seafaring. Captain Larry Muller joined FNTC in 1994 and re-designed the curriculum and entrance requirements. The certificate in deckhand course is nine months in duration (six months theory and three months practical). The courses provided include seafaring, engineering, communications, navigation, safety at sea, applied maths, and english. Admission fee for study is \$1 300.00 with graduates guaranteed placement overseas. An entrance exam is taken with only 24 successful candidates accepted each year into the college. This year approximately 120 applicants applied to the college. Graduates have been placed in such positions as merchant seamen, navigators, and deckhands in Hawaii, Seattle and San Diego.

Unfortunately the college does not provide courses targeting women. However, Captain Muller has ideas of starting a catering course for stewards on board tourist vessels. This may be one area that attracts female students.

### 6.2.7 The Marshall Islands Scholarship, Grant and Loan Scheme

The aim of this programme is to provide scholarship assistance to prepare students to fill present and future jobs needed by the Republic. The focus for the next ten years is to promote school and health improvement, professional and business development, technological development, integrated rural and island economy development, and general management and leadership development. Scholarships are offered in the following areas:

- health and applied fields
- science,
- entrepreneurship and business
- computer science
- fisheries & maritime studies
- environmental science
- education
- management
- economics
- law & law enforcement
- theological studies
- engineering
- agriculture

- industrial trades
- communications
- aviation
- accounting

The most popular courses of study are management, education, computer science and business.

Eligibility conditions apply concerning academic background, residential status, age, health, and so forth. Students sign a bond with government which requires that on graduating, the students must return to take up employment in the Marshall Islands.

According to the Director of Scholarships, although there are scholarships for fisheries and maritime studies, no applications have been made to undertake these courses. The Director believes that more promotion on the field of marine studies needs to be carried out.

Approximately 40 per cent of the scholarship recipients are female, while 60 per cent are male. The success rate of students is equal between the sexes. However, it is easier for men to acquire jobs upon graduation<sup>24</sup>.

## 6.2.8 University of the South Pacific (USP)

The USP extension centre offers a variety of courses through correspondence. The courses are for formal and non-formal education. Non-formal courses include studies for a diploma in community development, a certificate in non-formal education, and a certificate in nutrition. The centre uses local tutors for the courses provided. As the centre does not have a satellite, it makes contact with USP Fiji, concerning student queries, via electronic mail and facsimile. The centre does offer fisheries courses, but to date no students have applied to undertake them. However, the centre organised a shellcraft workshop by arranging the visit of a Fijian shellcraft artisan to teach local women. Anare Tuitoga (Acting Director) believes that student interest in marine studies could be developed by including marine education in the school curriculum.

## 6.3 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### 6.3.1 National Council of Women— Women United Together in the Marshall Islands

The establishment of the NCW goes back to 1981 when Cabinet endorsed the promotion of greater involvement of women in the context of national development. In 1984 the Third National Conference of Women in the Marshall Islands proposed the set-

ting up of a national women's organisation. The purpose of the organisation would be to build resources and use its cultural knowledge to respond efficiently to women's local groups through dissemination of information needed by women and affecting women. The NCW would also serve as a catalyst in integrating traditional Marshallese values with changing socio-economic structures in both urban and rural areas and form a link with national women's organisations throughout the Pacific<sup>25</sup>.

The NCW receives no funding from government, and so must fundraise to finance their work. There are 24 chapters of the NCW. According to representatives of the Majuro chapter, the women provide food and entertainment at government functions in order to raise funds. Although the representatives were able to point out the needs of both the chapter (funds, office, better communication with government) and Majuro women, (a market to sell produce, training in handling, processing and marketing seafoods), no reports on past activities, or plans for future activities were provided by the representatives.

### 6.3.2 Rural Development Programme

This is a federal programme with funds provided by the US government. The loan scheme offers loans from \$10 000 to \$1 000 000 with floating interest rates of four to six per cent. Loans are provided for housing, business and industry, community facilities (health care, telecommunications, police and fire stations, jails, rescue vehicles and other infrastructural services) and aquaculture. Most of the loans taken are for housing in both Majuro and on the outer islands. So far no one has applied for a loan to support fisheries projects. However, it is important to know that there is a loan scheme available for fisheries ventures.

