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## DEVELOPMENT BULLETIN

# 80

No. 80 December 2018 Editor: Pamela Thomas

# PACIFIC REFLECTIONS: PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS OF AID AND DEVELOPMENT



## THEMES

- Development: Doing it hard
- Village perceptions of change
- Aid for whom?
- Where does the money go?
- The untold stories
- Pacific WID, WAD, GAD - what next?
- The cost of inequality
- The Pacific urban village
- Wither the Pacific environment?



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## **The Development Bulletin**

This is the 80th issue of the Development Bulletin. Since 1988 it has been the journal of the Development Studies Network, currently based at the Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University. It is an occasional publication providing at least one issue a year. Each issue has focused on a specific, topical development theme providing a multi-disciplinary perspective on a range of opinions on development activities, theories, impacts and research.

This special publication celebrates the journal's 80th issue. Its focus is the Pacific Islands and their specific trajectory from colonial states through independence to the present day. The editor commissioned these papers from Pacific Island, Australian, New Zealand and British academics, journalists, NGOs, government personnel and consultants who have lived and/or worked extensively in the Pacific over a number of years. The papers here are their reflections and perceptions of development, aid and change and their thoughts for the future.

## **Free download**

The Development Bulletin is available online for free download and can be freely copied and used on condition that the source is acknowledged. In addition to the Development Bulletin, our website also has a collection of 87 papers on women and gender issues in the Pacific. Many are written by Pacific Island women.

<https://Crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/devnet/dev-bulletin.php>

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## **Cover photos**

Front: Langalanga lift nets, Lisiana village, Auki, Malaita, Solomon Islands (Photo: Simon Foale, James Cook University)

Weaving baskets at the Suva market, Fiji (Photo: Pamela Thomas)

Back: Modern and traditional lagoon-side houses, Causeway, Kiribati (Photo: Pamela Thomas)

# DEVELOPMENT BULLETIN

Issue 80 November 2018

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## PACIFIC REFLECTIONS: PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS OF AID AND DEVELOPMENT

Reflections, memories, anecdotes, experiences, hopes and despair of those who have lived and/or worked extensively in the Pacific and the many who feel that the Pacific is their second home. This collection of lived experiences perhaps tells us more about aid, development and change than many purely academic papers or the many evaluations, data sets and reviews of aid related projects. These papers outline some important advances in peoples' wellbeing but also reflect a widespread deterioration in their environments and the cultural and traditional beliefs that bound families and communities together.

