What is 'the Local' in Women's Participation?
The Contexts of Two Development Programs in Samoa

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Abstract: In these two decades, interest in 'local' has gradually increased in development theory and practice. 'Participation,' one of the most prominent concepts in emphasizing 'local,' has the purpose of implementing development projects based on people's needs at local level. Such needs are assumed to consist of 'local' factors. However, there are many meanings of 'the local' in development practice, and most of them are likely to converge on social and cultural aspects. This article attempts to examine factors influencing women's participation in two development programs in Samoa, in order to reconsider the meanings of 'the local' in relation with development practice. Comparing the two programs, factors influencing the possibility of women's participation were derived from various aspects; from human relations among the group to economic conditions in both individual households and residential villages. On the other hand, women's motivations to participate were basically determined by cultural norms. As a consequence, it is apparent that factors affecting the situations of women's participation are considerably diverse in terms of the projects themselves and women's daily lives. To comprehend the meanings of 'the local,' it is necessary to consider the scales and the contents, which are regarded as 'local' in development practice.

Key words: 'local,' participation, women, development projects, Samoa

Introduction

Over the past two decades, discussions on Third World development have gradually transformed "from holistic theorisation towards more localised, empirical and inductive approach" (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 247). Following such a direction, many phrases emphasizing 'the local,' for instance 'bottom-up,' 'people-first,' and 'self-reliance,' have been invented.1 Of these phrases, the most popular one is 'participation.' Especially in the 1990s, a great number of international development agencies dealing with development projects strongly announced that people's participation was absolutely indispensable to accomplish its end of development.2 Although there are significant differences as to how to consider 'participation' in terms of 'the local,'3 one of the most important points in participatory development is to involve local people in the decision-making process of the projects. In particular, to make the projects sustainable in the long term, it is considerably important to ascertain people's needs at local level. Concerning this point, Sato insisted that people's needs were determined by 'indigenous factors' in each local society4 (Sato 1995: 9).

In practice, at least the following three points could be observed as a 'local' aspect in participatory development. The first point is usually called 'indigenous knowledge,' such as 'traditional' rural technology (e.g. Adams et al. 1994) and 'traditional' productive activities (e.g. Nel et al. 2000) in project sites. Generally speaking, local people are well accustomed to so-called 'traditional' skills, so that 'indigenous knowledge' is regarded as an effective method to promote people's participation in not only productive work, but also its management. In addition, utilizing such skills and knowledge is believed to lead the projects to be sustainable in the long term, and to bring about people's self-reliance in local society. The second point is either a local political system or a social system,
which plays key roles in terms of both integrating local people into the projects and cooperating with external development agencies. As a result of decentralization policies since the late 1980s, for instance, local administrations directly came to command the projects in rural areas (e.g. Kanda 1999). Moreover, the importance of the nature of local society, which influences the degree of local people's participation, has been strongly emphasized because participatory development has mostly targeted local communities. The third point is the environmental aspect of project sites. To prevent environmental degradation, it is important to research on how local people utilize natural resources in their daily lives. Such a point has been exclusively mentioned in tourism development or rural development (e.g. Ulluwishewa 1997). In these ways, most development practitioners reach a kind of consensus that participatory development without caring about 'the local' never gives rise to positive effects on local society.

On the contrary, several scholars have been afraid of embracing 'the local' without question. For instance, Mohan and Stokke pointed out two dangers of indisputably mentioning 'the local' in contemporary development theory and practice as follows: 1) "[o]ne obvious problem is the tendency to essentialise and romanticise 'the local.' This means that local social inequalities and power relations are downplayed"; 2) "[a]nother problem is the tendency to view 'the local' in isolation from broader economic and political structures. This means that the contextuality of place, e.g. national and transnational economic and political forces, is underplayed" (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 249). Moreover, Adams et al., illustrating the case of indigenous irrigation system in northern Tanzania, indicated that there was "a strong theme of romanticism in thinking about indigenous agricultural method and knowledge" (Adams et al. 1994: 17–18). They therefore claimed that it was crucial not to celebrate merely the existence of indigenous knowledge, but to "explore in detail its geographical, historical and social nature and context" (Adams et al. 1994: 31).

Within these contexts, this article attempts to reconsider the relation between 'the local' and development practice by focusing on women's participation in development projects. With regard to dealing with only women, there are two main reasons. One reason concerns the aspects of 'the local' when development projects targeting women are implemented. It is widely accepted that women's roles, such as productive work and community activities, noticeably differ in each region (Women and Geography Study Group of IBG 1984: 108; Momsen 1987: 17). However, most factors affecting women's participation as 'the local' in development projects tend to converge on either cultural or social aspects, such as gender relations or a gendered division of labor in local society. On one hand, the possibility of women's participation in development projects could exclusively depend on gender relations and norms in each society. Yet, on the other hand, women could hardly be recognized as a homogenous unit because there is considerably diversity in terms of class, ethnicity, and economic status, even if they reside in the same society. Moreover, gender relations are by no means static in this globalized time. Therefore, seeing factors influencing women's participation surely allows reconsideration of the meanings of 'the local' in development practice.

Another reason is related to contemporary situations in geography. In participatory development, women have been the prime target and many development agencies in fact admitted that women were indispensable to accomplish its end of both participation and development itself. Nevertheless, for geographers, even for feminist geographers in Europe and North America, women's issues in developing countries had remained a minority interest for a long time (Momsen 1987: 20). Such a tendency could still be observed in contemporary geography, and most geographers scarcely referred to women's conditions in detail, even if they admitted the importance of women's role in development processes. In such a situation, there must be an urgent necessity to improve studies dealing with women in developing countries.

