THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS EDUCATION SYSTEM

A study with particular reference to Solomon Islands women who held New Zealand Government tertiary scholarships between 1973 and 1990

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ABSTRACT

This is a study on the participation of women in the Solomon Islands education system, focussing in particular on the experiences of Solomon Islands women who held New Zealand Government tertiary scholarships between 1973 and 1990.

Despite increasing international recognition of the importance of education for girls and women in addressing critical national economic and social goals, gender remains the single most significant determinant of access to schooling in most developing countries. While there is a growing body of literature on factors affecting the participation of girls and women in education in developing countries, little has been written on the subject in relation to the South Pacific and nothing of substance in relation to Solomon Islands. More generally, Altbach (1985) noted the lack of research on the experience of women as overseas students and the outcomes of tertiary education for women in developing countries.

The findings of this study confirm research carried out elsewhere that the socio-economic status of parents has greater influence on the schooling of girls than of boys. For the earliest women tertiary students, the encouragement of educated fathers was of particular significance in breaking down traditional barriers to girls' participation in education. Girls and women from matrilineal societies were, in general, given greater encouragement to enter and to remain longer in school.

In undertaking tertiary study overseas and returning to positions of responsibility in both the public and private sectors, the women in this study were in many ways 'trailblazers' for the women who followed behind them. Their position was not an easy one, subject often to personal misunderstanding and criticism as they sought a new role and a new status for women in Solomon Islands society. Yet this was not an elite, Westernised group, divorced from their own society. Those interviewed were characterised by a strong commitment to assisting other Solomon Islands women and to contributing effectively to the development of their society. The study concludes that the interests of development have been well served by the investment in their education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES, MAPS AND CHARTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDAB	Australian International Development Assistance Bureau
CIT	Central Institute of Technology
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
EDI	Economic Development Institute
EEC	European Economic Community
GAD	gender and development
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
HOD	head of department
HRD	human resource development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KGVI	King George VI (National Secondary School)
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (Solomon Islands)
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
MNR	Ministry of Natural Resources (Solomon Islands)
NCW	National Council of Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPGHS	New Plymouth Girls' High School
NSS	national secondary school
NTU	National Training Unit (Solomon Islands)
NZHC	New Zealand High Commission
NZODA	New Zealand Official Development Assistance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTU	Overseas Training Unit (Solomon Islands)

PAP	People's Alliance Party (Solomon Islands)
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PSS	provincial secondary school
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
SIGOV	Solomon Islands Government
SINCW	Solomon Islands National Council of Women
SOLAIR	Solomon Islands Airlines
SSEC	South Seas Evangelical Church
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Childrens Emergency Fund
UNITECH	University of Technology (Papua New Guinea)
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea
USP	University of the South Pacific
VSO	Volunteer Service Overseas
WDD	Women and Development Division (Solomon Islands)
WFS	World Fertility Survey
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	women in development
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

CHAPTER 1

THE STUDY

Introduction

Third World governments and international development agencies are giving increasing recognition, at least in rhetoric, to the critical role of women in development. A growing body of research which began with Ester Boserup's seminal study on women in development in 1970, has analysed the social and economic status of women in developing countries, advanced reasons for the subordination of women and detailed the negative effects on both women and development programmes of planners' failure to recognise the critical role of women in development.

Boserup and, later, liberal feminist theorists such as Rogers (1980), highlighted access to education as a key variable determining participation in development. Both argued that European colonisers failed to recognise the important economic contributions of women in development and failed to direct new resources such as education, credit and new technologies to them.

Other writers, and in particular Marxist-feminist theorists (such as Nash, 1978 and Beneria and Sen, 1981), have criticised the liberal feminist approach for its focus on the economic causes of women's subordination and its failure to take account of women's reproductive as well as productive roles. They argued that, with the increasing penetration of capitalism into peripheral economies, it was women's unpaid domestic work and, in many cases, supplementation of family income through activities such as cash cropping or petty trading which made possible the withdrawal of men into low paid waged employment. Women's 'double' workload was likely to be further increased if girls attended school and were therefore no longer available for domestic assistance. Such writers stressed the importance of the provision of services such as childcare, water supplies and electricity both in the alleviation of some of women's domestic workload, and in increasing opportunities for girls to participate in formal education. Liberal-feminist theories have also been criticised on the grounds of over-generalisation of gender as a category which fails for instance to take account of other variables such as class and culture (see Bandarage, 1984).

By the 1980s, in response to the significant research that had been undertaken, both quantitative and qualitative, on the status and roles of women, many development assistance agencies, both government and non-government, had adopted women in development (WID) policies and established WID units to encourage both their Third World partners and their own staff to actively identify projects that addressed women's concerns and involved women in the planning, implementation and evaluation of

development assistance activities. Donors emphasised the need for women to participate more equally in the education and training opportunities which they provided.

Yet, despite the activity of the last decade, women in development remains very much an addition to mainstream development policy. The more recent emphasis on gender and development (GAD) takes a more holistic approach than earlier theories which focused exclusively on women in terms of their sex rather than their gender.

> "In contrast [to the WID approach] the GAD approach maintains that to focus on women in isolation is to ignore the real problem, which remains their subordinate status to men. In insisting that women cannot be viewed in isolation, it emphasises a focus on gender relations, when designing resources to 'help' women in the development process" (Moser, 1993:3).

Despite the different theoretical approaches to the participation of women in development, there is agreement that it is of critical importance for women to have access to 'new' knowledge and to participate equally in education and training opportunities if they are to be equal partners with men in development and to operate effectively in rapidly changing national and international situations.

The study focus

Despite an increase since the 1960s both in the numbers receiving education and in the amount of education they receive, women in most Third World countries continue to have significantly lower rates of participation in schooling than men, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. This research focuses broadly on the participation of women in education, assuming that improvements in this area are likely to advance significantly their greater participation in political, economic and social decision-making, particularly at the national level. Specifically the research focuses on the participation of women in the education system in Solomon Islands, with particular reference to the experiences of the small group of women who held New Zealand Government tertiary scholarships between 1973 and 1990.

Goals

The purpose of this research is to contribute to a growing body of knowledge of issues relating to the education of women in developing countries that might eventually form the basis for educational reform which aims at increasing women's participation in education and, in turn, their contribution to economic and social development. More specifically this research seeks, within the context of international research on the participation of women in education in developing countries, and the

consequences of that participation, to identify the critical factors which enabled those Solomon Islands women who obtained New Zealand tertiary scholarships to gain access to, and succeed within, the Solomon Islands education system. The extent to which these factors were also a significant influence on the educational experiences of a small group of women who left school at an earlier age (Forms 3 or 5); of younger women, who in 1990, were studying at sixth form level and of a small group of men who had held New Zealand tertiary scholarships is assessed. The research also seeks to describe the overseas experience of Solomon Islands women who held New Zealand tertiary scholarships in order to assess its effects on the women, both academically and personally, and the extent to which support systems in place were adequate for the students. Consideration is given to the educational outcomes for the women, as evidenced in their rate, level and continuity of workforce participation, in their personal attitudes, family life and ability to combine marriage and/or childraising with a career, and their wider social and political interests, including attitudes towards assisting other women and contributing to national development.

A secondary aim of this research is to describe, through the perspective of the women involved, a process of major social change. The women interviewed were among the first group of Solomon Islands women to obtain tertiary education abroad. Returning home, very often to positions of considerable responsibility and influence, the women described in this research are at the forefront of social change in their own societies. From small and sometimes extremely isolated rural communities, the women

interviewed broke with strong traditions and expectations to take scholarships to study abroad and then return home to positions of responsibility in government or the private sector. While widely considered a 'privileged' group, their position 'astride two worlds' brought with it personal pain and confusion, as well as the economic and professional rewards more readily perceived.

While the actions of these women constitute significant social changes in relation to the traditional role and status of women within their own societies, their personal stories have gone unrecorded. The voices of women are rarely heard in history. This study, in a small way, aims to redress this imbalance.

It is hoped also that the experiences of the Solomon Islands women described in this study will be of relevance to other women who follow in their footsteps - preparing them in advance for both the difficulties they may encounter and the opportunities that may become available to them during and following their tertiary study abroad. For educationalists, development planners, aid administrators and others who seek to encourage the increased participation of women in education, the experiences of the Solomon Islands women described here provide pointers as to those critical factors which not only facilitated their success but also those factors which were seen as a hindrance. The exposure of the difficulties faced by these women may assist educationalists and others to not only prepare women in similar situations for what to expect and how best to deal with it, but

perhaps also to devise policies and systems which will ameliorate, if not remove, some of those factors which currently act as a disincentive to the educational participation and achievement of women.

Assumptions

This research is based on the belief that there are powerful economic and equity imperatives requiring that the integration of women in the development process be accelerated.

> "Women are key actors in the economic system, yet their neglect in development plans has left untapped a potentially large economic contribution. Women represent the majority of the population, but they are concentrated at the bottom of the ladder in terms of employment, education, income and status" (Overholt, et al, 1985:3).

Underlying this research is the assumption that women should participate equally with men in the formal education system and that educating women will have benefits for the individual, the family, the community and the nation. While recognising that educational strategies alone are insufficient to address the complexities of women's subordination in most developing societies, it is assumed that education will greatly facilitate women's participation as equal partners in the development process. From the perspective of women themselves, new knowledge is

required to assist in determining the type of development they wish to pursue in a changing world and to enable them to participate in development decision-making. Without education, women risk being treated as 'objects' in the development strategies of others.

> "Education is the actioning process of the development paradigm. It is the process whereby people learn the values and skills perceived to be necessary in order to achieve 'development', in whatever terms development may be defined." (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991:1)

While recognising the significance of non-formal education to affect women's roles in a number of significant areas, this research focuses on women's participation in formal education. In doing so, it is assumed that formal education has greater potential to bring status benefits and to overcome some of the disadvantages currently suffered by women in Solomon Islands.

The study focuses primarily on the end of the education spectrum - the tertiary sector. Recent World Bank and other donor (including New Zealand, Australian and British government) studies have questioned the cost effectiveness of the marked concentration of development assistance that goes into this high-cost sector, recommending that a greater proportion of funding be directed to primary and then secondary education. However, women have constituted only a small proportion of those who have received tertiary education in Solomon Islands (and in most other

countries of the Pacific). In this study, just 23 women were awarded New Zealand tertiary scholarships over the period 1976-90 compared with 182 men. In 1986 a total of just 169 women in Solomon Islands had had university training. It is assumed that if women are to be fully integrated into the Solomon Islands development process there is a need for more women with tertiary qualifications who will be able to participate both in the formal decision-making (legislative) process and as key "implementors" in both the public and private sectors.

> "There is a need for highly trained and appropriately qualified women who have the capability to translate government policies in relation to women into meaningful and concrete actions and projects. Only then will the women of the Solomon Islands become equal partners with men in the development process." (Lateef, 1990:39)

Structure

The thesis is structured in three parts.

Part One provides an overall description of the participation of women in education in the Third World. Chapter 2 includes an assessment of major factors affecting the participation of women in education, some of the wider issues relating to international tertiary study and the outcomes of education for women in relation to their workforce participation, their personal lives and their families and their wider social and political roles.

Part Two looks at the specific country (Solomon Islands) context within which this study was undertaken. In Chapter 3 a country 'profile' which comments, in particular, on the education and human resource development constraints within Solomon Islands is presented, and in Chapter 4 the role and status of women in the country is discussed in some detail.

Part Three presents the field work. Chapter 5 describes the social and economic background (in relation to factors affecting access to and retention within the education system) of those Solomon Islands women who had in 1990, or before, held New Zealand Government tertiary scholarships, together with a group of women who had left school at an earlier age, all 1990 sixth form women students at government national secondary schools, and a small group of men who had previously held New Zealand scholarships. Experiences of applying for tertiary scholarships and the overseas experiences (both personal and academic) of those women who obtained New Zealand government scholarships are described in Chapters 6 and 7. Finally, Chapter 8 considers the outcomes of education on their labour force participation, personal and family life, and broader social and political involvements for those Solomon Islands women who in 1990 had returned home or proceeded to further study abroad. (Information from the field work is presented in a more holistic manner in Appendix 1 by way of case studies of four of the women interviewed.)

The final chapter, Chapter 9, summarises the major findings of the research and evaluates the effectiveness of the New Zealand development

assistance provided for the tertiary education of the Solomon Islands women interviewed.

Methodology

The research for this thesis consisted firstly of a literature search which focused on the participation in and outcomes of education for girls and women in developing countries, plus background on the country, (Solomon Islands), within which the field work was undertaken.

As well as secondary published materials the search included a review of reports on education in Solomon Islands and elsewhere in the Pacific carried out by the Solomon Islands Government and development assistance "donor" agencies. Statistics on women's education and labour force participation in Solomon Islands were obtained from a variety of sources including the 1986 Population Census, statistical information provided by the Solomon Islands Statistics Office of the Ministry of Finance, and reports of the Ministry of Education and Solomon Islands College of Higher Education.

The field work consisted of in-depth interviews undertaken both in Solomon Islands and in several centres in New Zealand, except in three cases where informants were studying overseas and unable to be contacted personally, for whom detailed questionnaires were used. The informants

were 11 women who had previously held New Zealand tertiary scholarships, seven women who, in 1990 held New Zealand tertiary scholarships and were studying in New Zealand, eight women who had left school at F3 or F5 and were currently undertaking primary or secondary teacher training at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and six men who had held New Zealand tertiary scholarships over approximately the same period as the Solomon Islands women who had completed their studies. A questionnaire was completed by all 23 sixth form women students in Solomon Islands in 1990 and a group discussion was carried out with the 17 who were studying at King George VI National Secondary School in Honiara. Of the total 24 Solomon Islands women who had held New Zealand tertiary awards some time between 1973 and 1990, 18 were able to be contacted. One of the former students who had returned to Solomon Islands was unable to be traced, and time and financial constraints prevented the inclusion of five students who, in 1990, were studying in Fiji or Papua New Guinea on New Zealand Government scholarships.

Interviews were also conducted in Honiara with educational officials including the Chief Administration Officer for the National Training Unit of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, the Principal and the Careers Officer of King George VI National Secondary School, and the Director of the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education.

A copy of the interview questions on which student and former student interviews were based is included as Appendix 2. Sections were

omitted if these were not applicable to certain groups; the section on the return to Solomon Islands for instance was only of relevance to former students interviewed. While use of the questionnaire as a guide ensured the same basic information was obtained for all those interviewed, it was not rigorously adhered to. Almost all women students interviewed provided considerable information either in addition to, or in elaboration of, questions asked. As much of this information was of relevance and interest to the topic it was considered worthwhile to pursue a reasonably informal and unstructured approach while ensuring all major questions were answered during the course of the discussion. Most interviews took between 3-5 hours. It became clear, early on in the process, that those interviewed were prepared to spend considerable time discussing personal, social, educational and work experiences. Several commented that they found the discussion personally helpful in providing an opportunity for a 'debriefing' of the effects on their lives of, in particular, their overseas tertiary education. A rigorous adherence to the questionnaire would not only have curtailed this useful outcome but would have prevented the description of many personal experiences and anecdotes which added 'richness' to the information collected.

While six men who were former tertiary students were also interviewed, the information relating to them has largely been confined to the chapter on social and educational background (Chapter 5) to illustrate some apparent differences in the factors influencing educational chances of men and women students. The decision to reduce material relating to their

experiences of obtaining a scholarship, their tertiary education overseas and the 'outcomes' of their education was primarily made because of lack of space, the unanticipated wealth of material provided by women interviewees and, particularly in view of the relative scarcity of research on women's experience of the effects of education, a desire to focus on the women's experiences rather than the mens'. The small sample (only six men were interviewed) and the diversity of experiences recounted, also made it difficult to draw any firm conclusions as to the similarities or differences between the post study experience of the former women and men students. The higher level of postgraduate study undertaken by the women was the one factor which stood out, perhaps, as suggested in the text, indicative of the need (or their perceived need) for women to be better qualified than men to obtain promotion. Both men and women former students had been in full time employment since graduating, the majority in the public service. The difficulties of combining domestic activities (particularly childbearing/raising) with a career and the effects, or perceived effects, of sex discrimination at work were issues only raised by the women.

This research takes a 'women-centred' approach recognising that women's voices are rarely heard in history, and women's stories rarely told. As such, the research relies heavily on the statements of those women interviewed to describe factors affecting women's access to formal education in Solomon Islands, their experiences of studying overseas and the effects of that education on their personal and professional lives.

Conclusion

While the women interviewed did not cover all women in Solomon Islands who had had tertiary education overseas, it did cover all but one of the Solomon Islands women who had held New Zealand tertiary scholarships between 1973-1990, all Solomon Islands women students in New Zealand on scholarships in 1990 and all sixth form women students in Solomon Islands government national secondary schools in 1990. There is no reason to believe that these women were not a representative sample (in regard to their social and economic background, their experience of study abroad and the outcomes of their education) of that small group of Solomon Islands women who have attained the level of tertiary education.

PART ONE

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

Introduction

Despite increasing international recognition of the importance of education for girls if critical development goals are to be realised, gender remains the single most significant determinant of access to formal education in developing countries. This chapter discusses some of the major reasons researchers have identified to explain this phenomenon. The participation of women in tertiary education is reviewed, and a summary of some of the key issues which have emerged from studies of tertiary education abroad is presented. Issues are identified which, to date, have received little attention. Finally a review of major research findings on the outcomes of education for women in developing countries is presented under three headings : labour force participation, attitudinal change and the family and women's participation in public life.

The gender gap in schooling

At the 1992 World Bank Annual Meeting, Vice President Lawrence Summers gave a speech on educating girls. Summers referred to the

potential return on educating girls as possibly "the highest return investment available in the developing world" (EDI Review Jan-March 1993:1). The 1992 development cooperation report of the OECD development assistance committee (DAC) devotes a specific section to increasing the educational participation of girls. It notes that the achievement of critical national development goals such as increasing economic productivity, improving the population's health and nutritional status and the education of future generations are all closely linked to the education of girls. The report notes also that educating girls will empower them with a knowledge of their rights as individuals and citizens. "Having knowledge, income and decision making power can place women on a more equal footing with their male counterparts." (OECD, 1992:56/57).

Third World governments, to the extent that they have focused on the issue have, in the past, assumed that an expansion of educational facilities will result in an increased participation of girls in education. However the experience of the last two decades shows that this "laissez faire" policy has not worked. Table 1 shows that by 1980 in Africa and South Asia in particular, despite significant increases since 1960, the enrolment of girls (particularly at secondary and tertiary level) continued to lag markedly behind that of boys. Table 2 provides some country specific examples of the disparity between the sexes in primary school enrolments. Gender remains the single most significant determinant of access to schooling, overriding regional variations, the rural/urban division, ethnicity and class in most countries. (Kelly, 1990; Bowman and Anderson, 1982).

Table 1 : Girls as a percentage of total enrolment by level of education

Region	First Level			Second Level			Third Level		
	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980
Developed Countries	49	49	49	49	49	50	35	41	46
Developing Countries	39	42	44	28	34	39	24	29	34
Africa	36	40	44	29	32	38	17	23	27
Latin America and Caribbean	48	49	49	47	48	50	30	35	44
South Asia	36	40	41	25	31	36	24	27	31

UNESCO, 1983. Trends and projections of enrolments by level of education and by age. Table 2 : 15

Table 2 : Percentage of the age cohort enrolled in primary school

	1960		1981	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Ethiopia	11	3	60	33
Nigeria	46	27	94	70
India	80	40	93	64
Pakistan	46	13	78	31
Papua New Guinea	59	7	73	58
Egypt	80	52	89	63
Oman	22	2	77	51

Kelly, 1990, Table 1 : 132

In only a few countries, the majority of which are industrialised, does the proportion of girls enrolled in basic education exceed that of boys. In 1984 in only three Third World countries (Lesotho, Botswana and Trinidad & Tobago) did the enrolment of girls exceed that of boys (Kelly, 1990:132). In Botswana and Lesotho it seems likely that this reflects the traditional economy where boys were educated by their elders in cattle-herding practices and modern education was not greatly valued. The opportunities for migrant labour to the mining industry, both at home and in South Africa, also acted as a disincentive for young men to stay at school (Graham-Brown, 1991:58). War may also create a situation where at different periods boys are withdrawn from school. (1).

In the few cases in the Third World where the enrolment of girls in primary schools does exceed that of boys it is only by one or two percentage points. In contrast, there are 13 Third World countries where the gap between boys and girls enrolment ratios is 30 or more percentage points and 13 where the gap is between 20 and 30 percentage points. (Kelly, 1990:132/33) (2).

Despite a trend towards improvement in the access of girls to secondary level education the disparities between the sexes at this level continues to be much more pronounced than at primary level (3). In 1980 in Africa 30% of 12-17 year old girls were in school as opposed to 44% of 12-17 year old boys. In Asia the figures were 30% and 43% respectively (Kelly, 1990:133).

Furthermore Table 3 shows that attrition rates for girls at secondary level remain high. While UNESCO figures indicate a trend towards the narrowing of the gap between boys' rates of attrition in the developing countries and those of boys in industrial countries, the rate of attrition between girls in developing and developed countries is expected to increase. Research undertaken by Vander Voet (1986) found that over the period 1970-1980 men in Africa and Asia had about twice the chance of women of enrolling in tertiary education.

Table 3 : Percentage of pupils aged 12-17 in 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990 respectively, who remain in school six years later

Region	Sex	1960	1970	1980	1990
Developed Countries (IC)	Boys	39	40	43	44
	Girls	29	36	39	41
Developing Countries (DC)	Boys	29	32	36	37
	Girls	23	27	30	31

UNESCO, 1983, Tables 13 and 14 : 44

(Note : 1990 figures are estimates)

Factors affecting the access of girls and women to education are varied and complex. Some of the main issues are discussed below.

Social, cultural and economic considerations

For girls, access to education is dictated by many factors other than the

availability of schools. Parental decisions about whether or not to educate their daughters will, particularly within a context of limited financial resources, be affected by parents' socio-cultural attitudes and the perceived economic advantage.

Girls are disadvantaged by value systems that give higher priority to the education of sons based on the belief that education will be of little benefit to women in their expected roles as mothers, housewives and agricultural workers. Even if, with education, these roles are performed more efficiently, there is little benefit for the parents of girls if they are performed in the homes of their husbands. Similarly, if with schooling a girl is able to obtain a job in the formal sector, economic benefits in the more common patrilineal societies are likely to accrue primarily to her husband's family rather than to her family of origin. Parents may also feel that it is the husband's role to support his wife and hence there will be no need for a woman to earn an independent income (Hetler and Khoo, 1987:27)

The decision to educate a daughter will involve calculation of the perceived benefits (not only job opportunities, but the effect of education on marriage prospects and the importance of improvements to the quality of domestic life considerations), as opposed to both the direct and indirect costs. Schooling involves not only the direct costs of fees, uniforms, transport and other incidentals, but also the significant indirect costs in terms of foregone labour for family subsistence or cash cropping activities and in some societies, the more immediate income from bride price from an early marriage.

Bowman and Anderson note that the indirect costs of education may be high.

> "New investigations are raising our estimates of how much time and labour children contribute to the economy of the household. Often the burdens placed on girls exceed those for boys. Child care and household tasks do not exhaust girls contributions to the family economy, they may work in garden or field, fetching and carrying, or help in trade and do home processing of products for sale. Time spent by girls, in these activities can be especially important in poorer families where perceptions of benefits from the schooling of girls are dimmer" (Bowman and Anderson, 1982:22)

Studies undertaken by Smock in Pakistan and Kenya also suggested that the opportunity costs of educating girls were higher than those of boys. In Pakistan it was found that girls were withdrawn when they were needed at home and in Kenya lower rates of repeating (a grade) for girls were thought to be indicative of parents' willingness to give boys a second chance. In both societies it was found that major changes in the school enrolment of girls resulted from small reductions in school fees.

> "Familial preferences for investing scarce resources in the education of sons ahead of daughters in many societies further implies that female school attendance may be more sensitive to cost changes than male registration" (Smock, 1981:259).

A UNICEF paper on 'Strategies to Promote Girls' Education' also advocates an economic approach to reduce the costs and thus increase the returns to the family for educating girls. Incentives such as scholarships have been used successfully in some cases. Other possibilities include selected provision of textbooks, uniforms, provision of day care facilities (to overcome the need for sibling care) and the introduction of labour saving devices such as mechanical mills and wells, to reduce the requirement for girls' labour (OECD, 1992, May:14-15). In contrast, Gannicott and McGavin's suggestion of raising school fees to finance educational expansion in Solomon Islands needs careful assessment, in relation to its likely effect on girls' enrolment (Gannicott and McGavin, 1990).

The self-concepts of girls themselves may also be a major impediment to their academic achievement. In Papua New Guinea Crossley believed girls were much more likely to see their destiny in the home than in the labour force. Also, "Male jealousy of women in responsible senior positions, or with more educational qualifications or better wages, is another serious constraint on female achievement" (Crossley, 1988:7).

The relationship of early marriage to educational access (or retention) is multifaceted. While on the one hand some education might be seen by parents as improving their daughter's prospects of finding a better husband, there can also be the fear of physical (and, in particular sexual) safety, particularly if the school is located some distance from the home, and of the 'moral corruption' which education might cause. In Zaire

for instance, Yates reported that parents were afraid that girls boarding at the mission school would refuse to marry men who had already paid bride price for them (Yates, in Bowman & Anderson 1982:19). The attitudinal change associated with Western education may also be seen as a threat to traditional ways of life, "scholastic ambitions might tempt them not to give their full attention to their proper role as wives and mothers" (Trevor, in Bowman & Anderson, 1982:20).

Parents' socio-economic background

In discussing the many factors affecting educational access and achievement, Bowman and Anderson conclude that, "The firmest generalisation is that socio-economic status of parents has more influence on the schooling of girls than of boys" (Bowman & Anderson, 1982:25). Weeks' survey of 1,683 tertiary students from 15 institutions in Papua New Guinea provides a good illustration of this. Weeks found that women students were much more likely to have educated fathers, employed in the formal sector, than men. Sixty-six percent of the women's fathers were educated and 34% lived outside villages compared with 35% and 24% respectively of the men's fathers (Weeks, 1985:107-108). A study of data for secondary school students in Muslim Tunisia and non-Muslim Senegal found that both mothers and fathers of the girls were better educated than the boys' parents, the girls' fathers being especially well educated (Bowman and Anderson, 1982:26). Educated mothers, in all countries, are influential as role models and in influencing the expansion of schooling for

girls. However, as in many Third World countries their numbers remain small, it is likely that educated fathers are more influential in breaking down traditional barriers to girls' participation in education.

Historical and structural factors

While traditional social and cultural values account for some of the disparity in educational opportunities between girls and boys, the colonial context in which most Third World education systems developed has also played an important role. Western education was initially introduced to assist conversion to Christianity and to train lower level workers for colonial administrations. The Victorian mentality of the colonial era, which characterised women as dependent and domesticated, ensured that missionaries and colonial administrators favoured the admission of boys over girls to the limited school places available. Educational systems which developed within this framework have retained the bias towards educating boys for entry into the labour force. This partly reflects the socialisation of indigenous male political leaders to the sex role mores of the earlier colonial administrators. The male bias within educational systems is further maintained by the predominance of male teachers in most Third World countries and the lack of any effective female lobby to reorientate the education system.

Failure to be aware of gender differences has sometimes resulted in well-intentioned educational reforms (such as increasing vocational training

to improve the relevance of education), working to further disadvantage women. Such programmes, unless well considered, are likely to increase the focus on home-making, sewing and childcare skills for the girls while improving boys' preparation for paid work in the labour force.

Structural imbalances (such as restricted availability of secondary school places for girls and the streaming of girls into "appropriate" subject areas) reflects the male bias of education systems in developing countries. Parental recognition of these structural constraints on their daughters' educational prospects may reinforce their inclination to put their limited resources into their sons' rather than their daughters' education.

Intra-country variations

While statistics for educational participation are usually prepared at a national level, there are often significant intra-country variations. Bowman and Anderson found, for instance, that in Sierra Leone primary education rates for girls "range from 11% in northern and 29% in southern to 77% in eastern provinces" (Bowman and Anderson, 1982:23). Such intra-country differences may reflect not only the uneven diffusion of Western education (with coastal areas or major waterways usually having first contact with the western world) but also the effects of traditional and religious value systems in encouraging or discouraging women's participation in education.

"The benefits of female education are likely to be maximised and the social costs minimised when the traditional value system is conducive to an expansion of womens' roles. Cultures whose traditional sexual division of labour does not limit women to serving only as wives and mothers and where women have been accorded considerable independence appear to offer greater incentives to educate girls and to erect fewer obstacles to women's utilisation of their education" (Smock, 1981:14).

Similarly, while noting the critical role of education in enabling women throughout Papua New Guinea to play a fuller part in modern society, Crossley acknowledges that :

"Any summary of the main constraints on women in Papua New Guinea is, of course, going to be too simplistic if it does not take into account the rich variety of traditions and customs in the country. There is a great deal of difference for example, between a woman's life in the matrilineal society of New Ireland, where women have always taken an active role in local affairs and land ownership, and that of a woman in the patrilineal highlands, where women do not have claims to land in their own right, but use land allocated to them by male relatives" (Crossley, 1988:8).

While this section has highlighted the complex and varied

reasons given for the inequitable participation of women in education, this research focuses on the experiences of a small group of women who not only gained access to but achieved well within the Solomon Islands education system and proceeded to tertiary education overseas. The next section covers issues relating to international tertiary study and, in particular, women's participation in it.

Women and international tertiary study

Despite the growing body of literature on international study (covering areas such as the 'flow' patterns of international students, students' (and their governments'), motivations for studying abroad, the experience of living in another culture, academic and other outcomes, little research has been done specifically on the experience of women international students.

> "The general increase in the participation in higher education by women throughout the world over the years has also been reflected in a general increase in the number of international students to the point where, in a country such as the US, roughly one out of every three international students are female. Yet despite this trend very little attempt is made by researchers to disaggregate variables and data by gender. Female international students, by virtue of their gender, encounter special problems both in the host-countries and upon return in the home-countries" (Altbach, 1985 : 47-48).

This research aims in a small way to address the lack of information on women international students. It will focus specifically on the overseas experience, both academic and personal, of Solomon Islands women tertiary students and its impact on their experiences after their return home. While it is beyond the scope of this research to address the wider issues of international (or tertiary) study abroad, three areas will be briefly addressed here to provide a context for discussion of the field work :

first, the extent of women's participation in tertiary education, particularly in the Pacific, and some key issues relating to this;

second, the major themes that have emerged in research on international study as they have been identified by Altbach (1985) in his comprehensive literature review and bibliography on the topic; and

third, concerns currently being addressed by the New Zealand Government in relation to its programme of tertiary scholarships under the Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme.

Women's participation in tertiary education

As discussed in the previous section, the expansion of educational opportunities for women at primary and, to a lesser extent, secondary level in developing countries has not generally increased women's access to

higher education. Only in Latin America have women narrowed the gap with, in the early 1980s, 20.8% of women aged 18-23 enrolled in higher education as opposed to 23.8% men. In Africa and Asia the difference in enrolment ratios between men and women increased at the tertiary level over the decade 1970-80 (Kelly, 1990:132-4). Despite a growth in tertiary education opportunities in the Pacific over the last 10-15 years, the proportion of the total population that received university education remained small, with women significantly under-represented. Micronesian and Polynesian women make up about 33.3% of those from their countries receiving tertiary education, with United States and French Pacific territories having the highest proportions. Female enrolments outnumber male at both the University of Guam and L'Universite Francaisé du Pacifique. Melanesian states have the lowest percentages of women receiving tertiary education, all below 20% (Crocombe and Meleisea, 1989:172).

These figures are reflected in New Zealand's Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme where in 1992 33% of South Pacific students on NZODA tertiary study scholarships were women. However, in the case of Melanesian countries the proportions were much lower with women from Papua New Guinea accounting for just 19 percent, Vanuatu 26 percent, and Solomon Islands 29 percent.

Researchers who have commented on the subject have noted that the increased participation of women in tertiary scholarships will improve the social returns of official development assistance funding. Their

recommendations to achieve that end have included targeting women for secondary and tertiary schooling and, in particular, for key fields where they are under represented (Aime et al, 1992 (d)); tailor-made programmes for women in science and agriculture, engineering and financial management (Jennings et al, 1991); targeting women for in-service training (Aime et al, 1992 (c)); increasing the proportion of awards to women in selected fields and improving dependents' allowances to attract more women (Brash et al, 1991). Other areas of concern have included the need to ensure that all secondary school subjects are gender inclusive, that gender stereotyping in teacher training courses be addressed and that scholarship appointment committees have balanced gender representation (Hancock et al, 1988).

Tertiary study abroad : major themes in research

The major international student flow today is from Third World countries to industrialised market economies. Altbach summarises (in Chart 1) the key variables (both 'push and pull' factors) which researchers have found to affect Third World students in deciding to study abroad.

Chart 1 : Key variables affecting the personal decision to study abroad by Third World students

key variables pertaining to Home-Country (Push Factors)	key variables pertaining to Host-Country (Pull Factors)
1 Availability of scholarships for study abroad	1 Availability of scholarships to international students
2 Poor quality educational facilities	2 Good quality education
3 Lack of research facilities	3 Availability of advanced research facilities
4 Lack of appropriate educational facilities	4 Availability of appropriate educational facilities with likely offer of admission
5 Failure to gain admission to local institution(s)	5 Presence of relatives willing to provide financial assistance
6 Enhanced value (in the market place) of a foreign degree	6 Congenial political situation
7 Discrimination against minorities	7 Congenial socio-economic and political environment to migrate to
8 Politically uncongenial situation	8 Opportunity for general international life experience

Source : Altbach, Philip G., Kelly, David H., and Lulat, Y. G-M., 1985:13.

For the governments of Third World countries the benefits of opportunities for study abroad include a lack of tertiary institutions or places, or specialised facilities to meet increased demand resulting from the expansion of secondary education and the ability to obtain necessary expertise without a permanent investment in expanding tertiary institutions at home. In recent years there has been some questioning of the relevance of some overseas study to the domestic situation and concern over the difficulty of graduates readapting on their return home.

Host country motivations combine "altruistic, pragmatic and foreign policy factors" (Altbach, 1985:14). Foreign study opportunities are seen as a useful way to maintain or develop influence overseas. However, increasingly there is debate over the high cost of large numbers of international students in subsidised higher education institutions, particularly in fields such as engineering, management and computer science, where there is also a high domestic demand.

Overseas study, while often discussed as 'cooperation' or 'exchange' occurs within a context of global inequality and while some of the outcomes (such as new skills and knowledge) may help to alleviate this, others, (such as a continuing or increased dependence) perpetuate the inequality. International students learn not only new skills and technology, but also the language, values, norms and consumer tastes of the host country. This knowledge enables them to hold power within their own

societies and to develop lifestyles often more in keeping with the West than their own society. In addition, in many developing countries, it is assumed that only the 'bright' are sent overseas and foreign study adds prestige, power and authority to those chosen. Returned overseas students are also powerful factors in maintaining the use of Western models and ideas in their professional careers.

Altbach estimates that around 70% of the literature on foreign students is written by Americans and uses North American data. Much of the research focuses on cross-cultural issues, student adjustment and similar topics, with little directly on the politics, economics or policy issues relating to international study. Research on the psychological effects of international study has highlighted that the 'stress' associated with living in a foreign culture, displayed as depression and loneliness, is most commonly the result of cross-cultural isolation. Researchers found that positive interaction with natives of the host-country ranked high in international student needs. Studies have shown a consistent change in attitudes among students who have stayed abroad for more than two years. While basic beliefs tended to remain largely unchanged, there was generally a change towards a more liberal attitude in relation to topics such as religion and relations with the opposite sex. Consistently too, research has identified intellectual and personal development, independence and self-confidence as likely benefits of international study.

In determining significant variables for academic success,

researchers have found language proficiency, the student's previous academic background and source of financial support (with scholarship students performing better than private students) and national origin (with students from countries with educational systems similar to the host country faring better) to be the most relevant. Studies which have included age, sex and marital status have found these variables to be of comparatively little significance, and the linking of personal and social adjustment with academic success has run into difficulties in determining which was cause and which effect.

In addition to these major areas of research on international study (cross-cultural impact, social adjustment and academic success) there have been some studies on international students who have returned home. In general, however, these have tended to focus on the students' experiences abroad. There has been little on their readjustment (counter culture shock, finding a job or usefulness of training) and their impact on the development of their societies.

Little attention has been given also to the 'macro' level dimension of international study and in particular, what Altbach refers to as the 'political economy' of international study. A major aspect of this is research into the costs and benefits (both direct and indirect) to both home and host countries of international study. Further research is also necessary to determine how foreign aid in the area of international study can be provided most effectively. Issues in this area that need addressing include :

from the donor's point of view the relevance of the training provided; the need for practical training following study; measures to dissuade international students from remaining in the host country; the need for foreign assistance to reach students suffering from political, racial or religious discrimination in their own countries, and similarly, for foreign study assistance to respond to the training needs of the poorest countries. There is also need for further research into the benefit for the host country of this sort of foreign aid. What role, for instance, does it play in creating allies, the promotion of peace and stability, and of economic development? From the point of view of the home country there is a need to determine whether it might be more cost-effective to use donor assistance to educate their students in other Third World countries; a need to develop measures to prevent overseas trained students forming an 'elite' class on return; a need to ensure foreign training is necessary and relevant and to ensure students return home on completion of their study.

Issues for NZODA in relation to international study

A number of 'donor' countries and international agencies such as the World Bank have begun, in recent years, to carry out research with a view to improving the effectiveness of their assistance to international study. A recent (1993) review of New Zealand official development assistance (ODA) for education and training in the South Pacific, together with an analysis of similar research carried out by the World Bank and other donors,

concluded that for ODA to be cost-effective and to meet the developmental needs of partner countries for education and training it must be targeted to meet key development needs; address equity issues (particularly in relation to the current gender imbalance); redress the imbalance between in-country or in-region and out-of-region training (to ensure the relevance and cost-effectiveness of training provided) and redress the current emphasis on tertiary study which is to the detriment of primary, secondary and non-formal education, to enable a greater spread of benefits from NZODA study and training assistance.

Three major difficulties were identified in applying these conclusions. These were a lack of adequate planning to identify future skill requirements in South Pacific countries which would enable better targeting of study and training assistance; the high value attached, both by governments and individuals in South Pacific countries to gaining access to education in Pacific rim countries without full consideration of the cost-effectiveness or the relevance of the education to the country's development requirements; and the lack of clear linkage between relevant development assistance to study-training and the aims of fostering a constituency in South Pacific countries sympathetic to New Zealand's foreign policy interests.

Major recommendations emerging out of the evaluation were that the rationale and objectives of NZODA to education and training must be clearly stated; developmental and constituency building objectives be

achieved by assisting partner countries to develop their human resource development (HRD) planning capacity and by responding in a coordinated way with other donors to meet defined HRD needs and priorities; cost-effectiveness be addressed by working with the partner country and other donors to ensure an appropriate balance between the location of education and training, the level at which it takes place, and equitable access to opportunities and the need for New Zealand to develop better systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its development assistance to study and training.

The outcomes of education for women

For the small, but significant, group of women who have had tertiary education, whether in their own country or abroad, the outcomes of this education are likely to have a significant impact on their labour force participation, their personal attitudes and role in the family, and in their broader social involvement, including political involvement. For those, however, who have had only primary or even lower secondary education, the 'outcomes' of education are less clear cut.

Labour force participation

Despite the slow but significant increases (outlined above) in

women's participation in education in the Third World, paid labour force participation rates declined from 45% to 42% since the 1960s (Cebotarev, in Kelly, 1990:136). The ILO anticipates that this will decline further to 24% by the year 2000 (Smock, 1981:11). In addition women continue on the whole to fill lower paying, lower status positions in the workforce.

Traditionally in the Third World, women's participation in the labour force, particularly in subsistence agriculture and petty trading, has been high but non-waged. New developments such as the spread of cash-cropping, mechanisation of agricultural processes, the development of new seed varieties and the impact of commercial retailing have tended to displace women's traditional work. Entry to the modern urban workforce is, however, usually dependent on educational qualifications. As the gap between men's and women's educational attainment, particularly at the higher levels, persists in most developing countries, and the formal (monetised) sector has grown only slowly, women have been at a disadvantage in competing for jobs. Kelly describes a common relationship between women's education and employment in many developing countries as having at one end of the employment scale poor uneducated women entering the paid labour force in lowly-paid positions such as domestic servants, and, at the other end, women with secondary or tertiary education seeking to fill positions in clerical, semi-professional and professional occupations. In between, women with basic education are unlikely to find paid employment (Kelly 1990:137).