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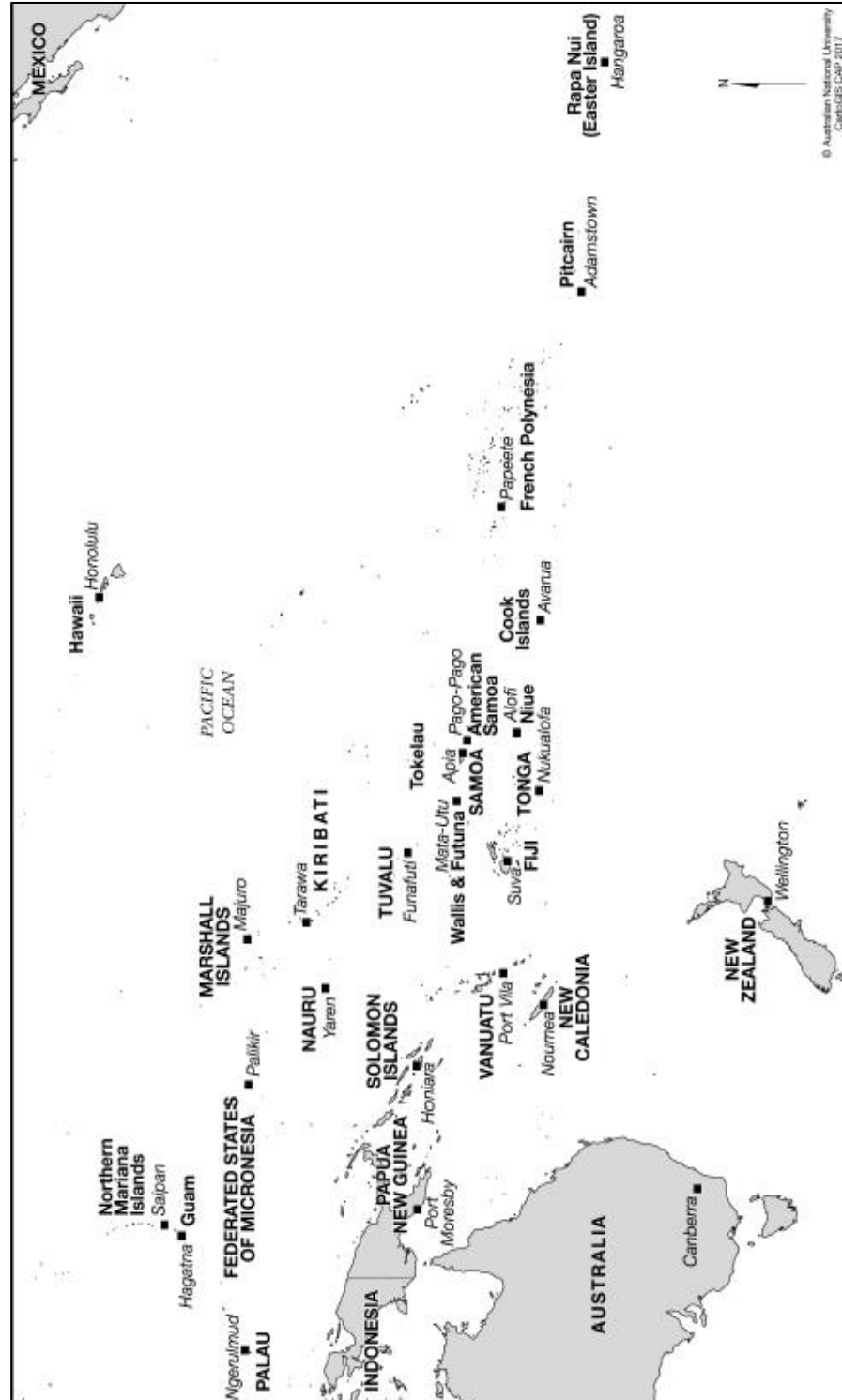


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Map of Pacific Island Countries showing major urban centres





## Pacific reflections: Perceptions of aid, development and change

*Pamela Thomas, The Australian National University*

This is my 80th edition of the *Development Bulletin*. It began in 1986 as the newsletter of the Australian Development Studies Network located then within the relatively new Development Studies Centre. The Network was just one of Helen Hughes's many bright ideas and was intended to share knowledge of development experience and teaching, provide discussion on social and economic development research results, new theories and policies, and provide linkages between those teaching development studies in addition to development consulting companies and those in government and non-government organisations who were actively involved in implementing development programmes.

### The Development Studies Centre

The Development Studies Centre had been in operation for a couple of years when Helen Hughes took over and we became the National Centre for Development Studies housed in the new JG Crawford Building. The Centre had been the idea of Fred Fisk, Sir John Crawford and the ANU vice chancellor at the time, Tony Low. As Rodney Cole recalls 'the idea was to establish a focal point for the coordination of the ANU's contribution to the development of less fortunate countries in our region. The DSC was to be modelled on the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex, providing a home for teaching graduate students in courses appropriate to the needs of developing countries, to have its own research and publishing capability and to conduct seminars and conferences on issues relating to development' (Cole 2001:iv).

The aim was to have staff who could produce graduates with an in-depth knowledge of development and a multi-disciplinary range of skills and knowledge. Among the staff were demographers, economists, geographers, environmentalists, administrators and agriculturists. An interchange of ideas between them was encouraged at weekly staff 'management' meetings where Helen in her usual form would toss about deliberately provocative pronouncements on some development issue or decision and sit back with a satisfied smile as the arguments raged, prodding if necessary.