To analyze factors affecting the situation of women's participation in development projects, this article handles two development programs implemented by the Ministry of Women Affairs.
in Samoa. Firstly, before focusing on the two programs, the characteristics of Samoa and Samoan women, which is generally called ‘the local,’ and its relation with the national development of Samoa are reviewed. Secondly, the situations of women’s participation in the two programs are described from the following points: 1) the backgrounds of participants, 2) the possibilities of participation, and 3) the motivations towards participation. The first point illustrates what kinds of women participate in the programs. As already mentioned, there has been a tendency to regard women as one unit in society. However there are many differences among women in terms of marital status, age, economic conditions, and so forth. This point is, therefore, indispensable to comprehend the contexts of women’s participation. The second and the third points are necessary to emphasize the process of participation. Generally speaking, most studies dealing with people’s participation are likely to persist in examining whether a project itself succeeded or not. The most important point to improve development practice on ‘participation,’ however, is not to evaluate only results of participation, but to clarify the process of participation, such as whether people could actually participate or what induced people to participate in a project. Thirdly, by comparing the cases of both programs, factors affecting the situations of women’s participation are analyzed, especially in terms of the possibility and motivation to participate. Lastly, from these analyses, reconsidering the meanings of ‘the local’ is attempted in relation to development practice.

The ‘Local’ Characteristics of Samoa

The outlines of Samoa

Since their independence, most island nations in the Pacific have attempted to accomplish both economic and social development based on their own social systems and indigenous cultures (Nishino 1987: 325). Similarly, Samoa (Figure 1), a small Polynesian island nation in the South Pacific, has taken up the challenge to build a nation by maintaining its own traditional custom and culture. This tendency is clearly observed in the preamble of its constitution: “Samoa should be an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and tradition” (Government of Samoa 1997: 8). In practice, almost all aspects in Samoan society, including economy and politics,
are profoundly related to Samoan custom and 'tradition'.

Samoan custom and 'tradition' is generally called *fa'aSamoa*, which is deeply rooted in the Samoan social system. The core unit of the society is the *aiga*, based on kinship groups consisting of several extended families. The *aiga* is headed by at least one *matai*, who is appointed by consensus of all members in the *aiga*. The *matai* takes the responsibility of managing family lands and other assets, which belong to the *aiga* (Department of Statistics 1991: 3). Serving the *matai* for the prosperity of the *aiga* enables all members to share all products and assets, so that each member has a 'place' with clear rights and duties (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991: 65). As a result, the norms of the *fa'aSamoa* place a great importance on the dignity and achievements of the *aiga* as a whole, rather than those of individuals. This situation can be clearly observed in reciprocity, called *faalavelave*.

This social system is also observed in the political scene because local authority is in the hands of the *matai* constituting the *fono* (village council). Presiding over the *fono* is the chief *matai* or the *plenu'u* (village mayor), which is a position appointed by the government on recommendation from the *fono* and usually rotated within a group of influential *matai* (Department of Statistics 1991: 3). Before the Electoral Amendment Act introduced universal suffrage for all people aged over 21 years in 1991, only *matai* could vote for a national election. Even after the Act, it is only *matai* who can be a candidate for the election (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991: 4).

In addition, the Samoan economy is more or less influenced by its custom and 'tradition.' Over 80 per cent of the total lands in Samoa are customary lands belonging to the *aiga* (United Nations 1997: 7). A large proportion of the Samoan economy contributing to the nation's gross domestic product (Table 1), though it is normally undervalued because of difficult measurement problems (Fairbairn 1991: 2), is subsistence agriculture based on the cultivations of root crops such as taros, yams, and fruits. Likewise, its cash economy is also influenced by Samoan culture. It is heavily depend-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry, and fishing</td>
<td>14.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>10.8</td>
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<td>Distribution and transportation</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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<td>Construction and transportation</td>
<td>7.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>10.6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
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Contemporary Samoan women

In the contemporary period, Samoan women's situation in daily life is still governed by its custom and 'tradition.' Traditionally, there has been a gendered division of labor based on the *fa'aSamoa*. Men's work is generally characterized as "heavy and dirty," which includes agricultural production, fishing, building house or boat, and Samoan traditional cooking. Women's work is "light and clean," such as weaving mats from Pandanus leaves, daily cooking, washing clothes, cleaning the house, and care of livestock (Yamamoto 1982: 42-43; Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991: 78-82). At present, the same trend on the gendered division of labor is still observed (Figure 2). Similarly, the political situations of Samoan women are deeply affected by the *fa'aSamoa*. In general, their participation in the political arena is considerably limited. Although women have equal right to be appointed as the *matai* in the *aiga*, in most cases men attain the *matai* title. Presently, there are only two female *matai* among the 49 members of Parliament (United Nations 1997: 6).

On the contrary, several situations surrounding Samoan women are not significantly determined by peculiar cultural aspects. As well as women in the South Pacific, Samoan women have significantly contributed to economic ac-
What is ‘the Local’ in Women’s Participation? 19

Figure 2. Number of persons aged 10 years and over doing non-SNA activities. Data Source: Department of Statistics 1997a: 13 and 16.