Smock found the relationship between educational attainment and labour force participation in three (and possibly four) out of five developing countries she studied to be curvilinear rather than, as she had expected, linear. In Ghana, Philippines, Pakistan, and possibly Kenya, countries with widely differing cultural traditions and education systems, women with no schooling or only primary schooling had higher rates of labour force participation than women with intermediate or secondary level education. With university education, women's labour force participation rates increased, equalling the level of uneducated women in Ghana and Pakistan. In the Philippines, university graduates attained higher rates of labour force participation than any other group. Only Mexico provided an exception to the trend, demonstrating a more linear relationship between education and employment. The curvilinear relationship observed appeared to reflect women's difficulties in making the transition from traditional, primarily agricultural, economic roles to formal sector employment and is partly explained by the small size and slow growth (apart from in Mexico) of the modern sector, the late entry of women into the labour force, which resulted in many positions being male stereotyped, and an increasingly unfavourable labour supply and demand situation. Despite the lack of a linear relationship between education and employment, the over-representation of educated women in the modern sector both compared with the general population and sometimes with men in the labour force, suggested that it was even more essential for women to be well educated than for men, if they were to find employment (Smock, 1981:274-276).

Schiefelbein and Farrell in their discussion of the relationship between women's education and labour force participation in Chile found that women sought higher qualifications in anticipation of labour market discrimination. "The labour market for women in Chile is much more socially predetermined than for men, with a woman's acquisition of a "socially acceptable" higher level job being heavily dependent on her completion of a relatively high level of schooling" (Schiefelbein and Farrell, 1982:244).

While increasing levels of education appear to have little effect in increasing the rates of female labour force participation, it does appear to increase the number of years women spend in the workforce once in it (Kelly, 1990:137). Wainerman, for instance found that increasing levels of education reversed a trend for women in Argentina and Paraguay to withdraw from the labour force on marriage, or for childbearing and raising (Wainerman, 1990:137).

Worldwide, an increase in women's education appears to have had little effect on women's wages relative to men. While in some developing countries, where the number of educated women is small, the disparity between mens' and women's wages may appear not so great as in industrialised countries, the overall disparity between the sexes is in fact likely to be greater. In Egypt, for instance, while the 5.7% of women who are in the paid labour force earn 93.7% of the wages of males, most women work as wageless labourers in agriculture (Vander Voet, in Kelly, 1990:138).

While higher levels of education will increase women's chances of obtaining access to professional and technical occupational groups (4) it is not in itself sufficient to overcome the structural and cultural restrictions that overwhelmingly prevent women from attaining senior managerial and administrative positions. Smock contends that, at this stage, more even access to education, even at higher levels will have little impact on men's historical domination of modern sector employment. Increasing amounts of education are necessary to achieve the same occupational level and, while education is a prerequisite for occupational placement and mobility it is not in itself sufficient. For both men and women with higher education, labour force participation rates have declined over time as a result of an increasing supply of educated labour and the limited demand provided by the small size of the modern sector.

> "The benefits obtaining to the select few who were schooled during a period of great educational scarcity do not accrue to the many who follow in their footsteps at a time when the balance between supply and demand for school leavers has shifted radically" (Smock, 1981:279).

Attitudinal change and the role and status of women in the family

While attitudinal research confirms a link between education and a change in attitudes, the process by which this occurs is not well understood. Some research suggests that education enables individuals to free themselves from their own narrow situation and view the broader social context, other

research notes the potential for conflict that education creates between the students' traditional background and the new learning and value base of the school. However education affects attitudes, its impact is likely to be particularly important for girls who have been traditionally socialised to expect that their lives will be governed by the family and are less likely to have had previous exposure to agents of social and cultural change than boys.

As a result of education then, it might be expected that :

> "women will be more inclined to adopt expanded role expectations, to have the self-confidence to plan their lives, to believe that their own preferences and objectives should be taken into account in decisions that affect them and to have access to the information necessary to implement these intentions" (Smock, 1981 : 6).

Education is likely also to confer higher social status and with it a relaxation of some of the traditional expectations of women.

Research on the effects of women's education on their roles and status in the family is fragmentary and, on the whole, inconclusive. This is partly because of the difficulty researchers have had in determining the relative influence of education and other agents of social change and modernisation on family patterns, but more because of the inherent problems involved in carrying out research within the fundamentally private domain of the family.

There is evidence from a number of societies confirming a correlation between education and higher age of marriage. The linkage between education and wage employment (where it exists) increases the options open to women who are then more able to provide for themselves (and consider not marrying), contribute economically to the family (and so have greater influence), and to afford domestic help which would enable them to pursue a career outside the home following marriage and childbirth. In traditionally restrictive societies, families are likely to be more accepting of women taking up paid employment if they have had higher education and are therefore more likely to find employment (and with it attractive remuneration) in professional and technical occupations rather than in low status, poorly paid positions.

Theories of 'resource' contribution (5) link the influence of each marriage partner to the 'resources' (education, income, occupational status, family position, social contacts) they bring to the marriage. Education constitutes a significant 'resource' for women in this, both for its own value and recognition within society and for the access it facilitates to higher status jobs and incomes, and status and roles in social organisations.

In addition, well-educated women are more likely to find husbands from higher socio-economic backgrounds who are more likely to accept a more egalitarian marriage. However, the beneficial effects of education within the 'resources' theory are offset by the fact that in all societies women tend to marry men with greater resources (age, education and occupation)

than themselves; so it is unlikely that even if her position is enhanced by education she will gain overall in relation to her husband.

> "Cultural norms, traditional marital patterns, and access to employment all skew the distribution of resources very much in favour of the husband" (Smock, 1981:127).

Smock found little hard evidence to confirm her assumption that educated women (in the five developing countries studied) would have more influence over whether and whom to marry. While evidence from several of the societies (eg Mexico) suggested that education enabled women to secure husbands of higher educational qualifications, evidence from other societies (such as Pakistan) suggested that too much education might not enhance a woman's marital prospects. Tracer studies on female university and teacher training graduates in Pakistan found many of the women, but not the men, to be unmarried. Also, very low parities recorded for university educated women in Ghana, Kenya, Mexico and Pakistan suggest also that a significant percentage did not marry, married late, or did not have children (Smock, 1981:138).

In relation to the role of education and decision-making within the family, Smock found that while highly educated women were more likely to be in a more "shared and companionate" relationship, there was no clear linkage between each increment of education and participation in family decision-making. Some data suggested that the relationship may be

curvilinear, with post-primary educated women in a particularly vulnerable position having relinquished the traditional areas of power and authority often available to uneducated or primary educated women, and moved into a situation of increased dependence on their husbands for income and status.

Evidence to confirm the effects of education on enabling women to continue participation in the labour force with marriage and childraising was again fragmentary in the five societies studied by Smock. There was, however, some evidence to suggest that in societies which traditionally disapproved of women working after marriage, highly educated women are more likely than poorly educated women to pursue a career. In Mexico for instance :

> "The pattern after marriage was more curvilinear, with rates varying from 15% among uneducated women down to 11% among women with intermediate training, and then up to 25% for women with higher education" (Smock, 1981:144).

In all five societies married women experienced difficulties in reconciling work and family commitments, with very little change in the traditional assignment of domestic chores. Where assistance was available, it was usually in the form of servants or relatives rather than husbands.

While it is commonly believed that education is inversely related to

fertility, Cochrane's review of World Fertility Surveys (WFS) shows that in half of the case studies there was in fact no inverse relationship. In these cases fertility rises with education, peaking at lower primary education levels and then falling. Data from the WFS suggests that an inverse relationship occurs more frequently in countries where literacy is above 40 percent, is more closely correlated with female than male education and is more likely to be observed in urban than rural areas (Cochrane, 1982:312-316).

Smock also found that increased education did not necessarily result in reduced fertility. Only in two countries which she studied, Ghana and Mexico, was there a consistently inverse relationship between education and family size. In the other three countries (Pakistan, Philippines and Kenya) there was either no change or a small rise in fertility amongst women with partial or completed primary schooling. In some cases, even several years secondary schooling did not result in a decline in fertility in rural areas.

The research of Cochrane, Smock and others suggests that while education is likely to have the effect of reducing infant deaths and the demand for children, it may also increase women's ability to conceive (through improved health and nutrition practices) and (with better possibility of obtaining employment) increase the ability to afford children.

In the Philippines (the most highly developed educationally of the countries Smock studied) only university education resulted in a drop

in fertility. Thus Smock concludes that education can only be seen as a vehicle of population control by following on the two extremes of the educational spectrum.

> "In every society known to this author, women with tertiary education average a lower number of live births than females with no formal schooling or with only a few years of primary education" (Smock, 1981:202).

She suggests the relationship even here is tenuous, given that highly educated women tend either to have come from privileged backgrounds or, by virtue of their education, to have acquired an elite position.

The effects of education on "mothering" are, as in other areas, difficult to separate from other influences such as family income, place of residence, and media exposure. While noting the lack of sufficient research to formulate definite conclusions, Le Vine believes there is some evidence that children of educated mothers perform better in Western pre-school tests, and are generally better prepared for participation in a new socio-economic situation involving education and waged employment (Le Vine, 1982:283-310).

Women's participation in public life

Perhaps the effects of education on women's participation in

politics, involvement in public policy formulation and in wider social issues generally is the area most requiring further research. Research to date has largely focused on the economic outcomes of women's education. Kelly notes that, despite the lack of research in this area, it is clear that in no country have women achieved full representation in national political decision-making. In some countries improvements in women's education appears, in fact, to be associated with a regression in their access to political power and decision-making. In countries such as China, USSR and Vietnam, women who had been very active in the revolution were, in post-revolutionary society, encouraged to increase their participation in production rather than in state affairs. In Algeria and Iran the effects of Muslim fundamentalism have relegated women, who decades ago had played an active role in politics, to separate spheres of activity (Kelly, 1990:138).

While education may increase women's participation in the workforce, it rarely changes the unpaid domestic work women are also expected to carry out. The resulting double workload leaves educated women with little time to participate in public life and politics. However, Kelly notes that in some countries the increasing numbers of women being educated to higher levels, while it has not increased their access to political power does appear to have

> "changed women's consciousness of oppression and has provided a means for women to organise as women to put women's issues on national political agendas. Such

developments suggest that education may serve in the long run to empower women to struggle against persistent gender-based inequalities in society" (Kelly, 1990:139).

Summary

Despite increasing international recognition of the importance of education for girls if critical national development goals such as increasing economic productivity and improving the health and nutritional status of the population are to be achieved, gender remains the single most significant determinant of access to schooling. While some improvements in the school enrolment of girls have been made since 1960, by 1980 in Africa and South Asia UNESCO figures show that at the secondary and tertiary levels, in particular, girls continued to lag significantly behind boys. Comparative figures for Solomon Islands show that in 1970 the proportion of girls in primary schools was 36.4% rising to 43.5% by 1986. Girls made up 35% of those in secondary education in 1987 and in 1991/92 women made up just 20% of Solomon Islanders overseas on tertiary training.

Reasons given for the inequitable participation of women in education are complex and varied. These include socio-cultural attitudes that give preference to the education of boys, the perceived lack of economic advantage of educating girls for their future roles as wives and agricultural workers and the indirect costs (in loss of family labour), as well as the direct costs, of educating girls.

Previous research has found that the socio-economic status of parents has more influence on the schooling of girls than boys and that the benefits of educating girls are likely to be maximised in societies where the traditional value system is conducive to an expansion of women's roles. In Melanesia, for instance, significant differences in the role of women in society have been observed between matrilineal and patrilineal societies. (See for example Crossley, 1988).

While there is a growing body of literature available on tertiary study abroad, Altbach estimates that 70% of the literature on foreign students is written by Americans and uses North American data. Much of it focuses on cross-cultural issues and student adjustment. Of interest to this study is Altbach's finding that very little has been written on the experience of women overseas students and little on the readjustment of students to their home country (counter culture shock, usefulness of training provided and ease of finding a job). Both donors and recipients need to evaluate the effectiveness of development assistance provided in the area of tertiary education - something which New Zealand has recently commenced in its 1993 review of NZODA for education and training in the South Pacific.

While women's participation in education in the Third World increased slowly from 1960 - 1980 the advances were most significant at the primary level. Over the same period, women's paid labour force participation rate declined from 45% to 42% and is predicted to decline further to 24% by 2000. Researchers have found a curvilinear

relationship between educational attainment and labour force participation with poor, uneducated women or highly educated women having higher levels of participation than those with primary or some secondary education. The over-representation of educated women in the modern sector suggests that it is even more essential for women to be well educated than now. The increasing supply of educated labour and the limited demand of the small modern sector in most developing countries is resulting in an increasingly competitive situation for educated women. Research on the effects of education on the roles and status of women in the family are fragmentary and on the whole inconclusive. While research from a number of societies has confirmed a correlation between education and a higher age of marriage, there is less conclusive research on the effects of education on enabling women to combine participation in the labour force with marriage and childraising and on the effects of education on fertility. For the small proportion of tertiary educated women, however, the correlation is clearer. These women average a lower number of live births than those with no formal schooling or only a few years of primary education. They achieve greater opportunities to pursue professional and technical careers which are acceptable to their families and which command incomes capable of making a substantial contribution to the family income, thereby increasing their influence and their ability to buy domestic help. There is little firm evidence to equate a greater involvement of women in public life with education, although some researchers have found a heightened awareness of women's oppression and desire to organise and put women's issues on to a national political agenda.

Notes

(1) In El Salvador, for instance, female enrolment overtook male enrolment over the period 1975 - 87 when many young men and boys left home and school to fight. In Nicaragua female enrolment also overtook male enrolment over the period 1974 - 87, partly as a result of government initiatives to promote education for girls, but also because of male conscription into the army and recruitment into the labour force as a result of poverty (Graham - Brown, 1991:58).

(2) The gap between male and female enrolment ratios is 30 or more percentage points in : Chad, Ethiopia, Nepal, Benin, Central African Republic, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Peoples Republic of Yemen, Liberia, Yemen Arab Republic, Morocco, Ivory Coast and Oman; and 20 - 30 percentage points in : Bangladesh, Malawi, Uganda, India, Burundi, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Egypt, Nigeria, Guatemala, Iran and Saudi Arabia (Kelly, 1990:132-133).

(3) In Africa 30% of 12-17 year old girls were enrolled in school compared with just 18.2% in 1970, in Asia 29.7% of girls in this age bracket were in school compared with 23.9% in 1970 (Vander Voet, in Kelly, 1990:133).

(4) Smock (1981:276) for instance found a close link between aggregate levels of female educational attainment measured by the female proportion of the population aged 15 and over with 10 or more years schooling and female participation in professional and technical occupational groups.

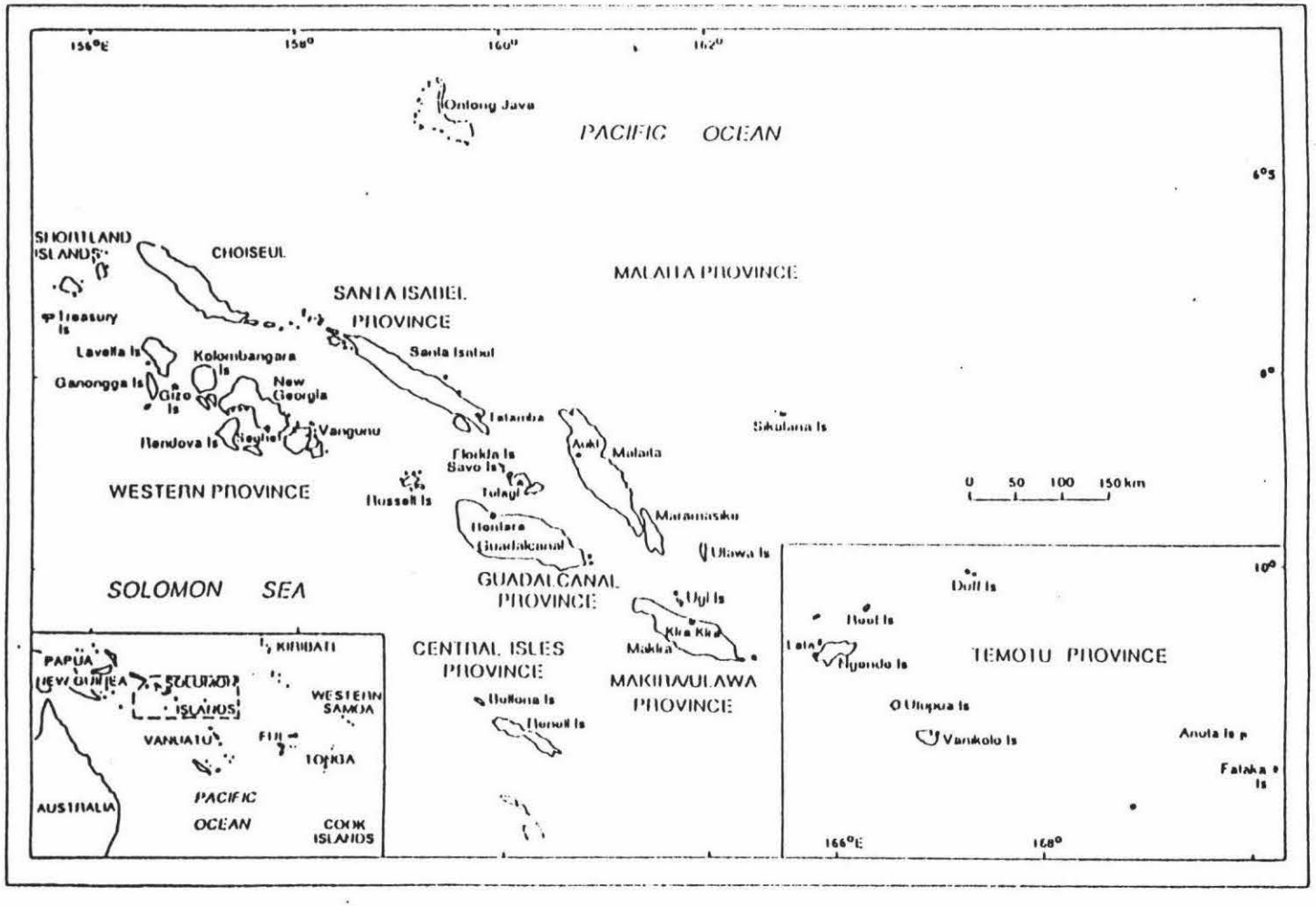
(5) See Rodman, Hyman, 1972, "Marital Power and the Theory of Resources in Cultural context" Journal of Comparative Family Studies III (Spring):50 - 69.

PART TWO

SOLOMON ISLANDS :

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

MAP 1 : SOLOMON ISLANDS



Source : The Solomon Islands Economy Prospects for stabilisation and sustainable growth. AIDAB, 1991:VI

CHAPTER 3

SOLOMON ISLANDS : ISSUES IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The participation and achievement of girls and women in formal education in Solomon Islands, which is the focus of this research, occurs within an overall context of an education system severely constrained to meet the country's future human resource requirements. This chapter profiles Solomon Islands concentrating, in particular, on critical issues in the education system which impact on the country's ability to achieve economic and social development goals.

The Country

Solomon Islands is a small South West Pacific nation with a population of 335,000. Its total land area of 28,000 square kilometres, is made up of six main islands and many smaller ones, spread over 1,300 kilometres of sea. Only about 10% of the land area is flat. From Table 4 it can be seen that Solomon Islands is the second largest Pacific Island nation in terms of land

area, and the third largest in terms of population. While population density at around 10.6 people per square kilometre is relatively low, the population growth rate (estimated at 3.7% per annum) is high.

Table 4 : Key Indicators : selected Pacific Island economies, 1988 *

	GNP (US$ million)	Population (million)	GNP per capita (US$)	Land area (square km)
Papua New Guinea	2,830	3.80	750	462,840
Fiji	1,130	0.70	1,540	18,270
Kiribati	40	0.06	650	710
Solomon Islands	130	0.30	430	27,990
Tonga	80	0.10	800	720
Vanuatu	120	0.15	820	12,190
Western Samoa	100	0.17	580	2,830

*Or most recent year available

Source : World Bank, Towards Higher Growth in Pacific Island Economies : Lessons from the 1980s, Vol 2, Country Surveys, Washington DC, 1991 in Australian National Development Assistance Bureau, 1991 (Nov):1

The size, the fragmentation of the country and its remoteness from major external markets create the same sort of limitations on sustained high economic growth as those faced by other South Pacific countries. However Solomon Islands is comparatively well-endowed with natural resources of land, forests and sea which provide considerable potential for future development. With a GNP of $US560 per capita in 1991, however, Solomon Islands is classified within the World Bank category of 'low-income' countries (World Bank, 1993:1).

Over 80% of the population depend to some extent on subsistence agriculture to meet basic needs of food and shelter. In 1991 only

18% of the adult population were employed in the formal (monetised) sector. Economic development is closely linked to international terms of trade, with 93% of export earnings coming from the sale of fish, timber, copra, palm oil and cocoa. Consumer goods and light machinery account for most of the imports. The manufacturing sector remains small accounting for less than 4% of GDP (World Bank, 1993 : iii).

A large public sector, which accounts for one-half of all full-time formal sector employment, is primarily concerned with the provision of services and contributes little to foreign exchange earnings. However, the size and growth of public expenditure has determined a large component of the demand for skilled labour, and the quality of personnel employed influences the efficiency with which the public sector can respond to the needs of the economy and to economic growth. (World Bank, 1992 : 113).

Private investment in the economy, while slow in recent years due to the increasing diversion of credit for government expenditure, has averaged 15% of GDP over the past decade. With high future growth projected in the private sector, particularly in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, but also in mining and tourism, human resource development strategies will need to ensure that skills will be available in these areas. (World Bank, 1993 : iv-v).

Overall, the major reasons for the economy's poor growth in recent years include the effects of Cyclone Namu in 1986 (which resulted in major

loss of crops and infrastructure) and fiscal imbalances arising from post-cyclone expenditure, a 10% deterioration in the terms of trade since 1988 and rapid increases in government spending in the 1990s (due, primarily to public sector pay rises, increased transfers and subsidies to provincial governments and public enterprises and the increased cost of domestic debt servicing). In view of these difficulties, World Bank advice to the Solomon Islands Government has focused on the need to restore macroeconomic stability as the major priority. This is dependent largely on a reduction of the fiscal deficit, which in turn involves a reduction in the size and cost of the public sector and improved efficiencies in both the public and private sectors (World Bank, 1993:iv). A reduction in the major role currently played by the public sector in providing formal sector employment will have significant implications for human resource development requirements.

Human resource development

Human resource development is critical to the sustainable development of Solomon Islands. Only by investing in human resource development will the government be able to improve living standards and develop the skills and productive capacity necessary to overcome the high rates of population growth and limited economic development described above.

Table 5 illustrates that, despite heavy government investment and

substantial donor assistance in education and health care averaging 14-15% of the capital budget during the 1980s (and reaching 31% in 1991 as a result of some major projects), progress has been relatively slow. Constraints on improving basic education and health services are significant. They include the high cost of reaching populations in remote scattered villages, the rapid population growth, the severe lack of qualified medical and teaching staff, the high costs of education and health at a time of budgetary constraint and breakdown in provincial delivery systems (World Bank, 1993:27).

Table 5 : Social Indicators, 1978 and 1991

Indicator	Units	1978	1991 /a
Crude birth rate	per '000	43	40
Crude death rate	per '000	11	9
Infant mortality rate	per '000	42	43
Total Fertility rate	per '000	6.9	6.1
Life expectancy at birth			
- Male	years	n.a.	59.9
- Female	years	n.a.	61.4
Population per :			
- Doctor	persons	n.a.	7,474
- Hospital bed	persons	n.a.	176
Net enrolment ratios /b			
- primary	percent	60	75
- secondary	percent	25	30
- tertiary	percent	1	4
Adult literacy	percent	15	30

a/ Or most recent estimate
b/ Based on the definition of the Statistics Office

Source : Statistics Office, World Bank. Social Indicators of Development, 1992 and Mission Estimates in World Bank, 1993:26

Forty-six percent of Solomon Islands total population is under 14 years which, together with the 3% of the population aged over 65, results in a very high dependency ratio of 0.96. A continued high population growth rate of 3.7% per annum would result in an increase of almost 50% over the 1990s, reaching 470,000 by 2001. This would create the need for primary education places to increase by 46% and health facilities to double, simply to maintain the existing (unsatisfactory) standards of social services.

Employment

Past rapid population growth will result in the labour force (those aged 15-65) increasing at a faster rate (3.7 - 4%) than the population as a whole. Formal sector employment has grown only slowly since the late 1980s and, in 1991, of the total workforce estimated at 145,000 (and increasing each year by about 7,500), only 26,630 (18%) have employment in the formal sector.

> "Taking attrition into account, the formal sector has provided new jobs for just over 1,100 new entrants to the job market each year, less than a seventh of those seeking work and only half as much as the total number of secondary and post-secondary school leavers" (World Bank, 1993:26).

Such figures imply that an increasing proportion of the workforce are having to find employment in the subsistence sector.

Despite the inability of the formal sector to provide sufficient jobs for those seeking work, there has been a lack of skilled and professional labour available, resulting in a continued, and in some areas growing, dependence on expatriate labour. Furthermore the small numbers of school leavers coming out at fifth and sixth form are insufficient to fill the tertiary educational opportunities available both in-country and overseas.

The education system

The formal education system in Solomon Islands comprises predominantly government-funded primary schools (with six standards, preceded in some cases by a preparatory year), two different types of secondary schools (15 more vocationally-oriented provincial secondary schools (PSS) which extend to Form 3, and eight more academically-oriented national secondary schools (NSS), which generally extend to Form 5). The two government national secondary schools and two private (church) national secondary schools include sixth forms. In 1993 a seventh form year was introduced at the government King George VI National Secondary School to replace the University of the South Pacific (USP) foundation year which had previously provided a bridging course for the majority of students going on to tertiary study. The Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) provides a range of tertiary technical and vocational courses within its seven schools to certificate and diploma level. The University of the South Pacific (USP) Extension Centre provides support through distance education for certificate, diploma and degree studies.

The overall primary school gross enrolment ratio was estimated in 1988 to be in the low 60%, with access to education varying considerably between provinces. Overall approximately 30% of those who enrol in primary school drop out before reaching Standard 6. There are high attrition rates between primary and secondary education with, in 1988, just 27% of students attaining a place following the Standard 6 secondary selection examination. Again there are significant provincial variations, with only 21% of students continuing to secondary education in Western Province, compared with 50% in Temotu (World Bank, 1992:v). In 1986, only 3.1% of the population had upper secondary or higher education and only 0.6% had any university training (World Bank, 1992:iv).

Major deficiencies in basic school resources and facilities affects the quality of education provided. Most importantly, in 1988, 48% of all teachers at primary level were untrained or only partly trained and 82% had not attended school themselves beyond Form 3. Again, however, there are significant provincial differences, with, in 1987, only 8% of teachers in Honiara untrained compared with 52% in Central Province and over 40% in Guadalcanal, Temotu, Malaita and Makira (World Bank, 1992:v).

Very slow expansion in secondary school enrolments has created particular problems for economic development. Between 1986-90 a total of only 251 additional places were created at Forms 1-6 levels. In 1990 the fact that there were a total of only 121 students at Form 6 level and 417 at Form 5 level throughout the country severely constrained the

quantity and quality of the intake for tertiary study both at SICHE and abroad. (World Bank, 1992:vi).

At secondary level, only 16% of students attend the two government secondary schools, King George VI and Waimapuru. The church-run national secondary schools teach one third of all secondary school students and 51% of students attend the more inadequately resourced provincial secondary schools. There is a failure to attract quality teachers at secondary level and expatriates make up 43% of teaching staff at national secondary schools and 16% at provincial secondary schools. Expatriates are responsible for teaching 100% of all lessons in some areas. Only 22% of local staff have degrees and 32% have only certificates (World Bank, 1992:vi). While these figures indicate a clear need for the government to expand its secondary teacher training programmes (which are constrained by the limited output of students from Form 5), the issues of poor pay and promotion prospects for teachers compared to both the public service bureaucracy and the private sector will need to be addressed, if higher quality teachers are to be attracted.

In 1992, the World Bank estimated the following resource requirements were necessary to maintain a very basic level of secondary education.

> "Assuming a moderate 30% transition between Standard 6 and Form 1, and a 98% progression rate through the secondary levels, would require by 1994, a doubling of student places, the

> establishment of 14 additional schools (each of capacity 400) and an additional 287 teachers. Given that part of the restructuring exercise would be the conversion of the PSS types into NSS types there would also be a need to expand the graduate component of the teaching force, to completely revamp the curriculum, equipment and facilities at the PSS and retrain the existing teachers in the PSS" (World Bank, 1992:vii-viii).

The inability of the government to achieve such moderate targets severely constrains post-secondary educational development.

In 1992, a World Bank coordinated review of eight key areas in the education sector proposed strategies to address the need for improvements in both the quantity and quality of primary and secondary education and the administration of education. Within the primary sector, it focussed on the need to review primary curriculum and associated materials, improve pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes and improve the production and distribution of teaching materials. At the secondary level the review proposed the upgrading and expansion of provincial secondary schools to allow increased numbers to continue to Form 5 (thereby increasing the numbers available for teacher training and enabling the future growth of primary and secondary education); upgrading the provincial secondary school curriculum and, in particular, fully incorporating science within it; adopting a policy on secondary curriculum and revising syllabuses accordingly; improving the production and distribution of

teaching/learning materials; assessing the scope for increasing day places (as opposed to boarding) or adding Forms 1-3 to certain primary schools and establishing a Form 7 to prepare students proceeding to tertiary (particularly degree level) education. In the administrative area the review identified the need to strengthen the management and planning capability of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD), revision of the Education Act and clarification of structures, roles, responsibilities, budget procedures, policies and practice for the procurement and distribution of teaching materials and equipment and review of aspects of the teaching service (Rawlinson, 1992:8-10).

Following the review, an 'education round table' organised by MEHRD brought together Solomon Islands government officials and key donors in the sector to determine priorities for action. The meeting saw some division between the Solomon Islands Government, which sought expansionary solutions (expanding school places), and the donors, who took a more qualitative approach, arguing that the quality of the current output from primary and secondary schools is low. The finally agreed areas of highest priority were the revamping of the Curriculum Development Centre (including designating it as the coordinating unit for in-service training and staff development), the production and distribution of appropriate teaching materials and the training of teachers in their use, improvement of primary teacher training and a selective expansion of the secondary school system (at Form 4 and 5 levels), together with improved in-service teacher training (Henderson, 1992). The World Bank, Australia,

Britain and New Zealand agreed to provide assistance for specified parts of this development programme. The New Zealand Official Development Assistance (NZODA) programme (through the Dunedin College of Education) is currently providing support for the upgrading of primary teacher education.

Tertiary education

As the only post-secondary institution within the country providing technical and vocational training for "middle level" positions within both the government and private sector, it is important that the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) plans to ensure that graduates from its seven schools meet the economy's human resource requirements, both in quantity and quality. With current enrolments of around 1,200, the institution expects to grow by 7% per annum (World Bank, 1992:xiii). A critical issue facing the College is the ability to recruit and retain teaching and administrative staff. This is reflected in a continuing high dependence on expatriate staff (27% in 1991). While 63% of the staff are trained teachers, around 70% of local staff have only diploma or certificate level qualifications, requiring the College to engage in a substantive programme of in-service staff development. It will also be necessary for the College to offer salaries which match public and private sector employment if they are to attract and retain quality staff. Women make up just 24% of the teaching staff at the College.

Of particular concern for the development of the education system as a whole is the urgent requirement for SICHE's School of Education and Cultural Studies to increase the numbers of graduates in both certificate level primary teaching and secondary level diploma courses. It was estimated in 1991 that there were 686 untrained primary teachers, while the School has not been able to take in their capacity intake of trainees. In the secondary programme there is a need, in particular, to expand the intake of trainees in science subjects where there is a continued heavy reliance on expatriate teachers.

While unit costs for training at SICHE are at present somewhat higher than comparable institutions (such as Fiji Institute of Technology or the Western Samoan Technical Institute), they are still slightly lower than at the University of the South Pacific (USP) and significantly lower than out-of-region tertiary institutions.

Of concern in the allocation of scarce resources for education is the desire of the Solomon Islands Government to upgrade SICHE to a national university by the end of the 1990s. While politically this may be seen as desirable, it would require substantial capital investment either from the national budget or from the donor development assistance budget to implement and would draw quality personnel from other parts of the economy or be dependent on experienced expatriates. It would also draw resources even further away from primary and secondary education and thereby increase the difficulty already existing in providing the number of

qualified school leavers for entrance to tertiary programmes. From a cost-effective point of view it would appear preferable to make greater use of existing regional institutions for degree level qualifications and to investigate possibilities for further regional cooperation which might allow SICHE to specialise in some areas while sending students in other areas abroad for training.

Overseas scholarships programmes

In the early years of independence (post-1978) the United Kingdom provided a large number of in-region scholarships for Solomon Islanders to assist in the development of a core group of public servants with training at para-professional and sub-professional levels. From 1985 there has been a reduction in the number of scholarships provided by the United Kingdom and an increase in scholarships sponsored by the Solomon Islands Government and the governments of Australia and New Zealand. There has also been a shift to less in-region training with an increasing proportion of new scholarships provided by Australia and New Zealand being for study in metropolitan countries as opposed to Pacific regional institutions.

In 1991 the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) data base showed that there were 397 students abroad on training funded by the Solomon Islands Government (89), Australia (133), New Zealand (76) and the United Kingdom (60). Thirty one

percent of all awards were for institutions in Fiji, 28% in Papua New Guinea, 17% in Australia and 12% in New Zealand. The majority of the awards (81%) were for pre-service training, with 83% of students sponsored by government departments. Only 20% were women, the majority of whom were studying in the traditional fields of health (52%) and arts (36%) (World Bank, 1992:xxii-xxiii).

A World Bank sponsored reverse tracer study of 130 tertiary graduates for the years 1985 and 1988 from SICHE and overseas study has provided some detailed information on the socio-economic and academic background of these graduates and their educational outcomes including : their entry to the labour market; the relevance of their training to their employment; career mobility and satisfaction with their tertiary study. As the findings of the World Bank study are of relevance to this research, some major outcomes are summarised below.

The largest percentage (59%) of the graduates had fathers engaged in village subsistence/cash cropping, while only 30% had fathers in the formal sector. The majority of graduates (42%) had only five years secondary school education (ie to Form 5 level). Thirty-eight percent had six years and only 2% had Form 7. Women made up just 18% of the graduates. Of these the majority had only five years secondary schooling and were graduates of SICHE. The Solomon Islands Government was the major source of scholarships (45%). Donors accounted for 26% of awards, mainly for overseas study. The majority of those interviewed went into full-time tertiary studies straight after secondary school; 17% went first into

full time work. Most (92%) chose courses on the basis of the usefulness of the qualification for obtaining a desired job. Only 11% indicated that there was no place on their desired course. Career officers and teachers were important in study choices for over two thirds, with parents and others less important. Factors found to be important in the first choice of occupation were expected high demand (87%), knowledge of the occupation (82%), expectation of good income (75%) and the status of the occupation (62%). On completion of their studies, 96% reported that they had found a job very or fairly easily. Ninety-eight percent were employed within three months of graduating. Eighty-nine percent of the post-secondary graduates interviewed were found to be working in government ministries or parastatal organisations. Only 3% were working in the private sector and 5% for religious or non-profit organisations. None went immediately into self-employment, though 13% subsequently attempted it. Fifty percent thought that their qualifications entitled them to a higher level job than that obtained at graduation, although only 12% thought that they could have got the job without their qualification. Only 10% (and lower for women) would not have chosen the same course, although 21% would not have chosen the same institution on the basis of their work experience. (Of these, 31% were overseas graduates, 28% were from USP and 14% from SICHE). Graduates had an optimistic assessment of their prospects for job mobility and career development in the future. Eighty-three percent believed they could get better jobs, 90% higher incomes and 89% that they would be promoted in the near future. Sixty-eight percent expected to change occupation, 90% thought they would be accepted on a new course,

and 25% expected to emigrate. The figures relating to job mobility were perhaps not surprising, given that 63% of 1985 and 34% of 1988 graduates had gone through two or more jobs since graduation. (World Bank, 1992:xxiv-xxviii).

Summary

Investment in human resource development is essential for improved living standards and economic growth. Yet despite heavy Solomon Islands Government investment and donor assistance to education and health during the 1980s, progress has been relatively slow. Significant constraints on expanding education and health services include the high cost of reaching widely dispersed populations, rapid population growth, lack of qualified personnel, a breakdown in provincial services and Government budgetary constraints.

The very high proportion of the population (46%) under 14 years, together with a continued high population growth rate of 3.7% will result in an increase in population of around 50% over the 1990s with a corresponding increase in demand for education and health facilities. In 1988 it was estimated that only around 60% of children in the 8-13 age group were enrolled in primary school. Just 27% of those sitting the Standard Six secondary selection examination obtained a place in secondary school. In 1986 only 3% of the population had upper secondary

or higher education and only 0.6% had any university training.

Since 1987, the slow growth of the formal sector (which in 1991 employed 18% of the total workforce) has provided jobs for less than one seventh of those seeking work, resulting in an increasing number of school leavers having to find employment in the subsistence sector. Despite this, a lack of skilled and professional labour has resulted in a continued dependence on expatriate labour. The small number of students graduating from senior secondary school are unable to fill the tertiary education opportunities available, thus perpetuating the dependence on expatriates for some time to come. The challenge of meeting the country's domestic professional and technical skills gap is a critical one in which the tertiary students (and former students) interviewed in this research have an important role to play.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLES AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Introduction

This chapter provides a broad overview of the economic and social roles and status of Solomon Islands women focusing in particular on their traditional (generally unwaged) work, their participation in education and in the formal economy. Government policies specifically relating to women are discussed and both government and non-governmental bodies undertaking women's programmes are described.

Any discussion of women's roles and status within Solomon Islands must bear in mind the existence of numerous diverse cultural and language groups, which make generalisations difficult. In addition, the existence of both patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems creates some significant differences. However, while women in matrilineal societies (such as exist in Guadalcanal, Isabel and some parts of Western Province) may have higher status and greater access to customary land than women from patrilineal societies (such as in Malaita), power continues to be exercised by men, generally the mother's brother, inheritance being transmitted from mother's brother to sister's son. In addition matrilineal descent does not necessarily

correlate with the husband's residence in his wife's village or, if it does, that this will greatly lessen his power and authority over his wife.

Traditional roles

"The role of women in Solomon Islands is essentially that of wife, mother, family breadwinner and backbone of the kin group, wider family or clan" (Pollard, 1988:42). Women are responsible for the vast majority of work relating to the making and maintaining of food gardens (although some activities, such as clearing, harvesting, transporting and selling of produce are shared with men). Women also fish, if they live in coastal areas, fetch firewood and water, tend any pigs or poultry and assist with the weeding and harvesting of cash crops. In addition, they are responsible for the general domestic chores, like cleaning, cooking and washing, childraising, care of the aged and sick. Girls are expected to assist their mothers in these chores and to assume adult responsibilities at an earlier age than boys. They learn early that their role is to respect and to serve men, initially their fathers and brothers, later their husbands and their husbands' families. As bearers of children, women ensure the continuity of the kin group. They are valued by their own families of origin as an economic asset, as at marriage they will be exchanged for a 'bride price'. In the patrilineal societies children traditionally belong to the father's clan, as it was the father who contributed the bride price (Pollard, 1988:43).

While Solomon Islands women are widely acknowledged as working long hours and being extremely industrious, they are subordinate to men in most areas - health, education, employment, access to information, new technology and resources. Development programmes have tended either to ignore women or to marginalise them by, for instance, failing to recognise their central role in agriculture and relegating them to a 'domestic' sphere. Development benefits have therefore largely passed women by, or even produced negative consequences such as an increased workload.

Population

The last two censi (1976 and 1986) recorded higher percentages of males than females in the population (52% compared with 48% in both years). However, the female population over the last decade grew at a faster annual rate (3.6% compared with 3.4%). In Honiara which, reflecting a process of urban drift, grew at twice the rate of natural increase between 1976 and 1986, female rates of increase were significantly higher (at 8.5%) than that of males (at 7%) (Lateef, 1990:4). The total fertility rate (children per woman of childbearing age) decreased only very slightly from 6.4 (1980-84) to 6.1 (1984-86).

Life expectancy for females at birth is 61.4 years (compared with 59.5 for men), having increased by 13.7% over the decade 1976-86. Similarly infant mortality decreased over the decade from 62 to 39 per 1000

for girls compared with a drop of 72 to 46 per 1000 for boys.

