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**A QUIET REVOLUTION:  
STRATEGIES FOR THE EMPOWERMENT  
AND DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL  
WOMEN IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS**

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

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# Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to locate effective strategies to promote women's development in Third World countries. It is argued that many past development efforts aimed at women have failed to significantly improve their lives because while they may have alleviated women's burdens, they have not attempted to challenge the existing structures in society which have accorded women secondary status. Unequal power relations, rather than a lack of resources, explain why women have not benefited from development to the same extent as men thus women need greater access to power. An approach which focuses on empowering women to help them to challenge the *status quo* was, therefore, established as providing a good model for development agencies to follow.

Fieldwork in the Solomon Islands revealed that many development agencies and planners adopted a conservative, home economics approach to women's development which focused largely on women's roles as wives and mothers. Many other concerns facing women, including their rights to land, access to safe contraception and literacy were largely ignored. It became apparent that many development agencies had a poor conception of gender needs and interests and how they could be addressed largely because they had failed to consult their supposed beneficiaries. Analysis confirmed that there was a strong relationship between the amount of input rural women had into a development initiative and the likelihood that they would be empowered by it.

Despite the narrow approach adopted by many agencies attempting to assist rural women, however, a movement for change did emerge. Women's organisations played a key role in this movement, providing women with a space in which to define and pursue their future priorities, and building collective solidarity so that women would have the confidence to confront forces which were obstructing their progress. These groups, and agencies supporting their work, were not afraid to address the causes of women's subordination although subtle strategies, rather than outright confrontation, proved to be most effective in catalysing changes in women's lives.

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# Glossary

ACFOA	Austrialian Council for Overseas Aid
ACM	Advisory Council to Management
ACW	Area Council of Women
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIDAB	Australian Development Assitance Bureau
AIDS	Acquired Immune Defficiency Syndrome
APCWD	Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development
APDC	Asian and Pacific Development Centre
BDD	Business Development Division
CBD	Community Based Distributor
CBSI	Central Bank of the Solomon Islands
CETC	Community Education and Training Centre (Suva)
CNWC	Catholic National Women's Council
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DCA	Danchurch Aid
DIVIT	District Village Training Centre
DMI	Daughters of Mary Immaculate
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EEC	European Economic Community
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FSP	Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific
GAD	Gender and Development
GNP	Gross National Product
HMA	Honiara Municipal Authority
ICPE	International Centre for Public Enterprises in Developing Countries
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (Sussex)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
IPS	Institute of Pacific Studies (Suva)
ISS	Institute of Social Studies (the Hague)
IUCD	Inter uterine contraceptive device
MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (Solomon Islands)
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MCPI	Ministry of Commerce and Primary Industry (Solomon Islands)
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
MERT	Ministry of External Relations and Trade (New Zealand)
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand) <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MFAT replaced MERT in 1993.

MFEP	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (Solomon Islands)
MFO	Moving Forward Organization
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs (Solomon Islands)
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Solomon Islands)
MP	Member of Parliament
MTM	Mobile Team Member
NCW	National Council of Women
n.d.	no date
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIO	national information officer
NNS	National Nutrition Survey
NSS	National Secondary School
NZ\$	New Zealand dollars
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PAWORNET	Pacific Women's Information/Communication Network
PBU	Provincial Development Unit (Solomon Islands)
PCW	Provincial Council of Women
PIANGO	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSS	Provincial Secondary School
PWRB	Pacific Women's Resource Bureau
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RTC	Rural Training Centre
SBD\$	Solomon Islands dollars <sup>2</sup>
SCFA	Save the Children Fund, Australia
SDA	Seventh Day Adventists
SEWA	South Employed Women's Association (Ahmedabad)
SICA	Solomon Islands Christian Association
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
SIPPA	Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association
SPC	South Pacific Commission
SRA	Social Relations Analysis
SSEC	South Seas Evangelical Church
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
TRF	Triple Roles Framework
UCWF	United Church Women's Fellowship
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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<sup>2</sup> SBD\$1 = NZ\$0.64 (1992)

UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Women's Fund
USP	University of the South Pacific
VNCW	Vanuatu National Council of Women
VSA	Volunteer Services Abroad
WAD	Women and Development
WAESP	Women's Agriculture Extension Services Programme
WDA	Women And Development Assistant (of the WDD)
WDD	Women and Development Division (of the MHMS)
WDO	Women and Development Officer (of the WDD)
WID	Women In Development
WIO	Women's Interest Office
WIP	Women's Initiative Programme
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association