Gender, Culture and Business Assistance in Western Samoa

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University

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For Doreen and Ray Shadrake
Abstract

This thesis examines the question:

How far did the planning and implementation of the Small Business Enterprise Centre of Western Samoa take into account the gender and culture perspectives of development, and to what degree are those perspectives reflected in its outcomes?

It does so by reviewing the gender and culture perspectives of development, and concluding that each can be divided into two approaches. The gender perspective comprises the market approach, which aims to use women’s effort to achieve economic growth, and the empowerment approach, which aims to increase the ability of women to alter the gender balance of women and men, in favour of women. The culture perspective comprises both the utilitarian approach, which advocates adapting development projects to local culture to make them more likely to succeed, and the moral approach, the purpose of which is to reduce the harmful effects of development on indigenous culture. The thesis identifies indicators of the different approaches in a development project, and then uses a four-stage analytical model to discover whether they were present in the Small Business Enterprise Centre of Western Samoa.

The thesis concludes that the planning and implementation of the Small Business Enterprise Centre showed a limited application of the market and utilitarian approaches, but did not show any application of the empowerment or moral approaches, though the outcomes of the SBEC included some empowerment of women, and few harmful effects on Samoan culture. The thesis shows the primacy of neo-liberal thinking in New Zealand’s overseas small-business development practice during the period 1990-1995, despite its stated concern for women and, to a lesser extent, for culture.

The thesis reached three conclusions which concern wider issues:

- While the nature of Western Samoan culture, and gender relations, is changing, there is no fundamental inconsistency between them and small business development.
- Neo-liberalism can adopt perspectives of development which appear to spring from a concern for social welfare, and turn them to its own ends.
- The combination of indicators of different perspectives and the four-stage analytical model used in the thesis can be used, very effectively, for detailed assessment of the planning, implementation and outcomes of a development project.
Acknowledgements

The lasting memory I will have from completing this thesis is of the warmth and generosity of the people of Western Samoa, some of whom became my good friends even in the short time I was able to spend there. I should like to thank all the students and graduates of the SBEC training courses for their frankness and trust in telling me so much, not just about business in Western Samoa and about the SBEC, but also about in Samoan culture. There were also many government officials, staff of private agencies and individuals who gave me information which I could not possibly have obtained elsewhere. I owe special thanks to Luagalau Foisagaasina Etenati Shon, Secretary of Women’s Affairs. I am also very grateful for the help, friendship and support of Audrey Aumua, Sam Nichol, Mandy Whyte and Lorna Suifua, of the Small Business Enterprise Centre in Apia.

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### GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aiga</td>
<td>Extended family. The limits of an <em>aiga</em> are not defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa’alavelave</td>
<td>A social event, such as the investiture of a chief or a funeral. Participants in <em>fa’alavelave</em> are often required to bring substantial gifts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa’amati</td>
<td>Church festival held in March each year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa’apalagi</td>
<td>The European way of behaving. The term is often pejorative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa’aSamoa</td>
<td>The traditional Samoan way of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feagaiga</td>
<td>The ‘sacred covenant’, by which brothers were responsible for the well-being of their sisters, who in turn maintained the status of the <em>aiga</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fono</td>
<td>The council of <em>matai</em>. Each village has a <em>fono</em>, and there is also a national <em>fono</em> of <em>pulenu’u</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ie Toga</td>
<td>Fine mats, woven by women from pandanus leaves, which form an important part of traditional gift-giving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komiti</td>
<td>Village councils of women, with particular responsibility for village health, sanitation and tidiness, and for communal projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matai</td>
<td>Chief, almost always male. Each family has at least one <em>matai</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palagi</td>
<td>European.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pule</td>
<td>Authority, particularly that of <em>matai</em> over the allocation and use of family resources, including land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulenu’u</td>
<td>The village mayor, chairman of the <em>fono</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tama’ita’i</td>
<td>The women born in the village, as opposed to those who move to the village of their husbands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tautua</td>
<td>The service owed by children to their parents, family members to their <em>matai</em>, and villagers to their community and Church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>BWS</td>
<td>Bank of Western Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAWN</td>
<td>Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWA</td>
<td>Ministry of Women’s Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>Pacific Regional Equitable and Sustainable Human Development Programme of the United Nations Development Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBEC</td>
<td>Small Business Enterprise Centre of Western Samoa</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAGST</td>
<td>Value-added Goods and Services Tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
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</tbody>
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