### 6.3.3 Youth to Youth in Health (YTYIH)

This very active youth organisation began in 1986. The group works in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Environment and receives funding from both local and overseas government and non-government agencies. As a youth leadership programme, YTYIH sponsors an active peer and community outreach education programme. There are 20 chapters of YTYIH in RMI to ensure that as many young people as possible on all islands benefit from the programme. Peer educators are trained to lead health education and cultural promotion outreach activities, counsel youth clients at

<sup>24</sup> Marshall Islands Scholarship, Grant and Loan Scheme, n.d.

<sup>25</sup> Women United Together in the Marshall Islands, n.d.

health clinics, and share information with elementary, high school and out-of-school youth about family planning, contraceptives, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, nutrition, malnutrition, suicide prevention, the hazards of alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking, and other topics of concern to youth and the community at large.

YTYIH produces annual reports which detail the programme's activities. Of particular interest is the reference to a Women's Leadership for Self-Reliance and Outer Islands Income Generating Projects workshop held in Majuro in November 1994<sup>26</sup>. Women from six outer-island sites developed income-generating plans which included plans for gardening, handicrafts, salt fish and other marine resources. The plans would be put into practice with the help of materials provided by YTYIH. Profits from the projects would be shared three ways: individual member – 65 per cent, outer island YTYIH chapter – 20 per cent, and the Majuro office of YTYIH – 15 per cent. The YTYIH office in Majuro has been contacted to find out how successful the workshop was. There could be the possibility of providing SPC funds to support a marine project administered through YTYIH.

### **6.3.4 Home Garden Project**

Steven Lepton is the Gardening Project Co-ordinator. According to Steven, the Project's aim is to encourage women who are at home, to plant home gardens. The produce from the gardens is used to supplement the family diet, and any surplus is sold to provide income.

Funded by the local government, the Project provides planting materials, and training. Such topics taught include gardening techniques (such as improving the salty soil conditions), as well as making recipes using the tomatoes, green leaves, and fruit that are grown.

If the Project could also work with women in the fisheries sector, it would be one worthwhile income-generating project that could be funded by the SPC Women's Fisheries Project.

### **6.3.5 Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church is an active non-government organisation which carries out a number of community activities. The Church has fellowship clubs for both men and women. Steven Lepton, the President of the Catholic Men's Fellowship club, informed me that the club has been working with

high school boys and girls (Assumption 10th and 11th graders) teaching them the traditional fishing technique of alele. Fearing that traditional methods of fishing are dying, the club has taught the children techniques in both alele fishing-gear production, and the alele fishing method.

### **6.3.6 RMI Billfish Club**

The club organises fishing tournaments for fishermen. Not many women are involved in the tournaments. According to the President of the club, those who do compete, do so in the bottom-fishing competition.

## **6.4 FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

### **6.4.1 Marshall Islands Development Bank**

The Marshall Islands Development Bank was established in 1988. As a government-funded bank, it provides loans for housing, consumers, farmers and business. The interest rates of each loan are as follows: housing (4%), consumer (12%), farmer (6%) and business (6.5%). The bank has provided numerous loans for fishing projects (such as the purchase of a boat or engine). Unfortunately, fishermen tend to have problems repaying their first loan and tend to apply for additional loans. The Manager, Amon Tibon, believes that the two main problems applicants have are to clearly define their project proposal, and to find a market for their product.

### **6.4.2 Bank of the Marshall Islands**

The interest rate for a loan was set at 18 per cent for May 1997. Small loans below \$10 000 do not require a security. However loans of \$10 000 upwards do require a security. Calculations are made to determine the security, and depend upon the amount loaned. Aside from information concerning personal finances, the personal loan application form requires details of security or collateral, and details of a guarantor.

### **6.4.3 Bank of Hawaii**

Two categories of loans are provided; consumer and commercial. Consumer loans cover personal needs such as cars, housing and so forth. These range from \$1 000 to \$10 000. Commercial loans cover business ventures. These begin at \$10 000. Interest rate for a loan is 17.5 per cent. In order to secure a loan, the applicant must have credit files or collateral. 70 per cent of loan applicants to date have been men, while 30 per cent have been women.

#### 6.4.4 Bank of Guam

The interest rate for a loan from the Bank of Guam in May 1997 was set at 18.5 per cent. It is quite difficult to obtain a loan from the Bank of Guam.

### 6.5 BUSINESS

#### 6.5.1 Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber of Commerce is an association of local business people. The Chamber does not promote foreign investment, nor is it a clearing house for projects. The Chamber is more of a support group for people involved in business. It promotes the exchange of information that is of interest and concern amongst its members.