Table 2. Educational participation rates 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Both sexes</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5—9</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10—14</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98</td>
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<td>15—19</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5—19</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Department of Statistics 1991.

tivities (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1993: 223), though their participation rate has been underestimated for various reasons (United Nations 1997: 5). In the 1991 census, only about 40 per cent of females aged 15 years and over were reported as being economically active, while the corresponding proportion of males was 77 per cent. Of those economically active, nearly 37 per cent of employed women and 33 per cent of employed men were in paid work. With regard to employed population by occupation, a considerably higher proportion of females than males was engaged as senior officials, professional technicians and clerks (Department of Statistics 1991). In addition, unlike other developing countries, Samoan women have a relatively equal opportunity for education. According to the 1991 census, the educational participation rate of females was higher than that of males of every five year age group over five years old (Table 2).13

In these ways, Samoan ‘local’ characteristics mainly consist of its custom and ‘tradition’ because its economic, political, and social conditions including women’s lives in villages are exclusively embedded in the fa’aSamoa. In development studies, such characteristics have been normally regarded as crucial obstacles to accomplish development objectives, especially in terms of economic development.14 With regard to women’s situations, however, it is not only cultural aspects which are characterized as ‘local.’ Their economic and educational situations could be termed ‘the local’ features. Such situations are supposed to influence development programs implemented by the Ministry of Women Affairs.
Women's Participation in Two Development Programs

Women and development in Samoa

In Samoa, women's group activities at local level have been relatively vigorous since the era of the New Zealand administration. In the 1950s, one nationwide women's organization had already been founded, and it attempted to make "the official channel of communication between its members and the government and any other appropriate authority" (the National Council of Women Constitution, cited in Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991: 10). In such a movement, the government finally made a decision to establish a Women's Advisory Committee in 1978, in order to integrate women issues into national development processes. The Women's Advisory Committee was to be "directly responsible to the Prime Minister and Cabinet on matters relating to the welfare and development role of women" (Economic Development Department 1980: 80).

The Ministry of Women Affairs Act was passed by Parliament in 1990. As a result, the Women's Division came to be independent of the Prime Minister's Department and opened an office as the Ministry of Women Affairs in 1991. The Ministry has mainly attempted to promote the following things: 1) to collect statistical data in order to produce a report with recommendations for programs in development planning; 2) to coordinate implementation of income-generating activities such as the manufacturing of handicrafts and vegetable growing; and 3) to coordinate appropriate training programs for women (Ministry of Women Affairs 1992: 9–11). At the same time, the Women's Advisory Committee was incorporated into one of the Ministry's systems and enhanced its roles by increasing the members. The Ministry also built a channel with various women's non-governmental organizations, and they have cooperated with each other in organizing several events.

Study area

Although the Ministry has promoted many programs all over the country, this survey was conducted in Savaii Island (see Figure 1). This island is generally regarded as the area which has maintained the most 'traditional' Samoan lifestyle. In fact, the 1991 census recorded that over 97 per cent of Savaii population was under the matai system, while the corresponding rate in Apia urban area was only 73 per cent. Compared with Upolu Island, Savaii Island has been behind in terms of economic development. Over half of the employed in Apia urban area were in paid work, while only 15 per cent of the employed in Savaii were so (Department of Statistics 1991). In sum, there have been significantly limited opportunities to attain paid work in Savaii Island, especially for the youth, so that Savaii people have turned to work in the subsistence agricultural sector.

Within this context, the Savaii Women's Community Centre, a branch of the Ministry in Savaii Island, has implemented several development programs for Savaii women since its establishment in 1996. Of these programs, this article is interested in the two main programs: Community Development Services (CDS) and Sewing Skill Training Course (SST). Both programs were surveyed from late July to early September in 1999, and information from 15 women on the CDS and 27 women on the SST was obtained. The method of the survey was based on both the questionnaire in Samoan and personal interviews in English.

The case of the Community Development Services

The purpose of the CDS is to teach women new skills, such as sewing, cooking, flower arrangement, and manufacturing handicrafts, which are regarded as useful skills to improve their village life. The CDS is a kind of short-term programs. Each program begins with the submission of an application for training from a women's group to the Secretary of Women Affairs. Once the Secretary approves the application, it is forwarded to a CDS division in the Ministry to discuss a plan for its implementation among a trainers. The trainers also consult the contents and dates of the training with the representatives of the applying group. If both parties reach an agreement, the trainers visit the village of the group and implement an in-
tensive training for about a week.

As one of the CDS cases, the training in T village of Savaii Island was surveyed at the beginning of August 1999. T village is located in the south of the island, about an hour by car from the Centre (see Figure 1). The size of the village is relatively large compared to other villages on the island. The total population of the village is 706 persons: 371 males and 335 females (Department of Statistics 1991). The main industry is agriculture based on subsistence, especially many villagers engage in producing coconuts. The village has three small shops, one elementary school, and six denominations of Christians. Except for one, every denomination has a women's group, and one of them had already experienced the CDS training in April 1999, before the survey was implemented.

The training period of this case was only for four days. The content of the training was mainly sewing. Cooking and flower arrangement were added for a few hours in the third and the last day respectively. Three trainers commuted from the Centre to the village every day during the training period. The training started from about 0900 to 1530, that is, from the trainers' arriving to their leaving the meetinghouse of the group. The group consisted of a president, a first councilor, a secretary, and other members. It was the first councilor who eagerly proceeded with the applying for the training, so that three core members, namely the president, the first councilor, and one of the old ladies running a small shop in the village, took the lead to organize the training among other members. In reality, a total of 17 women participated in the training, but not everyone took part consistently. One member came to the training only on the first day, while the other member started to participate in it on the third day. In general, the participants moved in and out of the meetinghouse each fifteen minutes, so that the average number of participants for four days was around 15 persons.