For Solomon Islands women the mean age of marriage is 21, compared to 25 for men. However, as the 1986 census did not address this question directly the figures are only estimates and many claim that young women, particularly in rural areas, are more likely to be married at 16 or 17. While the percentages of both females and males who have never married is high in the 15-19 age group, it drops below 10% for women in the 30-34 age group. Between the ages of 20-24 only 34.9% of women have never been married compared with 68.7% of men (Solomon Islands, 1986 : Population Census Report 2B, Data Analysis : 124).

Health

Despite population growth rates that are amongst the highest in the world there has been no concerted government population programme and it is estimated that less than 15% of women of reproductive age are practising family planning. The need for more family planning information and services was raised consistently by women in a series of meetings throughout Solomon Islands convened recently to assist in the formulation of a national women's policy.

Similar concerns were raised by women in relation to the general accessibility and delivery of health services. Major causes of ill-health amongst women are due to poor nutrition, heavy work loads and a high

level of childbirth with short birth intervals. Low body weight and anaemia are also precipitating factors for ill-health (Lateef, 1990:10). As with the total population, malaria, tuberculosis, respiratory infection and diarrhoeal disease are major causes of ill-health amongst women.

Legal and political rights

The constitution of Solomon Islands prohibits the making of discriminatory laws and women's rights are protected under the Labour Act which states for example that a woman :

i) shall not be employed during the night except where night work is essential, such as nursing;

ii) is permitted maternity leave of six weeks before and after delivery and must not receive less than 25% of her wages; and

iii) is permitted one hour per day to leave work to nurse her baby (Pollard, 1988:50).

Women over the age of 21 have the right to vote and to participate in the political process. For the majority of women in Solomon Islands, however, their legal and constitutional equality is somewhat theoretical. Women's high rate of illiteracy and the fact that the majority practice

subsistence agriculture in remote rural areas, makes a Western-style democratic and legal system somewhat irrelevant to their lives, which continue to be primarily influenced by custom and tradition. A 1989 nationwide consultation with women found the majority to be ignorant of their rights under the law. While few participate in the political process, a small number of women were elected to provincial governments in 1985, and in 1989 one woman was elected to national government.

The rapidity of social change and the concurrent breakdown both of women's customary rights and of the traditional methods of social control, make it imperative for women to gain some understanding of their legal rights, particularly in areas such as marriage and divorce, child custody, maintenance, property laws and domestic violence. Lack of familiarity with the law is eroding women's traditional rights;

> "For example, in areas where land is inherited matrilineally, men have been known to sign away the use of the land to mining and logging companies without any consultation with women and sometimes even against their expressed wishes. Similarly, the modern practice of registering land in the husband's name (even matrilineally inherited land) to ensure that modern assets such as cash crops, farms or permanent houses are passed on to male sons, seriously threatens women's traditional rights to land ownership and use" (Lateef, 1990:14).

Lateef contends also that domestic violence has, in a situation of social change and confusion over women's roles and rights, increased dramatically in recent years (Lateef, 1990:14-16). Traditional systems of redress, such as the woman's kin demanding compensation, are, for many women now geographically separated from their families, ineffective. There has been some reluctance by the police and the church, which is influential, to become involved in the issue. Until recently women's groups have also been divided over whether and how the issue should be tackled. However, over the last two years the issue has received greater public prominence and in 1993, under the auspices of the New Zealand Official Development Assistance programme, representatives of four Solomon Islands women's organisations toured New Zealand and Fiji to assess methods being used to address domestic violence. This highly successful study tour has resulted in a programme of education, prevention and victim support being developed to address the issue in Solomon Islands.

Education

The highly competitive nature of the Solomon Islands education system was described in Chapter 3. Within this system women are particularly disadvantaged. Table 6 shows that the number of uneducated women in the population is far greater than men. Between 1976-86, the numbers of never educated women actually increased by 22% and, in 1986, only 74% of girls aged 6-14 were enrolled in primary education compared with 89% of boys (Lateef, 1990:18).

Table 6 : Population Aged 10 years and over who did not attend school in 1986, by sex

	1986		Number of Males per 100 females	
	Male	Female	1976	1986
No education	24,740	38,021	73	65
Primary ST1-4 & NS *	18,756	17,693	110	106
ST5-7	25,374	17,168	190	148
Total	44,130	34,861	134	127
Secondary F1-3 & NS *	7,368	3,420	-	215
F4-6	2,504	1,050	-	238
Total	9,872	4,470	259	221
University	925	270	206	343
Level NS *	342	257	108	133
Total	80,009	77,879	101	103

* NS - Not Stated

Source : Solomon Islands 1986 Population of Census Report 2B (Data Analysis:165) In Lateef, 1990, Table 10:18

Table 7 illustrates the considerable provincial variation in the school enrolment of girls. The provinces with the lowest overall primary enrolment ratios are the most densely populated provinces of Malaita, Guadalcanal and Western Province. Within these three, however, the proportional enrolment of girls ranges from 39.1% in the case of Malaita to 47.8% in the case of Western Province, suggesting that in the former there is a preference for the education of boys in response to the scarcity of places, and in the latter a more egalitarian attitude towards education for both sexes.

Table 7 : Primary Enrolment Ratio, and % Enrolment of Girls by Province, 1986

Province	Enrolment Ratio %	% Enrolment Girls
Western	64.2	47.8
Isabel	79.1	46.5
Central	68.3	42.1
Guadalcanal	59.4	42.4
Honiara	85.6	45.3
Malaita	49.7	39.1
Makira	73.2	45.1
Temotu	75.9	42.8
Total	62.7	43.5

Source : Solomon Islands Statistical Bulletin 14/87 1985-86 Statistical Yearbook

in Knox, Stephanie. 1988. Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. Education Sector Plan Workshop Briefing Paper Education : Current Issues and Recent Developments. Ministry of Education and Training, Solomon Islands. Table 1.

Overall, there has been some improvement in girls' primary school enrolment over the period 1970-86. In 1970 girls made up 36.4% of all children in primary school. By 1983 this had risen to 42.7% and by 1986 was 43.5%. However, a significant number of girls who commence primary school drop out before they reach Standard 6. Table 8 illustrates again the disparity in the retention rates for girls between, on the one hand Western and Isabel Provinces and, on the other, Malaita and Central Provinces. Overall, as Table 9 shows, the gender imbalance grows with increasing educational levels, until by Forms 5 and 6 there are two to five time respectively as many boys as girls.

Table 8 : Percentage of girls in each standard : 1987

Government Aided Schools

Province	Prep	Std1	Std2	Std3	Std4	Std5	Std6	All Stds
Western	46	48	46	50	47	49	50	48
Isabel	48	48	41	47	47	50	45	47
Central	46	44	43	41	43	37	38	42
Guadalcanal	47	43	46	45	43	39	37	44
Honiara	50	45	49	42	48	42	42	46
Malaita	44	43	43	41	40	38	36	41
Makira	47	49	44	45	49	44	45	46
Temotu	50	45	47	44	38	41	38	44
Total	46	45	45	44	44	43	42	44

Source : Coyne, Geoffrey. 1988. Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, Education Sector Plan Workshop

Table 9 : Sex Ratios among children who attended primary and secondary schools in 1986

	Standard, Form or University Year							
Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	NS *	Total
Primary (Standard)	120	122	116	129	132	141	174	126
Secondary (Form)	167	175	164	197	206	558	-	176

* NS - Not Stated

Source : Solomon Islands 1986 Population of Census Report 2B, Data Analysis, P 158 in Lateef, 1990, Table 9, p 18

While girls have slowly increased their share of scarce secondary school places (from 32.5% in 1982 to 35% in 1987), Table 10 shows that the percentage of girls achieving a place is still markedly less than the boys and less than the overall proportion of girls in the primary education system.

Table 10 : Standard Six Test : Numbers Sitting and Intake into Secondary Schools : 1982-86

Year	Number Sitting	% Girls	Intake following year	% Girls	Intake Rate (%)
1982	3,699	40.1	1,408	36.2	38.1
1983	3,745	40.7	1,518	37.0	40.5
1984	3,735	39.6	1,564	36.1	41.9
1985	4,416	41.0	1,575	35.9	35.7
1986	4,724	41.2	1,524	37.8	32.3

Source : Solomon Islands Statistical Bulletin 15/87, Provincial Statistics in Knox, Stephanie. 1988. Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, Education Sector Plan Workshop Briefing Paper. Education : Current Issues and Recent Developments. Table 3

Again, as with primary enrolment, there are significant provincial differences in the secondary school enrolment of girls. Table 11 shows that over the period 1980-84, the overall percentage of girls in national secondary schools (NSS) increased by just 1 % and in provincial secondary schools (PSS) by 4%. Secondly, Table 11 illustrates the wide variation in the proportion of girls enrolled in different secondary schools. While Government (King George VI and Waimapuru) or 'aided' (church schools, apart from the private Seventh Day Adventist) national secondary schools in or around Honiara draw their populations from all over the country, the two church national secondary schools in the provinces (Goldie in Western Province and Su'u in Malaita) draw their populations largely from those

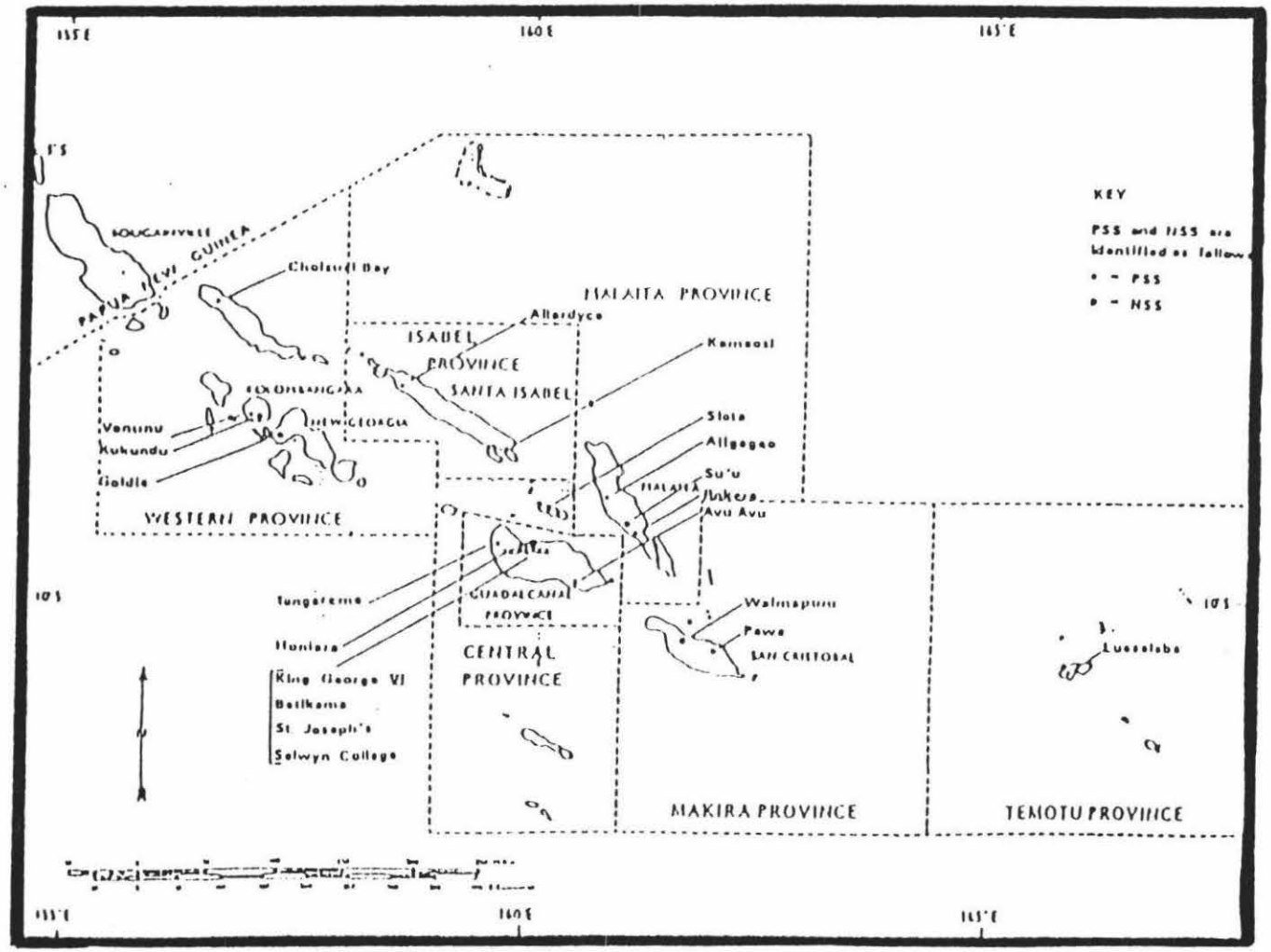
provinces. It can be seen that in 1984 these two had both the highest (Goldie 41.6%) and the lowest (Su'u 22.6%) proportion of girls. (This discounts figures for Waimapuru which, in 1984, was just becoming established). Similarly, in provincial secondary schools it can be seen that those in Western and Isabel Provinces had relatively high proportions of girl students (ranging from 40-51%), compared with those in Malaita and Temotu (26-36%)(1).

Table 11 : All Forms - Percentage of Girls : 1980 - 84

NSS	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Goldie	40.14%	41.69%	42.47%	42.37%	41.61%
Kukundu	33.66%	34.67%	38.07%	36.99%	38.86%
KGVI	26.10%	25.42%	26.09%	25.35%	28.71%
Betikama	29.66%	31.91%	31.91%	32.39%	32.23%
St Josephs	25.25%	28.62%	28.29%	25.97%	27.21%
Seiwyn	33.67%	33.22%	33.33%	33.22%	33.33%
Su'u	19.51%	22.87%	21.92%	21.50%	22.67%
Waimapuru	-	-	-	-	14.96%
All NSS	29.31%	30.68%	30.92%	30.21%	30.52%
PSS	**1980**	**1981**	**1982**	**1983**	**1984**
Vonunu (W)	31.43%	37.05%	40.07%	45.67%	45.10%
Choiseul Bay (W)	-	-	36.92%	39.77%	41.23%
Kamaosi (I)	40.67%	42.50%	45.86%	48.70%	51.43%
Allardyce (I)	-	29.35%	33.54%	35.98%	40.80%
Siota (C)	31.02%	27.78%	31.03%	29.69%	33.56%
Tangareare (G)	39.32%	39.79%	40.35%	36.31%	36.60%
Avuavu (G)	-	32.38%	31.95%	35.38%	34.03%
Honiara (HTC)	35.82%	37.88%	41.83%	43.06%	44.75%
Aligeglo (M)	16.67%	20.83%	24.74%	23.68%	26.47%
Rokera (M)	-	23.46%	27.03%	34.25%	36.36%
Pawa (MU)	33.16%	33.47%	32.28%	33.44%	34.00%
Luesaleba (T)	20.10%	23.83%	25.58%	28.28%	26.09%
All PSS	29.97%	31.37%	32.46%	33.16%	33.96%

Solomon Islands Government. Statistical Bulletin No 38/84. Education Statistics, Table 31 A, p 55.

MAP 2 : SOLOMON ISLANDS: LOCALITIES OF NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS



Source : Education Policy for South Pacific Island Nations Solomon Islands Study; McGavin, P.A., 1990:27

Table 12 shows that the most heavily populated provinces of Malaita and Western Province are those under the most pressure in terms of secondary school places. In 1985 the percentage intake into secondary schools in Western Province was, at 21.5%, the lowest of any province, followed by Malaita at 25.5%.

Table 12 : Proportion of Students Achieving a Place in Secondary School, 1985

Western	21.50%
Isabel	47.50%
Central	43.80%
Guadalcanal	29.60%
Honiara	47.90%
Malaita	25.50%
Makira	36.50%
Temotu	50.20%

Knox, Stephanie. 1988. Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, Education Sector Workshop Briefing Paper. Education : Current Issues and Recent Developments

In this situation the relatively high proportion of girls gaining entry to secondary school in Western Province might again be assumed to reflect a more tolerant and encouraging attitude towards the education of girls as opposed to Malaita where figures suggest boys are given preferential treatment in terms of educational opportunities (2).

Personal accounts from former, and current, Solomon Islands women tertiary scholarship holders of the 'culling' process which results in

just a tiny number of women remaining in secondary school by the sixth form will be given in the next section of this study. However figures in Table 13 for Government National Secondary School, King George VI for 1990, are illustrative of the general situation.

Table 13 : Student numbers, by gender and form, at King George VI National Secondary School, 1990

	Form					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Boys	60	60	60	42	50	49
Girls	45	45	30	28	20	17

Source : Jim Waroka, Principal, King George VI NSS

The Principal, Mr Jim Waroka is concerned at the disparity between the sexes in his school. He believes cultural and social attitudes need to change to provide greater encouragement for girls to, firstly, attend school and, secondly, pursue their studies. In addition, however, he admits that a further major constraint on girls continuing their education is the lack of dormitory facilities for girls in a situation where geography dictates that the vast majority of students must board. "The reality", he said, "is that girls may pass the Secondary Selection Test but there are no boarding spaces available for them at national secondary schools." At King George VI there are boarding facilities for 280 boys and 112 girls, plus places for 60 day students. In an effort to address the inequality between the sexes in terms of numbers Waroka was currently trying to pick girls as day students. This meant that, inevitably, he had to pick some students with lower marks than

some who would have to board, a situation which is itself clearly unsatisfactory. He hoped that a new dormitory for girls which was under construction in 1990 would address the problem more satisfactorily.

While the numbers of women who have had overseas university training grew considerably over the decade 1976-86, women remain significantly under-represented among graduates. In 1976 there were only 80 Solomon Islanders with university training (73 men, 7 women); by 1986 overall numbers had increased to 615, of whom 411 were men and 169 women (Lateef, 1990:19). A more recent World Bank study found that in 1991/92 women made up only 20% of those overseas on tertiary training. Among the major donors (Australia, New Zealand, Britain, EEC and the Solomon Islands Government) most maintain women's participation around this low percentage, apart from the Australian Equity and Merit Scheme. This, by design, had a high (46%) of awards given to women. Among the sponsors, government departments had around the national average (just under 20%), the church had half (of a low eight awards), and private and statutory sponsors gave 5% and 8% respectively of their awards to women. While women made up only 20% of students receiving tertiary awards in 1991/92, they comprised 52% of all awards in health, 36% of arts, 27% of medicine and 25% of business related awards. They were significantly under-represented in engineering, computing, law, social science and technical courses (World Bank, 1992:71). While women's low rates of participation in university training reflect their low secondary education participation levels, some bias in favour of men in the awarding of scholarships has also been suggested (Lateef, 1990:19).

Within Solomon Islands the numbers of women proceeding to tertiary training at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) has declined recently. SICHE records show that over the period 1988-90 the numbers of women attending the College fell from 244 to 228, while the enrolment of men increased from 681 to 839. The growing disparity between the sexes appears to be due largely to an approximate doubling of the numbers of men taking finance and administration courses in 1990, the introduction of community education courses (such as chainsaw and outboard motor maintenance) and an increase in courses run by the School of Marine and Fisheries Studies, in which women do not feature at all (in 1987 just 14 men were enrolled in these classes, by 1990 this had increased to 77). Men also figure more prominently in enrolments for the three-year secondary teaching diploma course introduced in 1988. In 1990 there were 123 men participating in the diploma course compared with 23 women, 18 of whom were majoring in home economics. While women are most highly represented at SICHE in the two-year primary education certificate course, they are still heavily outnumbered by men. In 1988 (the year with the highest overall enrolment of women in SICHE courses) 91 women were enrolled in primary teaching certificate courses, compared with 192 men. (Rex Horoi, Director SICHE : 1990).

The proportion of primary teachers who are women increased from 26.4% in 1980 to 33.8% in 1986. There is, however, considerable variation between the provinces. In 1981, for instance, 64.79% of primary teachers in Honiara were women compared with 32.5% in Isabel and 17.56% in Malaita. Approximately half of all primary teachers are untrained, the majority women.

Employment

The 1986 Population Census provides a more realistic assessment of women's labour contribution than has previously been available. For the first time 'work' was defined as including both 'work for money' and 'village work'. Using this definition, it can be seen from Table 14 that men and women contribute almost equally with 84.3% of women classified as 'economically active' compared with 86.4% of men. 71.3% of women classified as economically active were engaged in village work without money (subsistence agriculture) compared to 51.3% of men.

Table 14 : Economic Activity of Solomon Islanders Aged 14 and Over : 1986

	Working for money, and:		Not Working for money, and:		Not Specified	Total	Economically Active
	village work	no village work	village work	no village work			
Number							
Male	12,946	15,354	41,364	10,461	460	80,585	69,664
Female	6,470	3,393	53,971	11,190	718	75,742	63,834
Total	19,416	18,747	95,335	21,651	1,178	156,327	133,498
Percentage							
Male	16.1	19.1	51.3	13.0	0.6	100.1	86.5
Female	8.5	4.5	71.3	14.8	0.9	100.0	84.3
Total	12.4	12.0	61.0	13.8	0.8	100.0	85.4

Source : Adapted from Solomon Islands 1986 Population Census Report 2B, Data Analysis, p 181 in Lateef, 1990, Table 11 p 21

Table 15 shows that only 14.5% of adult women were, in 1986, working for money, compared with 40.4% of men. This did, nonetheless, represent a significant increase from 7.8% in 1976. The table also shows that the largest number of women working are in the 20-44 age group. Significantly, proportions are highest in the 30-39 age group where, statistics show, all but a very small proportion of the total female population is married.

Table 15 : Monetary Activity Rates for Solomon Islanders by Sex and Age, 1976 and 1986

Age Cohort	Percentage of each group who worked for money					
	1976			1986		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
14	-	-	-	7.5	6.2	6.9
15-19	27.0	7.8	17.8	23.2	12.2	17.8
20-24	47.9	9.9	28.4	46.8	15.7	31.0
25-29	48.0	8.3	27.8	29.3	15.7	32.3
30-34	42.4	7.5	25.4	29.7	16.6	33.4
35-39	39.8	6.9	24.1	49.5	16.2	33.0
40-44	35.3	7.1	21.9	43.5	14.3	29.7
45-49	28.7	5.3	17.7	36.4	13.1	25.3
50-54	26.1	5.8	16.8	32.5	10.8	22.4
55-59	19.2	5.9	13.2	22.6	7.9	15.8
60-64	18.8	4.7	13.4	18.6	7.1	13.7
65+	9.9	1.7	6.9	9.7	3.5	7.3
Total 14+	-	-	-	35.2	13.1	24.5
Total 15+	34.0	7.3	21.3	36.6	13.7	25.4
Total 15-54	37.7	7.8	23.1	40.4	14.5	27.6

Source : Solomon Islands 1986 Population Census Report 2B, Data Analysis, P 186 in Lateef, 1990, Table 12, p 22

Women made up 26% of the total population in waged employment in 1986, having increased their share from 17% in 1976 as can be seen

from Table 16. Women's rate of entry into the formal labour market is faster than that of men, reflecting the increases in their educational attainment. Despite the fact that women are slightly over-represented in the professional and technical occupational groups (Table 16), women's share in this category has fallen over the decade 1976-86, while their share in production-related activities has increased.

Table 16 : Occupational Structure of the Adult Population Working for Money, by Sex and, Proportion to, Non-Solomon Islanders, 1976 and 1986

ISCO*	Occupational Group	No in each group			Percentage of Labour Force in ISCO Group			Non-Solomon Islanders	
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	No	% of Group
			1976						
1	Professional and technical	2,508	768	3,276	13.3	20.2	14.5	494	15.1
2	Administrative and Managerial	285	12	297	1.5	0.3	1.3	161	54.2
3	Clerical and related	1,431	350	1,781	7.6	9.2	7.9	112	6.3
4	Sales	754	131	885	4.0	3.4	3.9	147	16.6
5	Service	1,175	397	1,572	6.2	10.4	6.9	26	1.7
6	Agricultural, forestry, fishing	6,638	1,902	8,540	35.2	50.0	37.7	109	1.3
7	Production and related	5,987	236	6,223	31.8	6.2	27.5	166	2.5
	Not specified	78	7	85	0.4	0.2	0.4	-	-
	Total	18,856	3,803	22,659	100.0	99.0	100.1	1215	5.3
			1986						
1	Professional and technical	4,016	1,517	5,533	13.8	15.1	14.1	438	7.9
2	Administrative and Managerial	563	15	578	1.9	0.1	1.5	145	25.1
3	Clerical and related	2,061	988	3,049	7.1	9.8	7.8	71	2.3
4	Sales	1,598	373	1,971	5.5	3.7	5.0	46	2.3
5	Service	1,689	1,106	2,795	5.8	11.0	7.1	30	1.1
6	Agricultural, forestry, fishing	10,023	5,002	15,025	34.4	49.9	38.3	90	0.6
7	Production and related	8,840	925	9,765	30.3	9.2	24.9	133	1.4
	Not specified	386	106	492	1.3	1.1	1.3	18	3.7
	Total	29,176	10,032	39,208	100.1	99.9	100.0	971	2.5

* International Standard Classification of Occupation

Source Solomon Islands 1986 Population Census Report, p. 197 in Lateef, 1990. Table 13, p. 23

Women's occupational level is (as Table 17 shows) more closely related to educational level than is that of men. This reflects their more recent entry into the labour market and their significant levels of employment in the public sector where employment is more closely related to educational levels (Birks and Marau, 1988:3.14). Women's per capita earnings, on average, amount to a high 98.7% of men's, and in some sectors (notably transport, commercial and government services) are higher than those of men (see Table 18). While such statistics may be seen as encouraging, it should be recalled that the vast majority of Solomon Islands women work as unpaid labour in the subsistence sector. Only a very small proportion of the total female adult population is in paid employment.

Table 17 : Solomon Islands : Male and Female Employment by Educational Level and Occupational Group, 1986

Educational Level	Professional and Technical	Admin and Managerial	Clerical and related	Sales Workers	Service Workers	Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing	Production and related	Other	Total
None									
Male	111	13	35	132	291	2,110	1,652	67	4,411
Female	23	0	9	36	405	1,398	381	19	2,771
Primary									
Male	1,577	156	722	1,020	930	6,728	5,678	203	17,014
Female	481	1	229	234	616	2,875	485	58	4,979
Lower Secondary									
Male	1,134	91	574	298	371	893	1,067	54	4,482
Female	611	4	385	75	62	207	47	17	1,408
Upper Secondary									
Male	613	32	589	77	69	145	229	38	1,792
Female	265	0	308	17	7	11	8	3	619
University									
Male	213	82	89	25	1	17	32	6	465
Female	52	1	19	1	3	1	0	2	79
Total									
Male	3,648	374	2,009	1,552	1,662	9,893	8,658	368	28,164
Female	1,432	6	950	363	1,093	4,992	921	99	9,856
Total	5,080	380	2,959	1,915	2,755	14,885	9,579	467	38,020

Source : Solomon Islands, Population Census, 1986 in Birks and Marau, 1988, Table 3.44

Table 18 : Solomon Islands : Average Weekly earnings of Solomon Islands Employees in $SI, by Economic Sector and Sex, 1987

	Male	Female	Percent Female	Female Earnings as Percent of Male
Agriculture	52.7	48.4	23.9	91.9
Logging			2.4	
Fishing			0.6	
Mining and Exploration			3.8	
Manufacturing	63.0	49.5	5.4	78.6
Electricity			6.1	
Construction			1.7	
Wholesale, Retail Trade	55.9	54.0	23.2	96.5
Transport and Communications	70.9	105.3	7.6	148.6
Finance	122.5	102.7	37.2	83.8
Commercial Services	92.3	94.2	23.9	102.0
Government Services	53.7	60.1	16.9	111.8
Other Services	52.5	46.2	30.9	88.0
All Industries	58.0	57.2	16.7	98.7

Note : Number of responses, 1141

Source : Statistics Office, Statistical Bulletin, 17/88, Employment Survey, June 1987, Ministry of Finance, Honiara in Birks and Marau, 1988, Table 3.45

Researchers have noted an increasing trend for families to encourage girls with education to take up modern sector employment, particularly as, in a situation where remittances to villages have been affected by urban inflation, girls have been found to remit more money to their parents and wantoks than boys (Birks and Marau, 1988:8.10).

Women with little or no education may migrate to the towns to take up employment as domestic servants. The wantok system generally assists

this process. However, minimum wages are rarely paid, and women are not always guaranteed protection, despite the wantok connection. A further category of women who migrate to the towns as dependents of men, are often marginalised, having lost their traditional role as food producers. Some take up employment in a growing urban informal sector - as cleaners, providers of cooked food, or small traders.

Government policies and organisations for women

The 1985-89 Solomon Islands National Development Plan (p74-75) listed the following objectives relating to women :

i) Promote an increased and more effective role for women in decision-making for national development.

ii) Improve the availability and circulation of information and resources relating to the welfare of women and families.

iii) Facilitate women's training programmes to develop appropriate knowledge and skills for women to improve their participation in development."

The People's Alliance Party (PAP) Government Programme of Action 1989-1993 (p24-25) continued the promise of support for women :

"In enhancing the interests and welfare of the women the following activities are anticipated in conjunction with the National Council of Women :

a) Select a committee on women's affairs with the aim to assist the government to compile women's programmes more meaningfully;

b) Establishment of Women's Training Centres in the provinces;

c) Possibility of establishing a special girls' school will be thoroughly examined.

In addition, the Government promised to "reassess the role of women in nation-building to ensure that any barriers that may have prevented them from taking part in the nation-building are addressed" (PAP, 1989:52).

Despite the good intentions, little progress has been made in implementing any coherent policy on women. This is in part due to delays in finalising the report and recommendations of the National Women's Policy Review Committee, set up by the Government in 1988 to develop a National Women's Policy and to review and recommend on the role and functions of the Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW). In undertaking this review, the Committee carried out nationwide consultations with women. The findings of the consultations have been released, and

following lengthy delays, a draft report and recommendations of the Committee have recently been produced and were (in late 1993) awaiting Cabinet consideration. An important function of the report is the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the two arms of the Government's National Machinery for Women's Affairs - the Women and Development Division (currently situated in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services) and the National Council of Women (currently based in the Ministry of Home Affairs).

The Women and Development Division was created in 1989, upgrading the former Women's Interest Section which had been established in 1964 to carry out training programmes, largely in domestic skills, but later including income-generating activities, appropriate technology and leadership skills. In 1990 the Women and Development Division (WDD) had six 'established' positions based largely in the Head Office, but also covering some provinces. The aims and objectives of the Division were to promote increased participation in decision-making and development, improve the availability of information and resources on the welfare of women and the family, and facilitate women's training programmes. In reality, however, the focus of the Division's programmes has continued to be on domestic skills, with the more recent introduction of leadership courses. The Division is also becoming more involved in agricultural training for women and has set up a Women's Revolving Loan Fund to provide small sums of money for income-generating activities. The WDD also played a major role in the organisation of women's clubs throughout

the country, and in the establishment of the Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW) in 1983.

SINCW was established as an umbrella organisation for women to lobby and advise Government on policies of concern to women, to encourage women's participation in decision-making and to identify women's needs and formulate solutions, and generally to promote awareness of women's concerns. The Council is funded by the Government, and this to some extent has constrained its ability to be critical of Government policies and programmes. It has also in the past been funded by the Canadian Government and other donor agencies which enabled it to set up a structure of provincial councils of women with paid provincial coordinators. However, with the cessation of this funding in 1988 it was no longer possible to employ the provincial coordinators, and many of the Council's programmes and activities came to a halt. From the late 1980s the SINCW also became the target of criticism from some women and some women's organisations, in part reflecting the division between the urban educated women, who have been the driving force behind the Council, and the more traditional rural women.

Apart from the Women and Development Division and the National Council of Women, a number of voluntary agencies, notably the YWCA and the Solomon Islands Development Trust, and all the major church women's organisations run non-formal educational programmes and other activities for women.

Summary

Throughout Solomon Islands, women are feeling the effects of social and economic change. The impact of the forces of modernisation on the traditional roles and status of women are traumatic. Education and employment have broadened women's traditional roles and brought them in contact with modern ideas and values, including those of women's equality. Women's traditional roles have been reduced by the impact of the cash economy which has made possible the purchase of items previously produced by women for use in traditional activities.

The speed of change is accelerating. If women are to avoid being disadvantaged in the process of change and to participate fully in the new socio-economic order that is emerging, they will need to participate fully, and on an equal basis with men, in the 'new' knowledge.

The following chapters assess the factors influencing the participation and achievement of girls within the Solomon Islands formal education system and describe the experiences of some of that small group of Solomon Islands women who have undertaken tertiary education overseas.

Notes

(1) The tendency for women from Western and Isabel Provinces to be over-represented in terms of their educational participation and achievement in relation to women from other provinces was observed also amongst those women interviewed who had held New Zealand tertiary scholarships.

(2) These figures should also be considered in the light of 1986 population statistics which show a significant disparity between the sexes in Western Province, with females making up 26,033 and males 29,333 of the total population. Equivalent figures for Malaita were females 40,445 and males 39,738.

PART THREE

THE PARTICIPATION AND ACHIEVEMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS GIRLS AND WOMEN WITHIN THE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM :

EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN WHO HAVE HELD NEW ZEALAND TERTIARY STUDY AWARDS

Introduction

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade statistics show that between 1976 and 1990 182 Solomon Islands men were awarded New Zealand Government long term tertiary study awards for study in New Zealand or within the Pacific region, usually in Fiji or Papua New Guinea. Over the same period just 23 Solomon Islands women held New Zealand tertiary scholarships, the majority of which were awarded in the last few years. In 1990 half of these women were studying in New Zealand, Fiji, or Papua New Guinea. One other women, probably the only Solomon Islands woman awarded a New Zealand scholarship prior to 1976, has also been included in this study.

Solomon Islands women who were former or current (1990) New Zealand tertiary scholarship holders may be considered the 'primary' target categories of this research. In 1990, 12 of these women had either returned to take up employment in Solomon Islands or were undertaking further study abroad. One of these 12 could not be traced. Seven women were studying in New Zealand. Financial and time constraints prevented the inclusion of a further five students who, in 1990, were studying in Fiji or Papua New Guinea on New Zealand tertiary scholarships. 'Thumbnail' sketches of women in the two 'primary' target categories can be found in Appendix 3.

In addition to these two primary categories reference is also made to interviews with six Solomon Islands men who previously held New Zealand tertiary scholarships, eight women who left school at Form 3

or Form 5 level and who, in 1990, were undertaking primary or secondary teacher training at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) and 23 women undertaking Sixth Form studies in Solomon Islands in 1990. These groups may be considered 'secondary' target categories. Their experience is referred to in Chapter 5 which describes the socio-economic background and early educational experiences of women in the primary target categories and attempts to assess the extent to which those factors which appear to have influenced their educational chances were similar to, or differed from, those which were significant in the backgrounds of the secondary target categories.

Chapter 6 outlines the experience of women in applying for and obtaining a tertiary scholarship. Chapter 7 describes the overseas study experience of Solomon Islands women who were former or current (1990) New Zealand tertiary scholarship holders and Chapter 8 reviews the career and personal development of those women who had returned to Solomon Islands following tertiary study abroad.

CHAPTER 5

PROVINCIAL, FAMILY AND SCHOOLING BACKGROUND : INFLUENCES ON EDUCATIONAL 'CHANCES'

Introduction

Chapter 2 on 'Women's participation in education' discussed a number of key factors identified by researchers to explain the continuing inequitable participation of girls and women in education in developing countries. Chapter 4 highlighted the extent to which girls are particularly disadvantaged in attaining access to education within a situation of overall scarcity of school places in the Solomon Islands education system.

This chapter seeks to identify those factors that appear to have been of particular significance in enabling Solomon Islands women who have held New Zealand tertiary study awards not only to gain access to, but also excel within, the education system. An attempt is also made to assess the extent to which those same factors influenced the educational chances of a small group of women who left school at an earlier stage (Form 3 or Form 5) and six men students who had previously held New Zealand tertiary study awards. To assess whether there appears to have been a change

over time in the factors which are important in enabling the academic achievement of women the socio-economic background and educational experiences of sixth form women studying at national secondary schools in Solomon Islands in 1990 are also discussed.

Provincial Background

Among the 11 women who had formerly held New Zealand scholarships, there was, somewhat surprisingly for such a small sample, representation from each of the seven (including Honiara) provinces of Solomon Islands (1). There was also, however, a predominance of women from Isabel and Western provinces (two came from Isabel, one from Western, one had a mixed Western/Isabel background and one a mixed Western/Malaitan background). The remaining six women came from Temotu, Guadalcanal, Malaita, Honiara (a Chinese), Makira and a ni-Kiribati who had married a Solomon Islander of Kiribati descent.

The trend for Western Province women to be over-represented was even more pronounced among the women students who in 1990 were in New Zealand on tertiary study awards. There were, however, no women from Isabel Province. Three of the seven students came from Western Province, one had a Western/Central background and the remaining three (two from the same family) were of Chinese descent, having grown up in Honiara.

The predominance, within these two groups, of women from

Western and Isabel provinces reflects the national trends (outlined in Chapter 4) for women from these provinces to have comparatively better chances of primary and secondary education. This is probably in part the result of the historically strong influence of the United Church (Methodist) in Western Province and the Church of Melanesia (Anglican) in Isabel and the related early establishment of mission schools in these provinces. Respondents also commented on the strong matrilineal traditions within both societies which they believed were a major factor in providing social acceptance of, and indeed encouragement for, girls to continue their education and for women to occupy positions of importance. Conversely, the lack (with just one exception) of women from the most highly populated province of Malaita again appears to reflect national statistics which depict the under-representation of girls from that province in primary and secondary education. Respondents also commented on the traditional lack of value attached to female education in this patrilineal society where, from an early age, daughters represent an important source of income in the form of bride price.

Given that only 0.4% of the population of Solomon Islands is of Chinese descent, the number of Chinese among Solomon Islands women students in New Zealand in 1990 represents a very high proportion. According to one Chinese student interviewed, many Chinese parents choose to send their children overseas privately, rather than on Government scholarships which are taken to be an indication of financial hardship. In interviewing the Chinese students currently in New Zealand it became clear

that, for a variety of reasons - poverty, social 'ostracism', place of family origin - all fell outside the 'mainstream' of the small Chinese community in Honiara. This will be discussed more fully below.

Among women sixth formers at both King George VI and Waimapuru national secondary schools in 1990 there was a relatively high proportion (nine out of 23) of Malaitan students. If the lack, with just one exception, of Malaitan women students in the earlier New Zealand scholarship groups can be taken as an indication that few of these students were reaching sixth form level, the increase by 1990 suggests changing attitudes and values within Malaita, enabling more women from this most densely populated province to take advantage of education at higher levels. Women from Western and Isabel Provinces (four from each) were the next most highly represented. Three were from Central Province (from West Rennell and West Bellona), two from Guadalcanal and one from Makira.

Of the six men who had formerly held New Zealand scholarships over roughly the same period as the women, three were from Malaita, one from Western Province, one from Central Province and one from Guadalcanal. In a sample of half the size of the total earlier female group (and selected without knowledge of provincial background) it can be assumed from these figures that, unlike women, significant numbers of men from Malaita were taking advantage of earlier opportunities for tertiary education.

Parents' education and employment

The majority of both former and present (1990) women tertiary students came from a relatively privileged background. They had most often grown up in Honiara or major provincial centres and their fathers, and occasionally their mothers, were employed in government or private sector occupations.

In most cases, both parents had had some education, and several some form of tertiary education or training. Conversely parents of the women who had left school at an earlier age were not so well educated and fewer had been employed in the formal sector. There appeared to be less correlation between parents' education and academic achievement of the men interviewed than was the case with the women. The personal understanding of the importance of education together with the financial ability arising from employment in the formal sector (taking into account the loss of family labour, possibly cash income from Form 3, and in some societies bride price, as well as the direct costs of school fees, uniforms and transport) of maintaining a daughter at school through to Form 6 appeared to be of major significance in determining the educational chances of most women in the primary target group.

Fathers of all but two (those from Malaita and Temotu) of the 11 former students had had primary education. One of those (from Temotu) who had not had formal primary education, had had some church-based vocational training. Two of the fathers had had tertiary education, one in

medicine, and the other in teaching and later theology. Nine of the 11 mothers involved had had primary education, although for two this was described as 'informal' or 'domestic' mission-based education. None had gone on to secondary school. Most of the mothers in this group were described as 'housewives' or as having home/garden responsibilities. Two had been teachers and one was proprietor of a general store. Occupations of fathers included two policemen, a priest (previously a teacher), a retired Archbishop of the Church of Melanesia, government clerk (deceased), manager of a private company, doctor and plantation owner. Three were farmers, two of these (from Malaita and Temotu), being described as subsistence farmers.