#### 6.5.2 Robert Reimers Enterprises

Robert Reimers Enterprises is possibly one of the largest locally owned business ventures in the Marshall Islands. An extremely diverse family enterprise, Robert Reimers Enterprises, includes everything from shipping to the sale of wholesale goods, and the provision of tourist accommodation. In addition, the family is involved in a number of fisheries ventures including the operation of a clam facility and farm, and the farming of black pearl oysters. Few women are involved in fisheries activities. However those that are, are involved in the cleaning and sorting of pearl oysters. Ramsey Reimers says that the packaging of clam shells for export is another employment area that may involve women in the future.

#### 6.5.3 Dorothy Doultram— One Aces Stop shop

Dorothy Doultram assists both men and women who harvest and process seafoods by marketing their produce at her *One Aces Stop* shop. Dorothy's shop packages and sells fresh fish (such as snapper and parrot fish) as well as salted fish from local suppliers. Dorothy also markets goods sent to her from the outer islands. Sea snails, smoked fish and preserved clams are imported from Namdrik and sold at the *One Aces Stop* shop.

### 6.6 MEDIA PROMOTION

#### 6.6.1 Government radio programme

The radio is probably the most effective means of communication in the Marshall Islands.

Broadcast to all islands, the radio keeps the public informed of current events. In terms of promoting fisheries news, the station broadcasts such marine information as *Safety at Sea* spots (using information from SPC), and makes announcements concerning local billfish tournaments.

#### 6.6.2 Government newspaper— *The Marshall Islands Gazette*

Government funded, *The Marshall Islands Gazette* is a monthly newspaper which is distributed only within Majuro. The paper documents government activities—legislation (bills and resolutions), training courses, meetings, official visits, and official travel details<sup>27</sup>.

#### 6.6.3 Private radio

According to Antari Elbon (Manager of the Government media programme), there are two private radio stations in the Marshall Islands, both FM stations; one is a Christian radio station (run by the Baptist Church), while the other is run by a member of the business community.

#### 6.6.4 Private newspaper— *The Marshall Islands Journal*

According to journalist, Wendy Lewis, *The Marshall Islands Journal* was first printed back in the 1960s through the work of a USA peace-corps volunteer, Joe Murphy. As a means of informing the public on local and overseas happenings, *The Marshall Islands Journal* features articles on local developments, community activities, entertainment news, sectoral issues (such as health, education, and the environment), and events in government. Local news items are obtained from Majuro, Jaluit, Ebeye and Likiep. Overseas news items are received from Radio Australia and Pacnews. Articles are written in English and Marshallese. Produced on a weekly basis, *The Marshall Islands Journal* is sold for 50 cents.

*The Marshall Islands Journal* provides articles on fisheries activities. During this project, the paper featured articles on the training in the traditional fisheries (alele) technique provided by the Catholic church, news of a shark caught at Delap Point, and details of my visit to the Marshall Islands<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Youth to Youth in Health, n.d.

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Education, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson et al., 1997.



Women of the Marshall Islands.

# 7.0 CONSTRAINTS THAT INHIBIT WOMEN'S EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

## 7.1 SOCIAL ISSUES

### 7.1.1 Cultural taboos

There are cultural taboos which limit women's participation in fisheries activities. The taboos are mainly to do with the harvesting activities of women. In general, it is culturally taboo for Marshallese women to engage in diving, netting, trapping, pole-and-line fishing, or longlining. As such, women are found collecting shellfish and crustaceans in the shallow areas of the lagoon, and on the inner reef area.

In addition, there is a belief that women on a fishing boat, or anywhere near fishing carried out by men, bring bad luck and prevent successful harvesting. To encourage a successful catch, physical relations between fishermen and their women are banned the night before a fishing trip.

Such taboos restrict women's actions, and reinforce the belief that fishing is for men, not women.

*The implementation of the National Women's Policy is one means of addressing such traditional stereotypes. Another means is public awareness of the roles women play in fisheries, the services available to them, and the opportunities open to others who may wish to pursue marine studies or set up income-earning ventures in the marine sector.*

### 7.1.2 Traditional roles of women

The traditional roles of Marshallese women are wife and mother. Such roles entail domestic responsibilities (child bearing, child rearing, house work etc.) which tend to restrict the movement of women outside the home. In the area of fishing, the harvest activities of women are confined to collection in the lagoon and inner reef as these areas are close to the home, and do not take the women away for long periods of time. As collection is in shallow water, the women are able to take their children along with them during harvesting. Processing is carried out at home, and marketing tends to be carried out through local stores.