The backgrounds of the participants were divided into several remarkable features. Firstly, 11 participants were related to each other. For instance, four persons came from the president's family, and four from the first councilor's family. In many cases, their relations were between mothers and daughters in the same family, so that the age structure among the participants consisted of three groups: the 20's-30's, the late 40's and over 50 years of age (Figure 3). Such a characteristic was assumed to be the reflection of the nature of a religious women's group. Secondly, most of the participants lived in an extended family. Ten of the participants were married, while three were unmarried, one was widowed, and one was divorced. Twelve of the participants had children. Even if they had either husbands or children, it did not necessarily mean that they lived together in the village. One of the participants, for instance, had three children, yet two of them lived with her husband in American Samoa. The participants aged over 40 years had a husband possessing the matai title. Thirdly, every household of the participants attained cash earnings in some way, yet there were a few households, whose members were in paid work. One of the most popular income resources was selling agricultural products, such as taros, bananas, and coconuts, in the Salelologa market, when they needed money (Figure 4). Another was remittances from their relatives in foreign countries. Twelve of the participants had siblings or uncles and aunts, who were staying in New Zealand, Australia, and American Samoa, and all of them received remittances irregularly (Figure 5). In this regard, nine persons had been abroad to visit their relatives. Moreover, two participants had an earned income: one was a bank officer in Salelologa, while another ran a small shop in

![Figure 3](image-url)
Figure 4. Income resources of each household.
Data Source: Author's field survey 1999.
*Including plural answers

Figure 5. Relations with overseas migrant societies.
Data Source: Author's field survey 1999.

the village. Lastly, many of the participants completed at least elementary education. Eight persons finished secondary education, while only one person had tertiary education.

The possibilities of participation were considerably affected by various human relations within the community. Firstly, there was a clear role distribution among the participants, which was based on the age division of labor in the Samoan family. During the training, the participants mainly separated into three units. The first unit consisted of young women, namely daughters whose mothers also took part in the training. Their role was chiefly to prepare for lunch during the training, therefore some of them stayed at home to cook, while the others brought lunch and served it to the trainers and the elderly amongst the participants. On the next day, the former came to the training, and the latter stayed at home for cooking. In this way, the young women took turns to learn sewing. The second unit was composed of relatively older ladies, who merely stayed there without participating in the training. They usually looked after babies or infants, whose mothers were participating in the training. The last unit included the rest, either the young or the elders. They were mostly engaged in the training all the time.

Such a reflection of the age division of labor had both positive and negative effects on implementing the CDS. Regarding the first unit, it was very difficult to take the training properly, even if they really wanted to do so. They were unable to concentrate on the training, because they had to leave the meetinghouse whenever the elders ordered them to do anything. On the other hand, this situation was helpful for mothers, because they could participate in the training, even if they had babies.

Secondly, the differences of opinions on the CDS divided between the participants and the non-participants of the group. In fact, the total number of members came to around 30 persons, yet half of them did not come to the training. Concerning the perceptions of the non-participants on the CDS, some of them regarded the training as a waste of time. According to the president, such members preferred to weave mats for faalavelave rather than to participate in the training. The first councilor, however, explained that the reason why the others did not come to the training was that "they were angry with us, because they did not know what we did. They said to us that we had to consult with them before we applied to the Ministry."

On the contrary, the perceptions of the core members on the CDS might be influenced by their abundant experience outside the village. For instance, the first councilor completed higher education and was working as a bank officer. The lady running her own shop also had various experiences abroad. She had stayed in Australia for three years, had worked in New Zealand for seven years and had been to Fiji and the United States.

The motivations towards participation were completely different between the core members and the other participants. Among the core members, it was the first councilor who proposed the CDS to the group. She heard about the CDS from a woman belonging to the group which held the training in April 1999, and decided to encourage the members to apply for
"This [CDS] is a really good activity. We are able not only to attain sewing skills, but also to help for the family and save money. If we learn sewing more, perhaps villagers will come to ask to sew, so that we will be able to earn money... I really need to learn sewing. When I have a child, it is better for me to sew the child's clothes. Attaining sewing skills is a good thing, not only for myself, but also for my family" (the first councilor).

The first councilor found two meanings in learning to sew: a necessary skill for mothers and a way of income generation. Such a perception, as a result, induced her to strongly initiate the process of applying for the training.

The other participants, however, hardly considered the idea that sewing brought them cash earnings. There were two main reasons for their participation in the training. The first one, the most popular answer of all, was that they expected the CDS to make them enrich their knowledge in terms of sewing skills, for example, how to use a sewing machine or how to cut different patterns of clothes. The second one was that they wanted to sew clothes for their family, especially for their children. According to the president, there were no objections from male members within the community on their applying for the training, because both of them had already reached an agreement. Each member participant, therefore, brought materials and threads, and sewed clothes one after another during the training period. In other words, the CDS gave woman a good opportunity to concentrate on sewing all the day.

However, several of the participants passively participated in the program. One lady came to the CDS with the idea of socializing, while the other young woman participated in the training because her mother forced her to do so.

The case of the Sewing Skill Training Course

The SST is one of the income generating programs implemented by the Ministry. Its purpose is to help women earn money by attaining sewing skills. This program was initiated as a non-governmental activity by a Japanese senior volunteer who taught home economics in a Christian college in Savaii Island. She designed the program to let female graduates have an opportunity to attain cash earnings, because most of them were unable to find paid work in the island. In contemporary Samoa, daily formal clothes, children's uniforms, and working uniforms in an office are seldom sold as ready-made clothes. Most of them are generally hand-made by women, who are called 'tailors.' The tailors are usually invisible in the formal sector, so that people give an order for their clothes to a tailor introduced by either relatives or friends. In this context, enriching knowledge of sewing opens the possibility to be a tailor and to generate income. The Japanese volunteer's idea was enthusiastically approved by the Secretary of Women Affairs, so that the SST was started in the Centre in June 1996.

During this survey, the SST was held twice a week: Tuesday and Thursday. It consisted of two classes, namely the morning class (0830–1130) and the afternoon class (1330–1630). Training processes were chiefly divided into four steps: basic, elementary, intermediate, and advanced, and every student had to pass a small examination concerned with practical skills in each step to move on the next one. At least five weeks were necessary to finish each step. The Centre usually had a short-time interval between each term, so that it took around two years to complete all of the steps. Completing all the steps enabled participants to attain basic sewing skills as well as making school uniforms. At the same time, the Centre undertook the orders of school uniforms, and only advanced participants were able to earn small money by undertaking the orders.