All parents of women students in New Zealand in 1990, with the exception of one Chinese father, had had education, at least at primary level. Apart from one set of Chinese parents who had attended teachers college in Hong Kong, none had had tertiary education. Fathers' occupations included two general store owners, manager of a cooperative, two teachers (one turned taxi owner/driver), pharmacist, and radiographer. A larger number of mothers in this group had had 'careers', usually before marriage. Of the seven, there were two nurses, one teacher and one office worker. Another managed a general store. In the one case where home/garden responsibilities were cited as the mother's primary occupation, it was also noted that the woman concerned played a major and unusual community role as a member of the local council.

In almost all cases both parents of the 1990 sixth form women

students had had at least primary education. In five cases mothers were cited as having had no primary education (three from Malaita, one from Isabel and one from Guadalcanal). In half the cases mothers were cited as having an occupation other than 'home/garden'. These were mainly teachers or nurses, but included a malaria technician and a typist. Fathers were involved in a wide range of occupations including politician, engineer, agricultural extension workers, forestry workers, plant operator, building inspector, administration officer, personnel and training manager. Only four of the 23 stated that their fathers were farmers. Another four, however, did not complete this question perhaps indicating that their father was not in paid employment and therefore likely to be farming. (Some correlation between failure to answer the question and a rural background requiring the student to have walked a significant distance to primary school, suggests that this may be the case.)

Among the eight women interviewed who left school at Form 3 or Form 5, a higher proportion of mothers than for the previous groups (five out of the eight) had had no primary education. (Two of these were from Malaita, one from Tikopia, one from Makira and one from Temotu.) In only one case was it cited that a mother had worked outside the home/garden (as a teacher) before marriage. Fathers were more likely to be employed in the formal economy, reflecting their slightly better education. Six had completed, or almost completed, primary schooling. One was a nurse, one a policeman, one a clerk, one worked with the church and one with Lever's Plantations. In two cases fathers' traditional roles were mentioned as

significant; one as President of the Area Council in Santa Cruz (Temotu), and the other in teaching 'custom' in Makira.

Parents of the six former men students had in three cases had primary education and in the case of two sets of parents (two fathers and one mother) tertiary education. The other three parents had had no or very little formal education, suggesting that there is less correlation between the academic achievement of men and their parents' educational level than with women. Fathers' occupations ranged from Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, to retired doctor, engineer (by practice, unqualified), local council employee and farming. None of the mothers were cited as having occupations outside the home/garden area.

Position in family

Among the two primary target groups position of the respondent within the family did not in most cases appear to influence their academic chances. In only one case was it mentioned as a significant factor. Gabrielle is from Isabel Province. "I was the eldest in a family of six girls. I got a lot of encouragement from my parents to continue my education. They thought someone in the family should have a job to help out financially. I was sent away to boarding school when I was still in primary which is why I did better than my sisters who all went through school in the village." Three of Gabrielle's sisters left school in Standard 6, one in Form 3 and one in Form 5. Only one, the Form 5 leaver, is working outside the home, as an accounts clerk.

Family Size

While the size of the respondents' families varied greatly (from one to ten children) it is significant that the average family size of those reaching sixth form in all three groups was considerably lower than that of those who had left school at Form 3 or Form 5. The average number of children per family among former female students was 5.5, among those in New Zealand in 1990 four (this includes three students from Chinese families, traditionally smaller than Melanesian families) and 5.5 for the 1990 sixth formers. In contrast, the average number of children per family for the Form 3 and Form 5 leavers was 7.25. Average family size for the former male students was six children per family.

The effects of parental attitudes and early childhood experiences

While gender does not appear to have been a major factor in determining educational chances within the families of the women who had undertaken tertiary study (parents often appeared to encourage their daughters as much as their sons, and in a number of cases daughters had achieved more highly) it appeared that in over half of the families of male respondents, daughters had not had the same encouragement as sons to continue or, in one case, to even begin her education. Charles (Guadalcanal) comes from a family of eight. None of the three female children (now aged 28, 22 and 20) have had any education. On the other hand, Charles left school in Form 6 and went on to tertiary training in New Zealand, one brother is a teacher,

another currently in Form 5 and two younger brothers are still in primary school. Albert's (Central Province) family includes two girls, one of whom left school at Standard 4 ("She didn't want to go on") and another who is six and has not yet started school. Albert has completed a law degree, his next brother left school in Form 5 and did nursing training, and three younger brothers are still in school. When Christopher's (Malaita) sister decided to leave school in Form 5, his parents "were flexible about it. They put more pressure on the boys." Christopher has an economics degree. He has two brothers currently undertaking tertiary studies. A younger sister "dropped out at Form 3 and is at home helping on the vegetable farm."

The encouragement of parents, and in the case of the former women students the attitudes of fathers in particular, were an important influence in enabling the women to continue their education. In several cases the overseas experience of parents, elder siblings or other close relatives, such as aunts or uncles, was important in enabling an understanding of what was involved in overseas study and in developing an expectation that the woman would continue her education and apply for a tertiary scholarship. Iris (from Isabel Province) received encouragement from both parents. Her mother was a primary teacher and her father had had theological training in Fiji.

Julienne, whose father comes from Western Province and her mother from Malaita, received particular encouragement from her father who had studied medicine overseas and who later became a prominent

politician. As in the case of several other women interviewed, Julienne's father showed a strong desire to support his daughters' tertiary education. Both Julienne's elder brothers had gone to university, and her father was disappointed when her younger sisters went into nursing and direct employment from Form 5. When Julienne's scholarship was terminated following failure of units, her father initially tried to get this decision revoked. When this was unsuccessful, he decided, with some assistance from Julienne's older brother, who was by that time in paid employment, to pay for her to return to New Zealand as a private student.

Lorraine (whose mother is from Isabel and father from Western Province - both part European) was the eldest and only girl in a family of four children. She was encouraged to continue her studies both by her mother, an ex primary teacher and her father, a previous Archbishop of the Church of Melanesia. Both had had schooling in New Zealand. Encouragement from her parents went so far as to determine Lorraine's area of tertiary study. "I was a bookworm at school. I was always interested in studying and learning. I wanted to do something after Form 6 but I wasn't sure what. No one gave me any advice. I wasn't interested in law, but when my family decided I should do that I thought I should please them."

Natalie (from Western Province) is third in a family of eight (four males/four females). While her two older brothers left school at Form 4 and Form 3 (one being expelled), both she and her next sister went on to complete tertiary studies successfully. Natalie became the first woman

lawyer in Solomon Islands and her sister now holds a senior position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Natalie recalls that when she wanted to leave school in Form 3 to take up a stenography course her father discouraged her. "He even bought me a typewriter to keep me happy."

Not all the respondents in the earlier group of women students came from relatively privileged backgrounds. Hilary's parents were very poor and uneducated subsistence farmers from a small village outside Port Adam in Small Malaita. Hilary's success must in large part be attributed to her own obvious and outstanding academic ability and her own determination to continue with her studies in the face of considerable difficulties. However, in a patrilineal society where traditionally girls have not been encouraged to continue their schooling and where daughters from an early age represent an important source of family income in the form of bride price, the willingness and far-sightedness of Hilary's father, and indeed the whole family, to make the sacrifices necessary to support her through secondary school must also be considered exceptional. Hilary was fortunate to have been able to attend primary school. She was eight when a small Anglican mission school opened in Port Adam approximately three kilometres walk from her home. Hilary was a bright student and was quickly promoted. She was always considerably younger than the other (predominantly male) students in her class. Her interest and determination to pursue her studies was evident from an early age. Not only did she have to walk six kilometres daily to attend school, she was also, as the only girl in

a subsistence household, expected to carry out numerous tasks to contribute to the family's survival and welfare. "I got up at 5 am. I had to clean the house and cut firewood and then get to school for early devotions. After school and at weekends there was always a lot for me and my (two) brothers to do. We had to go a long way, some of the way by canoe, to collect firewood, we had to help with planting and harvesting and weeding in the garden, and I had to do cleaning and cooking." It is significant that Hilary is the only respondent out of both primary target groups who spoke of the requirement to be involved to any degree in family subsistence activities. Both Hilary's brothers failed to get through the Standard Six Secondary Selection Test and she alone from the family went on to Selwyn (Anglican) National Secondary School in Honiara. Her family was pleased and proud of her, seeing it as a great privilege that their daughter had been selected to go to secondary school. The requirement to pay school fees however placed the family under severe pressure. "We were really strained financially. In 1980 Dad had to come to Honiara, leaving my older brother in charge of the land, to find work to pay for my fees. I wanted to leave in Form 5. I felt so sorry for my parents. I thought of working in a bank or going nursing, but my careers master persuaded me to stay. In Form 6 when I got a scholarship, my parents were so relieved."

Selina from Santa Cruz in Temotu Province also came from a remote rural background with parents who had had no formal education (although her father had had some religious vocational training). Within the traditional local structure her father occupied a position of importance - as

Headman (under the British administration) and since the 1970s as President of the local court. His influence and encouragement were important in motivating Selina to continue her education. Given the remoteness of Santa Cruz it was necessary for her to board throughout most of her primary schooling, removing her from involvement in the daily domestic chores faced by Hilary.

Two other former students cited hardship, though of a somewhat different nature, during their childhood years. Both were brought up in single parent families and for both this experience was a major influence in their determination to continue their education. Lily is Chinese, brought up in Honiara. She is the youngest in a family of eight (six girls, two boys) and is the only one to continue her education to tertiary level. The other girls in the family all left school at Form 3. Lily's parents were divorced when she was in Form 3 and her mother, with little money or education, took over a general store to support the children. "We had a rough childhood. We were looked down on in the Chinese community as our parents were divorced and we were poor. That made me very determined to do well. Also as I had done well at school it was taken for granted (at school) that I'd go on. My mother was quite supportive but my father put some pressure on me to stop my education. I'd seen the struggle my mother had had. Even if you get married, separation or divorce is always possible and you need something to fall back on."

Therese has a different background from others in this study. She grew up in Kiribati, later marrying a Solomon Islander of Kiribati

background. Like Lily, she spent some of her childhood in a one parent family. Her father died when she was nine, leaving her mother to bring up seven children. "Our mother had to work very hard. It was a struggle for her to get our school fees. In our culture boys get precedence for education. In one year both my brother and me were in the same class sitting the secondary school exam. We both got through but because my mother couldn't afford fees for both of us at the same time I had to stay back in primary for another year. Some of my friends were from well off families. My best friend was part-European, a doctor's daughter. They had nice clothes, pocket money. It was a real incentive for me to work hard. I wanted to do better. In the end all my friends had dropped out of school and I was the only one left. My mother was very proud of me."

Either directly or indirectly the women students in New Zealand in 1990 appeared to be influenced more by their mothers than their fathers, as the earlier group had been. Emily, from Western Province, was a seventh former in 1990, hoping to go on to study medicine, or failing that, physiotherapy or radiography. "My mother was very important in encouraging me to work hard at my studies. Our family is unusual in that my mother is very strong and more outspoken than my father. She is a kindergarten teacher and president of the Women's Fellowship (of the United Church) for our area, and is very involved in community activities."

Marina, also from Western Province, says her mother and other female relatives were an important influence. "My mother thought women

had not been given the opportunity in terms of education in the past, and was very keen for me to do well. She was thrilled when I got a scholarship. I think most women in our (Western Province) society would be pleased to see their daughters educated. There are a number of women from Western Province in high positions in the government. I think this is related to our culture. Women are more respected and allowed more independence than in some parts of Solomon Islands. My aunt for instance is now head of a division in the Ministry of Agriculture. She did an agricultural degree in Papua New Guinea. She had a child in her first year and had to come home, but she went back and later went on to do her Masters and PhD."

Linda, whose father is from Western Province and mother from Central Province, was also influenced by her mother and maternal grandmother, with whom she has close ties, though in a somewhat different way. Within her own family Linda saw that her father was head of everything and made all the decisions. "My mother supported him. She accepted it. But I think that's wrong. The thing I noticed most when I stayed with a New Zealand family was how equal the women are with the men. I want to show that women can do anything." It was Linda's father, however, who decided she should stay at school when she wanted to leave and do a secretarial course in Form 3. Her mother agreed, wanting Linda to be better educated than she had been. Despite the unequal relationship which Linda observed between her parents, her mother was in fact well educated and, until her death quite recently, followed a nursing career that involved initiative and determination. "She trained in Solomons and then did three months training in Fiji. After she'd had children, and had worked in

hospitals, she started an urban nursing service in Honiara, nursing people in their homes and through clinics in town."

Two of the three Chinese students in New Zealand in 1990 came from the same family. Their parents had both been teachers and were keen educationalists. "We were introduced to Shakespeare at 12!" Their father had been a previous assistant principal at Chung Wah, originally an all Chinese primary school. According to his elder daughter, he was expelled from this position when he attempted (prematurely for the Chinese community) to integrate Melanesian students into the school. Renee, who had begun school at this stage was forced to change schools, as the whole family faced ostracism from the Chinese community.

The one other Chinese student came from a family of relatively recent immigrants to Solomon Islands. Unlike the majority of the Chinese community who are Cantonese, Kate's family are of Haka origin. Kate's father has had no education. He immigrated to Solomon Islands in the 1960s as a cane chair manufacturer. He and his wife later bought a general store. "I had to help in the shop most days and at weekends. My parents thought it was important to have an education but didn't put any pressure on me. My mother now thinks I've gone too far. I motivated myself really. I wanted to know more, to be more intellectual, to get a degree and a good job. I didn't want to work in a shop forever."

It was difficult to assess the relative importance of various influences in relation to academic success among the 1990 sixth formers,

who responded by way of a questionnaire rather than a personal interview. As with the earlier groups, most cited their parents' (and in a few cases other relatives such as older brothers') encouragement, and their own determination as major factors influencing their ability to reach sixth form level. Nearly all had younger siblings still at school. Among those with older sisters (ten out of 23) it was apparent that in all but one case, where an older sister was studying for a Diploma in Physical Planning, the girls concerned had already reached higher levels of education than their older sisters. Two had sisters doing courses at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, (in one case secretarial) presumably having left school in Form 3 or Form 5. Three others had older sisters who left at Form 5 and one at Form 4.

Three cases of girls who came from rural backgrounds illustrates an apparent trend for improving educational attainment for girls, at least within the families concerned. Alison from Malaita is the daughter of subsistence farmers. Her mother has had no education, her father had primary education only. She had to walk six kilometres to attend primary school. Alison is fifth in a family of six, and has three older sisters. The two oldest girls left school at Standard 6, and the sister just above Alison at Form 3.

Mary from West Rennel, Central Province, had to walk seven kilometres to attend primary school. She has three older sisters. The two oldest both left school in Standard 6. She and a sister two years older than herself were both in the sixth form in 1990.

Natice is the daughter of subsistence farmers in Guadalcanal. Her father had some informal education at a Bible school, her mother no education. She had to walk approximately 3.5 kilometres to attend primary school. She is fifth in a family of eight girls and one boy. Two of Natice's older sisters finished school at primary level, the one just above her at Form 3.

Nine of the 23 sixth formers indicated that they had to walk considerable distances to attend primary school. As this was the case for only one woman (Hilary, Malaita) of those who had held tertiary scholarships, it would suggest that more girls from rural backgrounds may now be reaching sixth form level.

Most notable in interviewing the eight women who had left school at Form 3 or Form 5 was their very much more rural background, compared with the two primary groups, and a considerably greater requirement for them to contribute to the family's economic and social welfare. Only one, whose father was a policeman and who was regularly transferred between provincial centres, avoided being involved in the daily grind of rural survival. It was also clear that, in this group, gender and position within the family were more important factors in determining education chances than in the primary groups. Typical of the responses was that of Perpetua who came from a family of ten, living in Santa Cruz, Temotu Province. "I had a lot of work after I had walked back from school (five kilometres away). I had to collect firewood from the hills, a long way away, I had to clean and cook for the family and help in the garden. And I had to do homework." Despite the

hard work, Perpetua was fortunate, due largely to her position in the family, to have got to school at all. Two of her sisters were not allowed to go to school as her mother needed them to stay at home and help her. The eldest in the family, a girl, left school at Form 5 and became a primary school teacher. The next two children (boys) left at Form 6 and Form 5 and went on to USP and into direct government employment. The fourth child, a girl, was not allowed to go to school, the next, a boy, went to Form 5 and Perpetua to Form 3. Two younger boys left school at Standard 6 and Form 3. The next girl was again not allowed to go to school as by this stage the older girl who had been assisting at home had married. The youngest girl, despite passing the Form 3 examination, left school at that stage to help her parents at home.

While the reasons were not elaborated on, girls suffered even more in Mary Jane's (Malaita) family. The eldest girl in a family of nine, Mary Jane reached Form 3 in a Provincial Secondary School before missing her Form 3 examination. Of her four sisters, two died and a third was handicapped. The youngest was just three.

For two married Form 3 leavers who had previously worked as untrained teachers, a major factor determining their ability to undertake teacher training was the attitude and support of their husbands. Perpetua had been able to leave her husband and child at home in Temotu while she attended the two year primary teacher training course in Honiara, but not without social comment. "My husband is also a teacher so he understood how important it was for me to be trained. He has encouraged me a lot.

But people in the village were surprised that I left my family behind. And surprised that he trusted me."

Education and the role of the church

Among the group of former women students religious affiliations tended to reflect original missionary activity in the area they came from, in particular those from Isabel having a Church of Melanesia (Anglican) background and those from Western Province a United Church (Methodist) background. In one case there had been a conversion from Methodism to Pentecostal. Six of the 11 had grown up in an Anglican background, three in a Methodist and two in a Catholic background.

Of the women students in New Zealand in 1990 there were two Methodists and one Seventh Day Adventist (from Western Province), three Catholics (one with a Central/Western background, and the other two Chinese) and one (Chinese) not stated.

Women who had left school in the third or fifth forms and in 1990 were in teacher training at SICHE, and 1990 female sixth formers were more likely to belong to the newer evangelical churches. Four of the eight Form 3 and Form 5 leavers were affiliated to the South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC). Of the other four, three were Anglican, and one Methodist. Eight of the 23 sixth formers belonged to SSEC and two to the Assemblies of God. Students following these newer religions came

primarily from Malaita and Central Provinces with students from Isabel and Western Provinces maintaining affiliations with the traditional religions of Anglicanism, Methodism or Catholicism. The influence of the evangelical religions on students, particularly girls, was noted by one of the former tertiary women students, now a teacher at KGVI secondary school. "A number of the students, particularly the girls, are very interested in these charismatic Christian groups. Most of the sixth form girls are involved and they lead the others. They have bible readings and prayers and singing in the dormitories early in the morning and at night. It's just happened over the last three or four years, and seems to particularly affect the girls, diverting them from their studies. The school chaplain, who is Church of England, doesn't like it, but other teachers are involved and encourage it. So it has become quite a difficult issue for the school."

The influence of the church in establishing schools and encouraging parents to take advantage of educational opportunities has already been noted, most particularly in the case of Isabel (Church of Melanesia) and Western Province (United Church).

Seven of the 11 former tertiary students had attended church secondary schools and seven, including two who had gone on to the government KGVI National Secondary School rather than a church affiliated secondary school, had attended church primary schools. Of this early group of students only Hilary (Malaita) had had to walk some distance (about three kilometres) to attend the local mission school. In some other

cases there were no schools that girls could attend close by. Lorraine, who was living in Makira at the time, went from Makira to Honiara for her primary schooling. "There was no school close by I could go to. There was a village church school, but only for boys. Only recently has there been a church school for both boys and girls." Several of the former students boarded at single sex church primary schools, especially from Standard 4 on. Gabrielle from Kia in Isabel Province believes that the fact that she was sent away to a church boarding school from Standard 4 enabled her to be more successful in her education than her sisters who were educated in the village. Selina, from Santa Cruz in Temotu was also sent to single sex church boarding schools for her primary education before going on to the Anglican Selwyn College in Honiara. Iris, from the main provincial centre of Buala in Isabel, attended local church primary schools, which from Standard 4, were single sex. She then went on to board at Selwyn College. Natalie (Western Province) attended Catholic junior and senior primary schools in the main centre of Gizo, before boarding at the Methodist Goldie College in Munda, Western Province. Lily attended the Chinese primary school, Chung Wah, in Honiara, her first three years of education being in Chinese medium. She then went on to the Catholic St Joseph's National Secondary School in Honiara, where she was the only Chinese student.

In contrast to the experience of the earlier group of women students, only two out of the seven in New Zealand in 1990 had attended church secondary schools, the remainder all attending the Government KGVI. Three had attended the Catholic St John's Primary School in Honiara.

Among the 1990 sixth form women students 13 out of 23 had attended church secondary schools. While St Joseph's (Catholic), Selwyn (Anglican) and Goldie (Methodist) still feature amongst these, five of the 13 had attended the South Seas Evangelical Church National Secondary School, Su'u, in Malaita before going on to the Government KGVI or Waimapuru (in Makira) for their sixth form year. Of note among the sixth formers was the fact that three had made the relatively uncommon transition from a Provincial Secondary School to a National Secondary School after attaining outstanding results in their Form 3 Examination.

Of the three Form 3 and one Form 5 leavers who had worked as untrained teachers, all had been to provincial secondary schools. One had gone on to Su'u National Secondary School to attain Solomon Islands School Certificate. Of the other four Form 5 leavers, three had gone to church national secondary schools, and the other had attended Pawa Provincial Secondary School before transferring to Waimapuru where she obtained school certificate.

The influence of teachers

Several of the former students in particular noted the positive influence of teachers (usually expatriate) in the church schools in encouraging them to achieve academically. Iris commented, "Certain of my teachers were very encouraging. Selwyn is a small school and we were all very close, and close to the teachers." Natalie too had been encouraged by her teachers.

"I have very good memories of the (Catholic) primary school. We had a local nun in KG but from class 1-7 they were all expatriate teachers. They were good teachers. At Goldie (Methodist NSS) we also had highly qualified teachers - New Zealanders, three Australians, one British. There was also a high proportion of women teachers who were encouraging of the girls. A lot of the qualified Solomon Island teachers were female too, which is different from other provinces." Natalie recalls the pressure put on her by teachers at Goldie to remain at school. "In Form 3 I wanted to leave and do a stenography course that had just been introduced at the Kukum Campus (Honiara Technical Institute, now Solomon Islands College of Higher Education). There was a shorthand club at school and I'd joined that and enjoyed it. I was very cross when the teachers discouraged me from leaving. By Form 5 I thought of stenography again, but the teachers told me I was capable of applying for a degree course so I settled for that." Anita, currently in New Zealand, believes Goldie has a good academic record. "There are always some girls from Goldie in the sixth form at KGVI. The school is on an island so it's difficult to wander off, not like at KGVI where it's easy to go into town. We had mostly English teachers, quite a lot of women. They expect the girls to do as well as the boys."

Several of the former students commented on the range of extra curricula activities available at the church schools, in contrast to KGVI. Julienne believed, "There was a lot more interraction between students and teachers at St Joseph's than at KGVI (where she went for her sixth form

year) and there was a wider range of extra-curricular activities available." At Selwyn College Hilary was involved in drama and girl guides and Selina was able to pursue an interest in Japanese language and Solomon Island languages, as well as being in the school choir and participating in a number of sports, including softball, volleyball and netball.

Among students in New Zealand in 1990 (most of whom had attended KGVI) feelings about the standard of education there relative to other schools varied. Emily was encouraged by her primary teachers to apply for KGVI as her first choice of secondary school rather than the local (Western Province) Goldie College. "People at home thought KGVI was a very good school. My mother told me I should work hard as I was lucky to have the opportunity to go there. All my other friends went to Goldie. I was proud to be going to KGVI, but also sorry to leave." In contrast Kate, a Chinese student in her fourth year in New Zealand, studying microbiology, thought the education at KGVI was so bad that she had persuaded her father to send her two younger brothers to New Zealand for education. "I told my father that KGVI has gone down heaps. There are a lot of local teachers, mainly trained in PNG and Fiji, and the level of English isn't good. I always wanted to do music when I was at school, but they had no-one to teach it. There was no drama club, and not much sport." Sports however appeared to be the main extra-curricular activity that other students who had attended KGVI had been involved in. Gabrielle had excelled at sports. "I was very keen on sports when I was at KGVI and represented the country at netball at the South Pacific games."

The 'culling' process

The account of their schooling given by the women who had held New Zealand tertiary scholarships illustrates the drastic culling process that occurs by way of examination at Standard 6, Form 3 and Form 5 levels. The process impacts most severely on female students.

For some, such as Hilary, who had had to walk several kilometres to attend a newly established small mission school in Malaita, there were few girls at school to begin with. "When I was at primary school (1972-77) parents did tend to send boys more than girls. By Standard 6 there were only 12 girls out of 40 students, and just four of us went on, three of us to Selwyn (NSS) and one to a provincial secondary school. Things are changing now. I noticed when I was back in the village last month that boys and girls are all sent to school now."

Gabrielle (Isabel) who was at primary school 1960-1967 says there were always more boys than girls even at primary level. "It depends on the attitudes of parents. My husband is from Malaita. There are five boys and one girl in his family, and the girl had to stay home. Even in Isabel some people had their daughters stay home." Only a small number of girls at Gabrielle's senior primary school went on to secondary, but the biggest drop out she recalls was at the Form 2 (now Form 3) selection level. "By Form 5 (1972) there were only 12 girls out of 90. The Principal selected a number of pupils to apply for scholarships, but only two girls, myself and Rebecca." (Both women now hold senior government positions.)

Iris (Isabel) and Natalie (Western) were in the first sixth form class in the country in 1977. There were only two other women in that class of approximately 30 students, another woman from Western Province and a ni-Vanuatu student, living in Solomon Islands. They had seen their friends drop out of school along the way. Natalie recalled, "In Form 2 (at Goldie) there were 35 girls. By Form 5 only five remained to sit their Cambridge O levels. Two passed." At Selwyn, according to Iris, there were slightly more girls. "We had 35 boys and 12 girls in Form 5." Natalie believes that based on school test results more girls should have got through the examinations and suspects that the Ministry of Education may have "hidden selection criteria." The following year (1978) two sixth form classes were introduced at KGVI but, Lorraine recalled, "There were still only six girls out of 60 students. Most of my friends left in Form 5. Quite a lot wanted to go on to the sixth form. Some did foundation years at USP or in PNG on government scholarships. Some went to work in offices."

The number of girls had not increased by Julienne's sixth form year (1979). There were just five girls out of 60 students. "Most of my friends had left in Form 2. Some had failed the selection for Form 3 but there were other reasons too. They or their parents felt that was enough education, especially if they came from villages in Malaita. Some came back for the first term of Form 3 and then their parents decided they shouldn't go on. It's more acceptable for women from Western Province to go on. Women have a lot more authority there."

By the time those women studying in New Zealand in 1990 reached sixth form level things had improved only slightly in favour of women. In Renee's year (1982) there were 13 girls in the sixth form, three in the science stream and ten in the arts stream. "From Form 1 to Form 5 (taking into account students who leave and others who come in from other schools after the Form 3 exam) there were about 12 girls out of 45 at KGVI. Around 60% leave at Form 3 and 90% at Form 5. At Form 5 there are around 300 students competing for 60 places in Form 6." (This was prior to the establishment of an additional sixth form at Waimapuru NSS, Makira Province in 1989). While failure to pass exams to the level required was one reason for the high female drop-out rate throughout secondary school, Renee (a Chinese student), believed other reasons were also important. "Most wanted to get married and have a family. Marriage is an important status symbol in Melanesian culture. Some had had enough of school work and wanted to get jobs. Most didn't want to get into the sixth form."

By the time Kate was in the sixth form (1985) the numbers of girls had again fallen to nine (six doing science and three arts) and the following year when Anita and Marina went through there were again just nine, two of whom dropped out before the end of the year. Marina had been through secondary school at KGVI. "In Form 5 there were about 17 girls out of 64 students. I was the only female boarding student at the school who went on to the sixth form. There were two other KGVI part-Chinese day students who went on. The others (such as Anita) came in from other schools. Others passed school certificate in Form 5 but their grades were not good

enough to get into the sixth form. You have to have As and Bs. Some of my friends who left went to work in banks or did a certificate course as health educators at SICHE. I was going to do nursing if I didn't get into the sixth form."

Reflecting on what had happened to her sixth form friends, Anita commented, "Most of the girls from Form 6 went on to university, but most also dropped out in the first one or two years. There are only three of us still left at university." (Marina's scholarship was terminated when she failed to pass sufficient units to gain entry to a Bachelor of Pharmacy course. She has since returned to undertake a Dispensary Assistant's Certificate course.)

By Emily and Linda's time (1989), numbers of girls in the sixth form at KGVI had increased to 17 out of 60 (16 from the second term). At the time this research was carried out (1990) there were again 17 women sixth formers at KGVI and another six in the newly established sixth form at Waimapuru National Secondary School in Makira. Both Emily and Linda related that most girls had dropped out at Form 3. Linda believed that girls were being given encouragement at school but that fewer passed the exams. She thought that those who dropped out at that stage had often come in from primary schools in the provinces where the quality of education in terms of teachers, facilities and resources, was not as high as in Honiara. A former New Zealand scholarship holder now teaching at KGVI also commented that, "Girls often do well at Form 1 and 2 but as they go up

they tend to lose interest. There is no special counselling for girls. It's something the school needs."

Among the 1990 sixth formers, half stated that most of their friends had left school at Form 5, because they didn't get into the sixth form, to get jobs, or to go on to further training, including nursing, at SICHE. Most of the remainder said that their friends had left at Form 3, largely because they failed the exam or in one or two cases because they were expelled (over boyfriends). One student from a rural Western Province background noted that her best friends had left at Standard 6 after failing to pass the Secondary Selection examination.

Of the untrained teachers (three Form 3 and one Form 5 leavers) all stated that the majority of their friends had left at Standard 6, having failed to pass the secondary exam. As noted earlier, all but one of these women had had to walk considerable distances to school, and to assist with heavy domestic chores. Perpetua (Temotu) recalled, "We had 12 girls in Standard 6 and 18 boys. Three girls went on to Form 1 and ten boys." Joyline (Makira) had also been fortunate to get into secondary school. "In Standard 6 there were 13 girls and 15 boys. Two girls went to national secondary schools and four to provincial secondary school. The rest went home."

Most of the secondary teacher trainees (Form 5 leavers) saw the major drop-out stage as Form 3. Most of their own best friends however

had gone through to the fifth form. Of the four secondary teacher trainees interviewed, only one had applied for a place in the sixth form and failed to get in. Two others (one whose parents were from Malaita and Makira, and another from Makira) had been instructed not to go on by their fathers, who wanted them to go into direct employment, and only with reluctance agreed that they should train as secondary teachers in home economics on government scholarships. The fourth (of Malaitan background, living in Western Province) had "had enough of school. I didn't want to do another year. I was thinking of taking an office job at Kukum Campus (SICHE). I had been for an interview and been accepted. Then the careers master said there were two more spaces for people to do home economics teacher training and he put my name in because I'd done home economics. He didn't even ask me. At interview time people just get pushed into various careers and the careers masters favour their wantoks, giving them the best opportunities. Some of my friends said teaching was OK, so I decided to take it up, and now I'm enjoying it. My parents encouraged me. At first they were worried about finance, but seeing I was sponsored by the government it was alright."

Summary

The ability of Solomon Islands girls to, firstly, enter school, then to survive the 'draconian' culling process which occurs at regular intervals throughout the education system in response to the scarcity of places available, and,

finally, to reach the sixth form is constrained by many factors. Most importantly these include societal values and family attitudes, the level of parents' education and their employment and financial ability to sustain the costs of their daughter's education (including the cost of foregone family labour), the accessibility of schools and the quality of teaching and educational resources available to them, as well as the personal capability and determination of the individual. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that the majority of Solomon Islands women who had been awarded New Zealand tertiary study scholarships came from relatively well off 'town'-based families, with educated 'liberal' parents who were themselves aware of the value of education. They also derived income from sources other than, or as well as, agriculture thus enabling them to cover the costs (both direct and indirect) of maintaining their daughter at school for an extended period. The lack of necessity in most cases, for women in the primary target group to contribute labour for the household's subsistence requirements was, no doubt, an enabling and important factor in their educational chances and was in contrast to many of the family experiences described by women who had left school at Form 3 or Form 5 levels. This group was notable for its very much more rural and less privileged socio-economic background. Parents' education levels were lower, with five of the mothers and two of the fathers of the eight women interviewed having no education. As children most of the women had had to walk significant distances to school and contribute to the family's subsistence. The correlation between the socio-economic background (in particular parent's provincial origin, education and employment) and academic achievement

was found to be not as closely linked for the men interviewed for this research as for the women.

Despite this generalisation of the socio-economic background of the primary target group, it is significant that, in the face of the immense odds against them, a few of the women who had held tertiary awards had come from quite different backgrounds. Hilary, in particular, stands out as having come from a conservative, rural Malaitan background with parents who were poor, uneducated, subsistence farmers. Through her own ability and determination, the far-sightedness of her father and the willingness of her family to make considerable sacrifices, she too 'made it' through to the sixth form and attained a New Zealand scholarship to study overseas.

The predominance of women in the primary target group from matrilineal societies in Isabel and Western Provinces suggests that early opportunities for the education of girls were more readily taken up in those societies where women traditionally hold higher status and where value systems are more conclusive to an expansion of women's traditional roles. In this respect, the fieldwork for this research reflects national statistics which describe a more equitable distribution of the scarce educational opportunities available between the sexes in Isabel and Western Provinces as opposed to the strongly patrilineal society of Malaita.

While only Hilary, amongst the primary target group, had come from Malaita Province and described an early childhood characterised by a

significant contribution to the household's subsistence, and long walks to school each day, it is significant that in 1990 nine of the 23 sixth form women came from Malaita Province, and that the same number indicated that they had had to walk long distances to attend primary school. This suggests that, along with the expansion of school facilities into rural areas (albeit slow and inadequate to keep pace with rapid population increase), there may be an increasing recognition, even in more conservative societies, of the importance of education for girls. This, together with some evidence that suggests young women are more likely to remit a larger proportion of earnings from formal sector employment than young men to their parents and wantoks (Birks and Marau, 1988:8.10), has the potential in time to result in a significant change in the traditional status and roles of women in patrilineal societies such as Malaita.

Note

(1) Since the fieldwork for this research was carried out Choiseul, previously part of Western Province, has become the eighth province of Solomon Islands.

CHAPTER 6

OBTAINING A TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP

Introduction

Having survived the 'drastic' culling process of primary and secondary school examinations and won the privilege of entry into the sixth form, it has, at least until recently, been almost a foregone conclusion that, providing they pass the sixth form examination with reasonable grades, all students would obtain scholarships for tertiary study overseas. There is also an implicit expectation, on the part of parents, teachers and peers, that students will wish to proceed to tertiary study overseas. To opt, at this stage, for a career requiring a lesser qualification, such as nursing or primary teacher training, is difficult for a student, who may be considered 'ungrateful' for not making the most of the opportunity they have been offered, 'selfish' for unnecessarily taking up a scarce sixth form place, and almost certainly a 'disappointment' to parents and teachers. This chapter describes the 'process' involved in the allocation of tertiary scholarships and the factors which influenced the decision-making of the women interviewed on courses of study and future careers.

The scholarship "process"

There was little difference in how past and current tertiary students and 1990 sixth formers described the process they had gone through in applying for a scholarship. Initial questions about why they had chosen to apply for a New Zealand scholarship were found to be irrelevant. Students have little control over where they study and often a limited choice of what they study. Most are sent to the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji, or to universities in Papua New Guinea (usually the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in Port Moresby, or the University of Technology (UNITECH) in Lae). The brightest sixth form students, depending on their field of study, go to New Zealand (where they generally first complete a seventh form year) or to Australia. Those taking up Australian tertiary awards are more likely to be mature 'in-service' students as opposed to school leavers.

The lack of an overall human resource development plan for the country makes the process of allocating tertiary study awards difficult and somewhat 'ad hoc', dependent to a large extent on public and private sector employers annual perceptions of their future staffing requirements, or wishes. The scholarship 'process' was outlined by Hazel Lulei, Chief Administration Officer of the National Training Unit (NTU) of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD). "At the beginning of each year a circular is sent from the Manpower Planning Unit of MEHRD to government ministries, churches, ... all employment agencies, asking for

submissions on future staffing requirements. These are received by the end of May, and adjusted by the Manpower Planning Unit in accordance with what they are able to accommodate in terms of funding and what they consider to be reasonable. An 'opportunity list' is then produced and circulated to NTU and to all sixth form career masters. Career counselling around the scholarship list is then carried out and students complete scholarship application forms and return them to NTU. Scholarship interviews are generally held in early August."

Students are interviewed by a panel of around eight to ten members of the National Training Committee, including officials of the Ministries of Education and Human Resource Development, Finance and Economic Planning, and Labour, a women's representative, and a professional (for example, doctor, pharmacist or agriculturalist) appropriate to the scholarship being offered. On the basis of these interviews, and their mid-term examination results, students are provisionally accepted for a graduate degree or diploma or for attachment, usually with a government ministry, prior to tertiary study. Final confirmation of the scholarship is dependent on end of year examination results.

Criteria for obtaining a scholarship are based primarily on academic grades. "The Committee will examine school reports which include comments from house masters on behaviour, attitudes and outside interests and these might have a positive or negative influence on the panel, but basically the criteria is academic" says Hazel Lulei. She admits that

sometimes women get a hard time at the scholarship interviews. "In the most recent interviews, for instance, a girl had nominated her first choice as meteorology. Some panel members were trying to get her to change her mind about her choice. I was pleased the girl was quite assertive. She asked us, "Is this job just for men?" The men were embarrassed and didn't say anything. I think that shook them. It was good that the interview came early on in the programme though. Almost all the girls were asked, "Why did you apply for a scholarship?" Mostly they replied that this is a developing country and few women are taking up opportunities to be better educated and take up positions of responsibility. I thought the women came through quite strongly. Women are now being accepted for a much wider range of scholarships. In 1984 our records show most women were going overseas for either teacher training or accountancy. In 1989 they were enrolled in all sorts of areas of study, with a trend towards more non-traditional areas such as engineering, piloting, agriculture and medicine." Lulei thought that when the interview panel had to make a choice it was on the basis of merit. However, her intervention on at least one occasion ensured a decision of positive discrimination in favour of a woman student. "In one case the Ministry of Police and Justice had indicated that they needed six or seven lawyers. Three women and fifteen men had applied for law scholarships and the choice had been made for six. Amongst the remainder one woman had scored as high marks as three or four others. I pointed out that it was important to have women lawyers. In our society it is not acceptable for women to talk to men about their problems. My point was accepted and the woman got the place. I think if I had not spoken up for her she would have missed out."

This incident highlights the importance of ensuring that people able to defend the interests of women are represented on all scholarship interview panels. In recent years senior administration positions within NTU (and in the recent past OTU) have been held by women aware and concerned about the need to encourage the greater participation of women in tertiary education. However, the high incidence of staff transfer that occurs within the public service means that this is unlikely to always be the case, emphasising the importance for women's organisations to ensure that the position of women's advocate, which has been established on the scholarship committee, is filled.

While students are asked to indicate their preferred country of study there are many times when they do not get the placing wanted. The Government tries to get as many as possible into USP and UPNG, which are the most cost effective options. With the addition in 1989 of a new sixth form at Waimapuru National Secondary School in Makira Province, the Government has had to increase its sponsorship of scholarships as there were insufficient scholarships available under the development assistance programme. In 1990, some sixth form students were to receive "in-country" scholarships to SICHE, so no longer can all sixth formers expect to go overseas. In general it has been found that students at USP adapt quicker and are more content than those in PNG. Hazel Lulei explained, "Students in PNG often have problems, especially resulting from social pressures and harassment. Ideally we'd like to try to get students away from PNG. We have lost a lot of women in PNG, who have got married or got pregnant.

Nonetheless it is not correct to say there is a bigger drop out rate amongst women than men. People often say that, but I don't agree. The number of women on scholarships is much smaller to begin with."

Factors influencing choice of study and career

While only one of the former or current women tertiary scholarship holders indicated that she had had difficulty securing a scholarship, few felt they had had sufficient career counselling, some had had to accept scholarships for study in disciplines not of their own or their first choice and a number were uncertain until the last moment about where they would be studying.

