

BOOK

Pacific Voices: Equity and Sustainability in Pacific Island Fisheries

Edited by Irene Novaczek, Jean Mitchell and Joeli Vietayaki, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji, 2005

This review is by **Harini Kumar** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Associate, ICSF

This book brings together a number of papers on gender and inshore fisheries in the Pacific. It juxtaposes the male-dominated, market-driven, commercial production of commodities for domestic sale and export with the subsistence production that women engage in and which provides the food for family consumption. Through gender-sensitive research, the interests of the various stakeholders in Pacific Island fisheries and their various interactions have been pertinently captured.

This book highlights the various roles women in the inshore fishery of the Pacific Islands play and the challenges that they face

and, in the process, makes a strong case for gender equity in the fisheries. Women are key stakeholders in the inshore fishery and make a valuable contribution to the food security and nutrition of the majority of Pacific Islanders. They are almost solely responsible for post-harvest activities and the distribution and sale of marine products. However, they are confronted on a day-to-day basis with many challenges, such as lack of credit facilities, irregular and unsafe transportation systems to and from market areas, and cultural norms and prevailing gender systems that have tended to exclude them from decision-making processes. Women are also increasingly facing a decline in resources in the inshore fishery, one of the reasons being the intensive exploitation of niche market export products.

The title of the book 'Pacific Voices' resonates with the narratives of women from the inshore waters of the Pacific Islands, as many of the case studies have been written by people from this region. The depth that local knowledge has brought to these various studies is evident throughout and exemplifies a research methodology that is welcome and much needed.

The articles in the volume clearly bring out that men and women experience development differently, pointing to the need for a gender analysis that explores the different interests of men and women and the different impacts of interventions on them, contributing to a more gender-equitable approach to fisheries development. Also, because the fishing activities of women are seen as marginal, even though they are the key stakeholders in the inshore fishery, they are excluded from contributing to resource use decisionmaking. The case studies highlight the urgent need for participatory community-based management that includes especially women and the youth, key to ensuring the future and sustainability of the inshore fishery of the Pacific Islands. ■



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable

fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

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