Participants to the SST were recruited through either the advertisements of the Ministry on radio or TV, or the Women's Committee in villages. There were neither required qualifications nor tuition fees to attend the class, thus those who wanted to participate in the SST came directly to the Centre on the first day of each term. In such a situation, however, the sustainability of participating in the training was by no means high. The SST had no strict rules to force participants to continue the training, until they completed all the steps. While
one participant unexpectedly quit during the term, the other, who had already stopped, suddenly returned to the class.

The survey on the SST was conducted in the fourth term in 1999. During this period, a total number of participants were 27 persons. Among them, 23 persons attained information on the SST from the advertisements on radio or TV, one by the Women’s Committee, one through her friends, and another through her own experience of participating in the CDS in her village. Everyone came to the Centre by bus from her own residential village (Figure 6). Only nine of the participants had learned sewing for more than a half a year, leaving most of them as beginners in sewing in the SST.

The backgrounds of the participants were basically diverse, though three prominent differences were observed, compared with the CDS case. Firstly, the participants were chiefly divided into two groups in terms of age and marital status (Figure 7). One consisted of unmarried women aged less than 24 years, while the other consisted of married women aged over 25 years. Secondly, one fifth of the participants lived in a nuclear family, which was regarded as ‘Western’ style in Samoa. As well as in the CDS case, however, 21 participants still originated from extended families, and most of them stayed with their own parents. Nine of the 13 married women had a husband possessing the matai title. Thirdly, the number of households relying on cash economy exceeded that of households depending mostly on subsistence economy (see Figure 4). 24 households of the participants attained cash earnings in some way: 17 households had family members working in the formal sector, such as government officers, teachers, bank officers, and company employees, while seven households worked in the informal sector, such as selling agricultural products and bus/taxi drivers. Furthermore, five of the participants had earned income: two sold vegetables in the Salelologa market; two were teachers; and one assisted her husband to run a small shop. Concerning this individual economic situation, five of the participants did not receive remittances even if their relatives were staying in overseas migrant societies (see Figure 5).

On the other hand, the SST also had the same tendencies as the CDS case. Firstly, a number of the participants had children despite their marital status, and several of them did not live with their husbands or children. Secondly, the participants had a good educational career in general. 25 of them had completed secondary education. One had attended a technical insti-

![Savaii Island](image)

**Figure 6.** The relation between daily bus services and residential villages of the participants in the SST. Data Sources: Ward and Ashcroft 1998: 77, and author’s field survey 1999.
What is ‘the Local’ in Women’s Participation?

The age structure by marital status in the SST.
Data Source: Author’s field survey 1999.

![Age Structure by Marital Status](image)

The possibilities of participation were firstly influenced by the condition of transportation in Savaii Island. Generally, which class the participants could attend was exclusively determined by the daily supply of bus services. As shown in Figure 6, those who residing in low bus service areas attended the morning class, while those in abundant bus service areas came to the afternoon class. In Savaii Island, the timetables of bus services, especially in villages far from Salelologa, were basically determined by ferry’s departures and arrivals in Salelologa Warf.24 The participants coming from villages relatively far from Salelologa were unable to return to their house in a day, if they attended the afternoon class. Such a condition of daily bus services might result in depriving women, especially those who live in the northwest area of the island, of an opportunity to participate in the SST.

The next factor affecting the possibilities of participation was the economic conditions of the participants. As mentioned above, the Centre never asked women for a tuition fee, however they needed money for a bus fare and materials.25 Such a situation was reflected in the interview with the participants: three of the participants raised a bus fare as a problem in taking part in the SST; while two absent women during the survey said that managing either a bus fare or materials determined their attending the class. As you can see from the fact that many of the participants' households obtained a regular income (see Figure 4), only women who could manage the expense for participation could attend the training in the SST.

The motivations towards participation nearly corresponded with the purpose of the SST. The most popular reason for participation was to generate income in the future by using sewing skills.26 Except for one person, all the participants were planning to earn money after their completion of the SST. More than half of the participants expected to generate income either as a tailor or by running a small business in their own village. Ten of the participants desired to find a job related to sewing.

In the context of such an aspiration for income generated by sewing, a number of the participants insisted that the total income of their own household was low, even though several family members were in paid work. The reason why they felt the shortage of income was partly due to Samoan culture.
“My husband's salary is not enough for us. We need money for church donations, kids, food, and faalavelave.”

“Just only one [gets money]. It is not enough for making village (faalavelave).”

“I know that my working, a job, now is not enough. [What I need money for are] school fees, for church, for the village, and so many faalavelave.”

Many of the participants felt that faalavelave put pressure on their household expenses. If any family members were in paid work, most of their salaries were spent on faalavelave. As a result of the penetration of cash economy, the demand for cash needed for faalavelave has been increasing. The participants, therefore, had to pursue extra cash earnings. In addition to this, the demands for various consumer goods have been also increasing. Several of the participants expected to buy food, such as rice, sugar, tea, and meat, by cash earnings. In particular, the young generation aged between 20 and 35 years desired to buy their own clothes and cars, and to build houses in order to be independent of their parents; on the other hand, mothers needed school tuition fees for their children. Actually, seven of the participants were in need of money for children's education, and four participants were sending their children to schools in Apia.

Despite the reality of the increasing demands for cash, however, the fundamental reason why women participated in the SST was related to the norms of the fa'aSamoa. As well as the CDS case, several of the participants regarded sewing as an indispensable skill for a mother. One of the participants said that she took part in the SST to sew only family clothes, and that she would like to learn to cook after her completion of the SST. Another also pointed out that Samoan mothers were generally deficient in home economics skills.