The Network ran conferences, symposia, think tanks, published directories of Australians working in development and regular briefing papers on the current development debate. In time the briefing papers and newsletter expanded into the *Development Bulletin*. With the exception of three years when I was working with the UN in Bangkok, I have been its managing editor. But after Helen retired NCDS became more heavily focussed on economics and began to lose those staff members who belonged to other disciplines, including the Network. Increasingly full-fee paying students from Asian countries focussed on economics and finance. We all recognised the change. After several permutations, part of what was once NCDS was incorporated into the large, prestigious and multi-disciplinary Crawford School of Public Policy housed in another new JG Crawford Building. The word 'development' remains in the Crawford School's Development Policy Centre and their Resources, Environment and Development (RE&D) Programme and in a development course run in the Faculties by Patrick Kilby. At ANU the great body of Pacific Island knowledge, research and publication seems harder to find as are the remnants of the iconic research organisation that made ANU globally famous.

### Development Bulletin No.80

The 80 issues of the Development Bulletin (65 of them available on line) provide a history of social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific as well as Australian aid policy, programming, review and research. The issues of the journal that I personally feel most proud of are the two that consider disability and its

relationship to poverty, women and development (Issue 73: *Disability, disadvantage and development in the Pacific* and Issue 74: *Implementing disability-inclusive development in the Pacific and Asia*). Those two publications brought into academic focus for the first time in Australia the relationship between poverty and disability. The Network organised two disability related conferences with speakers with disability from Asia, the Pacific, New Zealand and Australia. I worked closely with the AusAID Disability Task Force and they funded both conferences and publications.

## Issue 80: Pacific reflections

This issue was intended to provide the opportunity for those academics, development practitioners, administrators, researchers, journalists and others who have spent much of their working lives in the Pacific to look back over their experiences and to reflect on development and the changes that they feel were most important. The result is a collection of what are often very personal papers with deeply felt thoughts of the past Pacific and its possible futures. It does not always make comfortable reading, but then deep reflection does not always stir up comfortable memories. A high proportion of the papers are about Papua New Guinea and most are written by Australians, although considerable effort was made to encourage more Pacific Islanders to contribute.

## Looking back to understand the present: 60+ years

This publication begins with two papers, Éric Waddell and John Connell. They both provide an in-depth reflection on rural research that began prior to independence in Papua New Guinea; one among the Enga people of the Central Highlands and the other among the villagers of Siwai, Bougainville. In both cases the authors first visited as young men and have continued their research. Today, almost a lifetime later, they look back and now identify themselves as *lapun* (honoured old men). Both provide considerable food for thought about the loss of culture, land and identity. Éric discusses the growing corporate power and the loss of influence of the state. He is uncomfortable with economic development measured in such quantitative terms as growth, profitability, competition and the gross domestic product. The economic initiative, he maintains, has been transferred from the state to the private and corporate sectors.

The corporate world expresses little interest in social welfare—its over-riding concern is with profit, ideally short-term, to be acquired through unlimited economic growth. The state is now largely at the service of these enterprises. I had no idea when I first went to PNG that this would be the shape of the world to come.

John's work in Siwai eventually enabled a discontinuous, fragmented understanding of Siwai society and economy over a 75 year period—a situation unusual in Melanesia. He considered agricultural change, the emerging diversity of livelihoods, employment and migration and political and personal aspirations in an era of 'subsistence affluence', linked to cocoa growing and wage and salary

labour. This was to change from 'a successful economic future' to the disastrous impact of nine years of war after the closure of the mine and to a current situation where 'any sense of strategic planning, even for infrastructure, has failed to reach the villages, while large sums of money are being wasted by national and provincial politicians on poorly designed projects'.

Elizabeth Cox sailed up the Sepik River in 1973 as a 20-year old woman, travelling on her own. She recalls feeling more welcome, safer and happier with her local hosts than with the company of men and women in the many macho and blatantly racist colonial communities. She writes of the following 40 years living and working in the Sepik, a place she still calls 'home' and seeing development:

'Subtly and steadily shifting from delivery of information and services at community level through locally trained and motivated facilitators to fly-in/fly-out consultants designing, implementing and evaluating. Onerous documentation and expensive, unreliable and often inaccurate information and communication media, have displaced local organisations to the margins of development'.