*If women are to participate in regular fishing activity, they are going to need the support of other members of the household or community.*

*Here again the implementation of the National Women's Policy can be of benefit.*

*The implementation of MIMRA's five-year National Fisheries Plan with an emphasis on community development will also help to support women in the sector, by promoting community cooperation.*

### 7.1.3 Men are the decision makers

Decisions concerning economic development are made by men who hold positions of power in both the local and national governments. Because men make the decisions they may overlook the needs of women. A look at the development of the fisheries sector shows that government-funded fisheries projects target men and not women. Men hold the management positions in the Ministry of Marine Resources and Development. As a result, decisions concerning the management and development of resources within the fisheries sector tend to be made by men for men.

*One way to address this constraint is to encourage women representatives to take up positions (in particular, those in management) in the Ministry of Marine Resources and Development.*

### 7.1.4 Division of labour

Within Marshallese society, there is a strict division of labour between men and women. In the fisheries sector, the focus tends to be placed on the harvesting of resources rather than upon processing and marketing. Fishing is seen as the catching of fish, which is the domain of men. Collecting shellfish and crustaceans, as well as the preparation and sale of fish or shellfish tend to be overlooked as 'fisheries activities'. Unfortunately, these activities are the domain of women.

*The implementation of MIMRA's five-year plan is one means of overcoming this constraint. The Ministry of Marine Resources and Development needs to expand its focus of support in the fisheries sector to include women.*

### 7.1.5 Lack of initiative

It has been suggested that Marshallese women have not shown initiative in developing activities in the fisheries



sector. This is debatable when you look at the number of women involved in shellcraft, processing and marketing. It would be more correct to say that women have not taken the initiative in lobbying for access to resources. Although there are many women's groups in the Marshall Islands, there are no 'women in fishery' groups which specifically lobby government or non-government groups for access to resources.

*Women actively involved in fisheries activities could consider forming a lobby group, or lobbying individually for assistance through existing channels of communication (both national and local government, the church, youth groups and so forth).*

## **7.2 ACCESS TO RESOURCES**

### **7.2.1 Limited finance**

The Ministry of Marine Resources and Development does not provide funds to support the activities of women in the fisheries sector.

Commercial banks and government credit schemes provide loans. However, it may be difficult to obtain a loan, and repay the loan in the time stipulated by the banks. As stated by the Mayor of Wotje, it is difficult for his people to obtain loans, as loans require a guarantee of repayment. As the income of fishing is not regular it is difficult for fisherfolk to guarantee loan repayment. The difficulty fishermen experience in meeting loan repayments leads to their applying for additional funds.

*Community development programmes such as Youth to Youth in Health (YTYIH) have set up a revolving fund to assist women in setting up income-generating projects. The 1994 annual report of YTYIH describes one such fund. Fisherfolk could try to tap community programme funding sources.*

### **7.2.2 Lack of equipment**

Apart from the 1994 programme of YTYIH which provided assistance to women who were interested in setting up salt-fish and other marine resource projects, there is no evidence of other programmes (government or non-government) providing equipment to women in the sector.

*Government departments (such as MIMRA, and the Ministry of Interior and Social Welfare) should seek donor support for equipment that may be required by women in fisheries.*

### **7.2.3 Marketing restrictions**

One constraint highlighted by many is the lack of a local market. In Majuro there is no market

where women can sell goods directly to buyers. As a result, women have to sell their goods via a middle man (either through a retail store, or a handicraft store). This means that they may not receive the full value of the goods as fees may be deducted by the sales outlet.

For those on outer islands, the restrictions are greater. Most islands do not have a local market and so must either airfreight or ship their goods elsewhere. The cost of airfreighting goods is very high, and shipping is infrequent. Such transport constraints discourage income-generating ventures. The tendency is to harvest and produce only enough to satisfy family consumption needs.

*No doubt the Government department responsible for aviation and shipping is already looking into improving the transport system between islands. A possibility may be for airlines or shipping agents to work with the department on providing more frequent services and reducing costs. In the area of shellcraft export, projects such as YTYIH, as well as MIMRA and ISW will need to seek markets overseas to prevent the present glut on the local market.*

## **7.3 ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES**

### **7.3.1 Restricted development focus**

Women in the fisheries sector tend to be involved at the subsistence level; preparing enough for family consumption. Where there is a surplus, the marine products are sold on the domestic market. From harvesting to processing and marketing, the activities are small-scale, requiring limited materials.