Furthermore, every participant definitely mentioned that they wanted to earn income for their family rather than for themselves.

“[I would like] to help my family and many faalavelave. You know, if my brother gets pay, he buys food for his kids and my family. So I need to get more money for my family.”

“[If I could get money], I help my children, school fees... My husband's salary is not enough. Otherwise, some goods are very expensive. Materials to sew clothes and food.”

As these narratives imply, those who had children needed money for their children, while unmarried women hoped to help their own parents in terms of house expenses. In this regard, the Secretary of the Ministry indicated that such a perception was partly affected by the norms of the fa'aSamoa, in which every member in the aiga shares everything.

On the contrary, another factor against the fa'aSamoa, which induced the participants to join the training, was observed in the SST. In the fa'aSamoa, women's behaviors, especially of unmarried daughters, are strictly watched by male members in the aiga, so that it is usually difficult for women to go out by themselves without any companions, except in the cases of going to school and work (Yamamoto 1982: 50). During the survey, for example, one of the trainers took her younger brother to the Centre as her companion, when she had extra work on a Saturday. To attend the training in the Centre, however, the participants had to come to Salelologa by themselves, and such mobility from each village made them feel a kind of freedom. One of the participants said that she really liked to attend the class because she gained many friends from different villages, and several of them were sometimes absorbed in chatting, rather than in sewing. Moreover, most of the participants got on a bus in front of the Salelologa market, so that they could enjoy shopping after the SST. In this way, participating in the SST meant that women could attain a possibility to expand their daily life spaces.

Discussions: What are ‘the Local’ Factors Relating to Women’s Participation?

Compared with women’s participation in the two programs described above, it was evident that both the possibilities of and the motivations towards participation were affected by various factors surrounding participants.

Regarding the possibilities of participation, firstly, gender relations were by no means a
What is 'the Local' in Women's Participation? 27

crucial factor influencing them in both cases, unlike most development studies have argued. In practice, women's participation in both programs was admitted or supported by their husbands and male members in each household. In the CDS case, for example, the group members could make a decision to apply for the training by themselves. In the SST, almost all the participants except for one were approved to take part in the class by their other family members.29

In the CDS case, on one hand, it was human relations among the group members that affected the possibility of participation. For instance, one of the participants felt that she could not help coming to the training, because she regarded her participation as her duty for the group. Almost half of the members, on the contrary, never participated. One of the reasons for non-participation was because they were upset to apply for the training without adequate consultation. Another reason was because they thought it was a waste of time. In addition, even if they could participate in the training, the age division of labor between the youth and the elders prevented the former from learning how to sew. Each status of women in a group, therefore, resulted in determining their participation.

In the SST, on the other hand, several factors were assumed to influence women's participation. One of the factors was the daily transportation service in Savaii Island. As seen in Figure 6, the attending time was governed by daily bus services in their residential villages.30 Villages far from Salelologa had in general a shortage of bus services. In such villages, the possibilities of women's participation in the SST were obviously low. Another factor was concerned with the economic situations of each participant. To attend the SST, women had to afford participation fees, such as a bus fare or expenses for materials, by themselves. This implied the result that women who could not afford the participation fees had a relatively low participation rate in the SST. In reality, as shown in Figure 6, many of the participants in the SST resided in the southeast area of the island, where economic growth has gradually increased in recent years. The participants in the SST also tended to live exclusively in economically well-off households, compared with the participants in the CDS cases (see Figure 4). In other words, the more benefits of cash economy women received, the more aspiration for cash earnings they had, which induced them to take part in the SST.

With regard to women's motivations towards participation, both cases were fundamentally affected by the fa'aSamoa norms. Especially in the CDS case, most of the participants regarded sewing as an indispensable skill for women, especially when they had children. Such a perception showed the reflection of the gendered division of labor in the fa'aSamoa (e.g. Figure 2). In the SST, although each participant needed sewing skills differently to generate income, everyone expressed that they learned to sew, not only for themselves, but for their family. This situation also represented one aspect of the fa'aSamoa norms, which places a great importance on the prosperity of the aiga as a whole, rather than that of individuals.

Through these analyses, it became apparent that factors affecting the situations of women's participation considerably depended on the style and purpose of each program. Concerning the style of the program, group participation like the CDS inevitably had a limitation to equal participation because of power relations within a group.31 However, individual participation like the SST could bring about unexpected outcomes such as expanding women's daily life activities. As to the purpose of the program, the reasons why the motivations for participation in the SST were strongly affected by individual economic conditions might be because the SST was one of the income generating programs.

As a consequence, factors determining the situations of women's participation as 'the local' ones consist of complex situations including not only cultural aspects but also economic and residential situations in the project sites. Even if development projects are implemented for women in the same island, it hardly means that every project is influenced by the same 'local' factors. Both the aspects and the scale, which the word 'local' usually indicates, are remarkably changed by the contents of each develop-
Conclusions

From the comparison between the two programs, it appeared obvious that various factors deriving from the daily life of women influenced the situations of their participation in each program. Such factors included not only cultural and social aspects in project sites but also human relations in the community, economic conditions in each household, and the daily supply of transportation on the island.