For the earliest women students decisions about what or where they should study were all effectively made for them. Gabrielle was in the sixth form in 1972. "The Scholarships Board decided I should study for a BA in Education. I'd never thought about being a teacher. But I had no strong feelings. It didn't bother me until I came back for teaching practice. There were only two options about where to study. I wanted to go to Fiji. I'd heard about PNG and it sounded a bit scarey." Natalie, in the sixth form in 1972, had clear ideas about the career she wanted to pursue. "I wanted to be a lawyer, though my English teacher tried to get me to do English studies. I was influenced by an aunt (part Australian) who was a lawyer. We used to talk about land issues and legal issues a lot. My parents were a bit concerned when I chose law. It wasn't the usual choice for a woman.

They were concerned it would take a long time, and what if I got married...?"

Unlike Natalie, for two later students the choice to do law was either not of their own making or was based on a limited knowledge of what was involved. Lorraine, in the sixth form in 1978, felt 'pressured' by family and friends who said there was a need for women lawyers in Solomon Islands. "I wanted to do something, but I wasn't sure what. No one gave me any advice. I wasn't really interested in law, but I thought I should do it to please my family." Julienne, in the sixth form the following year, was influenced by Lorraine's decision to become a lawyer, and again by the fact that there were no women lawyers in Solomon Islands. Her teacher in the fifth form at St Josephs National Secondary School had wanted her to study English. Rachel, in the sixth form with Lorraine in 1978, was keen to become a lawyer, but was selected to do economics, her second choice "mainly because I did well in commerce as a subject in Form 5 and economics in Form 6."

Mature students had to take the initiative if they were to obtain a scholarship, the vast majority of which go to sixth form leavers. As Selina found, securing a scholarship under these circumstances was far from easy. She initially spoke with New Zealand High Commission staff in Honiara, wrote to Auckland University and filled in the appropriate application forms. Despite being highly motivated to pursue a career in anthropology (she had been assistant curator and ethnologist at the National Museum from 1978-84) and, as her degree comprising A and B+

grades was to prove, also highly capable, Selina encountered considerable, and from her perspective unjustified, resistance from both the Ministry of Education and the Public Service in obtaining a scholarship for tertiary study. While finally successful, the resistance continued after she had commenced study in New Zealand. "After being in New Zealand on an ODA scholarship for three months I received a letter from the Ministry of Education telling me that I shouldn't have taken up the scholarship because I wasn't eligible. Furthermore, if I failed any of the courses that year they threatened to terminate the scholarship. Can you imagine the stress that put me under?" Further problems arose when Selina, having completed an outstanding first degree, again took the initiative and secured an East-West Centre Scholarship for an MA in Anthropology. "I had discussed the idea with the Ministry of Public Service, the Overseas Training Unit and the Training Coordinating Committee and they had approved it. I was supposed to return to my job at the museum for eight months while waiting to go to Hawaii in August. This I did. The week I was leaving, however, the Ministry of Education wrote and told me I couldn't go because there were public service requirements I had not met. This presented a dilemma because if I turned down the scholarship the chances of getting another one from the East-West Centre or another source would be slim. They gave me two options; either go and be terminated from the Public Service or stay on in the job. I took the former option."

Selina believes that there is no specific explanation for the resistance she encountered but rather that, "these incidents are illustrative

of public servants' (predominantly men) attitudes towards women, although I hope this is an isolated case. I cannot offer you any explanations because as far as I was concerned, I did not overlook or break any regulations. Thus I can only put these actions down to discrimination on the basis of sex, where one is from, if one has or hasn't any relatives or friends in positions of decision-making or if a woman or particular individuals' have the courage to speak up for their rights. I tend to believe such decisions are made erratically depending on what individuals' attitudes are, their personal jealousies, grudges in seeing women especially getting better education than themselves. It has nothing to do with breaking Public Service rules and codes of conduct."

Therese also applied as a mature student for a New Zealand scholarship but (perhaps partly because of the lack of competition for Dip TESL scholarships) had little difficulty in securing one at short notice. She approached the Head of the School of Industrial Development at SICHE where she worked to allow her time off for study, confirmed the availability of scholarship with New Zealand High Commission staff, completed application forms, and herself ensured they were processed through the Ministry of Education and Training. Timing before the course began was tight and within the space of two weeks Therese had obtained a scholarship.

Hilary, one of the youngest of the former students, had been influenced by her rural subsistence background in Small Malaita to apply for an economics scholarship with the hope that in the future she might be able

to influence government rural development policies. She had initially obtained a place at UPNG which she believed had a superior economics course but at the last moment was withdrawn when it was found that law and medical students had filled all available places. She was sent instead to USP.

Women students in New Zealand in 1990 all originally obtained medical or related (usually pharmacy) scholarships. For some this choice of career was determined by personal feelings or experiences. Linda, in Form 7 at New Plymouth Girls' High School stated, "When my grandmother got sick she wouldn't have doctors or anyone to see her. She only wanted me around. So I started thinking that we really needed someone in the family who knew about medicine. I was also influenced by what happened to my mother (who died recently). I thought she hadn't been properly looked after. Also there are very few women doctors. The country needs more doctors. If people are sick you don't have a good workforce. So I saw it was a good way to contribute to the development of my country."

Others decided not to apply for a medical scholarship, but for something in a related field. Future career prospects played a part in Amy's decision-making. "I was interested in the medical field but didn't want to be a doctor. The hours are too long and you need to think about it every day. I thought pharmacy would be a good career. You are helping people and there is a big demand for pharmacists. There isn't a qualified Solomon Islands pharmacist yet, so you could become Chief Pharmacist." Emily,

who really wants to do medicine, realised in the sixth form that the competition for medical scholarships would be intense, and she was likely to miss out. She therefore made a calculated decision to apply for scholarships in areas where the competition would not be so great. "I put down radiography as my first choice and physiotherapy as my second. I knew that if I did OK I could most likely change to medicine after I came to New Zealand."

Anita had not initially applied for a pharmacy scholarship. She had been interviewed and was accepted for a civil aviation course in Australia. When this course was cancelled, her sixth form careers master 'slotted' her in to a New Zealand scholarship vacancy to do pharmacy. "I was quite interested in pharmacy, but after Form 7 in New Zealand I realised I didn't enjoy biology. One of my teachers at New Plymouth Girls' High School talked to me about what I might do. She had a daughter who had done mechanical engineering and I thought 'that sounds different, maybe I'll do that'."

Career counselling

While some of the former and current tertiary students felt they had inadequate study and career counselling at school, Ken Watkinson (Careers Master at King George VI National Secondary School) believed that present sixth formers, at least at KGVI were given a comprehensive programme of careers guidance which included a range of outside speakers, both Solomon Island and expatriate. Watkinson conceded, however, that the

speakers were almost invariably men and that there was no special counselling available to girls. As far as it was possible to ascertain, careers masters in all national secondary schools were male and there was no career counselling aimed specifically at girls.

Of the twenty-three 1990 sixth formers questioned, most stated they had received some career counselling at school during their sixth form year. Several considered their most useful "counselling", however, had come from their home experience, for instance in "helping on our family farm", and "helping in our family business in the holidays." Several others were not happy with the counselling and support they had received. Alison had always wanted to be a lawyer. However, "when I came to the sixth form, I was put into the science stream and not arts. So now I would be out-nominated if I chose law as my scholarship."

Several sixth formers (from Waimapuru NSS) appeared to hold quite different study and career aspirations from the scholarships for which they had been nominated. Their questionnaires appeared also to indicate a degree of confusion over the whole process. Surigeni from Makira illustrated this confusion in her response. "We went for an interview. I was accepted for journalism. I'd like to be a home economics teacher. I hope to study in Australia because I know that there is a college there where you can learn home economics." Vaelyn (Central Province) would like to study for a BA to become a secondary school teacher. She was, however, accepted for journalism and said she was "expected to do a year's attachment as a journalist with a paper in Honiara." Betsy, from Isabel

Province, illustrated in her response the pressures and expectations on students from parents, teachers and peers to take up the opportunity for an overseas scholarship. "If it were possible I'd like to go to the College of Higher Education to do nursing but I am expected to go overseas to train for a scholarship I have been offered."

Family influence in attaining scholarships

None of the seven 1990 and only three of the former eleven women tertiary students had immediate family members or close relatives in positions of influence in the government at the time they were awarded scholarships. Of most direct relevance was the situation of two of the earliest women students, both from Isabel, one of whom had an aunt and the other a close cousin involved directly in the scholarship process (one as Head of the Overseas Training Unit and the other as Chairman of the Scholarships Committee). There was no evidence to suggest, however, that their influence had played a part in the women concerned obtaining a scholarship. Their encouragement and knowledge of the scholarship process and overseas study opportunities was however acknowledged as a helpful factor in the women's decision to apply for a scholarship. Both women were clearly capable and deserving of scholarships; completing their tertiary qualifications in minimum time and both later going on to successfully complete post graduate qualifications. Both have performed exceptionally well in their careers, one becoming the first woman permanent

secretary of a government department and the other becoming the first woman head of a department at KGVI National Secondary School. For two other former women students the prestigious positions their fathers occupied in society, as Archbishop of the Church of Melanesia and as a doctor and prominent politician, were insufficient to reverse the government's decision to terminate their daughters' scholarships following their failure to pass units towards law degrees.

Parents' attitudes to their daughter's overseas study award

Parents of all women awarded scholarships were happy and proud of their daughter's success, emotions which in general overrode concerns, particularly on the part of mothers, for their daughters' safety. Rachel said, "My parents were happy and proud, though my mother was a bit worried I would be lonely as I was the only girl selected to go to UPNG in 1978. Also, she'd heard the news about the rascals and mugging in Port Moresby and was worried about that." Lorraine remembered, "My parents were proud of me. They had a lot of church friends in New Zealand. Still, my mother was a bit concerned. I had never been away before and my mother had always been very strict with us." Similarly, while Julienne's father was pleased, her mother was worried about her safety. "I was her first daughter, and she didn't want me to get into trouble." Marina recalled, "My mother was thrilled, but she panicked when it was time for me to go! I think most women in our society (Western Province) would be pleased to see their daughters

educated." Anita's parents had no concerns about her studying overseas. "My family said, 'that's good', but they didn't want to know much. I think my mother was quite proud. They had no concerns about my safety. I'd always made, and been encouraged to make, my own decisions, which is quite unusual in Solomon Islands society."

Summary

Until the establishment in 1989 of a sixth form class at Waimapuru NSS, additional to the two existing classes at King George VI NSS, it was the expectation that all students who succeeded in passing the sixth form examination would proceed overseas to tertiary study. Students have little control over where they study. The majority are sent to the most cost-effective regional educational institutions, usually in Fiji or Papua New Guinea. A few of the brightest gain awards to New Zealand or Australia.

The lack of an official human resource development plan for the country results in a somewhat ad hoc approach to the allocation of scholarships which is dependent primarily on the perceived future staffing needs of public and private sector employers.

While there is evidence of some continuing resistence among members of scholarship interview committees to women taking up study in non-traditional areas, Ministry of Education records show a trend over the late 80s for women to move away from areas such as teaching and

accountancy into less traditional areas such as engineering, agriculture and medicine.

The most frequently cited influences in decision-making about future study and career choices among the women interviewed were within the constraints of the scholarships offered, parents or other close family and/or family background experiences, interest in the area, and a desire to do something to "help" people and to assist the country. While teachers influenced (or determined) the study/career of some, there were also a few cases where students made decisions directly opposed to the advice of their teachers. Although career counselling is available in national secondary school to a greater or lesser degree, there is little attempt to provide counselling aimed specifically at meeting the needs of girls. Statements in questionnaires completed by some 1990 sixth formers suggest a wide divergence between their own interests and the scholarship they were to be awarded - a situation unlikely to be conducive to future successful tertiary study.

CHAPTER 7

THE OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE

Introduction

This chapter discusses the academic and personal experiences of 18 Solomon Islands women who had either previously, or in 1990 currently, held New Zealand tertiary scholarships. They were among some of the first women in their country to have university training and in doing so to break with strong societal traditions and expectations of the role of women. For the majority, it was their first time away from a sheltered, isolated and constrained social environment. As well as the need to develop independent and disciplined study habits if they were to succeed academically, they had also to confront new cultures and new ideas - often very much more 'liberal' (most particularly in relation to the role and status of women) than they had been used to. Most of them suffered initially from some degree of 'culture shock' and homesickness, but for all it was an experience which broadened their horizons, increased their independence and self-confidence and enabled them to view their own society in a more objective light. The extent to which both the New Zealand and Solomon Islands Governments were successful in supporting students to adapt to the new academic and social situations which they faced is assessed.

Academic achievement

Of the 11 former women students interviewed, three had held scholarships for study at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji, two for study in Papua New Guinea (one at the University of Technology (UNITECH) in Lae, the other at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in Port Moresby), and six for study in New Zealand. Of those who had studied in New Zealand, two had studied previously at USP (on other scholarships) and another two had undertaken foundation years (equivalent to Form 7) at USP immediately prior to coming to New Zealand. Three had attended Form 7 in New Zealand (two at Nelson College for Girls and the other at Marlborough Girls' College) prior to commencing tertiary study.

All but one of the seven women tertiary students in New Zealand in 1990 had attended seventh form at New Plymouth Girls' High School. The other, who had been in New Zealand the longest, had undertaken a foundation year at USP before commencing a medical degree at Auckland University.

Of the 11 former students, six successfully completed the courses for which they had been nominated (four BAs, one DipTESL, and one LLB) with a further two completing lesser tertiary qualifications (a diploma and a certificate) than the degrees they had been nominated for. Three failed to complete qualifications, having their scholarships (two LLBs and one BAcct) terminated following failure to pass required units.

Of the six who successfully completed their original scholarship courses, three did exceptionally well, going on immediately, or after only a short break, to post-graduate study. Hilary (from Malaita) completed a BA in economics at USP and was then offered a scholarship for a postgraduate diploma in physical planning in Queensland, Australia. She returned as Solomon Islands' first woman physical planner. Rachel (from Makira) also completed a BA in economics at UPNG and was given permission to extend her scholarship to undertake an Honours degree. She returned to Solomon Islands and, after some work experience, became the first woman senior planner in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. In 1990 she was completing an MA in economics at the University of New England in Australia. Selina (from Temotu) also completed an excellent degree in minimum time at Auckland University and, through her own initiative, was awarded an East-West Centre scholarship to study for an MA in anthropology in Hawaii. For reasons which were unclear (discussed below) Selina was forced to resign her position as Ethnologist at the Solomon Islands National Museum to take up this scholarship.

Of the six completing original degrees only one took longer than the minimum time required. Natalie studied for a BA/LLB in New Zealand from 1980-85, having first undertaken a foundation year at USP. She dropped the BA in her second year at Otago University (now regretting this decision as she feels a BA would have given her wider options to pursue post graduate qualifications). Natalie took two years above the minimum to complete her LLB. In 1986 she failed to complete her professional exams

and, following lengthy negotiations with both Solomon Islands and New Zealand officials to be allowed to stay and repeat the exams, she finally returned home to attempt the two remaining papers extramurally in 1987. Natalie cites poor health, personal/family problems and her involvement in the Cyclone Namu appeal as reasons for her academic failures over her last two years in New Zealand. While not completing her professional exams, Natalie returned to Solomon Islands having achieved considerable success in becoming the country's first woman lawyer.

Two who followed her into law were not so successful. After a difficult year at Marlborough Girls' College, where she fell sick with pneumonia and bronchitis, and felt homesick and 'inferior', Lorraine commenced study for an LLB at Otago University. In her first year she failed a law unit but passed history and anthropology, discovering she had a particular interest in anthropology. Her attempts to change her degree to a BA however met with complete resistance from the Overseas Training Unit (OTU) of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education. In her second year after again failing to pass her law unit, her scholarship was terminated, leaving her feeling extremely bitter, a 'failure' and a 'disappointment' to her parents. Julienne (from a Western/Malaitan background) took up a law scholarship the year after Lorraine, studying at Nelson College for Girls and then Auckland University. In her law intermediate year (1981) she passed only two out of six papers, and her scholarship was terminated immediately, OTU apparently being influenced in this decision by Lorraine's failure to pass her law unit on a second attempt. Julienne sees the main reason she

failed as her inability to cope with the lack of discipline and the 'free time' of university, too much of which she spent with friends. Julienne's father, an influential doctor and politician, tried unsuccessfully to obtain a reversal of OTUs decision to terminate her scholarship. From 1983-85 Julienne returned to New Zealand as a private student but failed to complete a BA degree. In 1990 she was hoping to obtain a further New Zealand scholarship to complete the remaining three papers.

The one other former student whose scholarship was terminated following failure in her second year had been studying for an accountancy degree at UNITECH. Ailsa from Guadalcanal believes her own lack of self discipline was the main reason for her failure. "I spent too much time socialising. I was being too good for everybody that I was always disturbed by both boys and girls. In particular my boyfriend (now husband) demanded too much of my time."

Of the two former students who changed courses, Gabrielle (from Isabel) did so for personal reasons. She had commenced study for a BA in education at USP in 1973, but during her first year met her future husband and, "wanted to finish as soon as possible." She therefore changed her course to the shorter Diploma in Education which she completed with no problems. Gabrielle has, since returning to Solomon Islands in 1975, successfully completed study for a Diploma in Public Administration (PNG 1980-82) and a BA in Politics and Administration (Canada 1987-90).

Lily (a Chinese student from Honiara) failed to pass her seventh form bursary exam at New Plymouth Girls' High School and gain admission to a B Pharmacy degree course. She was however accepted for a Diploma in Pharmacy course at the Central Institute of Technology (CIT) in 1984 but passed only one paper. She then transferred to a Dispensary Assistant's Certificate course based at Wellington Hospital and passed this well in 1987. After a year's work experience in Solomon Islands she returned to New Zealand on a World Health Organisation (WHO) scholarship to again attempt a Diploma in Pharmacy and was in her second year of this course when interviewed in 1990. Lily puts her initial lack of success down to settling into a new country and family worries.

Four of the seven women students in New Zealand in 1990 had been awarded scholarships for pharmacy degrees but only Amy (a Chinese student from Honiara) was still pursuing this course of study and was about to sit her pharmacy intermediate exams at Otago University.

Marina (from Western Province) failed pharmacy intermediate at Otago University in 1988 after a seventh form year at New Plymouth Girls' High School (NPGHS). She regrets, as do some of the more recent students, not taking English in the seventh form as she still has difficulty writing essays and tackling written exam questions. After a break of some months in Solomon Islands she returned to commence a Dispensary Assistant's Certificate course, based initially at Gisborne Hospital and later at Otago.

Anita (also from Western Province) had been able to change her scholarship award in pharmacy to mechanical engineering after finding she had no interest in biology after a seventh form year. She had failed two units in her first professional year at Canterbury University, putting this down to difficulty in getting used to the change in emphasis from a purely academic to a more practical approach. She was repeating these units in 1990 and at the time of interview felt confident of passing all units. Pursuing study in a non-traditional area for women, Anita had undertaken engineering practical work experience during her university holidays, in the Ministry of Transport, Works and Utilities Workshop in Honiara - an extremely male work environment. She had, nonetheless, enjoyed the experience, encountering no problems and winning the respect of her supervisors and workmates.

Kate (a Chinese student from Honiara) had failed the pharmacy intermediate year at Otago University in 1987. At the time of her enrolment she had been forced to take physics as part of this course, despite her insistence that she would not be able to do it. As she had predicted, she failed physics that year but passed all her other units. "The following year students didn't have to take physics. They could take two or three maths papers instead. It didn't occur to me that I could have repeated pharmacy intermediate, and no-one suggested it. I decided to go on with a BSc. I thought if I completed that I could reapply to do pharmacy. Now I want to stick with the course I'm doing." In 1990 Kate was hoping to complete a degree in microbiology and to return to work in the area of malaria research in Solomon Islands.

Renee (also Chinese) was awarded a scholarship to study medicine in 1982. After a foundation year at USP she commenced a medical degree at Auckland University in 1984. She failed one of her intermediate papers in her first year and failed a professional year in 1989, which she was repeating when interviewed in 1990. Renee believes this failure was in part due to a personality clash with a surgeon whom she believed had a discriminatory attitude towards foreign students. She had also had trouble answering a multiple choice paper, maintaining that "medicine is not a 'black and white' science." She felt confident of passing in 1990 and expected to complete her degree in 1993.

The two youngest students were in 1990 both attending New Plymouth Girls' High School and, according to their headmistress, were doing well in preparing for bursary exams. Both were receiving extra tuition in all subjects. Linda was expecting to go on to study medicine and, while Emily had been nominated for a scholarship to study radiography, was hoping that her bursary results would be good enough to enable her to transfer to a medical degree.

While this research was unable to finally predict the academic outcomes of those students studying in New Zealand in 1990, the success rate for the earlier group of tertiary women students who had returned to Solomon Islands was 72.7% (including the 'downgraded' qualifications obtained by two of this group). This outcome is slightly higher than the findings of a recent study of the effectiveness of tertiary awards for Solomon Islands students undertaken by the Australian, New Zealand and Solomon

Islands Governments and covering tertiary students who had returned home over the period 1980-1992. This study found that for Solomon Islands women who had studied in Fiji or Western Samoa, the success rate was 71%, in New Zealand 68%, Australia 65% and PNG 45%. Female success rates were found to vary only marginally from male rates apart from in the case of Papua New Guinea where men achieved a 75% success rate, comparing favourably with other study locations, while the women's success rate of 45% is low both in comparison to men in PNG and women in other study locations. (Joint Governments of Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand Draft Report, 1993:30).

Support provided for students by the New Zealand and Solomon Islands Governments

About half of the former women students felt they had received good support from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (including New Zealand High Commission staff in Papua New Guinea and Fiji), with the remainder expressing some reservations. Despite recent cutbacks in staffing in the student liaison area of the Development Cooperation Division of the (now) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, all Solomon Islands women students in the country in 1990 appeared happy with the level of support provided by the Ministry, with most having considerable praise for their student liaison officers.

Of the five former students expressing reservations about the support provided, four had failed to complete the degrees for which they

had been nominated, three having their scholarships terminated and the fourth changing to a practical certificate course. All felt student support staff should have taken more initiative to keep in regular contact and deal with problems as they arose. Lorraine commented, "My student officer was good, but I didn't use her as much as I could have. I didn't want to 'impose'. The student officer could have come to Dunedin more often, then it would have been easier to talk to her. I didn't feel I could ring her up. It seemed there was no-one who took a particular interest in me." Lily expressed similar sentiments. "I didn't see them much. I felt isolated." Ailsa, (who studied at UNITECH in the mid 80s) said, "I saw the New Zealand High Commission (NZHC) person only once. Students sponsored by Australia had someone come to visit them every semester, so they had someone they could air their concerns to."

In contrast, Rachel who attended UPNG (1978-81) was pleased with the support provided. "Office staff were quick to respond to queries and arrange meetings to discuss problems." Gabrielle and Iris who attended USP in the mid 70s were also positive in their comments. "The support was good. We were one of the luckiest groups. New Zealand officials came to see us regularly and also organised social functions." Comments from other former students who studied in New Zealand included, "I think having student liaison officers is a wonderful idea", "my liaison officer was very attentive and helpful", and, "she (the liaison officer) was very responsive."

Two other students, while being generally satisfied with the support offered, had some specific criticisms to make. Hilary, who studied at USP, felt that while the NZHC gave them adequate support while they were at USP and looked after them well during the Fijian coup in 1987, the scholarship provided no support during university holidays. "Our parents had to support us which seemed unfair on them. It was particularly difficult when we had to spend time in Honiara before going home to the village. Also we had some trouble with the way the book allowance was allocated. It was very inflexible and if you ran short you couldn't get any more." Selina was disappointed that the New Zealand Government insisted that scholarship holders return home immediately after they complete their exams. "With my work background (as museum ethnologist) I would have liked time to see the Pacific Islands collections in New Zealand museums."

Students in New Zealand in 1990 were all pleased with the support they received, particularly from their student liaison officers. Renee enthused, "The support is excellent. I can ring up and chat to my liaison officer whenever necessary and she is always very helpful. New Zealand is the best of all the overseas scholarship schemes. Liaison officers can arrange extra tuition and so on, but they don't interfere in your private life."

All but the earliest of students, who attended USP when the total number of Solomon Islanders studying overseas was very small, were critical of the support provided by their own government, and in particular

the Overseas Training Unit (OTU) of the Ministry of Education. Enquiries about the support received almost invariably met with an animated response from those interviewed. Natalie recalled, "I hardly had any contact with them. They were not interested in any aspect of living overseas, only your academic results. They should have a New Zealand liaison officer as they don't understand the New Zealand curriculum or living situation. I initiated the Solomon Islands Wantok Association in New Zealand as I realised that many Solomon Islands students were not having a positive relationship with OTU and needed some support." Lorraine asserted that, "They offered no support, no help at all. They were hopeless" and Lily that, "There was no contact, no support. After my first year in New Zealand they didn't even know what I was doing." Selina believed, "The Government's policies in regard to training are ad hoc, so personal grudges and jealousies, especially towards women wanting to advance themselves academically or otherwise, tend to get in the way. It is a male and sexist bureaucracy."

Students in New Zealand in 1990 were also disappointed at what they perceived to be OTU's apparent lack of interest in them. Marina commented, "You hear very little from them. They forget about you once you are overseas, which is quite upsetting. There is no-one at the office when you try to arrange travel. I've never had a discussion with them about my study or future." Anita too said, "I've never had a talk with any of them. It would be good to have an idea of their future requirements, to have more information from them." Emily stated, "I've had no real contact with them. They should show more interest. In our first term they sent newspapers

from home, but not any more. They should be aware of how important this is to make us feel in touch with what is going on at home."

Hazel Lulei, current Head of the National Training Unit (previously OTU) admits that guidance and counselling is an important function that at present, with very limited staff, the unit is not able to carry out at all effectively. "Two additional staff have been requested for 'guidance and counselling' next year, but it is still uncertain whether we will get them. A previous employee of the unit was sent to Australia for training in counselling, with the aim of heading that section of the unit's work, but unfortunately she changed her course to social work. The unit still has a staff of three, the same as when it started in 1969, but students it has responsibility for have increased tenfold. With the increasing numbers of students there is a huge amount of administration which we just have to sit and plough through. So, until we have more staff, there is little possibility of regular liaison visits."

Impressions of a new society

For most of those interviewed, the experience of living in a different society at first involved a degree of 'culture shock'. For some the new social situations they encountered, the greater freedom and independence, and the greatly increased leisure-time activities available to them were positive experiences, which they were able to combine successfully with the need

for self-discipline in study. For others it was, at times, a bewildering and lonely experience. However, even those who were unable to say they had 'enjoyed' the experience at the time, felt in retrospect, that it had been beneficial in improving their sense of independence and self confidence, making them more assertive and able to stand up for their rights, and learning new skills and work habits. Several mentioned that their ability to understand their own society had been improved through the experience of living in another.

Those former students who attended USP in Fiji had the least problems in adjusting to the new situation. Not only were there some cultural similarities with their own society, but there were also many other Solomon Islands students to provide friendship and support when they felt homesick. All who had attended USP were enthusiastic about their experience, enjoying in particular, the opportunities for greater social experiences and for forming friendships with students from other Pacific countries. Gabrielle elaborated, "I loved it. It was great - much better than my later study experiences in PNG, Australia or Canada. There were lots of other Solomon Islanders and I made a lot of friends from round the Pacific. Women were about equal in numbers to men at the university, and I found Fijian women more outspoken than women at home." Iris commented, "There was a high social life in Fiji which affected some, particularly the men. We were under pressure from the Solomon Islands men to 'behave' but we still had a good time! Fijian women were almost of equal standing with the men and were more 'open' than Solomon Islands women. I found

Indian women more like Solomon Islands women - quieter, not dominating and not very forceful. I had some good Indian friends." Hilary said, "We had a lot more freedom than at home. The social life was more exciting, more variety of things to do. I had a lot of friends at USP unlike when I did my postgraduate study in Brisbane."

The two former students who had studied in Papua New Guinea had both found aspects of the social situation difficult and commented in particular on the poor status of women in society. Rachel had found she was living in a rough society compared to her own. "I lived in daily fear of being abused - fear of rascals, of rape, of theft. I found males had little regard for women and fights on the campus were common. The status of women is very poor indeed. They are not regarded as equals in the society. I felt very homesick, especially during my first year. I did make some local friends though. They treat visitors with high respect and are very generous people, once they get to know you. Overall I think it was a good experience. It certainly taught me to stand up for my rights."

Those who came to New Zealand encountered a society which was in many respects vastly different from their own. For some, the first year in particular was a difficult and often lonely experience. Natalie had wanted to come home. "It was so cold in Dunedin. The diet was different - I'd never eaten lamb before. I was very homesick." The first thing Therese had noticed in New Zealand was that, "Nobody smiles at you. If I wanted

to make friends I had to take the initiative and make the effort. They didn't. At first I had difficulty adapting to the new culture. I was shocked by some behaviour, like kissing on the street, and students being so outspoken in class." Lorraine recalled, "I was very homesick, especially during my year at Marlborough Girls'. I had problems acclimatising to the culture, the climate, the education system ... some people were very prejudiced, I felt very inferior that year and that feeling never really went away. The hostel manager was very hard on people from overseas. He tried to discourage us from accepting invitations to go out with New Zealand families. He told us not to impose on them. And he always used to ask us to do babysitting for him. We had to go and talk at schools in Blenheim and were asked some strange questions." Selina too said, "I always felt like a Pacific Islander when I was in New Zealand. I was bothered by the racial tension. However I found living in a flat of New Zealanders and other overseas students who were active in community affairs and aware of political issues, local and international, satisfying as it helped me to overcome my stereotype view of New Zealanders as racist and sexist." Lily commented, "My first experience of New Zealand was not very good. It was very cold and my personal situation, socially and academically, was not good. I made friends mainly with overseas students. It's very hard to make friends in New Zealand - people see things differently."

Most of the women studying in New Zealand in 1990 had also formed their closest friendships with other overseas students. "I've made

mainly overseas student friends (at NPGHS). I feel shy and a bit 'scared' of the New Zealand students" (Linda). "The hostel (at NPGHS) is OK now. At first I didn't like it. The teachers, matron and students have been friendly, but I've made friends mainly with Pacific Island students. I feel closer to them" (Emily). "I've found that New Zealanders who have been overseas are more outgoing and friendly than others. I've also made New Zealand friends through playing soccer" (Anita). "My closest friends are overseas students, although I did make some New Zealand friends, both Maori and Pakeha, in Gisborne. It's different there - it's a very small place" (Marina). "I didn't enjoy my first year (at NPGHS). Everything was different. I'd never been away from home and I felt confused. I had more freedom than I'd been used to but I felt I had to work all the time. I didn't know how well I had to perform. I'd never been to an all girls' school, and I was the only Solomon Islander in the seventh form. All the others (private students) were at junior level" (Amy). "My first year I boarded at the YWCA in Dunedin. That was not a good experience. It's not a students' hostel. I have made some New Zealand friends, but I've also been shocked to find how prejudiced some people can be. I've also been hassled by New Zealand guys. For a while I used to live on Castle Street and I'd have to walk home past flats of young drunken students" (Kate).

Differences in the status of women and the opportunities open to women in comparison to their own society made a major impression on many. Lorraine was impressed with the fact that, "Women could do

more. They were freer in everything - in jobs, in social life ..." Natalie commented, "I soon realised women could speak their mind in class and not be booed or criticised by men. That was a big encouragement to me." Therese too noticed a contrast with her own society where, "The young, and especially girls, have to listen and not talk. Women in New Zealand are very independent. One of my friends was in her late 30s, single, and lived on her own and another was divorced. Their opinions about life were very different. They were very strong women and lived such a different world to me." Linda said "Women are so equal with men, unlike at home. I noticed this especially when I stayed with a New Zealand family. In my own family my father was the head of everything and my mother supported him and accepted she should do so." Lily however commented, "Even though I've been here a long time now I still think some women get carried away with being too 'liberal'." Julienne commented that the impact of the feminist movement which was very strong when she was at Auckland University. "I thought New Zealand women had more of a chance of 'making it' in society. People like Cath Tizard and Fran Wilde were pushing for women. I was impressed with the feminist movement though not all of it. Not when it became too aggressive." Selina maintained, "You can't really compare the position of women in New Zealand to that of Solomon Islands societies but certainly the feminist movement has had results for New Zealand women. In many ways Solomon Islands women are struggling for opportunities not available to them, as New Zealand women were 100 years ago." While most of those interviewed believed New Zealand women held a privileged position in society in comparison to women in Solomon Islands, Renee

observed that societal attitudes in New Zealand placed different pressures on women. "New Zealand women are obsessed with their weight. They are constantly going on diets and exercising. I find this quite amusing. At home, you just accept that as you get older you are going to put on weight. Auckland women seem to have chips on their shoulders about equality. Feminists want to be equal to men, but deny their femininity. There are more pressures here being a woman working. You need to be twice as good. In hospitals (while doing medical practice) I've found the attitude quite old-fashioned. Those women struggling to be doctors, and especially surgeons, need to be very, very good ... and often women aren't encouraged. In Solomon Islands if you're a good doctor, it doesn't matter if you are male or female."

Despite initial difficulties in adjusting to living in a new society, the vast majority of both former and current students had, overall, found the experience a positive and worthwhile one. Even the few who had failed to complete qualifications and who had not at the time 'enjoyed' living overseas, were in retrospect pleased they had had the experience. Lorraine felt, looking back, that "Despite everything it was a good experience. I learnt how to stand up for myself, and I developed confidence and the ability to be independent. I saw how people in New Zealand did things and how they worked and so on, and that helped me when I came to set up my own business. Before I went to New Zealand I had led a very sheltered life. I couldn't do things on my own. But when I came back I could." Natalie said, "I learnt a lot from the 'informal' education I had in

New Zealand - travelling, hitchhiking, meeting people in different set-ups - all those things develop your self-confidence and personality. I also appreciated the opportunity to get part-time employment, which helped prepare me for work later on. That was something I couldn't have done in Fiji or PNG."

Selina summed up a common feeling amongst many of those interviewed. "Overall it was a good experience. To understand and appreciate your own country you need to experience and understand what goes on in other countries. Travelling abroad broadens your views and perspectives."

Summary

The tertiary study 'success' rate of the eleven women in this study who had returned to Solomon Islands was just under 73%. While this includes two of the eleven who completed 'downgraded' qualifications from those they had been originally nominated for, their achievements were, nonetheless, significant. Gabrielle was to proceed from this initial tertiary study to a highly successful and prominent career in the public service, and Lily, as the first person in Solomon Islands to obtain a dispensary assistant's certificate, immediately assumed work responsibilities considerably above this level of qualification and, a year later, was awarded a WHO scholarship for further study. Several of those who completed degrees, excelled and proceeded immediately to postgraduate study. Some were the first women in Solomon

Islands to attain qualifications in their fields.

For those who did not succeed academically, the investment in their education should not be considered a failure, although it may have been seen as such by both the New Zealand and Solomon Islands governments. All three women in this category are in full-time employment in Solomon Islands and are hopeful of undertaking further study in the future. The personal benefits of their overseas study as perceived by these as well as other former students included increased independence and self-confidence and a more objective understanding of their own society and their place within it.

For most women students (both former and those studying in New Zealand in 1990), the traditional views of their own societies on the roles and status of women were challenged as they came into contact with new and more "liberal" ideas and values. For many this experience expanded their own expectations of their future roles.

The adjustment, academically and personally, to overseas study was difficult for all women tertiary students interviewed, but particularly so for those who studied in New Zealand and, for different reasons, Papua New Guinea. There were mixed views about how effective the support services provided by the New Zealand Government were in assisting this process of adjustment. Some correlation between criticism of the support provided and failure academically raises the question of whether the women concerned would have performed better had they had better support, or whether the criticism is subsequent to, and as a result of, their failure.

In a majority of cases the women were critical of a perceived lack of interest in their welfare on the part of their own government. This no doubt partly reflected the feelings of isolation and homesickness many expressed and the consequent need for their government to be understanding and supportive of them. While the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education appears to recognise the desirability of providing counselling and liaison services for tertiary students overseas, staff shortages prevent them addressing the issue satisfactorily.

The findings of this research, in relation to the problems of adjustment to a new culture, difficulties in forming relationships with the people of the host country, the beneficial effects of improved self confidence, assertiveness and independence resulting from overseas study and the likelihood of attitudinal change following exposure to new ideas and values are similar in nature to previous research carried out with male students or with groups where data was not disaggregated by gender. It is also likely, however, that the impact of these experiences was heightened for those who were the focus of this research, both because of their gender and also the particularly small, and isolated society from which they came. As girls and young women within Solomon Islands society they are likely to have led more sheltered and constrained lives, to have been less exposed than boys and young men to agents of social change, and, in taking up an overseas scholarship, to have broken more severely with tradition than would have been the case with their male colleagues. The effects of their overseas study experience can therefore be expected to impact in an

on-going way on all aspects of their lives. The next chapter discusses the "outcomes" of education, both personally and professionally, for those Solomon Islands women who had returned home (or proceeded to further study) following their New Zealand sponsored tertiary study abroad.

CHAPTER 8

THE RETURN TO SOLOMON ISLANDS

Introduction

For most former students the return from studying abroad was an emotional and sometimes confusing experience as they were reunited with family and friends, sought to re-establish old relationships and to readjust to Solomon Islands society and cultural norms. Inevitably they saw some things in their own society in a new (and not always favourable) light, they had grown in confidence and assertiveness (which sometimes created conflict in their family relationships), and in joining the extremely small minority of the population that had had tertiary education abroad, they inevitably acquired a 'stature' within their home communities which some of them were unprepared for. Their knowledge and experience on the one hand set them apart from family and friends, and on the other placed an onus of responsibility on them to respond positively and promptly to the demands of their families and communities for their time, advice or money. This, on top of entering the workforce for the first time, often in positions of considerable responsibility, resulted in the 'homecoming' being at a time of stress as well as excitement and pleasure.

Readjustment to home

In many cases, those interviewed were the first women in their communities (and sometimes in their provinces) to return with a degree or other tertiary qualification. Some were the first women in the country to qualify in their area of study. Iris recalled, "My family was very happy. I was the first woman from Isabel to come back with a degree. Apart from my parents and some close relatives though, most people at home didn't really understand what I'd done. I felt at ease, but I didn't really want to be there." Natalie (New Georgia, Western) returned as the country's first woman lawyer. "People in the village were happy and proud, but they wouldn't leave me alone. They always wanted to discuss what was going on in government and how I could help them with legal and administrative matters. People were respectful, but they felt I was part of the community and they could bring all their problems and questions to me. At times that was tiresome and burdensome." Gabrielle found on her return to Kia in Isabel Province that while she had acquired a tertiary qualification, there were many things that she didn't know - but was expected to know. "I felt proud, but I also felt a bit out of place. I'd been away so long. I couldn't do the work my sisters did. I couldn't do gardening like they could, and I couldn't weave a mat. People thought that was very strange, and bad ... one of the bad influences of being away. They think to be able to do those things is natural. My mother played a big role in helping me. She was very understanding. There were also some initial problems in my being married to a Malaitan. There was a bit of a clash as there is quite a difference in our culture.

His family was against me working, for instance. They're getting used to it now!."

On her return to Elita Village in Small Malaita, Hilary too found readjusting to life at home more difficult than she had anticipated. "My family are happy now that I have finished my studies and I can get a job and look after myself. I was the first woman from our village to have done tertiary study and some people seemed a bit shocked and kept quiet. They didn't treat me as a normal woman in the village. They seemed to have a lot of respect and saw me as someone of 'high rank', an 'academic'. Some people asked about life overseas. They had never experienced a woman who had done this and were keen to hear stories. I often felt uncomfortable ... like I was an outsider. I had very mixed feelings about it all. My family is very important to me, and I'd been looking forward to going home, going fishing and swimming and so on. I did all those things, but I realised that I had changed a lot. My attitude to some traditional things is different. I'm still friends with people I was with in primary school, but I realise I've come back as someone else. I feel sad when I see people looking at me, as if I'm someone different."

Selina (Santa Cruz, Temotu) received a mixed reaction from friends on her return home and again found that the knowledge and experience she had acquired set her apart from others. "My family was proud of me, although they don't really understand what it was all about. My friends were ambivalent - some were happy, others didn't care and I think others were

jealous. I have found it frustrating when you don't have people, especially of your profession to share ideas with. Generally women in Solomon Islands have different values to mine, that I don't share. It's too small and closed a society from my point of view."