A look at past and present government fisheries-development programmes shows that they target commercial fisheries. Projects focus on providing resources (cool stores, fishing gear, training) to support male-dominated artisanal fishing activities. Government aquaculture projects are all operated by men.

*MIMRA is addressing this through its fisheries plan. It is hoped that overseas donors will be interested in funding projects that benefit the whole community.*

### **7.3.2 Lack of written information**

No documentation could be found in Majuro on the participation of Marshallese women in fisheries. Comments were made that traditionally, women were more involved in the harvest of resources, but no written evidence was found to support this. In addition, there is no written information detailing services available to women in the fisheries sector

(such as where to go for technical information, training, equipment or credit). As in other countries, information is probably passed by 'word of mouth' via the church and community groups.

*Both government and non-government organisations should encourage the documentation of activities. This can be done through schools (as a High School Project) and through the publishing of community development reports (YTYIH, ISW Mobile Team, Catholic University and so forth), and through government (the ISW Culture Division).*

### **7.3.3 Limited training opportunities**

Training support to women in fisheries is provided through community training programmes which are carried out by the Ministry of Interior and Social Welfare's mobile team, as well as such non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as the Catholic Men's and Women's Fellowship clubs, Roots, Youth to Youth in Health, and the of the South Pacific Extension programme.

present support includes community workshops on nutrition, training on traditional fishing techniques such as alele fishing, and a workshop on shell craft.

MIMRA does not offer courses specifically targeting women in the sector. However, the FNTC is interested in providing training to women in stewardship on board tourist cruise vessels. CMI does not currently provide courses in marine studies but is interested in developing a curriculum in this area. USP provides correspondence courses in marine studies but to date only one student has enrolled for a course. The government scholarship programme offers scholarships in marine studies but no applications for such scholarships have been made.

*Current training programmes need to be continued through the respective government and non-government organisations. Such organisations should also look at developing new programmes. Regional organisations such as SPC can provide technical support in this area.*



The Workshop on the Processing and Marketing of Seafood held in Ebeye from the 10-14 August 1998, was organised by SPC's Fisheries Development Section as a follow up to the national assessment.

# 8.0 AREAS REQUIRING ASSISTANCE -A SUMMARY

Taking into account the constraints that women face, this section highlights the areas which require assistance. Two

## 8.1 IMPROVEMENT OF SUPPORT SERVICES

### 8.1.1 Information

Public awareness on fisheries activities needs to be promoted. More specifically, information on and for women in the sector needs to be made available. Both government and private media channels should be utilised to disseminate fisheries information. This includes services available (scholarships, educational courses, activities and so forth).

### 8.1.2 Training and education

In developing marine studies curricula, MIMRA, FNTC, EPA, USP and fishermen and women can be tapped to provide assistance. Using representatives as guest lecturers to schools would be one way to highlight the marine environment as an area of study.

In developing informal courses specifically targeting women, MIMRA, ISW, the Health Department, USP, EPA, Youth to Youth in Health, NCW, church groups, fishermen and women, and SPC can collaborate to design and implement community training programmes.

During the survey, training needs identified included:

- quality control,
- seafood hygiene in handling,
- seafood nutrition,
- processing fish for export,
- methods of pearl-oyster cleaning and shell drilling,
- seafood preservation—the making of value-added products,
- marketing (packaging, developing business skills),
- new designs in shellcraft.

### 8.1.3 Credit

In terms of credit schemes, women need to know which schemes they can tap for assistance (through available government grants e.g. through Youth to Youth in Health, and Women's programmes). MIMRA could consider looking into providing a revolving credit scheme for women in the sector.

### 8.1.4 Market facilities

Women in Majuro stated the need for a seafood market where they could sell their produce.

Inhabitants of outer islands stressed the high cost and infrequency of transport to get their produce to main markets.

The Ministry of Marine Resources and Development could consider undertaking a feasibility study to set up a market in Majuro that could sell both agricultural and marine produce.

In terms of the transport problem, this will need to be addressed by both government and business sectors.

## 8.2 SUPPORT AND PROMOTION OF INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES

### 8.2.1 Supporting current activities

Presently, income-generating activities include the sale of fresh and processed seafoods and shell craft to local markets. The high cost of freight and limited markets inhibit expansion in these areas. Rather than try to promote large-scale income-generating projects, it is best to concentrate on maintaining and supporting present small-scale income-generating projects.