In conclusion, reconsidering the meanings of 'the local' makes us return to the arguments related to its scale and content, as Mohan and Stokke argued that there were dangers in 'the local' (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 249). Development projects are truly implemented at what is called at a 'local' scale, yet it could be said that both women's practices and perceptions affecting the situations of their participation are formed within the interactions among several scales. Firstly, some kind of global perspective is needed to comprehend the situations of women's participation. For instance, the fa'aSamoa, which more or less influenced every aspect of women's participation, was invented in the process of colonization. In other words, the fa'aSamoa hardly has significance without the perspective of comparison with other cultures. In addition, the global perspective is also indispensable to analyze economic conditions in Samoa, because most of their households are deeply connected to overseas migrant societies. Similarly, a national scale is necessary to consider the conditions of development project sites. By comparing several regions in the nation, it becomes possible to make the characteristics of a project site clear, for example, the lack of opportunity for paid work or the poor supply of daily transportation. As a result, considering the linkage between a 'local' scale and other scales are definitely significant to comprehend the situations of women in project sites.32

On the contrary, it could be insisted that the reality of 'the local' is considerably ambiguous and meaningless for development practice, if 'the local' is only regarded as the interacting scales. However, using a local scale is necessary to clarify the content of 'the local,' and it also prevents development practitioners from ignoring necessary aspects of development practice. If the practitioners only focus on the features of their project site at national level, most of the features must submerge into cultural and social ones. This means that not only other significant aspects relating to people's life, such as political, economic, and historical ones, but also the gender perspective, is downplayed. Likewise, the differences deriving from ethnicity, race, and status among women in society would be undervalued.

The meanings of 'the local' are hardly fixed and static, rather, they are changeable and dynamic depending on the conditions of each project site. Nevertheless, the scale termed as 'the local' is necessary to implement a development project effectively. To comprehend what the word, 'the local,' means, it is indispensable to analyze factors affecting development practice within the linkage among several scales. At the same time, cooperation among scholars and practitioners from various disciplines are crucially needed to grasp the features of project sites broadly, which are predicted to affect development practice. Such efforts surely would help prevent 'the local' from being essentialized in development practice.

Acknowledgements

The author expresses her gratitude to Samoan women for their corporation in her research, and the Ministry of Women Affairs for their assistance with her field survey. She is also grateful for abundant assistance given by Ms. Yuri Takahashi, and Mr. Akira and Ms. Yukiko Hara, during her stay in Samoa.

(Received 25 September 2000)
(Accepted 27 March 2001)

Notes

1. Such a rise of interest in 'the local' in development discourse is also connected to the advocacies of populism or anti-development grassroots movements in the 1980s, in conjunction with the lessons from the failure of large-scale development projects by the nation-states (Adams et al. 1994; Mohan and Stokke 2000; Nel et
What is 'the Local' in Women's Participation?

1. In the early 1990s, the main international development agencies published their perspective on 'participation.' For example, the World Bank determined to emphasize 'participatory elements' as its development objective, and then established a research group with the government of Sweden in 1990. As a result of that, the Bank held an International Workshop on participatory development in Washington D.C. in 1992. In the Workshop, many development agencies, such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), attended to exchange opinions (see Bhatnagar and Williams 1992). As well as the Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) focused on 'participation' in its famous report in 1993 (see UNDP 1993).

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3. Mohan and Stokke divided positions in contemporary development mainstream into two groups: revised neo-liberalism and post-Marxism. The former does not change a 'top-down' strategy, so that it expects 'the local' to make its projects more economically efficient. The latter, on the contrary, takes a radical position as to empowerment emphasizing 'bottom-up' social mobilization in society as a challenge to hegemonic interests within the state and the market. Such a position represents words such as "people participation" and "empowerment" in development theory and practice. Despite such differences, both positions regard local actors, knowledge, and interventions as key features in conceptualizations of development (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 249).

4. He mentioned that such indigenous factors could be called "the characteristics of the local" (Chiiki no kosei in Japanese) (Sato 1995:16).

5. Shimizu (1996) researched a community based school construction project in Cambodia, and concluded that the traditional and cultural factors of a Buddhist community played a significant role in people's participation.

6. For instance, Uluuwishewa (1997) examined a large-scale irrigation and settlement project in Sri Lanka, and pointed out that the project resulted in environmental degradation and a fuel wood crisis, which badly affected women's livelihood and health, because the project overlooked the value of forests for the local people.

7. For example, Nakazato (1999) and Nel et al. (2000) dealt with development projects deeply related to women. However, they hardly mentioned the impact of projects on women in detail.

8. Samoa experienced colonization by two western countries; Germany (1899-1914) and New Zealand (1915-1961). It achieved independence in 1962 and changed the national name from 'Western Samoa' to 'Samoa' in 1997.

9. Religion also plays an important role in Samoan life. Although there is a legal guarantee for religious freedom in the constitution, the majority of the people are strong adherents to the Christian faith (Department of Statistics 1991: 3). Owing to the spread of education by missionaries, Samoa had achieved a high literacy rate before its independence. At present, Samoan educational indicators are generally favorable compared to most Pacific developing countries, resulting in "an adult literacy rate of around 98 per cent and a primary school enrollment of over 80 per cent" (Fairbairn Pacific Consultants Pty Ltd et al. 1994: 2).

10. In the fa'aSamoa, status groups within a village are traditionally divided into five groups: Matai, Faletua ma tausi, Atualuma, Aumaga, and Tamiti (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991: 72). Faletua ma tausi means in-marrying wives, and their role is to engage in domestic tasks. Atualuma means daughters of the village (unmarried women), and their role is to be hospitable to guests from other villages. Aumaga means entitled males who generate agricultural production for the aiga. Tamiti means children. However, it is unclear as to what extent this division of status groups maintains in the contemporary time.

11. 'Faalavelave' is Samoan 'traditional' ceremonials and exchanges based on kinship or those with whom they share some bond of allegiance. It normally happens in times such as weddings, funerals, the investiture of matai, the building of a house, and so on. Traditionally, they exchanged both men's goods, such as taros and pigs, and women's goods, such as fine mats and tapa clothes. In the contemporary time, however, the exchange goods have been gradually replaced by cash, because of the penetration of cash economy. For each member in the aiga, it is one of the most important obligations that he/she contributes to collecting the exchange goods once faalavelave happens (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991: 70-71 and 156).