The exposure students had had to differences in the role and status of women in other societies, together with the increased confidence, assertiveness and sense of independence they had gained from their experiences overseas, often made it impossible for them to return to their former role and expected behaviour within the family. Therese explained how overseas study had changed relationships in her family. "In terms of the family, I came back with a very open attitude. I used to just listen when my father-in-law spoke and agreed with everything, but I came back much more outspoken. At first I tried to get my husband to speak to him, but he couldn't stand up to him. So I told him directly that they shouldn't just depend on us for money. They should ask their other children for help too. My husband was very upset at that. His parents think that it's not right for me to teach adults, liaise with male staff, travel overseas and so on. They say it is a bad influence. I tell my husband we should encourage our daughters to speak up for themselves. His parents can't stand that, but my experience of teaching and the TESL course has taught me that there can be real problems if you don't say anything. We need to change that. I encourage the children to be independent and try to introduce new ideas. My husband always says, "Don't say anything that will upset my parents." Now he's got a house with his parents, though the children spend a lot of

time with me. Lots of things that have happened are a result of my New Zealand experience. I have different attitudes and am more outspoken. I have suffered because of it, but it is worth it. I hope we might be able to work things out, to sort out a compromise."

Those whose scholarships were terminated due to academic failure obviously found homecoming even more difficult. Lorraine believes her acute sense of failure resulted in her making unwise personal decisions - which again resulted in failure. "My family, especially my parents were very disappointed. I felt a failure. I felt that I'd taken up a scholarship place someone else could have had. I've found men in particular have been jealous of the opportunity I had and have told me I should never have taken a scholarship. I got married, though my parents discouraged me, to someone who had less education than me, and who had an inferiority complex. That didn't work out either."

In many ways the 'counter culture shock' of returning home was as traumatic an experience as adapting to a new and foreign culture. For most, it highlighted the inevitable divisions which had developed between themselves and their families and communities as a result of their overseas experience and the changed values and attitudes which they now held. At the same time the former students were made acutely aware of their responsibilities to their families and communities who were happy, not only at their safe return, but also because one of their number had been 'honoured' and was now, they believed, in a position to influence power on their behalf.

Employment

Previous research, outlined in Chapter 1, has found that, in a number of developing countries, there is a curvilinear, rather than linear, relationship between educational attainment and labour force participation rates with uneducated women and women with tertiary education having higher labour force participation rates than those with intermediate levels. Higher levels of education were also found to reverse the trend for women to withdraw from the labour force on marriage or for childraising. These findings were reflected in the employment situation of the Solomon Islands women in this research. None had had difficulty finding a job immediately following completion of their studies, although one (Hilary) had had some problems ensuring she obtained a position she was satisfied with. All had been in continuous employment since returning to Solomon Islands, apart from leave for further study or parental leave periods of up to three months.

Seven of the 11 former women students were at the time of interview engaged in full time work in Honiara, four in the public service, two employed in the private sector (one as Human Resources Development Manager with Solomon Islands Airlines and one as aid assistant with the Australian High Commission) and one running her own secretarial business. Four (who later returned questionnaires, or in the case of one, who was interviewed in New Zealand) were overseas on further study or training awards. All but one of these (who had been forced to resign her position as ethnologist with the Solomon Islands National Museum to take

up an East-West Centre scholarship which she had arranged privately) were on study leave from the public service.

The incomes of all three women working outside the public service were considerably higher than those women employed even in senior positions in government. This was despite the fact that two of the three had failed to complete tertiary qualifications. Significantly, however, both of these women claimed a sense of 'failure' and 'frustration', and indicated a desire to continue their studies in the future in order to obtain greater job satisfaction, even at the expense of a considerable drop in income.

While not all those interviewed were working in areas directly related to the tertiary study they had initially undertaken on New Zealand scholarships, there was, in most cases, some linkage. Almost all, even those who failed to complete qualifications, felt that the knowledge and skills, both academic and personal, which they had acquired overseas had assisted them greatly in the work they had undertaken.

Among the women who had completed tertiary qualifications, there were a number of 'firsts' for Solomon Islands women. Most notable among these (and occurring just a few days after the interview had been carried out) was the appointment of the first woman permanent secretary in the public service in the history of Solomon Islands. Gabrielle had also been the first Solomon Islands woman to hold a New Zealand Government scholarship, attending USP in 1973/74. Other 'firsts' included the first

woman lawyer, the first woman physical planner and the first person to qualify for a dispensary assistant's certificate. Former New Zealand scholarship holders also returned to become the first woman senior planning officer in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the first woman Head of Department (not including Home Sciences) at King George VI Secondary School, and the first woman in Solomon Islands Airlines (SOLAIR) management. While one woman running her own business was unlikely to have been the first to venture into this field, she believed she was (in 1990) the only woman sole proprietor in Honiara and the one whose business, established in 1983, had survived the longest.

At the time of interview, those women working in the public service were employed in the following positions :

Assistant Secretary to the Prime Minister (level 10) later appointed Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Senior Legal Officer (acting Deputy to the Registrar General), Ministry of Police and Justice (level 7.5)

Senior Planning Officer (on study leave), Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (level 7)

Head of English Department, KGVI Secondary School (level 7)

Senior Petroleum Officer, Ministry of Natural Resources (level 7)

Supervisory Dispensary Assistant (on study leave), Ministry of Health and Medical Services (level 5)

Assistant Statistics Officer (on study leave), Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (level 4)

Further study

Of note was the very high proportion of former women students (eight of the 11, or 73%) who had undertaken further overseas studies since holding New Zealand scholarships. The remaining three (together with a number of those who had already returned overseas at least once) hoped or expected to continue their studies in the future. Apart from one case (a three month in-service course) all additional study undertaken had been substantial, involving a minimum of one year's full time academic study. During several interviews it became clear that, having successfully completed a first degree, graduates could reasonably expect to obtain a post-graduate scholarship following several years' work in the public service. Several spoke of being 'earmarked' to go overseas for further study in particular years. Enthusiasm to continue their studies was universal among the group, perhaps reflecting the need for women to do particularly well (more so than men) if they are to compete successfully for higher level positions (Schiefelbein and Farrell, 1982:239).

Career development

Smock's (1981:276) contention that even higher levels of education will not be sufficient to overcome the structural and cultural restrictions that overwhelmingly prevent women from attaining senior management and administrative positions appeared to be borne out by the descriptions of their career development given by the women in this research. Many felt that their career progress had been hindered to varying degrees by sex discrimination. As noted above, the desire of the group as a whole for further education seems also to confirm Schiefelbein and Farrell's findings that women sought higher qualifications in anticipation of labour market discrimination.

At the time of interview, Gabrielle had just returned from completing a BA in Politics and Administration at Carlton University in Ottawa, and was working in a senior (level 10) position in the Ministry of Public Service as Assistant Secretary to the Prime Minister. Her job included preparation of cabinet papers on policy matters affecting the public service, negotiations with the public service union, and overall responsibility for the personnel division of the public service, with special responsibility for senior officers within the service. Gabrielle's salary in this position was approximately $SI 13,000 per annum. She had recently been disappointed to learn she had not been successful in being appointed to a permanent secretary position. Her application had followed the Prime Minister's dismissal of all heads of departments prior to re-establishing the permanent secretary

positions on a contract basis attracting incomes of around $SI 16,000 - a figure greatly in excess of any other public service salary. Gabrielle had worked for the public service (excluding periods of in-service study and training) since her return from USP at the end of 1974 where she had attained a Diploma of Education. By her return to Solomon Islands, she had decided that she did not want to teach. "The government was flexible about my decision not to teach. Quite a few came back and didn't become teachers. I had to find my own job though. I applied to the Ministry of Public Service and some private firms and I got a position as a clerical assistant. I got some recognition for my diploma, though not as much as if I'd done a degree. I began on level 4. If I'd started work from Form 5 it would have been level 3." After two years Gabrielle was promoted to administration officer, rising to senior administration officer in 1982 after undertaking a Diploma in Public Administration in Papua New Guinea in 1980. From 1984-86 she was seconded from the Ministry of Public Service to be private secretary to the Governor-General. In 1986 she successfully applied for a position as chief administration officer in the Ministry of Home Affairs and, in that year too, was sent on an in-service training course at the International Training Institute in Sydney. In late 1987 she was awarded a scholarship to do a BA. While in general Gabrielle felt her career had developed to her satisfaction, she felt her progress had been slow compared to male colleagues who had entered the service the same year or later. "Being a woman has been a major disadvantage in terms of getting promotion. When you apply for posts and you have equal qualifications or higher than the person who gets it, then there is no other apparent reason."

Gabrielle had twice applied for positions for which she was not successful. In the first case she appealed the appointment as, "the man who got it did not have such good qualifications, was younger, more junior and less experienced than I was. Their excuse was that he had been acting in the position." Having just returned from overseas, she did not appeal the permanent secretary position for which she had applied. "I felt bad though when I found out who had been appointed. Of the 15 appointed, seven had held the position previously. Two others had no degrees, despite the fact the application form said applicants had to have a degree or diploma, and another had entered the service very recently, in 1983. He went from level 7, acting level 8, to permanent secretary." (As noted earlier only a few days after this interview, Gabrielle was in fact appointed to a permanent secretary position, in the wake of the decision of the original appointee to withdraw his application).

Iris had taught English at KGVI National Secondary School since her return to Solomon Islands from USP in 1983. In 1990, following a year's post-graduate diploma course in Education at Bristol University in England, she was appointed Head of the English Department -the first woman to be appointed to a position of responsibility outside of the Home Sciences. Iris had found being selected for further overseas study an encouragement in terms of her career development. She had become counterpart to the British Head of Department (HOD) in early 1988, before taking up the British Council Scholarship in late 1988, part of a planned withdrawal of British teachers and localisation of posts. Despite her promotion to Head of

Department, Iris hoped in the future to move out of teaching and into educational research and administration. From the time she had, as a sixth former, obtained a scholarship in education, she had hoped in the future she would be able to be an administrator rather than a teacher. Unlike Gabrielle who, without difficulty, had moved from an educational background into administration, Iris had not found that move easy to make, particularly after becoming established in teaching. "I think it has been a disadvantage being female in terms of my career. Many people think higher jobs should be held by men. It's difficult to apply for certain posts - for instance, administration posts in the public service or jobs at SICHE such as head of schools or deputy director posts, as it's just expected they will go to men. Most women teachers agree about this." As HOD, Iris had additional responsibilities. "I have to allocate classes, order equipment, restock the library, look after the storeroom etc, but there is no reduction in teaching hours. I have to do a lot of work, marking and so on, at home." Teaching had other disadvantages too. "The salary is not good. I started teaching on level 6. Now I'm on level 7 and earn about $SI 500 a fortnight. However there are some other benefits, like being assured of a house. Students can sometimes give you a hard time. Ideally I'd like a job in educational administration in the area of curriculum development or examination and selection. I did some work on English testing and examination when I was in Bristol which has relevance for the problems we have here in the way examination questions are designed and students tested and ranked. Maybe in another year I might apply for other jobs, depending on what is

available in the Ministry of Education or SICHE. There were positions available in the Examination and Selection Unit when I came back from England, but I felt an obligation to return to KGVI. I'd also like to do an MA thesis, maybe in three or four years time."

While Rachel has generally been happy with the way her career as a Planning Officer with the Ministry of Economic Planning has developed, she faced some initial frustrations when she started work in 1983 on her return from UPNG where she had obtained an honours degree in Economics. "Due to an overdependence on expatriates most of my work in the first year or so was of an administrative nature, which didn't make effective use of my knowledge and qualifications. I think that is quite a common situation for new graduates and can be quite frustrating." She believes too that sex discrimination in work played a part in her being unsuccessful in her applications for some senior positions. "I applied for senior planning positions after two years probational work, but there were long delays before it was confirmed. I also applied for a Principal Planning Officer position in 1987, but the job was not established. The same application was lodged in 1988 but was turned down, they said, because I would be away on study. I think that as well as public service inefficiencies (my application got misplaced) the fact that my supervisor was unhelpful in not ensuring my application was endorsed, and general sex discrimination in work made obtaining promotion difficult."

Natalie, returning with a New Zealand law degree in 1987, was 'thrown in at the deep end' when she commenced work as a Senior Legal

Officer in the Registrar General's office of the Ministry of Police and Justice. "For two months of my first year the boss was on leave and there was no deputy, so I was Acting Registrar General. It was very difficult, but I also enjoyed the challenge." At the time of interviewing, Natalie was expecting soon to be 'substantiated' in the position of Deputy Registrar General, a position she had been acting in from May 1990. She had also, however, applied for a position as legal officer in the Ombudsman's office. While this position would not be so highly graded, she wanted to move into another area of law before finally deciding where to settle. Eventually she hoped to go into private practice. Natalie at first found the attitude of her (expatriate) boss, the Registrar-General, difficult to get used to. "He was not an expressive sort of person. I couldn't tell if he was being discriminatory towards me or not but I sometimes felt he didn't appreciate some of my ideas. However, I heard he was like that to all new legal officers. He liked things done his way. Previous legal officers had walked out because they couldn't work with him. In the end he put in a good report on me. He was not very supportive of my extra-curricula activities, particularly in relation to womens' affairs and my work with the National Council of Women (NCW). He thought NCW was a 'waste of time' organisation - not representing Solomon Islands women. It was difficult as there was an expectation, from politicians and others, that as the first woman lawyer I would be involved in working on womens' legal issues. He was quite reluctant to allow me to be involved. He said I was paid to do a job and I should do my NCW work outside work hours. I told him, "How many men go off to drink or to attend to their personal business in work

hours? At least my work with women is concerned with development." I also talked to the Permanent Secretary about his attitudes and explained why I thought I should have time to do my womens' affairs work."

Selina had worked at the Solomon Islands National Museum as assistant curator and ethnologist (1978-84) and after returning with a BA in Anthropology from Auckland University in 1988, had again worked there briefly before taking up an East-West Centre post-graduate scholarship which she had privately arranged. Her difficulties in obtaining a scholarship to study for a BA and the price she had to pay (forced resignation from the Public Service) to take up her post-graduate scholarship have been discussed in the previous section. She believes advancement in her chosen career has been difficult and frustrating partly because of sex discrimination and partly because the Government has "not enough interest in the area of cultural preservation. There is a lack of interested manpower plus limited funds to develop further programmes or facilities. My area of work was museology, whereas my university qualification is in anthropology. The former is very specialised. I never had a supervisor who knew what the job involved. All I had was a director, whose job was administrative. The lack of other qualified personnel meant that I was on my own much of the time. The little interest on the part of Government in cultural development meant that they were unable to recognise the need for training for the job and closed opportunities to achieve this. Secondly, even though it's recognised as an important job, the fact that it's held by a woman meant it was therefore unimportant."

Hilary, at 26, was the youngest of the former women students interviewed. She had gone directly from completing a BA degree in Economics at USP (on a New Zealand scholarship) to study for a post-graduate diploma in Regional Planning (on an AIDAB scholarship). As she had been only two weeks in her first job (as Senior Petroleum Officer with the Ministry of Natural Resources) it was too early for her to comment on the way her career had developed. She had, however, already experienced some difficulties in obtaining a position acceptable to her. As the first woman qualified as a physical planner, the Government had wanted to place her as planner in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Hilary was, however, aware of administrative problems within the physical planning section of the Ministry and was opposed to this. "I'd also been advised by some of my lecturers in Brisbane not to go to the provinces but to be involved in the policy area. I knew the Chief Physical Planner wanted to post me to the provinces immediately but with a crisis in the Head Office, I knew that wouldn't work. I asked for a post at the Ministry of Natural Resources. I had to get the job myself and negotiate with the Public Service. They finally agreed, but they still wanted me to go to Physical Planning. I said when they'd fixed up the problems there I would." Hilary sees her involvement in the energy field however as short term and hopes she will be able to work in her area of initial interest, rural development, before too long. Long term, she may be interested in lecturing. "I wouldn't mind setting up a course at SICHE, educating people for rural development and advising on rural development policies. I'd like to pass on new ideas to a new generation so that we might be able to change things in the future.

I look at the present problems, in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands for instance, and with the bureaucracy generally ... I feel more optimistic about the long term. We need to prepare people for change in the future."

After a one year Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language (Dip TESL) course at Victoria University in 1988, Therese returned to SICHE where she had been teaching English to apprentices since 1983. In 1989 she was appointed Head of the Communications Skills Department of the School of Industrial Development - the first woman to head any department in the school. She feels that working in a predominantly male environment has had both advantages and disadvantages, but believes that she has been able to bring a new approach (more consultative and conciliatory) to problem solving. "My being appointed head of a department was a change for the men, and at first they didn't like it. However, I just kept talking and smiling ... I made sure I listened to their views and asked their advice and made them feel important. Before I went to New Zealand we had a problem in the School getting communication skills accepted as a major unit. The tradition had been that apprentices came to study electrical engineering or whatever, so why was English important? When I became HOD I gathered together opinions of other HODs and staff and worked out a proposal which was accepted. Now English is recognised as a major unit and English staff work as full members of the team. I think the way I went about it, seeking peoples' opinions, working out a proposal, meant we were able to achieve what hadn't been possible before." In October 1989 Therese successfully

applied for a position as Human Resources Development Officer with Solomon Islands Airlines, and became the first woman in SOLAIR management. There were several reasons for her decision to change career. "It was partly for job satisfaction. At college I was teaching all the time. This job combines education, and administration and personnel work. I see it as a career promotion. Also the salary I had been receiving at SICHE, despite having been there six years was very low - only $SI 7,000. I have more than doubled my salary in this job." SOLAIR is currently setting up its own training centre where courses will be conducted in English, and Therese believes that her Dip TESL qualification will be of relevance here, possibly in some practical teaching role, and certainly in her management capacity. As the first woman manager in the organisation, Therese has faced some of the same difficulties as when she was first made HOD at SICHE. "In some cases they don't want to listen as it is so male dominated. But in other cases I have brought variety and a different point of view into management. I spend time counselling staff, ensuring information gets passed down, getting the right sort of new recruits."

Lily had returned home in 1987 to work as a Supervisory Dispensary Assistant in the pharmacy of Central Hospital in Honiara. While she had failed to complete a Diploma in Pharmacy, Lily "was the first one in Solomon Islands to complete the certificate, and in some ways it was a 'big deal' qualification. I was doing a lot of things I shouldn't have been doing including having to run the pharmacy on my own sometimes. The Chief

Pharmacist (British) was very helpful and encouraged me a lot. At one stage he sent me to work in Malaita, in the hospital pharmacy there. I found that very difficult. I had problems with my boss who was not a pharmacist but felt it his right to encroach on my territory. I also got a hard time from the males in the hospital, including harassment. But I survived and in the end I realised the Chief Pharmacist was trying to build my self-confidence and independence. He even gave me a free ticket home every month I was in Malaita to help me survive! I do think it has been a disadvantage being female. Men don't accept your authority. There are a lot of men in my area of work with no qualifications but with experience and they don't like me 'jumping over' them. Also people keep hounding me about when I'm going to get married. When the WHO scholarship came up (for Diploma in Pharmacy) the Chief Pharmacist tracked me down from holidays. We had a good talk about my future and he encouraged me to try for the diploma again. If I hadn't I would have to go on working in the same position. If I get a diploma, I will be eligible to replace an expat as a pharmacist after a year's work experience."

Of the three former students whose scholarships were terminated, one was working for government, one for the Australian High Commission, and one had set up her own business. Ailsa had returned from PNG in 1985 after failing to complete an accountancy degree. She found employment initially as a quantity supervisor working on the census, and later became an Assistant Statistics Office with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. During this period she completed a certificate in

statistical operations and procedures and in 1990 the then Chief Statistician (an Australian) arranged for her to undertake a three month diploma course on development administration run by the Pacific Studies Centre of the Australian National University. Since returning from Australia, Ailsa has found her work somewhat routine and boring and feels motivated to use her skills more effectively than at present. She has a particular interest in working on national accounts. However with the Chief Accountant who had supported and encouraged her now gone, Ailsa feels little optimism about her current work situation. She would like to apply for a further New Zealand or Australian scholarship to complete a degree.

Julienne's scholarship was terminated in 1981 when she failed to pass sufficient units in a law intermediate year. In 1982 she worked with the Ministry of Police and Justice on the understanding that if she did well she may be given a second chance. At the end of that year, however, she had decided she was not cut out to be a lawyer and, turning down a further scholarship opportunity to do a BEd at USP, returned to New Zealand as a private student to study for a BA. She returned to Solomon Islands in 1985, with three units still to finish for a degree. In 1986-87 Julienne worked as an administration assistant with the National Bank. "I had a lot of respect from men at the bank. Even though they were older and more experienced, they encouraged me to make decisions myself. In government ministries, on the contrary, men usually don't take kindly to women trying to get ahead." In 1987 she went to work for the Australian High Commission as an administration assistant for the aid programme (AIDAB). Despite

receiving a salary for this position ($SI 15,000) which is considerably higher than senior public positions, Julienne is keen to finish her degree and believes she would gain more job satisfaction by being an English teacher. "In seeing the forms students fill in for AIDAB scholarships, I'm aware of just how low the level of English is. I think Solomon Islands needs more qualified teachers in secondary schools with degrees in English which is especially poor here. If I became a teacher I'd have to take a drop in salary, but I'd have more job satisfaction and would feel I was doing something of benefit for the children of the country too."

Lorraine returned at the end of 1981, bitter at not being able to change from a law degree to a BA after failing to pass her law units, but passing History and Anthropology papers in two consecutive years at Otago University. She joined a private law firm as a legal secretary, working there until the firm closed in 1983. Together with a British friend who had worked in the same firm she set up the 'Better Business Agency', providing secretarial and business support services. As an expatriate, Lorraine's friend was unable to open a business. She therefore put in the capital and Lorraine paid her back over time. When the friend left Solomon Islands in 1986 Lorraine bought out her share of the business, a financial outlay she is still recovering from. While Lorraine doesn't find the work involved in running the business particularly satisfying it has been useful as a breadwinner to support two children from her previous marriage and, recently, a new baby. Her income varies, depending on the work available

but invariably, she says, is more than she would have earned working for the government, even if she had a degree. In both her work and her private life Lorraine has found that her ability to stand up for her rights and to be assertive (skills she learnt in New Zealand) have stood her in good stead. "It's been both an advantage and a disadvantage being a woman in this business. It was hard at the beginning as women to set up a business. We were told we charged too much. Customers would try to put us down and would argue with us, but we'd stand firm and wouldn't give them their work until they'd paid. When they find you can do something well and you can stand up for yourself they become good customers and then I think you get more respect as a woman. When I became divorced men thought I was 'available' and some were quite disrespectful. But by standing up for myself and being strong I was able to overcome that. Going overseas and the hardship I've been through has made me try harder to succeed at what I do." In 1990 Lorraine applied successfully for a public service job to set up a representative office in Brisbane but discovered, after she had got the job, that she was pregnant and unable to accept it. She hopes in the future to be able to further her studies but, having in the past been made to feel guilty at taking up a scholarship, she would want to do this independently. Lorraine's work and personal experience had resulted in her acquiring interests and skills in two main areas which in the future she would like to use to assist other women. These are business development and management and social/counselling skills, with a particular interest in providing support for women in violent or difficult domestic situations. She had recently applied to join the Small Business Association which, in 1990, had no women members.

When interviewed, all the women former students, apart from those on study leave, were in full time and, in most cases, demanding jobs which carried significant responsibilities. Their feelings about their career development were mixed with some feeling they had not been able to make as rapid progress as some of their male colleagues. Their interest in further study, which a very significant 73% had undertaken since returning from their initial tertiary training demonstrated their personal commitment to improving their opportunities for promotion. It remains to be seen, however, to what extent even higher levels of education will be effective in challenging men's historical dominance of senior management and administrative positions in the formal sector. The recent promotion of the first woman to a position as permanent secretary in a government ministry will give encouragement to women in this respect.

Career advancement was sought not only for the personal financial benefit and social status of the women concerned. All expressed a desire to see their qualification and skills utilised as effectively as possible to assist the country's development. In a number of cases this included a specific commitment to assisting other Solomon Islands women. These aspects will be discussed further in a following section.

Personal development and family/career conflict

The private nature of the family has made it difficult for researchers to

determine conclusively the effects of education on the role of women in the family. Some have suggested that, as with labour force participation rates, the relationship between education and fertility, and between education and increased influence and involvement in family decision-making may again be curvilinear rather than linear. In traditional societies the increased 'resources' that a woman with higher education brings to a marriage in enabling access to higher status professional jobs and incomes is likely to have a mitigating effect on traditional views on women working after marriage. In five societies studied by Smock (1981) it was found that women experienced difficulties in reconciling work and family commitments with support, when it was available, coming primarily from paid domestic help or relatives, rather than spouses.

The women in this research who had formerly held New Zealand scholarships were aged between 26 and 37, with just over half aged 30 or more. Eight of the eleven had children (four had 1, three had 2, and one had 3). Of these, three were solo parents. Apart from brief (three month) maternity leave breaks, all the women had been in continuous employment (or study) since completing their New Zealand sponsored tertiary training.

Several, particularly those with children, indicated they had faced personal/career conflicts. At least three had been involved in major marital conflict which in two cases had involved violence or threatened violence. Of these one was divorced and caring for three small children, one was separated and had part-time care of two children, and one remained in a

relationship which had in the past involved a high degree of violence. At the time of interviewing she was pregnant with her second child (the first aged 18 months) and considered her marriage 'more settled than in the early days'.

Relationships with spouses' families (particularly where spouses came from a more 'patrilineal' society such as Malaita or Tikopia) were a common source of conflict. Several felt that the independence and assertiveness they had gained from their overseas study experience had taught them to stand up for their rights - but had also exacerbated domestic problems, particularly in relation to spouses' parents who tended to have traditional beliefs about appropriate behaviour for daughters-in-law.

While only one of the women came from Malaita (and is engaged to a man from Western Province) three were married to men from Malaita and a fourth to a Tikopian. While in all these cases the women interviewed cited difficulties with parents-in-law, husbands were sometimes supportive of their wives' careers and independence. Gabrielle (Isabel) commented, "My husband's family has been against me working which used to be a problem, particularly for him. They are getting used to it now! My husband is supportive of my career. When I did my degree in Canada we had to take the two children with us - pay for all their expenses, education and so on." Julienne (Western/Malaitan) also stated, "My husband [from Malaita] works for the airlines and has had offers to work in other countries, but I've always refused to go. He has accepted my independence. I have had a better

education than he has. I think if a Solomon Islands man has a university education he doesn't accept the fact that his wife is intelligent and assertive. I was shy before I went to New Zealand, but I came back assertive and able to stand up for my rights. It has created problems with my husband's family though."

Ailsa (Guadalcanal) thinks a major reason for her failure to pass her university units in PNG was the amount of time her Malaitan boyfriend (now husband) demanded of her. During part of their time in PNG her boyfriend was receiving no allowance and Ailsa supported him during this time. Living and working in Honiara has also had its problems. As there is no permanent housing available to them, they are living in transit quarters. The poor conditions here have meant that their two year old child has had to move between Ailsa's family and her husband's. Lack of sisters, brothers, or any close family in Honiara has left Ailsa with little support - a situation which has been made more difficult by her husband's tendency in the past to 'have affairs'. Ailsa has also experienced increased 'discomfort' from her husband and his family since recently undertaking a three-month scholarship in Australia. The scholarship was seen as an attempt to 'advance' herself. Since her return from Australia, Ailsa has felt more independent and more motivated to continue her studies and to seek greater job satisfaction. In contrast, her husband appears to her to be becoming even more 'settled and traditional' in his outlook.

For Natalie, who had grown up in a liberal and respected Western Province family where girls were encouraged to continue their education

and women held important positions in society, marriage into a strongly patrilineal Tikopian family brought with it some major cultural conflicts which initially resulted in domestic disputes involving a high degree of violence. Despite the severe problems she has faced, Natalie does not see the situation as 'cut and dried'. "My husband is supportive of my working and encourages me in it. And while he doesn't support the work I do with women and development issues (with National Council of Women (NCW) etc), he is very supportive of the work I do with my own people. He is also very helpful with the baby. I have had quite a lot of support from family and friends and workmates. My first boss, while he didn't agree with my spending time on NCW work, was very understanding and sympathetic when I was upset about our domestic fights and would let me have the day off if necessary. He said it was the 'problems of early marriage'. His wife was also very sympathetic. My current boss is understanding, too."

Lorraine (now divorced and the solo parent of three young children) has found lack of support or maintenance from her former husband, and the social stigma attached to divorcees and solo parents, and the pressure of providing childcare while attempting to run her own business have combined to result in a stressful lifestyle over the last five or six years. "My husband wanted me to work to get an income, but he gave me no support. Our marriage lasted five years. I get no maintenance for our two children. I could apply for it but he has threatened me with violence if I do. He tried to kidnap the children at first, but he can't afford to provide for them or give

them a good education, so he is letting them stay with me, at the moment anyway. Also my father spoke to his father and persuaded him to let me keep them as they are my parents' only grandchildren. Usually children go to the man's family. It's difficult to be a divorced woman in Solomon Islands. I have lost some close friends over it. Friends' husbands see me as a threat. They seem to be afraid I might influence their wives or something. When I first got divorced I started to drink. My business went downhill and I soon realised that wasn't the answer - but it has been a struggle. My two eldest children are in preschool which is very expensive and I usually take the baby to work with me. My parents have been very supportive through everything."

Therese too has found her own family, while they are in Kiribati, an important source of personal support in the conflict she faced with her husband (from whom she is separated) and his parents. "I have had support from some close women friends and from my own family. I go back to see them regularly and take the children with me. My mother, brothers and sisters say the immediate family comes first and it's best if children can have both parents - but if it's too difficult then you just can't give them that happiness. I was taught to be independent by my mother, so she understands what the problems are about."

While many of those interviewed were assisted by their extended families in providing childcare, problems in this area were most acute, particularly for solo parents, when work commitments or overseas study

required lengthy periods away. Rachel stated, "As a single parent I have experienced problems of childcare, especially when I'm away on tour or attending overseas conferences." Selina too found that, "Being a (solo) mother it was difficult to pursue a career, especially in regard to further training and leaving the islands. Members of my family, especially my mother and son, couldn't understand why I have been at school for almost my whole life, or so it seems to them. There's not much anybody can do. I have to sit and consider and make decisions on my own, and let my family know it's for the benefit of all of us eventually."

For lengthy periods abroad, it was, for some, difficult deciding whether it was possible and desirable, both financially and in terms of providing childcare, to take children or to leave them with relatives. Iris recalled, "We had difficulties deciding about the children when I got the scholarship to go to Bristol. In the end one stayed here with my husband's family and one came with us. It worked OK. We had to pay for my husband (a welder-mechanic from Western Province) and our child to come. We had some help from my father-in-law." Therese stated, "My children (aged three and seven) stayed behind with my husband's family when I did the TESL Diploma course. They got used to it, but I worried a lot about them and had to come back in the May holidays to see them."

While it is too early to determine the completed family size of the women interviewed, it is safe to say that given the low average number of 1.18 children per woman for the group in 1990 and taking into account the

women's age range of 26 to 37, that average family size will be substantially below the country average of 6.1 and that of their own families of origin (5.5). The low parities for the group reflect similar findings for university educated women in Ghana, Kenya, Mexico and Pakistan (Smock, 1981:268-273).

Many of the women in this research had had to deal with considerable disapproval, in particular from their spouses' families, of their decision to continue working after marriage and childbearing. While, in some cases, spouses were supportive of their wives' independence and careers, at least three of the group had suffered physical abuse from them. While the personal difficulties some faced from family criticism, domestic violence, childcare and other domestic responsibilities were considerable, particularly when combined with demanding work outside the home, it is notable that in most cases the women in this group have been successful in being able to pursue their own employment and study plans and, to a considerable degree, determine their own future. In some situations, for instance where overseas study was involved, a clear decision was made for the woman's career to take precedence over her spouse's - an outcome contributing a significant break with tradition. In some cases, the greater self-confidence, independence and assertiveness that they had learned overseas enabled women to challenge the ideas, attitudes, or decisions of their spouses or families and, sometimes, to leave unsatisfactory relationships.

Commitment to assisting women in development, local community and national development

Most research on the outcomes of education for women has focused on labour force participation rates, with very little assessing the impact of education on women's participation in politics, public policy formulation and wider social issues. While heavy work and domestic responsibilities left little time for most of the women in this research to undertake additional activities, their level of interest in social issues and their commitment to using their qualifications and skills to contribute effectively to the country's development was impressive. Perhaps most noteworthy was their commitment to assisting other women - a finding which is in line with Kelly's contention that in some countries higher education for women appears to have changed their

> "consciousness of oppression and provided a means for women to organise as women to put women's issues on national political agendas" (Kelly, 1990:139).

Six of the former women students had been actively involved in women's organisations (usually NCW or YWCA) at various stages in the past. However only two (Natalie and Rachel) had very recently been actively involved, primarily in providing advice and support to women's organisations in their professional capacities as lawyer and economic planner respectively. Two others were interested in becoming involved - one had just returned to Solomon Islands and the other was heavily

committed in terms of work and family affairs. The reasons those previously involved had drifted away was due to lack of time, with demanding careers and home responsibilities leaving little time available for outside activities.

Almost all, however, hoped that the qualifications and work experience they had obtained was, or would be, in some way of assistance to other women. As Senior Planning Officer with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Rachel believes that her qualifications and experience will benefit other Solomon Islands women ... "through sharing knowledge and assisting women, especially in project appraisal work. I have helped the YWCA and NCW to plan their development activities, appraise projects and seek funding arrangements." As the first woman head of department at KGVI secondary school, Iris hopes she will be a role model for girls at the school, to whom she gives special encouragement. The fact that she was appointed to the position will also, she believes, be an encouragement to other women to apply for positions of responsibility. Selina too, hopes she will be an 'example' for other women. "It's vital to educate our women, but also for women to have the courage to change present attitudes of our societies. For my master's thesis I am looking at the effects of employing women in the fishing industry in Solomon Islands - the effects on women's lives and the household and village economy etc. I would hope that it would have some practical outcome that the Government could use in their planning policies." Gabrielle believed that her success would act as a role model for other women to know that "by hammering away at the many obstacles you meet along the way" ... it is possible to

attain positions of seniority in the public service. Coming from a rural subsistence background in Malaita, Hilary believes that her qualifications in economics and physical planning will enable her to promote women's interests (and in particular rural women's interests) in a number of different fora. "I may get involved with women's organisations, but in all the meetings that I'm involved in I will be able to put forward women's views, not just the Government's views. My experience as a woman is different to mens', and my background enables me to be a representative of the silent majority, and to speak from the viewpoint of rural women." As the first woman lawyer, Natalie has been consulted by politicians on women's issues and has spent considerable time (sometimes creating job conflict, as discussed above) on providing advice and support to women's organisations. Most recently, she has been involved in a major, Government initiated review of NCW policy. This involved nationwide research into women's views on issues such as education, agriculture and health in preparation for the establishment of a Government policy for women. As a woman lawyer she also has a particular concern to make the law accessible to women and has carried out research on women and the law. She hopes to obtain funding in order to publish her findings. Lorraine, who in the face of severe family difficulties has maintained an effective business, hopes that others in her situation will see that "it is possible to survive as a solo mother and run a business." She would like in the future to be able to assist other women by passing on the skills she has learnt, particularly in the areas of small business management and by working to provide counselling and support for those in violent or difficult domestic situations.

As well as indicating a commitment to assisting other Solomon Islands women, most of those questioned also expressed a desire to use their qualifications and skills as effectively as possible to assist the development of their country. Some felt that this was not occurring in their present positions. A number were either actively involved in providing advice or assistance to their home communities, or expressed a desire to do so in the future. Rachel said, "As a Senior Planning Officer, I do feel my skills are being well-used to assist in the development of the country. However, during my first and second years at the Ministry of Economic Planning I was assigned to do much work that was purely administrative. A great failure on the part of the Government is the lack of recognition given to professional and technical people due to an overdependence on expatriates. This can frustrate new graduates as they are not assigned to jobs that would make use of their knowledge." Iris stated, "My skills are being well used (as Head of English at KGVI) but I feel they would be better used in the area of educational administration, in curriculum development or improving examination and selection procedures. Maybe later I'd like to teach at home (in Isabel) or work in the provincial education office. I do at present give people at home advice on educational matters and help with filling in application forms for secondary schools and so on." While enjoying her job with the Australian High Commission, Julienne did not think her qualifications and skills were being put to the best use. "I'd like to complete my degree and would be interested in teaching, perhaps in Malaita where my mother comes from. In her village I'm the only woman who has gone to

university. I'd like to make the education system more accessible to women through teaching or involvement in curriculum development. I know from my work with AIDAB that aid donors are keen to sponsor women, but no-one here is speaking up for women and girls in education." Natalie felt a responsibility to use her knowledge to help her own communities (in Western Province. "I have gone back several times to talk to people about the actions of foreign logging companies operating in the area. The royalties from logging are not being fairly distributed, which has caused major disputes, so at present I'm working on a paper to set up a Trust Organisation to administer the royalties. It's a big responsibility, on top of my job." Hilary saw her current involvement in the energy sector as short term and hoped in the future to be able to work in the area of rural development, where her personal background and academic qualifications would enable her to make a particular contribution. Longer term she feels that she might best be able to contribute to the future development of her country by becoming a lecturer in rural development. "I would like to pass on ideas to a new generation. I see many problems with the present bureaucracy, but I feel more optimistic about the long term. I would like to prepare students to take up issues and change things in the future."

While improved social status and personal financial benefits no doubt played a part in the career and study planning of the women involved in this research, it was, overall, their strong commitment to making a positive contribution to their country's development and a particular interest in assisting Solomon Islands women to improve their status in society which most impressed.

Advice to young Solomon Islands women

So what advice did these women, in many ways pioneers in terms of achieving higher education and positions of responsibility, have for younger women considering their future education and careers? From almost all it was, 'Go for it! It may not be easy - but if you are determined you'll make it'.

Gabrielle, the top woman public servant, advises "You will meet obstacles - but keep hammering away. It's important to realise that these obstacles exist and to know it when you are told you haven't been discriminated against. The realisation that there are double standards in the public service, and knowing that I have at times been discriminated against has made me work harder to prove myself." Selina acknowledges, "It's tough when the odds are against you. But one needs to have courage to say 'this is what I want', to parents and to people in power. Women have to believe in themselves and recognise their capabilities and strengths, and that marriage isn't the only option. Start entering the 'male domain' - law, medicine, agricultural specialists etc. Solomon Islands women have to know that so far their capabilities and their areas in education have been decided for them. They have to start questioning these." Hilary advises, "Don't mind what the men say. Do what you want to do. Most women with careers in Solomon Islands are administrators rather than in technical positions such as doctors, engineers, planners, which are dominated by men. Women need to be encouraged to take up such careers." Natalie too suggests, "Shut your eyes to men and continue with your interest. Men can

put you off with what they say and do. The future of this country lies with you. If women can mobilise they can run the government. It is happening gradually - as women gain confidence and knowledge." Rachel advises young Solomon Islands women to, "Be competitive in academic life and whatever career you choose. Speak up for your rights, get your family's support, seek information about your areas of interest and discuss it with your teachers, friends and families."

How can New Zealand development assistance be used effectively to assist Solomon Islands women?

The New Zealand Government, like most other donors, now has a policy specifically aimed at encouraging the greater participation of women in development. In determining the priorities for such assistance it is important that those most involved be consulted. Former women students were asked how they felt New Zealand could most effectively assist women in Solomon Islands. Overwhelmingly, they felt that the provision of education and training opportunities for women at a variety of levels was the highest priority.

Rachel suggested, "New Zealand could provide more scholarships for women, and at the same time identify training requirements for women in different levels of occupation, both in the public and private sectors. The New Zealand Government approves scholarships in line with the approved manpower plans of the Solomon Islands Government. It is hard for women

to get recognised through such plans and there may be incidents of sex discrimination or favouritism. Perhaps New Zealand should offer a more competitive system such as the Equity and Merit Scholarship scheme of Australia." Iris too felt, "New Zealand could help by offering more scholarships for women and by funding in-country training courses for rural women on education, basic health and nutrition and so on. New Zealand could also support non-governmental organisations like the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) which is seen as quite an effective local organisation which trains local women to work with women in their area. In Isabel all the officers of SIDT are women." Julienne believed, "New Zealand should try to get local women's groups to put in proposals that will benefit them, perhaps for agricultural training or primary health training. New Zealand aid officials should talk to women in government ministries to find out what their needs are. The establishment of a Women in Development fund, such as Australia has, is a good way to ensure some money gets to women." Selina said, "One area I think could be positive, is to have a quota system in terms of scholarships. New Zealand could insist that half of the scholarships will be for women. The areas of study could also be suggested. Why couldn't New Zealand insist that they will train women lawyers, doctors, etc, and that scholarships will be for those areas, rather than women being pushed into the traditional positions of teaching etc." Hilary concluded, "New Zealand can best assist Solomon Islands women by providing training opportunities to meet a variety of needs. We need women in decision-making areas in government. The percentage of women involved here is very small and women need to be able to influence

the decisions that are being made. Women need to be encouraged to pursue careers in technical areas such as engineering, planning, medicine - fields that are currently dominated by men. Most women with careers in Solomon Islands are administrators rather than in technical positions. In the rural areas women need training in a lot of different areas such as agricultural skills and income-generating skills. But a first priority should be to improve living conditions for rural people - to make them healthier. They need basic facilities, and training to make them responsible for these facilities."