Export markets for shellcraft need to be investigated. At present the domestic markets are flooded with craft. Marshallese shellcraft is unique and intricate and with advertising could be marketed overseas. The South Pacific Forum Secretariat has a marketing division which could help provide assistance in this area.

### 8.2.2 Promoting potential activities

Outer island representatives suggested a range of income-generating projects; pearl and clam farming (Ailuk), a marine sponge project (Ebon), shrimp farming (Namdrik) and a pearl-oyster hatchery (Namdrik). These projects provide opportunities for the involvement of women.

The government is interested in privatising clam and pearl aquaculture projects. It was stated that these are two areas that women may be interested in pursuing as farming projects. MIMRA could provide clams or pearl spat, as well as training and assistance to help women set up such farms. Seaweed farming was another suggested area for potential. A feasibility study of all new development projects should be undertaken. (Research into the Kiribati seaweed project should be carried out to determine profits, techniques, and availability of markets).



Marshallese men and women working together in the Ebeye workshop, practising their skills in processing seafood.

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## APPENDIX: PERSONS CONSULTED

The following people were consulted in the course of researching this report. Grateful acknowledgment is expressed to all of them for their invaluable time and assistance.

In order of interview:

1. Carmen Bigler – Secretary of Interior and Social Welfare (ISW)
2. ISW Mobile Team – Evelyn, Carlin, Kiaban, Winjang, Ioane
3. Hon. Brenson Wase – Minister of Interior and Social Welfare
4. Walter Myazoe – Secretary of Resources and Development
5. Simon Tiller – ADB Consultant to Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA)
6. Judy Swan – Legal Consultant to MIMRA
7. Alfred Capelle – President of the College of the Marshall Islands
8. Veronica Kiluwe – President of the National Council of Women (NCW)
9. Ioane DeBrum – Secretary of the NCW
10. Veronica Wase – President of the Majuro Chapter of the NCW
11. Tarmile Ishoda – Acting Mayor of Majuro
12. Stephen Lepton – Co-ordinator of Home Garden Project, and President of Catholic Men's Fellowship Club
13. Antari Elbon – Manager for the ISW Govt. newspaper (*The Marshall Islands Gazette*) and radio programme
14. Wendy Lewis – Journalist from the private newspaper (*The Marshall Islands Journal*)
15. Father R. McAulliff, SJ – Priest, Catholic Church
16. Kenneth Kramer – President of the Chamber of Commerce
17. Terry Kramer – Member of the Chamber of Commerce
18. Danny Wase – Director, MIMRA
19. Ramsey Reimers – General Manager, Robert Reimers Enterprises
20. Brenda Ailuk – Director of Scholarships
21. Larry Muller – Fisheries Nautical Training Centre
22. Zed Zedhkeia – Director, Rural Development Programme
23. Hon. Rod Nakamura – Mayor, Ebon Atoll Local Government
24. Hon. Augustine Nakamura – Mayor, Namdrik Atoll Local Government
25. Hon. Anthony Phillip – Mayor, Wotje Atoll Local Government
26. Hon. Hackney Takju – Mayor, Ailuk Atoll Local Government
27. Justina Langirik – Assistant Secretary of Health
28. Loans Officer – Bank of Guam
29. Loans Officer – Bank of Marshall Is.
30. Librarian – Alele Library
31. Dorothy Doultram – Businesswoman, sells marine products at shop
32. Arno Arno Community – Women involved in fisheries activities
33. Dennis Reeder – President, RMI Billfish Club
34. Sylvia Lolin – Youth to Youth in Health
35. Grace Leban – Manager of ISW Youth Services Bureau
36. Simon Ellis – US Aquaculturalist
37. Anare Tuitoga – Acting Director Univ. of the South Pacific Marshall Islands Extension Centre
38. Kam Wase – Director, National Training Centre
39. Marie Maddison – Acting Principal, Assumption High School, and member of Roots (an NGO)
40. Jorelik Tibon – Manager, Environmental Protection Authority
41. Sharon Muller – Loans Officer, Bank of Hawaii
42. Amon Tibon – General Manager, Marshall Islands Development Bank
43. Dr Gunaseckra – ADB consultant, advisor to Govt. on Govt. projects
44. Ritok Jack – processor and seller of marine resources



