

Petani women transform degraded land into productive food gardens

Promoting gender equality

The island of 'Eua is considered to be amongst the most vulnerable of Tonga's 176 islands. This is largely due to its high soil erosion risk factor and the scale and type of agriculture practised on the island. The island also has a large number of town allotments that have been abandoned by families who have migrated overseas. Most of these allotments are left idle and degraded, covered with weeds and hardy grass. The women of Petani recognised the potential of turning these idle allotments into productive land to feed their families. Women are primarily responsible for the family's daily meals and for the women of Petani, accessing fresh produce was challenging as most of their food gardens are located away from their homes (bush allotments).

In 2013, the women of Petani Village on 'Eua approached the SPC (The Pacific Community)/GIZ Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region (CCCPIR) programme with a proposal for turning neighbouring idle and degraded land into productive community gardens that were in close proximity to their homes. The CCCPIR programme saw this as an opportunity to work with a committed group of women to strengthen the food security status of their community through sustainable agriculture and land management technologies.

Through the collection of planting materials such as banana suckers, yam and sweet potato cuttings and support provided by the CCCPIR programme on farming practices (like agro forestry) and provision of tree crop and indigenous tree wildings from the Tonga Forestry Division, the Petani Village Women's Group transformed a 4-acre plot of land into a multi-crop garden that was producing food for around 30 households in Petani Village within 6 months. Their commitment saw the transformation of 4 additional 4-acre idle plots into productive gardens and this resulted in benefits extending to more households in the village.



Gender Impact

In Tonga, women traditionally do not tend to food plantations alone so there is a level of dependence on food harvested by husbands (assisted by the women) to put on the table.

Previously the women had to rely on store-bought processed food whilst waiting for the harvest from their plantations. During harvest time women sometimes needed to accompany their husbands to the plantations where they spend a couple of days before returning home.

With gardens now at their doorstep, the Petani women have easy access to, and supply of, nutritious food. They no longer have to travel far distance for their vegetables therefore, allowing them more time to spend on their household and other activities. Their dependence on processed store-bought food is also reduced.

The women praise the garden, saying that it has significantly assisted with putting nutritious food on their table and has brought them closer together as a result of their regular planning meetings and gatherings in the gardens and market. With establishment of the market, the women are also able to earn revenue of up to 400 TOP¹ a day and 1000 TOP on weekends from the sale of their produce, baked goods and handicrafts.

In addition, the land management technologies on the allotment will reduce soil erosion and land degradation brought about by current and projected extreme and intense weather events and crop diversification contributes towards food availability as experienced in the 2015 El Nino drought event. These technologies and skills strengthen the role of women in ensuring food security for their families and local community.

During the recent El Nino drought the garden also provided a good supply of food to the households in Petani. Seeing the success of the garden many other villages and women's groups are also interested in this initiative and as such this approach will be replicated in 7 other villages.

Gender as a quality feature of our work

The example from Tonga demonstrates a commitment to promoting gender equality, women-led initiatives and gender mainstreaming that the SPC/GIZ project 'Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region' (CCCPIR) is known for. As part of its support to institutional mainstreaming within partner organisations the Pacific Gender and Climate Change Toolkit and associated training course was developed as a collaboration between 6 organisations (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme, Un Women, CCCPIR) to support practitioners design and implement gender-responsive adaptation measures. The toolkit was acknowledged by the Republic of the Marshall Islands Minister Hilda Heine at the Beijing +20 meetings.

"WUTMI (Women United Together in the Marshall Islands) meeting, women from outer islands discussed and developed action plans responding to climate change and participated in the Gender Climate Change Tool Kit training introduced by SPC. The exercises include the power walk that made sense and empowering it gave the women better perspective of their role in decision making processes at all level." ~Hilda Heine

¹ Tongan Pa'anga

Gender and RBM

CCCPIR has two programme indicators (see below) that track results achieved in relation to the promotion of gender equality. Results achieved in relation to these indicators and other work carried out by the programme are captured in the programmes monitoring systems, through the collation of an annual gender report and the development of lessons learnt products which are shared with stakeholders.

CCCPIR Indicators

Five (5) SPC, SPREP and MSG strategies and 5 publications (e.g. annual reports or special executive-level reports) outline advisory packages and activities (which explicitly reference gender) relating to climate change adaptation and mitigation (evidence: strategies, publications).

Multi-sectoral adaptation approaches incorporating principles of gender equality and ecosystem based adaptation are implemented in 10 communities in 8 Pacific Island Countries as well as in communities in 50% of three (3) sub-districts in Timor-Leste that are particularly at risk

We pursue the issue of gender equality through the conduct of gender mainstreaming workshops at regional and national levels, close collaboration with the gender focal points of the regional organizations SPREP and SPC, the development of a gender toolkit for the Pacific Island Countries, and the work with women groups at the community level, e.g. in our pilot sites in Rotuma, Fiji, and Nakolo, Tonga”

Wulf Killmann, Program Director & Senior Adviser, SPC/GIZ CCCPIR

During a lessons learnt session at our recent 2015 Steering Committee participants in the Food Security working group recognised the benefits of undertaking social analysis at the outset of the project to help identify different adaptation needs, opportunities and champions such as the Petani Women’s Group. Reflecting on what might have been done differently if the project was starting today a participant from the Tonga Forestry Department commented that identifying champions among women in the community early on helps to build whole-of-community commitment and ownership.

Cooperation

The Petani village women’s food security project was a partnership between the Petani women’s group, CCCPIR and the Tonga Department of Forestry. The Deputy Director of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forests and Food (MAFFF), Tevita Faka’osi, commended the Petani Women’s Group for their commitment and motivation, saying that their personal contributions reflected real partnership and true ownership.

In all its initiatives CCCPIR works in close collaboration with national government ministries, regional organisations and civil society organisations. For the development of the Pacific gender and climate change toolkit the programme worked in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) and UN Women. The involvement of multiple partners was important to ensure the ownership and sustainable use of the resource and training resource beyond the life of the programme. The toolkit is now widely used and adapted as part of internal SPREP and SPC trainings.

<http://www.pacificclimatechange.net/index.php/eresources/documents?task=showCategory&catid=137>