

the importance of ‘counting’ its contribution to the country’s well being by calling for the development of alternatives to the Western GDP indicators that are more appropriate in the Melanesian context. He is also arguing that we need to shift the focus for development onto food security and says that maintaining customary land tenure is the basis for a sustainable food supply. (p.33).

The accompanying DVD further enhances the value of this publication. It brings alive the voices of Melanesian activists explaining their views on the importance of indigenous land to their people, and the reasons for the formation of the regional Melanesian Indigenous Land Defence Alliance. The DVD also includes a short film in Melanesian Pidgin demonstrating how a community, by coming together succeeds in rejecting the temptation for quick cash presented by oil palm development schemes. More of these successful examples need to be shared.—*Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki is associate professor in communication studies at Unitec.*



Tribute to Solomon Is women

Being the First: Storis Blong Oloketa Mere Lo Solomon Aelan, edited by Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard and Marilyn Waring. Honiara: RAMSI, and Auckland: Institute of Public Policy and the Pacific Media Centre, AUT University, 2010, 162 pp. ISBN 978-1-877314-76-6.

THIS BOOK profiles the stories of 14 outstanding women, revealing their intimate moments, their struggles and the highs they have faced during their lives. Solomon Islands women make up around 49 percent of the country’s population. Traditionally, these women are

multi-taskers—as food producers, home keepers, child-bearers and child educators they are largely invisible in the media.

Here we see them in a new light. We enter a world of firsts—one where they hold positions of power and leadership in the public service. The 14 profiles include seven Permanent Secretaries, four Under-Secretaries, a Member of Parliament, a Public Service Commissioner and the Clerk to Parliament. They each reveal interesting stories of their upbringing, the challenges along the way and the support they received from mentors, family and, in practically all profiles, their faith in God.

And then they give inspirational advice to young women wanting to follow similar paths. However, as is most often the case with these types of stories, the rise of these women has come at a cost. It usually comes hand in hand with sexism, cultural conflict and challenges to their beliefs and value systems.

It is disappointing to see that in spite of these inspirational stories it seems no women were elected to Parliament in the August 2010 national election. The featured women's first person accounts reveal a lot about them. The histories share a similar pattern, in that many grew up poor but they did not let that stop them. The question line is formulaic.

In my experience, I have found Pacific women (especially older Pacific women) don't like talking about themselves. It is not the 'done thing'—your actions already speak volumes and therefore there is no need to publicly tell your life story. Using a pattern of formulaic questions to interview the women in this book has enabled them to talk about their lives somewhat freely.

Professor Marilyn Waring of the Institute of Public Policy at AUT University co-edited the manuscript with Malaita-born Dr Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard. Suzanne Bent-Gina, deputy director of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands' (RAMSI) Machinery of Government programme helped organise the book project as part of its component on women in government. The production of the book was pretty much an all female affair. The interviews were conducted by the well-respected Catherine Adifaka (the first female Public Service Commissioner in Solomon Islands) and they were transcribed by Cynthia Wickham, a Solomon Islands marine science graduate.

The Pacific Media Centre's Del Abcede designed the book and Isabella Rasch, also from AUT, created the cover montage. — *Sandra Kailahi of Television New Zealand is the author of a book on Pasifika women.*