12. Remittances significantly affect both the overall national income of Samoa and domestic individual incomes. According to the United Nations, "[e]stimates indicate that remittances ac-

al. 2000). In Japanese geography, development issues in developing countries have been a minor theme, except for several geographers (e.g. Ikeya 1994; Noma 1995a, 1995b). However, in the last couple of years the interest in development has gradually increased and the importance of 'local' aspects in project sites is being discussed (Kimoto 1999: 79).
counted for around 35 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product and that up to 40 to 50 per cent of disposable personal income may on average originate from remittances" (United Nations 1997: 8).

13. Recently, the number of female students exceeds that of male students in the University Preparation Years in the National University of Samoa.

14. The system of customary land could be regarded as "an effective means of ensuring access to land for subsistence purposes and thus providing food security to the community." However, it is also "increasingly recognized as a major constraint to diversification of land use and development for the economy" (United Nations 1997: 6-7).

15. Since the pre-colonial time, there have been strong and multifunctional women's associations in Samoa. According to Schoeffel, it was the early 1920s when a modern women's committee was introduced by an American woman, and was brought together in a single institution with the previous village women's association consisting of ladies and wives (Schoeffel 1977: 12). This composed committee was called "Komiti Tumama" (Women's Committee). As a result of the New Zealand administration's recognition of its potential for rural health improvement, the Women's Committee has played a significant role as the backbone of rural health services. It has mainly supported health activities such as "monthly baby clinics, sanitation, and home inspections, and has provided other nursing services and information concerning nutrition and cooking" (Economic Development Department 1980: 79).

16. The first Women's Advisory Committee consisted of: 1) the Secretary of Women Affairs; 2) the Director of Health or his representative; 3) the Director of Education or his representative; 4) the Director of Agriculture or his representative; 5) the Secretary of Foreign Affairs; 6) a representative of Internal Affairs and Rural Development; and 7) eight other persons elected annually from representatives of individual non-government women's committees and organizations (Ministry of Women Affairs 1993: 41). In 1998, the number of representatives from NGOs became 30 persons, and a half of them came from Savai'i Island.

17. According to the Ministry of Women Affairs, there are more than 50 non-government women's organizations registered under the Ministry. Of these, two organizations are the most popular: the National Council of Women with over 2,000 individual members and the Women's Development Committee with over 6,000 individual members (Ministry of Women Affairs 1993: 42).

18. Compared with average household daily total income, the maximum amount was 55.87 tala in Apia urban area; while the minimum amount 31.16 tala in Savai'i Island. The amount of all regions, namely Samoa as a whole, was 42.50 tala (Department of Statistics 1997b: 13).

19. The constructions of the Centre was assisted by a part of Japanese ODA.

20. This program's name is not official name used by the Ministry of Women Affairs. In general, this program is called either "sewing course" or "sewing class" in the Centre. However, to compare between two programs easily, this article uses the "Sewing Skill Training Course" for convenience.

21. Compared to Upolu Island, the number of applications from Savai'i Island was few. Since the Centre joined in CDS trainings in 1999, however, the number of applications from Savai'i villages has been increasing.

22. The main role of the first councilor is to assist the president. The secretary was collecting registration fees (2 tala) for the training from the members.

23. However, in Apia recently the number of tailoring shops has been increasing and one shop sells ready-made school uniforms.

24. On the contrary, the southeast area around Salelologa has been gradually growing in terms of economy, so that frequent bus service is run around the area in spite of both ferry's departures and arrivals in Salelologa Warf.

25. Bus fare ranged from 0.4 to 4 tala for a return, according to the participants' residential villages. One of the trainers in the Centre explained that it cost at least 20 tala to make a formal cloth for women.

26. In relation to this point, several of the participants deemed to save money used for paying the tailors, by sewing their own clothes.

27. The first woman (aged 46) lived in an extended family: her husband, her two sons in primary school, her brother, sister-in-law (brother's wife), their three children, and her sister. Her husband was a music teacher, and earned around 200 tala fortnightly. The second woman (aged 50) was a widow, and lived with her son, her two daughters (one of them was a teacher and had a child), and her niece. She did not have any relatives in overseas migrant societies. The third woman (aged 40) lived in a nuclear family: her husband, four sons (one of them staying in Apia to go to college and one in junior high school, and two in primary school), and two daughters (one in primary school). She was a teacher and earned 280 tala a fortnight.

28. The first woman (aged 31) was unmarried, and lived in an extended family: her parents, her...
brother and his family (sister-in-law and four kids), another brother, and two sisters in school. The only married brother worked in hotel. The second woman (aged 33) lived with her husband and a daughter who went to a college. Her husband was a bank officer, and earned two hundreds tala a fortnight. However, he had a loan, so that almost all his salary was used for repayment.

29. It is also assumed that the reason as to why men support women’s participation is that learning to sew never threatens male power in ‘local’ society. Thus, it is necessary to reexamine power relations between men and women at local level in detail.

30. The same points were pointed out in other case studies. For example, Nel et al. pointed out the lack of transportation when rural women came to the market (Nel et al. 2000: 32). Ulluwishewa found that well-to-do families could more easily adapt to a fuel wood crisis rather than low income ones (Ulluwishewa 1997: 115).

31. In development studies, many scholars have already indicated the diversity of local people and their power relations as one of the important points to be considered in participatory development (e.g. Mayoux 1995; White 1996).

32. Regarding this point, Momsen pointed out that there was “the enormous variation, both within and between developing nations in the process and impact of changes in the division of labor and in the relationships between women, men and the environment. This variation is explored at all scales from the sub-continental to the national, regional, community and household level” (Momsen 1987: 26).

References


wa-shuppansha. (J)
(J): written in Japanese
(JE): written in Japanese with English abstract