Summary

All women in this research, including those who failed to complete tertiary qualifications, had been in full time continuous employment (apart from parental or study leave) in the public or private sectors since completing their New Zealand-sponsored tertiary training. While none had faced difficulties in finding employment, a number felt that their career progress had been hindered to varying degrees by sex discrimination. A strong commitment to attaining further qualifications (a high 73% had already undertaken further study) may be seen as an attempt to improve their competitiveness for senior management and administrative positions. While there are clearly difficulties for women in overcoming the strong, traditional predominance of men in senior positions, the recent appointment of a woman to a permanent secretary position in government offers them some

encouragement. Most of the women had combined heavy domestic and work responsibilities with some facing criticism, particularly from spouses' families for their perseverance with non-traditional roles. As a whole, however, the group was notable in having been able to influence their families' decision-making and to a large degree determine their own career and study developments. This had included at times (for instance during overseas study) pursuing their own career development at the expense of their spouse's. Average family size for the group (aged between 26 and 37) was low at just 1.18 children per woman. The group was characterised by a high level of social consciousness, and a desire to use their skills and qualifications to best advantage the development of their country, and in particular to improve the status of women in the society.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Introduction

There has been increasing recognition in recent years from major international agencies such as the World Bank, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD and UNICEF of the importance of education for girls and women in addressing critical national goals such as economic productivity, the population's health and nutrition and the education of future generations. This has been true to such an extent that the education of girls has been described by the World Bank as having possibly "the highest return investment available in the developing world" (EDI Review, Jan-Mar 1993:1).

Development agencies are also increasingly drawing attention to the importance for sustainable development of ensuring that women are fully integrated ('mainstreamed') in development planning and decision-making. An impressive body of evidence now illustrates the results in terms of failed development projects or negative outcomes of the failure to consult with women and involve them (both as agents and beneficiaries) in project design.

As traditional knowledge bases, for example, in relation to sustainable, integrated agricultural practices, of which women were often the guardians become eroded, and women fail to access the new forms of knowledge, they become systematically disempowered. In order for women to participate in development decision-making and to avoid being treated as objects in the development process, it is necessary for them to gain access to the 'new' knowledge, while also retaining their traditional knowledge.

While recognising the important role of non-formal education in making significant impacts on the lives of women, this study has focused on the formal component of education, based on the belief that improving the participation of girls and women in schooling will result in improvements in status, and facilitate women's involvement in development decision-making and planning.

Despite significant advances since the 1960s (particularly at the primary level), gender remains the single most significant determinant of access to schooling in most developing countries. In Solomon Islands this is reflected in statistics which show that from 1970-86 the proportion of girls in primary school increased from 36.4% to 43.5%. However at secondary level the increase was much less rapid with girls increasing their participation by less than 3% (from 32.5% to 35%) over the period 1982-87. In 1991/92 women made up just 20% of those overseas on tertiary training.

Factors affecting participation in education

International research into the reasons for the lower participation of girls in education has identified the following as important factors : socio-cultural values and attitudes and the perceived economic advantages to parents of educating sons ahead of daughters, the indirect costs to parents (in loss of family labour) as well as the direct costs of school fees, transport, and uniforms, for girls' education, historical reasons (particularly associated with the diffusion of Western settlement and prevailing Western attitudes on the domestication of women), structural imbalances (such as restricted school places for girls) and traditional responses to the availability of education for girls. While there is a growing body of literature available on factors affecting the participation rates of girls and women in education in many developing countries, there is little that has been written on the subject in relation to the South Pacific and nothing of substance in relation to Solomon Islands. In looking at the factors that facilitated the access to and retention within the education system to an advanced level of a group of Solomon Islands women who had previously or who currently hold New Zealand tertiary scholarships, the findings of this research suggest that to a considerable degree those factors which have been internationally recognised as affecting the participation of girls in education are reflected in the experience of Solomon Islands.

The majority of the women interviewed, who had attained New Zealand scholarships, came from relatively privileged backgrounds. They had most often grown up in Honiara or major provincial centres. Both parents had, in most cases, at least primary education, and their fathers, and sometimes also their mothers, were most frequently employed in the

formal sector. Taking formal education and formal sector employment as broad indicators of socio-economic status, the findings of this research confirm Bowman and Anderson's conclusion that, "The firmest generalisation is that socio-economic status of parents has more influence on the schooling of girls than of boys" (1982:25). In comparing the parental education and employment of a group of men who had held New Zealand scholarships at the same time as the former women students it was found that half had no or very little formal education. A World Bank reverse tracer study of Solomon Islands tertiary graduates in 1985 and 1988 (of which women made up just 18% of the target population) found that only 30% of those questioned had fathers employed in the formal sector (World Bank 1992:xxiv). Higher proportions of the women interviewed who had left school at Form 3 or Form 5 also had parents who had had little or no primary education.

It would appear from this that the financial ability to sustain the high costs of education (both direct and indirect) were an important consideration in the parents' decision to send and keep daughters in school. Also of significance is the fact that the family size of those women who had reached sixth form or above was smaller than for both men students and women who had left school at an earlier age. Whether this primarily reflects the greater availability of resources for education or the higher education level of the parents is difficult to say. It was clear that, in particular for the early group of women tertiary students, the encouragement of their fathers was of critical importance in influencing their educational chances. This

encouragement of their daughters was in sharp contrast to the parental attitudes towards female siblings of the former men students. For the second group of women tertiary students interviewed (those holding New Zealand scholarships in 1990) mothers appeared to have played a more dominant role (no doubt reflecting their own better education) in influencing their daughters' education and career aspirations. These findings again reflect international research that educated mothers in all countries are influential as role models for the education of girls. However as their numbers are small, particularly in the early stages of the diffusion of education, educated fathers are more influential in breaking down the traditional barriers to girls' participation in education.

While Solomon Islands was, no doubt, affected by the colonial experience and prevailing attitudes which gave preference to the education of boys to fill religious and administrative roles and the corresponding domestication of women, it is clear that there developed some intra-country variations. These reflected to some extent the spread of western education, but also the varying effects of the traditional value systems in encouraging or discouraging an expansion of women's roles. Solomon Islands provincial educational statistics continue today to display these variations. The two most densely populated provinces have the lowest overall rates of primary education but exhibit apparently very different responses to the education of girls in a situation of educational scarcity. In 1986 the proportional enrolment of girls in primary schools ranged from 39.1% in Malaita Province

to 47.8% in Western Province. Primary school retention rates for girls are almost equal with boys in Isabel Province and Western Province with a more egalitarian allocation of places at secondary school also prevailing. This trend was maintained amongst women tertiary students (both past and present) interviewed for this research, with a predominance of Western and/or Isabel women in both groups. In discussing this phenomenon, respondents commented on the strong matrilineal traditions within both provinces which they felt were a major factor in providing social acceptance of education for girls and expanded roles for women in society. Conversely the lack of women (with one exception) in the sample from the country's most populated region of Malaita mirrors national statistics which depict the under-representation of girls from that province in primary and secondary education. Respondents also commented on the traditional lack of value attached to female education in this patrilineal society where, from an early age, girls represent an important source of income in the form of bride price

While the findings of this research substantiate that of other research in the primary factors affecting the access and retention of girls in education, the exception that proves the rule should not go unnoticed. The background which 'Hilary', one of the former tertiary students, comes from fits none of the 'norms'. Growing up in a traditional patrilineal Malaitan village, the daughter of poor subsistence farmers, Hilary had to walk long distances to attend school and to fit heavy domestic chores such as collection of firewood and water, house and garden work around her

studies. Despite such handicaps she excelled within the education system, completing a first degree with excellent grades and continuing on to gain a postgraduate qualification. Her success reflects not only her own ability and determination but the open-mindedness of her father and the willingness of the entire family to make considerable sacrifices to support her education.

Tertiary education overseas

A major omission identified by Altbach (1985:47) in the growing body of literature available on international study is research specifically focusing on the experience of women international students. In recounting the experience of a group of Solomon Islands women tertiary students (both past and present) who held New Zealand Government scholarships, this research has aimed in a small way to address this gap.

Only in Latin America have women in developing countries narrowed the gap between men and women enrolled in higher education with, in the early 80s, 20.8% of women aged 18-23 enrolled in tertiary study compared with 23.8% men. In Africa and Asia the difference in enrolment ratios at this level increased over the decade 1970-80. In the Pacific the proportion of the total population that has received tertiary education remains low, with women significantly under-represented. Melanesian states have the lowest percentage of women receiving tertiary education (all below 20%) with Micronesian and Polynesian women making up about

one-third of their national populations receiving tertiary education. These figures are reflected in the statistics for NZODA Pacific students in New Zealand in 1992.

A 1992 World Bank reverse tracer study of Solomon Islands tertiary graduates in 1985 and 1988 found that most of those interviewed had experienced no difficulty in securing a scholarship. This was also true (with one exception) of the women interviewed in this study, and reflects the fact that until recently it was expected that all those who had survived the draconian 'culling' process that occurs at various levels through the education system and had reached Form 6 would proceed to further study overseas on a tertiary scholarship. Factors found to be important in the World Bank study (which included just 18% women in its target population) on choice of course of study and future occupation were expected high demand, knowledge of the occupation, status of the occupation and expected good income. While the first two were mentioned in responses to a similar question in this research, no respondent commented specifically on the last two. (The question was however open ended, rather than a checklist). Considerations such as personal interest in the area and the ability of the qualification to 'help' people and to contribute to national development were reasons most frequently cited.

The World Bank study found careers officers and teachers were important for two-thirds of those questioned. While these also played an important role in the decision-making for the women in this study, several

showed a determination to make their own decisions contrary to the advice of teachers and careers officers. (Natalie and Julienne, for instance, both elected to do law, despite their teachers' preference for them to take English studies). Others were directly or indirectly influenced by their parents or by family experiences in their choice of occupation. Lorraine, who had no interest in law, was persuaded by her father to study it and Linda in wanting to become a doctor was influenced by her grandmother's illness and by the fact that both her parents worked in medical-related areas. Hilary was influenced by her family background of rural subsistence farming to take economics which, she hoped, would enable her to contribute in the future to rural development planning. For Anita initial career choices of civil aviation and later mechanical engineering (while seen as purely personal decisions) may well have been influenced by the non-traditional role model presented by her mother who, contrary to tradition, occupied a position on the village council.

Much of the international literature available on international students has focused on cross-cultural issues and the adjustment required by students to living in a foreign culture. Researchers have found that the stress associated with living in a foreign culture, most often displayed as depression and loneliness, is most commonly the result of cross-cultural isolation. Researchers have placed positive interaction with natives of the host country as high in international students' needs. This research has shown that the more different the culture, the more difficult the women

found the process of adjustment. Those students who studied in New Zealand, a society vastly different in many respects from their own, found the first year in particular very stressful. Almost all mentioned problems with homesickness, the climate, the diet, the strangeness of the culture and the difficulty in forming relationships with New Zealanders. For the two women who had studied in Papua New Guinea, the adaptation to cultural differences may not have been so great but the social situation, with a high level of personal violence and a perceived lack of respect for women were causes of stress. Those who studied in Fiji had the least problems in adapting to a new society. Not only were there cultural similarities with their own society but there were also many other Solomon Islanders whom they could turn to for friendship and support.

Previous research, in attempt to link personal and social adjustment with academic success, has run into difficulties in determining which was cause and which effect. It was evident in this research that those who failed the course for which they had been nominated (and either had their scholarships terminated or transferred to a lesser qualification) were those who expressed difficulties in either adjusting to the new cultural situation or in exercising the self-discipline necessary to combine study requirements with the greater social freedom which they encountered. In contrast with the majority of students, the same students felt that the level of support provided by the New Zealand Government was inadequate for their needs. Again, it is difficult to determine where the cause and effect lies. Had these particular students been better supported, would they have failed, or are

they critical of the support because they failed?

The heated criticism from virtually all those who had held New Zealand scholarships of the support they received from their own Government is, perhaps another manifestation of the isolation felt by students in a new environment, and of their consequent need for a sympathetic interest and concern for their well-being from those responsible for them being there. The links with home were important, particularly in dealing with homesickness, and students felt 'betrayed' by their Government's apparent lack of interest in them.

Previous research on international students has found that while basic beliefs have remained unchanged amongst students who have lived abroad for more than two years, there was generally a change towards a more 'liberal' attitude particularly in regard to relationships with the opposite sex and religion. For the women in this study who had spent time in New Zealand, their views on the role and status of women were particularly challenged as they came into contact with more 'open', 'liberal', and independent New Zealand women. It was in this area in particular that the effects of new ideas and attitudes seem to have made the most profound personal impact, creating both difficulties and new opportunities for them on their return home. As with other research also, this study found that the effects of overseas study on intellectual and personal development, independence and self-confidence were evident. Even the women who had academically 'failed' commented positively on the 'personal growth' which

they believed they had undergone as a result of the experience. In the light of their experience of a different society, the women were also able to view their own society more objectively and to compare its good and bad features with that of the host country. Again, this inevitably brought with it some problems when they returned home.

In summary, while the overall effects of overseas study on the women interviewed in this research do not appear to vary significantly from those found in previous research on men students or where data has not been gender disaggregated, it may be fair to suggest that the effects are felt more acutely by women. For the women in this group, who came from a small relatively isolated island nation, who, for the most part, had had no previous overseas experience, and who, as girls and young women, had led sheltered and constrained lifestyles, the experience of living in a foreign, more liberal culture was particularly acute. Few had had role models to prepare them for the degree of 'culture shock' they were to experience. All referred to the ongoing effect of their overseas experience both on their personal and professional lives. Several expressed their 'appreciation' of the opportunity which the interview involved in this study had provided them in order to reflect on the significance of their overseas experience. While they had recognised the experience as having had a profound effect on their ideas, attitudes and personality, nobody had asked them to talk about it before.

The educational 'outcomes'

As well as the lack of research into the experiences of women overseas students, Altbach noted, in his review of the literature, that there have been few studies carried out on students' readjustment to their own society - the effects of counter-culture shock, their experiences in finding a job, the usefulness of their training, and their impact on the development of their societies (1985:33,47). Chapter 8 in this research examined the 'outcomes' of overseas experience in relation to the eleven Solomon Islands women who had returned from tertiary study in New Zealand.

The initial readjustment to life in Solomon Islands was difficult for all those interviewed. They had grown (personally and intellectually), their new knowledge and overseas experience gave them a 'stature' which set them apart from their families and communities, while also placing an onus of responsibility on them to respond to their demands for time, advice or money. Some had nostalgically expected that their return home would be as they fondly remembered their childhood, and were distressed to realise how much they had changed, how difficult it was to be accepted as an ordinary woman in the village and how much their attitudes to some traditional things had changed. The inability of most in their communities to even begin to understand their experiences overseas set them apart from their families and friends in a way that few had anticipated.

One of the most difficult areas for the women to accept was the role and status of women in the family and in the broader society. Their increased confidence, assertiveness and independence, together with the exposure they had had to more liberal ideas and attitudes resulted in it being difficult for many to return to their former role and behaviour in the family, resulting in some cases in conflict with partners and in-laws.

Labour force participation

International research has described falling paid labour force participation rates for women from 45% to 42% over the period 1960-1980 (Cebotarev, in Kelly, 1990:136), with the ILO predicting a further decline to 24% by 2000 (Smock, 1981:11).

Women's labour force participation in Solomon Islands reflects a situation common to many developing countries. The 1986 Population Census found that of the 84.3% of women classified as economically active, 71.3% were engaged in village work without money. The proportion of adult women working for money had nonetheless doubled over the period 1976-86 and by 1986 women made up 26% of the total population in waged employment, having increased their share from 17% in 1976. Women's rate of entry into the formal labour market in Solomon Islands is faster than that of men, reflecting the increases in their educational attainment, and their occupational levels are more closely tied to educational levels, reflecting

their more recent entry into the labour market and their significant levels of employment in the public sector. While women's per capita earnings are on average a high 98.7% of men's, it should be recalled that, as in most other developing countries, the vast majority of women work as unpaid subsistence labourers. Of concern for women tertiary graduates is the fact that despite women's slight over-representation in the professional and technical occupational category, their share in this category fell over the period 1976-86.

While all the women interviewed, including those who failed to complete tertiary qualifications, reported that they had no difficulty in finding a job, pressure on the Government to curtail public spending has resulted in recent years in restricted public sector recruiting. Given the importance of this sector for women, the impact of this policy is likely to result in greater difficulty in finding a job for those Solomon Islands students currently undertaking tertiary study. As Smock (1981:279) notes,

> "The benefits obtaining to the select few who were schooled during a period of great educational scarcity do not accrue to the many who follow in their footsteps ..."

Already, as in other developing countries, the increasing numbers of Form 1 and Form 3 leavers who are forced to leave school due to the lack of secondary school places are at a particular disadvantage. Failing to reach the academic level necessary to continue their education, or to gain entry to the public service, they are also in many cases unable to readjust easily to their traditional subsistence roles.

Those women in this study who had returned to Solomon Islands with a completed, or partially completed, tertiary qualification were fortunate in being amongst the earliest who had qualified at this level. Many were the first in their communities to return with a qualification, some were the first in the country. These included the first woman lawyer, the first physical planner and the first to hold a dispensary assistant's certificate. Former New Zealand scholarship holders went on to become the first woman permanent secretary of a government department, the first woman senior planning officer in the Ministry of Economic Planning, the first woman head of department at a national secondary school and the first woman manager in Solomon Islands Airlines. A very high proportion (eight out of the 11) had gone on to further overseas studies, perhaps reflecting an awareness of the situation noted by Smock that it is "even more essential for women to be well-educated than men" if they are to find the employment (and promotion) they wish, in the modern sector (Smock, 1981:276).

The findings of this research reflect those of the World Bank reverse tracer study which found that a high proportion of the Solomon Islands graduates interviewed had found a job easily and were employed within three months (96% and 98%) respectively. A significant number of those interviewed in this research, however, found that their progress had been hindered in varying degrees by perceived sex discrimination, most notably in being passed over for promotion. The significance of this may be seen in the desire for post-graduate qualifications. It suggests also, that despite higher levels of education increasing women's chances of obtaining access

to professional and technical occupation groups, it will be insufficient to overcome the structural and cultural restrictions that prevent women attaining senior management and administrative positions (Smock, 1981:276).

Education, attitudinal change and the family

Smock's contention that as a result of education

> "women will be more inclined to adopt expanded role expectations, to have the self-confidence to plan their lives, to believe that their own preferences and objectives should be taken into account in decisions that affect them and to have access to the information necessary to implement these intentions" (Smock, 1981:6)

was borne out by this research. Aged between 26 and 37, eight of the former women students interviewed had children (four had one, three had two, and one had three children). While it was too early to predict completed family size, the fact that several had delayed childbearing until in their thirties, or alternatively had only one or two children at a younger age made it likely that this group would reinforce existing research that women with tertiary qualifications generally have smaller families than the average in their societies. Apart from brief maternity or study leave, all had been in continuous employment since completing their New Zealand-sponsored study.

This was in some cases against the wishes of, in particular, their spouses' families. However, their advanced education, and with it the professional jobs and correspondingly high incomes they could attract, gave them greater authority within the family and enabled them to make the final decision about whether or not they worked. Their incomes too assisted them to influence the decision-making as they could afford either to pay for child care and household help, or afford to have another family member stay with them to assist with these roles.

The expanded influence and decision-making role resulting from their education is perhaps most evident in considering the high proportion of the former women students who had undertaken further study overseas. In some cases spouses and children had accompanied them, in other cases they were left behind. Either way, the decision inevitably impacted on the spouse's career and life in a way that would have been unthinkable in a traditional family situation. In other cases, women had refused to go along with their spouse's career plans which would have disrupted their own career, eg "My husband works for the airlines and has had offers to work overseas, but I've always refused to go. He has accepted my independence." Their increased role in family decision-making has, however, not always been easy or amicable. For several of the women their increased confidence, assertiveness and independence had not been accepted by their families and had resulted in conflict and domestic violence. Two had separated from their spouses, and a further two continued to exist in abusive relationships.

Involvement in public life

Kelly noted that the effects of education on women's involvement in politics, public policy formulation and wider social issues generally is probably the area most requiring further research (Kelly, 1990:138-139). While heavy work and domestic responsibilities curtailed the current active involvement of many of the women in this sample in wider political and social issues, the group as a whole was characterised by a high level of interest in and commitment to social issues (in particular in relation to the position of women in their society) and to making a positive contribution to national development.

Six of the 11 had been actively involved in women's organisations in the past. Almost all hoped that their qualifications and work experience would, in some way, benefit other women. Two, in their professional capacities as lawyer and economic planner, had very recently undertaken voluntary work with women's groups, assisting in the development of a national women's policy and women's project planning respectively. Two others hoped that their occupying senior positions in government and in a national secondary school would be seen as a positive role model for girls and women. Another was planning to examine the role of women in the Solomon Islands fishing industry for her MA thesis and another was particularly concerned about the role of women in rural development, reflecting her own subsistence background and studies in the area. Yet another hoped in the future to be able to pass on her knowledge in business

management to other women by running training courses, and to learn counselling skills to assist women in violent domestic situations.

Almost all the women interviewed wished to use their skills and qualifications to not only advance their own career interests but to contribute to national development. Several felt their skills were not at the time being used to best advantage in this respect. Several were actively involved in voluntarily assisting their own communities in the development process.

Development benefits

There can be little doubt as to the benefits that have accrued to Solomon Islands in investing in the tertiary education of those former women students who have since returned to pursue careers and to contribute to the national development. For the New Zealand Government too, their sponsorship can be judged as more than 'effective' development assistance. Despite most of them having children and heavy domestic, and sometimes also voluntary, responsibilities, all had been in continuous employment (some with study breaks) since their return to Solomon Islands. Several now hold important and influential positions both in the public and private sectors. There was little doubt too that this was an exceptionally strong group of women. In undertaking study overseas and then returning to take up professional employment, they were in many ways 'trailblazers' for those women who followed behind them. Their role was not an easy one, subject often to

personal misunderstanding and criticism as they sought a new role and a new status for women in Solomon Islands society. Yet this was not an elite Westernised group interested only in their own advancement and material well-being, alienated from their own people and culture. The strongest impression one is left with is that of their clearly genuine and deep commitment to assisting other Solomon Islands women and of contributing generally to the development of their own society. In a country characterised by the scarcity of educational opportunity, the women interviewed understood their education in terms of privilege and were clear about the responsibilities it involved for them. In outlining their future hopes and plans, none of the women indicated any interest in emigrating.

Finally, as well as their commitment to Solomon Islands, one cannot help but be impressed by the energy, ability and enthusiasm of these women. Undaunted by combining demanding careers, often very heavy domestic responsibilities and voluntary activities, one got the impression that no challenge was too much for these women to handle. The interests of development have been well served by the investment in their education.

APPENDIX 1

Case Studies

Introduction

Inevitably, the process of analysis 'dissects' and 'divides' data according to artificial categories and, in so doing, does violence to information representing the lives of real people. The following cases studies aim, therefore, to integrate and supplement what has gone before, and to present the information in a more 'holistic' fashion.

The case studies which have been selected are of women whose stories are, for one reason or another, of particular note. Gabrielle, the first Solomon Islands woman to hold a New Zealand tertiary study award has recently been appointed to a position of permanent secretary within the public service - the first woman to hold such a senior position within government. Hilary, from a poor, subsistence, Malaitan background, defied all 'criteria' for academic achievement, to become the first woman physical planner in Solomon Islands. Anita, a current student, has embarked on a particularly non-traditional career option - that of mechanical engineering. Finally Lorraine, whose scholarship was terminated, has difficulty not

considering herself a 'failure'. From the viewpoint of both the Solomon Islands and New Zealand Governments there may also be an inclination to see the scholarship she was awarded as having been 'wasted'. Yet Lorraine is today the only woman sole proprietor of a business in Honiara, having successfully established and run her own business for seven years. As a solo parent she also provides and cares for three pre-school children.

Case Study 1 : "Gabrielle"

Gabrielle is 37, and, towards the end of the four week period in 1990 during which this research was carried out, was appointed to the position of permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade - the highest position a woman has ever held in the Solomon Islands Public Service.

Prior to her appointment to this position, Prime Minister Mamaloni had requested the resignation of all existing incumbents in government and invited existing staff in these positions to apply along with other applicants for permanent secretary positions which were to be on a contract basis with salaries far higher than the next most senior level in the Public Service. Overnight, Gabrielle's salary leapt from around the $SI 13,000 she had earned in her Grade 10 position as Assistant Secretary to the Prime Minister to around $SI 16,000 as a permanent secretary.

In achieving this 'first' for Solomon Islands women, Gabrielle was following in the footsteps of her maternal aunt who was one of the earliest woman civil servants in Solomon Islands, the first to achieve a senior (Grade 9) position in the public service and the first woman parliamentarian. Her achievement, however, was not a foregone conclusion. Her rise through the public service ranks had been relatively slow compared to some of her male colleagues and, at the time of interviewing, she was disappointed to have missed out on a permanent secretary position to several men who were younger, less

qualified and less experienced than herself. Her appointment came only after the politician who had been appointed to the position of Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade, decided to remain in politics and withdraw his application.

Gabrielle comes from Kia, a village of approximately 3000 people in Isabel Province, which has a strong matrilineal tradition and where the Church of Melanesia (Anglican) has had a long and continuing influence, one effect of which has been the establishment of strong church women's organisations. Both Gabrielle's parents had completed primary school in Anglican church schools, but had not gone on to secondary education. Her mother was a 'gardener/homemaker', her father a policeman. The eldest of a family of six girls, Gabrielle is the only one in her family to have had tertiary education. Three younger sisters left school after Standard 6, got married and have had no paid employment. A fourth left in Form 3, married and is now living in New Zealand, and the fifth left at Form 5 and is in paid employment as an accounts clerk. Gabrielle believes the fact that she was the first born in her family contributed to her academic success. "My parents encouraged me as the first born. They thought someone in the family should have a job. At an early age I was sent away to a girls' church primary boarding school in the Floridas. My sisters all went through boarding school in the village where the teachers and the resources are not so good. My teachers, at primary and secondary school, were also very influential in encouraging me to continue my education. They were mainly New Zealanders, also some Australians and some VSOs (British)."

Gabrielle says that when she went through primary school there were always more boys than girls, more so in some parts of the country than others. "My husband is Malaitan. There are five boys in his family and one girl, and the girl stayed home. Even in Isabel, though, some people had their daughters stay home. Just ten of us from my (all girls) Standard 6 class went on to secondary school. At Form 2, which was the selection level then, most of the girls dropped out."

By the fifth form at King George VI, Gabrielle was one of just 12 girls left out of a total of 90 students who sat their Cambridge 'O' Levels. A number of students, but only two of the girls, were selected by the Principal to apply for tertiary scholarships. Gabrielle was interviewed by a 'Scholarship Board' which decided she should study for a BA in education at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. While she was given no say in what she would do, Gabrielle says at that stage she had no clear idea of what she wanted to do. "My teachers said my grades were good enough to do tertiary study and I did feel some desire to go on. I saw graduates had better jobs. I hadn't thought of being a teacher, but I had no strong feelings about it at the time. It didn't bother me until the time came to come back for teaching practice. I had thought about nursing and, if I hadn't got a scholarship, I probably would have done that. That would have been OK. My parents were very keen that I go to university. They weren't too concerned about me going overseas. My aunt was the first in our village to go overseas. I was pleased to be going to Fiji and not PNG. I'd heard

about PNG from friends and I thought it sounded a bit scarey."

In 1973 Gabrielle took up a New Zealand Government scholarship to USP, undertaking a preliminary year (Form 6) in 1973 and then completing a Diploma in Education in 1974. Her scholarship had been for a BA in education but, during her first year she had "fallen in love and wanted to finish as quickly as possible." She had no difficulty in obtaining approval from the Scholarships Board to change her course of study and, despite having missed out on the first year of the Diploma in Education, by doing a Form 6 year, she easily completed the course.

Like most of the former students who had attended USP, Gabrielle was enthusiastic about her Fijian student experience. "I loved it. It was great ... one of the best places I've been to ... much better than PNG or Australia or Canada (countries where she has subsequently studied). I liked the social life, the food, the amenities, the dormitories ... it was all good! I was not at all homesick. There were lots of other people from Solomon Islands there. It was a very good experience. The number of men and women at the university was almost equal and men and women seemed very comfortable with each other. It was quite different from my experience at home. Women, at least the Fijians, not the Indians, were more outspoken than here. I made a lot of friends from other Pacific countries, a few Fijians, but especially people from Niue, Tonga and Vanuatu.

The support from the New Zealand High Commission was also

appreciated. "We were one of the luckiest groups. New Zealand officials came to see us often and they also arranged social functions for the sponsored students. Only the New Zealand sponsored students had this close contact - not the Australian group. The allowance was adequate. I was very happy with the support."

Unlike many of the students who followed her, Gabrielle was also pleased with the support she got from the Overseas Training Unit of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, though she admits she was particularly fortunate in that her aunt was at that time head of the unit, giving her a direct line of communication. The main factor, she feels, however, was that numbers were so much smaller than now. "I was part of only the fourth group to go to USP. We had visits, once or twice, from officers and we wrote to them, kept in touch with them. It was different in the 80s when I studied in PNG. Then there was very little contact with OTU."

Gabrielle returned to Solomon Islands in 1975, married, with her Diploma in Education. Before starting work she returned to visit her family in Kia, Isabel. "Everyone was very happy and wanted to know what I was going to do. Their first reaction was very respectful, but it didn't take long before they were back to normal. I felt proud (that I'd been overseas and got a qualification) but I also felt a bit out of place. I'd been away so long. I couldn't do the work my sisters did. I couldn't do gardening like they could and I couldn't weave a mat. People thought that was very strange, and bad

... one of the bad influences of being away. They think to be able to do those things is natural. My mother played a big role in helping me. She was very understanding. There were also some initial problems in being married to a Malaitan. There was a bit of a clash as there is quite a difference in our cultures. His family was against me working, for instance. They're getting used to it now."

Gabrielle began work as a clerical assistant in the Ministry of Public Service a month or so after she returned from Fiji. Before her return OTU had sent her and other completing students application forms to fill in for appropriate positions. She had applied for some teaching positions but had got no definite answer and by the time she returned to Solomon Islands she was sure she didn't want to teach. "The government was flexible about my deciding not to teach. Quite a few came back and didn't become teachers. I had to find my own job though. I applied to the Ministry of Public Service and some private firms and I got a position as clerical assistant with the Ministry of Public Service. I got some recognition for my Diploma, though not as much as if I'd done a degree. I began on Level 4. If I'd started work from Form 5 it would have been Level 3.

After working for two years in this position, Gabrielle was promoted to administration officer in the Ministry of Public Service, continuing in this position until 1979. In 1980 she was sent to PNG on a Solomon Islands Government scholarship to study for a Diploma in Public Administration.

She returned to work as senior administration officer, 1982-84, and was then seconded from the Ministry of Public Service to be private secretary to the Governor General, 1984-86. In 1986 she was appointed chief administration officer in the Ministry of Home Affairs, and that year also was sent on a short administrative training course at the International Training Institute in Sydney. In late 1987 she was awarded a scholarship to do a BA in politics and administration at Carlton University in Ottawa, Canada. Gabrielle was interviewed just a few weeks after returning from Canada in October 1990. She had just commenced working in a senior (Level 10) public service position as assistant secretary to the Prime Minister. Her job involved drafting cabinet papers on policy matters affecting the public service as a whole, negotiating with the public service union on pay and conditions, having overall responsibility for the public service personnel division, and particular responsibility for dealing with problems affecting senior officers (Level 9 and up). Her salary was $SI 13,000.

In general Gabrielle felt that her career had developed to her satisfaction despite the fact that she believed it had been a slow progression compared to other male colleagues who had entered the service the same year or later. "I'm quite glad in some ways that I've progressed up slowly, getting the 'solidness' and experience I need, but the financial benefits have been slow. I'm not that well off. Being a woman has been a major disadvantage in terms of getting promotion. When you apply for posts and you have equal qualifications or higher than the person who gets it ... there is no other apparent reason." There have also been some

problems in combining career and personal concerns. Gabrielle has two daughters, by adoption, aged 12 and 5. "Even though we've had someone living with us - a younger sister - it has been difficult sometimes taking days off when they were sick and so on. On the whole the permanent secretaries I've had have been quite good. Only one told me to 'leave my problems at home'. My husband's also been supportive, though his family has been against me working. When I went to Canada to study we had to pay for the kids to go and for their education and so on." She has received no particular assistance in planning her career but sees it as having been a fairly structured progression up through public service ranks. "There have been times when I've felt like quitting and going to a private firm. But I've so far decided not to. Maybe it's the security or something."

Gabrielle had applied twice for positions for which she was not successful. The first was for a chief administration officer position (during her period on secondment to the Governor General, preceding her appointment to the position in 1986). "I appealed that appointment as the man who got it did not have such good qualifications, was younger, more junior and less experienced than I was. Their excuse was that he had been acting in the position. Just recently I also applied unsuccessfully for a permanent secretary position. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs suggested I apply. There were 72 applicants, including two women. Neither of us got through. I was going to appeal but I thought, "I've just come back from overseas." I was also discouraged by people who

thought it would be a waste of time as some male officers with higher qualifications also hadn't got through. I felt bad though when I found out who had been appointed. Of the 15 appointed, seven had held the position previously, two others had no degrees, despite the fact the application said applicants had to have a degree or diploma, and another had entered the service very recently, in 1983. He went from Level 7, acting Level 8, to permanent secretary. A former permanent secretary is taking a case to court over his failure to be reappointed. (As noted earlier only a few days after this interview Gabrielle was appointed permanent secretary of Foreign Affairs, in the wake of the decision of the initial appointee to withdraw his application. Her career ambition when asked what she would like to be doing in five years time was to be a permanent secretary - an ambition that was realised sooner than she anticipated! Her other longer term ambition was to consider going into politics when she retired.

Gabrielle believes that in general her skills as an experienced administrator are being effectively used within the public service to contribute to the country's development (and presumably more so within her new appointment). She feels a particular obligation to assist people in her own village, and has done this in a number of ways, such as private sponsorship of young people, youth groups, women's meetings and sports carnivals. She hopes that her own career will be sent as a role model for other women seeking to reach high positions within the public service. She is a past board member of the YWCA and, while lack of time has prevented her from being involved in the National Council of Women, is supportive of

their work and believes they have played an important role in laying the foundation of the women's movement in Solomon Islands. She believes New Zealand development assistance could be effectively used to benefit many women in Solomon Islands through the funding of staff, offices, resources and training for organisations such as the NCW. She sees support for the education and training of women in Solomon Islands as critical. "In addition to tertiary scholarships for female school leavers, New Zealand should look at in-service training for women in the government. With extra qualifications women can help to fight against a system which discriminates against them. Women in middle management in the public service (usually Form 5 leavers) or junior officers (often Form 3 leavers) need additional qualifications if they are to progress. Within the public service assistance is often given to the women at the top of the scale. But many get frustrated before they get there. They need help further down. I didn't get the opportunity to do a degree in public administration until I reached Level 9. I could have provided more input if I had had it earlier.

To Solomon Islands girls considering their future study and career options Gabrielle says, "Go for it. You will meet obstacles, but keep hammering away. It's important to realise that these obstacles exist and to know it when you are told that you haven't been discriminated against. The realisation that there are double standards in the public service, and knowing that I have at times been discriminated against, has made me work harder to prove myself."

Case Study 2: "Hilary"

Hilary is 26, and at the time of interviewing had recently returned from completing a postgraduate Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning at Queensland University, Australia and had been just two weeks in her first job as Senior Petroleum Officer with the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Hilary was the only woman interviewed amongst both past and current New Zealand scholarship holders who came from Malaita and the only one whose parents were subsistence farmers with no primary education at all. In the face of quite overwhelming odds against her achieving academically, Hilary's success must in large part be attributed to her own exceptional talent, ability and determination. However, in a society where education for girls is not traditionally valued and where daughters from an early age represent a major source of income in the form of bride price, her father's far-sightedness and willingness to make considerable sacrifices must be seen as just as exceptional.

Hilary grew up in Elita Village, outside Port Adam in Small Malaita, the only daughter of very poor subsistence farmers. Only recently, with the assistance of Hilary's two brothers who dropped out of school in Standard 6, has the family begun to introduce some cocoa as a cash crop and have set up a small trade store.

Hilary started school when she was eight, one of the youngest in the

first group of children to enter a small Anglican mission school which had been opened that year (1972). Prior to the school being established there would have been little likelihood that Hilary would have had even a primary education. Hilary's natural ability was soon noted. She learnt quickly and was soon promoted to the next level. Her interest in learning, and her determination was evident in that attending school and studying had to be fitted in amongst the numerous chores expected of the only daughter in a subsistence household. "I got up at about 5 am and had to clean the house and cut firewood before walking three kilometres to school in time for morning devotions at 6 am. We (Hilary and her two brothers, one younger, one older) had plenty of work to do after school and at weekends. We had to go a long way, part of the way by canoe, to get firewood from the mangroves, we had to help in the garden with planting, weeding and harvesting, and I had to do cooking and cleaning." (It is significant that Hilary was the only one of both past and present female students to hold New Zealand scholarships who recounted such a requirement to be involved in significant household/garden chores and who had to walk a considerable distance each day to attend school. In this respect she has more in common with the Form 3 and some Form 5 leavers interviewed).

Of 40 students in Hilary's Standard 6 class, just 12 of them were girls. Of these, four (along with seven boys) went on to secondary school; one to the Provincial Secondary School, and the other three to the Anglican National Secondary School, Selwyn College, outside Honiara. On a recent

visit to her home village Hilary noticed that, while in the past people had largely sent their sons to school, the situation is changing and now she believes almost as many girls as boys attend school. She believes that other students in her Standard 6 class had the ability to go on to secondary school and says it is wrong to say they 'failed' the Secondary Selection Test. "There are just not the opportunities, there are not enough secondary school places and rural students are particularly disadvantaged by the system. I'm sure parents would have found the money somehow if their child had had a chance to go on." Neither of Hilary's brothers got beyond Standard 6. She believes both had the ability to continue their education and feels it is very unfair that they were never given the opportunities she has had. When she came to consider a career later in her schooling, she was influenced by the experience of seeing her brothers and most of her friends 'drop out' of the education system at primary level.

Hilary's parents were pleased and proud that she had won the privilege of going to secondary school. School fees, however, posed a major problem, increasingly placing the family under severe financial strain. Her father was forced to leave their land in the case of Hilary's older brother and go to Honiara to find work to pay her school fees. By her Form 5 year the family were struggling to cope. "I felt so sorry for my parents, I was thinking of leaving and working in a bank or nursing. In Form 5 I tried to apply for a job. In the end my careers master persuaded me to stay. When I got a scholarship in Form 6 (1983) my parents were very relieved that now they wouldn't have to go on struggling to support me."

"I didn't receive much counselling at school, but I was good at business studies and had done a bit of economics. I was interested in economics and government policies, particularly in relation to rural development. When the scholarship list came out there were four scholarships available in economics. I was the only woman to apply. The scholarship was to have been at the University of Papua New Guinea, but then it turned out there were only places for a certain number of Solomon Islands students and these were mainly taken up by law and medical students. So I had to apply, very late, to USP and was initially given a Solomon Islands Government scholarship to go there. At first there wasn't a sponsor for my scholarship and I didn't know what was going to happen. Then during the first term I came under New Zealand sponsorship. The economics course at UPNG would have had a greater content of economics than at USP where it was more of a 'sandwich' course, with other majors. It was mainly macroeconomics, and I did rural development and environmental studies papers. Although I was disappointed not to be going to UPNG at first (because the course seemed better) I know I would have regretted going there later. The social life in PNG is very hard and there are lots of restrictions. When I realised that I felt it was OK to be in Fiji."

