

FROM STRUGGLES TO STRENGTH: A WOMAN'S JOURNEY IN MABE PEARL FARMING

Faka'anaua Lakai*
Manager, Vava'u Pearl Centre, Longomapu, Vava'u, Tonga
*nualakai@gmail.com

This story reflects the journey of Faka'anaua Lakai, a single mother of five, who found new opportunities and personal transformation through Mabe pearl farming in Vava'u, Tonga. Initially unfamiliar with pearls, Faka'anaua participated in a Tonga Skills Program training, later joining the ACIAR-supported pearl research project, which provides technical training, equipment, and market support for coastal communities in Tonga, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea.

The narrative highlights the role of gender inclusivity in fisheries and aquaculture, illustrating how women contribute as farmers, artisans, marketers, and leaders. Pearl farming not only provides income and economic stability but also fosters personal growth, confidence, and resilience. The story emphasizes the importance of collaborative approaches and international partnerships in strengthening community livelihoods and creating sustainable development outcomes.

By sharing this experience, the presentation will demonstrate how empowering women in aquaculture and pearl farming can transform both individual lives and community well-being, offering insights for gender-responsive approaches in international fisheries and aquaculture research projects.