Hilary spent four years (1984-87) at USP, studying for a BA in economics and geography. In the second year of her degree course she, uncharacteristically, failed two economics papers. "I didn't know why. I thought I'd done OK but I felt sick and I didn't know what was happening. Throughout the whole of that second year I'd been having nightmares,

waking up screaming and so on. After I came home for the holidays in 85/86 I got very sick and thin. I was treated by traditional doctors who thought I had some sort of curse. They gave me traditional herbs and things. When I went back I did an overload in my third year - two economics Stage 2 papers, two economics Stage 3 papers and two geography Stage 3 papers. I was fine that year. I passed all my papers easily."

Like other students who attended USP, Hilary on the whole enjoyed her time there. "I found the society freer than in Solomon Islands and the social life more exciting. There was more variety of things to do. Most women were more outspoken than I was used to at home. I was a little homesick at first and I felt very upset when a close aunt died while I was away. In general though it was much worse when I went to do postgraduate studies in Brisbane. I was much more on my own there. Lots of my friends from secondary school were with me in Fiji."

Hilary had some criticisms of New Zealand support during her time at USP (concerns that were backed up by a male Solomon Islands student who was there on a New Zealand scholarship at the same time). "While we were actually at USP we had reasonable support. They (the New Zealand High Commission) looked after us and sent us home for five weeks during the coup in Fiji in May 1987. One of the main problems we had, though, was when we went back to Solomon Islands in the holidays. We were given no allowance during that time. This was especially hard if we had to spend time in Honiara before we could get home. Our parents had to support us,

which seemed unfair on them. The Solomon Islands Government was giving Solomon Islands-sponsored students an allowance while they were home on holiday. When we went to the Overseas Training Unit they said it was the NZHC's responsibility, but when we went to see them they said it was our government's responsibility; there was a lot of confusion. We also had some trouble with the way the book allowance was allocated - it was very inflexible. You got the same amount for whatever course you were doing and if you ran short you couldn't get any more."

Hilary thought the Overseas Training Unit (of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education) needed to keep better contact with students studying overseas. "They should get students to call in at the office when they are home for the holidays so that they can have someone to talk to about any problems they have and OTU can keep track of what students are doing. When I came back from Brisbane I found that they had put me down as studying the wrong course."

Hilary returned to Solomon Islands after graduating at the end of 1987. She had been recommended by USP for a postgraduate scholarship on Ocean Resource Management but OTU decided she would need to do two years attachment with the Ministry of Fisheries before she could take this up. "Then the Scholarships Board said there was a scholarship available to do physical planning at Brisbane. I said I wanted to do a combination of economics and planning but they said they wanted me to go on this. In the end I decided to take it up because I didn't feel I was prepared to work yet. I still wanted to study." So, after only two weeks at

home in Malaita, Hilary left again for overseas, this time to study on an Australian (AIDAB) scholarship for a diploma in Urban and Regional Planning at the Queensland University of Technology. While the qualification was, at that stage, for a diploma, Hilary believed the course was at a masterate level, and in fact has now been upgraded to a master's qualification. Hilary's initial idea for a thesis was on the involvement of women in rural development in Solomon Islands, and she had already gathered considerable material on the subject. She was however directed by her supervisors to change her topic to look more 'broadly' at rural development and her final thesis focused in particular on the Government's 'rural centres project', the establishment of 'growth centres' able to provide work and services for people at a provincial level. In carrying out this research she was particularly interested to find out just how such projects are planned within government; who is, and who is not, involved in the planning process. Hilary returned to Solomon Islands at her own expense, during the course of her study, to gather resource materials for her thesis topic. During her time in Brisbane she joined the Royal Australian Planning Authority and won an award for a project involving a strategy plan for an inner city council.

Without the many friends she had been used to at USP, Hilary, at times, found Brisbane a difficult social experience. As the only Solomon Islands woman student at the university she found herself the unwilling centre of attraction for Solomon Islands men students. This led in one case to a problem of severe and continuing sexual harassment which she found

frightening and limiting of her freedom. She was helped by Australian friends (who would come and pick her up when necessary) and by AIDAB officials who tried to keep a check on the situation.

On her return to Solomon Islands in 1990 Hilary spent two weeks at home in Malaita before taking up her first job. While she was happy to see her family and friends again this was also a difficult and unsettling time for her. "My family are very happy now I've finished my studies and I can get a job and look after myself. I was the first woman from our village to have done tertiary study and some people seemed a bit shocked and kept quiet. They didn't treat me as a normal woman in the village. They seemed to have a lot of respect and saw me as someone of 'high rank', an 'academic'. Some people asked about life overseas. They had never experienced a woman who had done this and were keen to hear stories. I often felt uncomfortable ... like I was an outsider. I had very mixed feelings about it all. My family is very important to me, and I'd been looking forward to going home, going fishing and swimming and so on. I did all those things, but I realised that I had changed a lot. My attitude to some traditional things is different. I'm still friends with people I was with in primary school, but I realise I've come back as someone else. I feel sad when I see people looking at me as if I'm someone different."

Hilary had returned to Solomon Islands as the first woman qualified physical planner and the government wanted her to work as a planner in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. However Hilary was opposed to this, and

her overseas experience had taught her to speak up for what she saw as her rights. "I told them I didn't apply for this scholarship in the first place. I had wanted to do economics. Although I had become interested in physical planning while I was away and did have new ideas on developing Honiara and villages and so on I knew that there were administrative problems with the Head of Physical Planning in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and I didn't want to go there at this stage. Also I'd been advised by some of my lecturers in Brisbane not to go to the provinces but to be involved in the policy area. I knew the Chief Physical Planner wanted to post me to the provinces immediately, but with a crisis in the Head Office, I knew that wouldn't work. I asked for a post at the Ministry of Natural Resources. I had to get the job myself and negotiate with the Public Service. They finally agreed but they still wanted me to go to Physical Planning. I said when they'd fixed up the problems there I would."

As Senior Petroleum Officer at the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Hilary is in a Grade 7 position, earning a salary of $SI 490 a fortnight. She is the first woman to work in the Energy Division and at present is the only Solomon Islander, working with two expatriates. Her job involves developing government policy on petroleum issues, monitoring supply and demand and interraction with regional bodies monitoring petroleum supply and demand. However one of her first tasks is to work on the relocation of fuel storage facilities, at present in the centre of Honiara, which does involve an element of physical planning. Her expectations of

the job include that she will learn skills of negotiation and will be able to travel. In the two weeks she had been at MNR she had found the job quite demanding, involving extra hours, but also interesting. She sees her involvement in the energy sector, however, as short term and wants to work in her area of initial interest, rural development. In the long term she may be interested in lecturing. "I wouldn't mind setting up a course at Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) educating people for rural development and advising on rural development policies. I'd like to pass on ideas to a new generation so that we might be able to change things in the future. I look at the present problems, in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands for instance, and with the bureaucracy generally ... I feel more optimistic about the long term. We need to prepare people for a change in the future." In preparation for this Hilary would like to study for a Master's degree in Economics or Planning in the mid 1990s.

Having spent only two weeks at work, and being single and without children, Hilary is not yet in a position to assess the degree to which being a woman might affect her career. She says she is now able to mix well with men and is not concerned at being the first woman in a traditionally male work environment.

Hilary believes that she will be able use her qualifications to benefit other women. She may become involved in women's groups, but sees that her experience as a woman from a poor rural background will enable her to provide valuable input, which is not often heard, in a variety of spheres. "In

all meetings that I'm involved in I will be able to put forward women's views, not just the government's views. My experience as a woman is different from men's, and my background enables me to be a representative of the silent majority, and to speak from the viewpoint of rural women."

New Zealand, she believes, can best assist Solomon Islands women by providing training to meet a variety of needs. "We need women in decision-making areas of government. The percentage of women involved here is very small and women need to be able to influence the decisions that are being made. Women need to be encouraged to pursue careers in technical areas such as engineering, planning and medicine, fields that are currently dominated by men. Most women with careers in Solomon Islands are in administrative rather than technical fields. In the rural areas women need training in a lot of different areas such as learning new agricultural skills, income generating skills, together with the ability to assess whether markets are available for new products. But there is also a need to ensure there is an integrated approach to rural development. At the moment most rural projects are simply concentrating on encouraging cocoa development, and don't have an integrated approach. It is also important to improve living conditions for rural people, to provide basic facilities such as water, and to make them responsible for such facilities. One of the first priorities has to be to assist people in rural areas to become healthier."

An extremely able and determined young woman, who has already

achieved outstanding success in the face of enormous odds against her doing so, Hilary is convinced that women have a critical role to play in all levels of decision making within Solomon Islands. Her advice to other young Solomon Islands women is simply, "Do what you want to do. Don't mind about what the men say."

Case Study 3 : "Anita"

Anita is 22 and, in 1990, was studying for her second professional year of mechanical engineering at Canterbury University.

Anita comes from Pihariki, Munda in the Western Province of Solomon Islands. Her father, who reached Form 2 in secondary school, is manager for a cooperative society (store) and her mother, who had four to five years of primary education, works in their gardens and house. She is the second to youngest in a family of seven children. Three of her elder brothers and sisters have had overseas education, either at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, or at the University of Technology in Papua New Guinea. While her elder brothers completed their tertiary studies, Anita's sister failed to submit a relatively minor final report which would have completed a diploma in social work. Anita recalls trying to persuade her sister to complete the qualification but, having commenced her first job in social work on her return to Solomon Islands, her sister could 'not be bothered' to fulfill the final diploma requirement. She is now married and no longer working in social work. The sister immediately elder to Anita "dropped out" at Form 2 and now helps her mother at home. Her younger sister failed the Standard 6 exam. Anita puts this down to the fact that her parents sent her to primary school in the village (Munda) where the quality of teaching is not as good as in Honiara.

Anita herself spent six years at Mbokanavera Primary School in Honiara, as her father was working there at the time. From 1981-85 she attended Goldie College, the Methodist national secondary school in Munda, Western Province. "Goldie had a good academic reputation. There were always some girls from Goldie in the sixth form at KGVI. The fact that the school is on an island helped. There are few distractions from study. You can't just wander off into town, like you can at KGVI (in Honiara). The teachers were mostly English, and there were quite a few women teachers. They expected the girls to do as well as the boys." Anita boarded both at Goldie College, where in the fifth form she obtained her Solomon Islands School Certificate, and at King George VI where, in 1986, she was one of just nine girls out of sixty students in the sixth form. At school Anita played soccer, a relatively unusual sport for girls in Solomon Islands, and has maintained this interest, currently playing for the Canterbury University Women's A team.

Anita says that most of her female classmates dropped out of school at Form 5, some because they were not capable academically. She believes, however, that the prevalent attitudes that only boys need further education and jobs, and the fact that girls get no particular encouragement or careers guidance also contributes to girls' decisions not to continue their education. Most of those who left got jobs in offices or went nursing. Some went on to the College of Higher Education and did secretarial courses. Anita believes it was largely her own personal interest to learn new and different things that most influenced her decision to remain at school.

Several of her immediate family had gone on to tertiary education and one uncle gave her particular encouragement to pursue her studies. Her parents did not appear to have played a major role in influencing her decision. They had always encouraged her to make her own decisions and told her it was up to her whether or not she continued with her education.

The process of applying for and obtaining a scholarship, at the end of her sixth form year, was somewhat haphazard with, Anita claims, no further education or career counselling provided by the school. "Towards the end of the year a list of available scholarships was put up on the blackboard and we were told to select a course if we were interested. I chose civil aviation." This very non-traditional career selection was in line with Anita's determination to try new and different things. The scholarship for this course was offered by Australia and, again breaking with the tradition of most students (including her own brothers and sister) who proceed to tertiary study in Papua New Guinea or Fiji, Anita was determined she would go to Australia or New Zealand. She was interviewed by a panel of people from the government, including one woman. She was unsure who they all were, but they included someone from Civil Aviation in Honiara and Ministry of Education and Training personnel. Anita was provisionally selected for the course, confirmation depending on her final exam results. With no explanation, however, the course was 'cancelled'. "The sixth form tutor then suggested I apply for a New Zealand scholarship. They needed one extra person - for pharmacy."

With good final examination results Anita duly attained the New Zealand scholarship. Her parents were pleased and, Anita thought, her mother quite proud. However, "They didn't say much. They had always made it clear that it was up to me what I did with my life. They had no concerns for my safety or welfare in going to live in a new country. They knew I could look after myself."

Of the nine girls in Anita's sixth form year, most went on to university. However, most also dropped out in the first one or two years and Anita believes there are now only three still at university. The other two, she comments, are part-European. At the time of taking up her scholarship Anita was not required to sign any contract with the Solomon Islands Government relating to her future return and employment in Solomon Islands. She is concerned that, since arriving in New Zealand, she has had very little contact with the Ministry of Education. "It would be good to know something of their future requirements and expectations."

Anita spent 1987 at New Plymouth Girls' High School where, amongst other things, she discovered that she didn't enjoy biology - a major component of any pharmacy qualification. A conversation with a teacher at the school who had a daughter studying mechanical engineering led her to think, "That sounds different. I could do that." There was no difficulty, either with the New Zealand Ministry of External Relations and Trade, or the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, in changing her course of study, and the following year Anita enrolled in engineering intermediate at Canterbury University, achieving good results in her final examinations (an A, two Bs

and a C). The following year she experienced some difficulty in transferring to the more practical first professional year of engineering and failed two out of five units. In 1990 she was feeling more confident. Her term results, when interviewed, had been good and she believed she would pass all her papers that year.

In 1990 Anita was flatting with other Solomon Islands students, after spending her first three years in New Zealand in student hostels. She was thinking the following year of flatting with some Malaysian students. "I have not made any close New Zealand friends, although I get on well with some I play soccer with. I have found that New Zealanders who have travelled are more friendly and outgoing than others." She has been impressed that "even 18 year old women in New Zealand appear to be quite independent and outspoken."

Following her first professional year of engineering, Anita applied to do practical work experience at the Solomon Islands Ministry of Transport, Works and Utilities workshop in Honiara, during her summer vacation. She was readily accepted, although relates how ministry officials were initially incredulous and assumed there had been some mistake when they heard there was a woman engineering student. Anita was under the supervision of two New Zealand (MFAT-sponsored) trade trainers during her time at the workshop and says she received good training and experience. In a totally male and physically uncomfortable work environment, she says she faced no particular problems, relating to and being well accepted by her

workmates who "were curious, but friendly and helpful." She is aware however that there may be resentment if she is to return to the ministry in the future in a senior position, and by-pass mechanics with trade qualifications and considerable work experience. In this situation she feels there could be problems with workers accepting a woman 'boss' and would prefer to spend some time working her way up rather than simply "arriving" at the top. The New Zealand advisors, with whom Anita worked, were impressed with her ability and attitudes, but are concerned that she may face problems in the future due to the very small number of positions that are available in Solomon Islands for tertiary qualified mechanical engineers. They feel she may have been better advised to have taken up electrical or civil engineering.

Anita has, to date, enjoyed her time in New Zealand, and has felt it has been good to experience a different culture. She has had no serious problems although has, naturally enough felt homesick from time to time, particularly when her grandfather died. When she returns to Solomon Islands she would like to talk in schools, to encourage girls to consider non-traditional careers such as engineering. She thinks it is important that some foreign aid is designated specifically for women as otherwise it tends to just get 'absorbed into the system' and women miss out. She thinks also that New Zealand should consider providing more training for women already working in government departments to help them progress and that perhaps if more practical training courses were provided more women could take advantage of them. She is uncertain of all the factors that have

enabled her to overcome the constraints placed on most Solomon Islands girls and women in terms of progressing through the education system. She concedes that she is personally very strong and determined and has always had a strong motivation to try new and different things. Her choice of study, career and sport show that she is undeterred by pressure to conform to the norm. Anita also comments that she has noticed that women from the Western Province tend to do better in getting through the education system at home and in 'lasting the pace' when they go overseas to study. She notes several Western Province women (some of whom she is related to) who now occupy fairly high positions in government departments. She sees women in the Western Province as having more freedom and independence to make their own decisions than in some other parts of the country. While her mother appeared not to be an overtly strong influence in determining her study and career choices she is obviously a strong and outspoken woman. This is evidenced particularly in the fact that she is a member of her village committee - which is almost invariably restricted to male membership. Anita laughingly says that her mother is always 'going on' about how women are the ones who get things done and who care about making things better for everyone.

Case Study 4 : "Lorraine"

Lorraine is 29, the solo parent of three young boys aged seven, four and two months. Her scholarship to study law in New Zealand was terminated at the end of 1981, and she returned to Solomon Islands to work as a legal secretary in a private firm, prior to establishing her own secretarial business in 1983. In 1990, Lorraine was the only sole woman business proprietor in Honiara.

Lorraine, whose mother is from Isabel Province and her father from Western Province, spent much of her childhood in Honiara. Both parents, who are part-European, had had schooling at Anglican schools in New Zealand, her mother to Form 5 level, her father going on to teachers' college, and later training for the priesthood in Auckland. Lorraine's father, who is now retired, had previously been Archbishop of the Church of Melanesia in Solomon Islands. Her mother had worked as a primary school teacher before getting married. They are now retired in Makira Province.

Lorraine is the eldest in a family of four. Her three younger brothers all reached Form 6, one going on to the University of Technology in Papua New Guinea to study electrical engineering.

Lorraine's early primary education was by correspondence. The family had recently returned from New Zealand to live in Makira Province. "There was no school close by I could go to. There was a village school, but only for boys. Only recently has there been a church school for both

boys and girls." For the last four years of her primary education, Lorraine attended the Woodford (International) Primary School in Honiara. She then went on to King George VI National Secondary School where, in her sixth form year, she was part of just the second group to undertake sixth form studies within Solomon Islands. "There were only six girls out of sixty students in the sixth form (in 1978). Most of my friends had left in the fifth form. Quite a lot had wanted to go on, but there were just not enough spaces in the sixth form. A few went to Fiji or Papua New Guinea to do a foundation year (before continuing with tertiary studies), others got jobs in offices."

Lorraine's parents, and in particular her father, played an important role in influencing her decision about future study and career options. "I had always been a 'bookworm'. I was very interested in studying and learning new things. I was very curious. My parents and relatives expected me to go on to university. As one of the few girls in the sixth form there was also a lot of competition with the boys. I wanted to do something, but I wasn't sure what. No-one gave me any advice. We were supposed to have careers counselling, but there wasn't a wide range of people come to talk to us about different jobs. My parents and friends said I should do law. They said there was a need for women lawyers in Solomon Islands. I wasn't really interested in law, but I thought I should do it to please my family ... and there was nothing else that I knew I wanted to do, so I chose law when the scholarship list came out. The (scholarship) interview was hard because of being a girl. The men asked lots of questions like why I wanted

to be a lawyer ... what was the point? They also asked how I would cope with the social life and what if I got pregnant? I'd been warned by other women to expect this and to be firm. In the end, three boys and myself were selected for law degrees. In the past, law students had gone to Papua New Guinea. We were the first group to go to New Zealand. My parents had a lot of church friends in New Zealand. Still my mother was a bit concerned. I had never been away before and my mother had always been very strict with us."

In 1979 Lorraine spent a difficult year in the seventh form at Marlborough Girls' College. During the year she suffered pneumonia and had to be hospitalised. There were other problems too ... "I was very homesick ... I had problems acclimatising to the culture, the climate, the education system ... Some people were very prejudiced. I felt very inferior that year and that feeling never really went away. The hostel manager was very hard on people from overseas. He tried to discourage us from accepting invitations to go out with New Zealand families. He told us not to impose on them. And he always used to ask us to do babysitting for him. We had to go and talk at schools in Blenheim and were asked some strange questions." The following year Lorraine commenced study towards a law degree at Otago University. That year, as well as a law unit (which she failed) she took anthropology and history, discovering a particular interest in anthropology. Attempts to change her study to a BA, however, met with complete resistance from the Overseas Training Unit of the Ministry of Education and Training. "They were hopeless. They refused to see my point of view. When I told them I wasn't interested in law and wanted to

change to a BA in anthropology they simply told me to go back and do what I'd been sent for. (New Zealand) Foreign Affairs had also told them I was interested in anthropology, but they wouldn't let me do anything else. They were very inflexible." In her second year at university Lorraine again failed her law unit, but passed both history and anthropology stage two units. At this point the Solomon Islands Government terminated her scholarship, leaving Lorraine extremely bitter.

Under these circumstances, the return to Solomon Islands was particularly stressful for Lorraine. "My family, especially my parents were very disappointed. I felt a failure. I felt that I'd taken up a scholarship place that someone else could have had. I've found men, in particular, have been jealous of the opportunity I had and have told me I should never have taken a scholarship."

Lorraine found work as a legal secretary with an Australian/Vanuatu law firm, 'Hudson and Company'. When the firm closed in 1983, she and a British colleague set up their own secretarial business, Lorraine providing the citizenship required to open a business, and her friend the initial capital. Lorraine paid her friend back over time, and when she left the country in 1986, bought out her share of the business - a financial outlay which she is still recovering from. While running a business has been hard work, often involving long hours and weekend work, and has not always been particularly satisfying, Lorraine has found it a useful 'breadwinner' to support herself and the three young children for whom she has sole responsibility.

Her income varies, depending on the work available, but invariably, Lorraine says, it is more than she would receive working in the public service, even if she had a degree. Setting up the business posed some particular problems for the women, particularly in the early stages. "It has been both an advantage and a disadvantage being a woman in this business. It was hard at the beginning ... We were told we charged too much. Customers would try to put us down and would argue with us, but we'd stand firm and wouldn't give them their work until they'd paid. When they find you can do something well and you can stand up for yourself they become good customers and then I think you can get more respect as a woman. When I became divorced men thought I was 'available' and some were quite disrespectful. But by standing up for myself and being strong I was able to overcome that. Going overseas and the hardship I've been through (in her personal life) has made me try harder at what I do."

In 1990 Lorraine successfully applied for a public service position, to set up a Solomon Islands representative office in Brisbane. Soon after she got the job, however she found she was pregnant and had to turn it down. "I wasn't too disappointed. A major motivation for applying was to give the children a better education, also the job would have provided a house for me and the children. It was those things, rather than the job itself, that made me apply." It was, Lorraine feels, partly due to her sense of failure on her return to Solomon Islands that, despite discouragement from her parents, she married someone less educated than herself and with an 'inferiority complex'. "My husband wanted me to work to get an income, but

he gave me no support. Our marriage lasted five years. I get no maintenance for our children (boys aged seven and four). I could apply for it, but he has threatened me with violence if I do. He tried to kidnap the children at first, but he can't afford to provide for them or give them a good education, so he is letting them stay with me, for the moment anyway. Also my father spoke to his father and persuaded him to let me keep them as they are my parents' only grandchildren. Usually children go to the man's family." While the marriage had not worked out, being divorced has been stressful - financially, emotionally and socially. "It's difficult to be a divorced woman in Solomon Islands. I have lost some close friends over it. Friends' husbands see me as a threat. They seem to be afraid I might influence their wives or something. When I first got divorced I started to drink. My business went downhill, and I soon realised that wasn't the answer - but it has been a struggle. My two eldest children are in pre-school which is very expensive and I usually take the baby (born recently) to work with me. My parents have been very supportive through everything." In order to ensure she is able to keep control of her third son (the father of whom she is no longer involved with), Lorraine feels she is again unable to claim maintenance.

Lorraine's personal struggles have made her sympathetic to the plight of others. "So many women have a hard time here. They are beaten up, neglected ... some turn to drink ... I have become interested in social work-type things and would like to be involved in counselling and providing advice to women." While at present her heavy workload and personal

commitments prohibit her from playing an active role in women's organisations, she hopes that in her own life she has been an example to other women in bad domestic situations. "I hope I have shown that it is possible for women to be solo mothers and to be successful in working to support their children." Lorraine would also like to pass on skills she has learnt in small business management to other women, perhaps through running courses organised by the National Council of Women or the YWCA. She believes a useful way in which New Zealand could assist women in Solomon Islands is to sponsor them on short (perhaps six month) courses in business studies. "Some women have started businesses, but they have failed or closed down, or they have gone back to work in the public service. There is a need for training in business studies but it shouldn't just be restricted to single women. Women should be able to take their children with them, if necessary." In 1990, Lorraine believed she was the only woman sole business proprietor in Honiara. She had just applied to join the Small Business Association, which currently has no women members.

Lorraine hopes in the future she will be able to do some more study, but realises that with three small children this will not be easy. "I'd feel guilty about taking another government scholarship. I would have liked to have worked and made enough money to finish my studies for my own satisfaction ... and to show my parents and the government ..." In the short term she says her aim is to make more money to increase the options open to her. "I have become more business-minded. At present I am working with my parents to see what opportunities there are for development of their

land both in Western Province and in Santa Isabel. Some landowners, for instance, are interested in setting up small sawmills."

Despite the difficulties she encountered at the time, Lorraine does not consider the time she spent in New Zealand as wasted. Looking back, I feel now that despite everything it was a good experience. I learnt how to stand up for myself, and I developed confidence and the ability to be independent. I saw how people in New Zealand did things and how they worked and that helped me when I came to set up my own business. Before I went to New Zealand I had led a very sheltered life. I couldn't do things on my own but when I came back I could."

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Personal

1 Surname

2 First Names

3 Previous Names (if applicable)

4 Age Marital Status

5 Children (please state age and sex of children)

6 Home Address

7 Village/Town of Origin

8 Province

9 Religion

10 Present Occupation

11 Grade Salary

12 Parent : Highest educational level reached

Mother
Father

13 Parents occupation (or past occupation if retired)

Mother
Father

14 Siblings : Please list brothers and sisters in order of age indicating your own place within the family, and indicate beside each name the level of education or academic qualification attained :

15 What major illnesses, if any, have you had?

Education

16 Please list primary, junior secondary, and national secondary schools attended and qualifications obtained :

Years	School	Qualification

17 How far approximately was your home from primary school?

18 Did you board or travel daily to :

a Junior Secondary School?
b National Secondary School?

19 What particular interests did you have at school (eg cultural, sporting activities?)

20 If you did not board, how many hours of chores were you expected to carry out daily while at school?

21 At what stage did your three best female classmates leave school?

22 What were their main reasons for leaving?

23 What or who influenced your decision to remain at school?

24 Please list any employment prior to taking up a New Zealand scholarship

25 Did you receive any counselling regarding further study or careers during your sixth form year?

26 Please outline the process you went through in making application for an overseas scholarship :

27 Did you receive assistance from anyone in making your application, filling in the forms, etc?

If so, who

28 What motivated you to apply for a scholarship?

29 Did you wish to continue your studies in any particular country?

If so, which and why?

30 How did you determine your area of study (eg BA, LLB)?

31 Did you have a particular career in mind at this stage?

32 Who most influenced your decision to apply for a scholarship?

a) Teacher
b) Mother
c) Father
d) Other (specify)

33 Did you face any difficulties in obtaining a nomination for a New Zealand scholarship?

If so, please describe

34 At the time of taking up your scholarship did any member of your family or close relative hold a position of responsibility in the Government?

35 What was the reaction of your parents to your decision to study overseas? Did they have any particular concerns?

36 What understandings were there with your Government about your future career/employment at the time of taking up your scholarship?

Your overseas experience

37 Which overseas institution(s) did you study at?

38 What qualifications did you study for?

39 Did you complete your course of study?

If not, what were the main reasons for this?

40 Please list subjects studied and grades attained :

Year	Subject	Grade

41 Where did you live for the longest period while you were studying?

a) in a student hostel?
b) in a flat?

If so :

1) with other Solomon Islanders?
2) with other overseas students?
3) with local people?
4) other? (specify)
c) with a local family?
d) other? (specify)

42 What were some of your major impressions of the society in which you were living?

43 What were your impressions of the role and status of women in the society in which you were living?

44 Would you say you made some good friends among the local people?

45 Were any of the following factors of concern during your time overseas?

a) Failure to pass required units?
b) Family concerns? (eg ill-health of a relative)
c) Social/cultural reasons (eg difficulty in adapting to a new culture, homesickness etc
d) Financial?
e) Other? (specify)

46 Overall, would you say your overseas experience was an enjoyable and positive experience?

47 Did you receive adequate support from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (later MERT) or its offices in Fiji or Papua New Guinea?

If not, please indicate how this could have been improved :

48 Did you receive adequate support from the Solomon Islands Government and in particular from the Overseas Training Unit?

If not, how could this have been improved :

Following your return to Solomon Islands

49 Did you return to your home village/town prior to taking up your first position?

50 What was the reaction of your family, relatives and friends to your new qualification (or partial qualification) and their expectations of your future career development?

51 What were some of your own feelings on your return home?

52 How soon after your return were you placed in a position?

53 Was this first position in an area of work which you felt was appropriate to your qualification?

54 Was the grading appropriate?

55 Please list all positions held from the time of your return to Solomon Islands.

Year(s)	Employer	Position

56 Has your career developed to your satisfaction?

If so, what have been major factors that have assisted this? (eg helpful superiors, on the job training, lack of other qualified personnel?)

If not, what major obstacles have you encountered?

57 Have you faced major conflicts between personal (eg marriage, childcare) concerns and career aspirations? Please describe briefly :

58 If so, to what extent have employers been helpful/flexible in assisting you to resolve these :

59 Has anyone else been particularly helpful in these situations?

60 Have you received any particular assistance in planning your career? (eg from OTU, employers, career counsellors)

61 Since your return have you applied for positions for which you were not successful?

If so, please list :

What are the major reasons you believe you were not successful?

62 Have you felt that being female has been of any particular disadvantage or advantage in the way your career has developed? Please explain :

63 Are you involved in any women's groups/organisations that have provided you with personal or career support?

If so, which?

64 Is there any particular advice you would give to Solomon Islands girls in considering their future education and careers?

65 What would you like to be doing in five years' time?

66 What, if any, additional study or training do you require to achieve your career aspirations?

67 Do you intend making application for further study?

If so, for what and where?

68 Do you feel your qualifications and skills are currently being used to best assist the development of your country?

69 Do you feel any particular obligation to use your knowledge/skills to assist in the development of your own village or town?

70 Do you think your qualifications will benefit other Solomon Islands women?

If so, how?

71 How do you think New Zealand development assistance can best be used to benefit women in Solomon Islands?

72 Are there any additional comments you would like to make, either in relation to your overseas study or your subsequent career development and personal experience, following your return to Solomon Islands?

APPENDIX 3

The Key Participants

Solomon Islands women who formerly held New Zealand tertiary scholarships :

GABRIELLE from Kia, Isabel Province, is the eldest in a family of six girls. Her parents both completed primary education, her father becoming a policeman.* Gabrielle was the first Solomon Islands woman to hold a New Zealand tertiary scholarship, attaining a Diploma in Education from the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, in 1974. She subsequently went on to attain a Diploma in Public Administration (Papua New Guinea 1980-81) and a BA in Politics and Administration (Canada 1987-90). A career in the public service, which began in 1975, culminated in her appointment in 1990 to the position of Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs - the first woman to have held a permanent secretary post in the history of the Solomon Islands public service. Gabrielle, 37, is married to a Malaitan. They have two daughters, aged twelve and five.

SELINA from Santa Cruz, Temotu Province, is second in a family of four (three girls, one boy). Her parents, subsistence farmers, had no formal education, although her father had some religious vocational training.

Selina worked as an assistant curator and ethnologist at the Solomon Islands National Museum from 1978-84 before studying for a BA in Anthropology at Auckland University (1985-87). In late 1988 she took up an East-West Centre (Hawaii) scholarship to study for an MA in Anthropology. Selina was forced to resign from the public service to take up this scholarship which she had arranged privately. Selina is 35, and is the solo parent of a son aged twelve.

RACHEL is from Ulawa Island, Makira Province. She is third in a family of nine (five girls, four boys). Her parents were educated to Standard 3-4 level, her father becoming a policeman. Rachel attended the University of Papua New Guinea (1979-83) attaining a BA Honours degree in Economics. From 1984-88 she worked in the Ministry of Economic Planning, becoming the first woman Senior Planning Officer in the ministry, prior to taking up a scholarship for a post graduate diploma (and later an MA) in Economics in Australia (1988-91). Rachel is 32, and the solo parent of a son aged six.

IRIS from Buala, Isabel Province, is the oldest in a family of four girls. Her parents completed primary school, both working for some time as primary teachers. Her father later trained in Fiji to become an Anglican priest. Iris attended the University of the South Pacific in Fiji (1987-82), obtaining a BA and graduate certificate in Education. She returned to teach English at King George VI National Secondary School, and in 1990, after undertaking a two year post-graduate Diploma in Education at Bristol University, England,

was made Head of Department (the first woman to hold a position of responsibility in the school outside of the Home Sciences area. Iris, 30, is married to a man from Western Province. They have two sons aged six and four.

NATALIE is from New Georgia, Western Province, and is third in a family of eight (four girls, four boys). Her father had attended school to Standard 6 and her mother had had some 'domestic' church-based education. Natalie's father is manager of a private company. Natalie became Solomon Islands first woman lawyer after completing a law degree at Otago University (1980-85) and Auckland University (1986). From 1987 she worked in the Registrar-General's Office of the Ministry of Police and Justice, and in 1990 was Acting Deputy Registrar-General. Natalie is married to a Tikopian. They have one daughter, aged 18 months, and at the time of interview, were expecting another child in a few months.

JULIENNE, whose father comes from Western Province and mother from Malaita, grew up in Honiara. She is third in a family of six (three girls, three boys). Her father had trained overseas as a doctor, her mother had had no formal education. In 1980 Julienne attended seventh form at Nelson College for Girls, prior to enrolling in a law degree at Auckland University. Her scholarship was terminated at the end of 1981, when she passed only two out of six papers. From 1983-85 Julienne returned to New Zealand as a private student to study for a BA but had three units to complete her degree when she returned home in 1985. (In 1991 she received a

further New Zealand scholarship to complete her degree). At the time of interview, Julienne had been working for three years as Administrative Assistant for the Australian aid programme at the Australian High Commission. Aged 30, Julienne is married to a Malaitan.

THERESE is from Tarawa, Kiribati. She is the youngest in a family of seven (three girls, four boys). Her father had completed primary school and worked as a government clerk. Her mother had had some informal mission education only. While attending the University of the South Pacific (1979-82) Therese met and later married a Gilbertese from Solomon Islands. She returned to Solomon Islands with him, and taught English to technical apprentices at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education from 1983-87. In 1988 Therese obtained a New Zealand scholarship for a Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language. On her return she became the first woman head of a department (the Department of Communication Skills) within the School of Industrial Development at the College. In late 1989 Therese successfully applied for a position as Human Resources Development Officer at Solomon Airways, becoming the first woman to hold a management position in that organisation. Therese is 30 and is separated from her husband, and has part-time care for their two daughters aged nine and six.

LORRAINE, whose father is from Western Province and mother from Isabel (both part-European), spent most of her childhood in Honiara. She is the eldest, and only girl, in a family of four. Both her parents attended Anglican schools in New Zealand, her father going on to attend Teacher Training

College and later training for the priesthood in Auckland. Lorraine's father became the Archbishop of the Church of Melanesia in Solomon Islands. Her mother worked as a primary teacher before marriage. Lorraine attended seventh form at Marlborough Girls' College in 1979 and studied for a law degree at Otago University from 1980-81. Her scholarship was terminated when she failed to pass law units in both years, despite passing history and anthropology units. She returned to work as a legal secretary in a private firm, before setting up her own secretarial business in 1983. Lorraine, 29, is divorced, and has sole care of three sons aged seven, four and two months.

HILARY comes from Elita Village, outside Port Adam, in Small Malaita. She is the only daughter in a family of three. Her parents are subsistence farmers, neither of whom have had any formal education. Hilary attended the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, (1984-87), obtaining a BA in Economics. She then went on to do a post-graduate Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. At the time of interview, Hilary had been just two weeks in her first job as Senior Petroleum Officer with the Ministry of Natural Resources. Hilary, 26, is engaged to a man from Western Province.

LILY is of Chinese origin and grew up in Honiara. She is the youngest girl in a family of eight (six girls, two boys). Her mother had had primary education to around Standard 3 level in China, her father had had some secondary schooling in Australia. Her father had previously owned a

coconut plantation. Since her parents' divorce ten years ago, her mother had supported the family as proprietor of a general store in Honiara. Lily did a foundation year at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, in 1982 before going on to Form 7 at Nelson College for Girls. In 1984 Lily, having failed to gain entry to a pharmacy degree course, commenced study towards a Diploma in Pharmacy at the Central Institute of Technology. After failing most of her papers that year, Lily transferred to Wellington Hospital where she completed the Dispensary Assistant's Certificate course in 1987. She returned to work as a Supervisory Dispensary Assistant at the Central Pharmacy in Honiara before, in 1989, obtaining a World Health Organisation scholarship to try again for a Diploma in Pharmacy. Lily is 26 and single.

AILSA, from Tiaro Village, near Lambi, Guadalcanal, has one younger sister. Her parents, who are farmers, had primary education. Ailsa studied for an accountancy degree at the University of Technology in Papua New Guinea from 1984-86. Her scholarship was terminated when she failed to pass sufficient units in her second year. She returned home in 1987 to work as Assistant Statistics Officer with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. In 1990 she was sent on a three month Diploma in Development Administration course at the Australian National University. Ailsa, 26, is married to a Malaitan. They have a two year old son.

Solomon Islands women in New Zealand on government scholarships in 1990 :

RENEE, aged 25, is of Chinese origin and grew up in Honiara. She is the eldest of a family of three girls, the youngest of whom, Amy, is also studying in New Zealand. Renee's parents had both obtained teaching qualifications, and her father a degree in philosophy in Hong Kong, prior to their immigrating to Solomon Islands. Both parents had initially taught at Chung Wah, the Chinese primary school in Honiara. Her father now runs a taxi and her mother works in a general store in Honiara. Renee commenced a medical degree at Auckland University in 1984, after a foundation year at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. She failed a unit in her intermediate year, and a professional year in 1989. She expects to complete her degree in 1993.

KATE, aged 23, is also Chinese, the daughter of relatively recent immigrants to Solomon Islands. She was eight when she arrived in the country from China. She is the only girl in a family of four. Her mother had completed primary school in China; her father had had no primary education. He had initially immigrated as a manufacturer of cane chairs, and now owns a general store in Honiara. Kate initially commenced a pharmacy degree at Otago University, after completing seventh form at New Plymouth Girls' High School in 1986. After failing a physics paper in her intermediate year, she continued studying towards a BSc degree, and was expecting to complete this in 1990.

MARINA, aged 22, is from South Choiseul, Western Province. She is third in a family of four (two girls, two boys). Her parents had both attended school to Form 2 level, and are currently proprietors of a general store in Honiara. Marina's mother had previously worked as a typist with Solomon Islands Airlines. After attending seventh form at New Plymouth Girls' High School in 1987, Marina commenced a pharmacy degree at Otago University. Her scholarship was terminated when she failed her pharmacy intermediate year. Marina returned to New Zealand in mid-1989 to commence study for the Dispensary Assistant's Certificate course, based first at Gisborne Hospital, and later at Dunedin Hospital.

ANITA, aged 22, is from Munda, Western Province. She is the second to youngest child in a family of seven (four girls, three boys). Her mother, who had four or five years primary education, is on the village committee (usually restricted to men). Her father, who reached Form 2, manages a co-operative society store. Anita, who had originally come to New Zealand on a pharmacy scholarship, had changed to mechanical engineering, after finding she did not enjoy biology in the seventh form at New Plymouth Girls' High School. She commenced study for an engineering degree at Canterbury University in 1988.

AMY, aged 19, is Renee's youngest sister. In 1990 she was completing a pharmacy intermediate year at Otago University, having attended seventh form at New Plymouth Girls' High School in 1989.

LINDA's mother is from Savo Island, Central Province; her father from Choiseul, Western Province. Aged 19, Linda is the eldest in a family of four (two girls, two boys). Her mother completed primary school and went on to train and work as a nurse. Her work included establishing a home nursing service in Honiara. Her father began work as a primary teacher, later taking up nursing. He subsequently trained as a radiographer and is currently working in the Central Hospital. Linda was, in 1990, at New Plymouth Girls' High School, expecting to commence a medical degree the following year.

EMILY, aged 18, is from Munda, Western Province. Emily is second to youngest in a family of five (three girls, two boys). Her mother completed primary education and went on to train and work as a nurse until marriage. More recently, she has been working as a kindergarten teacher. Her father completed Form 5, and then trained in Honiara to work in a pharmacy. In 1990, Emily was in the seventh form at New Plymouth Girls' High School. She had been nominated for a radiography scholarship, but was hoping her bursary results would be good enough for her to be allowed to change to a medical degree.

Note * The mothers of both former and current (1990) women students were all cited as having primary 'home' or 'home and garden' responsibilities. It has therefore only been noted where women worked outside of these areas, either before or after marriage.

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