Mike Bourke, an agronomist, looks back to 1970 and his first posting as a *didiman* in villages in the Baining Mountains of New Britain and New Ireland which he saw for the first time from the air. It was a time when there was very limited accessible information on village agriculture, something that since then Mike has rectified. His research has provided long-term data sets on agriculture and the times of food shortages and their causes. He considers the agricultural changes over time, the impact of the introduction of a wide range of new crops—with more failures than successes, and the continued attempt to grow rice despite a 50-year history of failure. His most recent field work mid-2018 has been very close to the villages he first saw from the air. Future gains in social development, he considers can continue to be linked with agricultural development, including more efficient production of subsistence food and cash crops, and good markets for locally grown food.

Patrick Kilby first went to PNG in 1975 as an undergraduate agricultural science student and later worked with the East Sepik Rural Development Project—an integrated rural development project, very fashionable at the time and covering almost everything from rubber, to buffalos, to dried fish, to rice and nutrition. All except the nutrition programme, he says, were a failure due to poor planning, poor economics and a flood of foreign consultants with little local knowledge of the context—a problem that several contributors mention including Jenny Bryant-Tokalau who writes 'all the planning in the world cannot lead to development—unless people are part of the planning and there is deep understanding of the people and the context'. Even then, she asks, who decides?

It is with pleasure that I have included here a short paper taken, with the author's permission, from two of his books. I met Rodney Cole at the National Centre for Development Studies where he was responsible, amongst many things, for the 2010 series of Pacific publications. Rodney was born in Fiji and worked in senior posts with the British Colonial office until independence in 1971. In the

preface of his book 'A Pacific Journey' (2001:iv) he expresses a sentiment that underlies a number of the papers in this journal:

Over the last fifty years I have observed and sometimes participated in, events large and small that have changed for ever the quiet backwater that was the South Pacific. Now, reflecting on the past, I wonder how often those who presently control the destiny of the region pause to consider the consequences of decisions taken in days gone by. Sadly, I believe, the pace of this new Pacific, and the world generally, is such that there is little time to reflect on what has gone before—the way is forward, and let us not be hindered or confused by decisions of our predecessors.

### Some personal Pacific journeys

In 1979, Mary-Jane Mountain and Barry Shaw returned to a small, isolated village in the mountains in Simbu province to continue Mary-Jane's archaeological work only to find that the village was a smouldering ruin and the gardens destroyed. A nearby village had attacked. The villagers began building a new village on a nearby ridge and a 'few days later, a procession of village women, men and children, trudged uphill with Mary-Jane and Barry, carrying crates of archaeological equipment, cooking gear and the baby'. They write of the way in which negotiations were undertaken to build them a house, provide assistance on the dig and mind the baby and the great value of *bigmaus*, a Simbu version of a natural loud speaker used for conveying messages across ravines and deep valleys through a form of yodelling from a specific point on the edge of a ravine.

Susana Taua'a writes of the development of party systems of government in Samoa and what she terms as 'Samoa's version of democratic government—a mixed bag Samoan cultural ethos and modern democratic principles'. She confirms that 81 per cent of land in Samoa still remains under customary tenure and that two-thirds of the population depend on agriculture for subsistence and cash income but the recent introduction of the Torrens system has opened up customary land for leasing and mortgaging 'for the sake of economic development' which is likely to make this increasingly difficult in the future. Samoa has seen a rapid increase in development assistance from China and Chinese provision of many very large loans most of which are for infrastructure which must be built by Chinese companies, using Chinese labour. China has secured some control over tourism and access to Samoa by buying out a one-third share of Samoa Airways, which Taua'a says will 'not only help pay for our Chinese built airport, but will boost the occupancy rates of many locally owned and operated hotels'.

The rapid increase in Chinese involvement and visibility in Pacific Island Countries is mentioned by over 50 per cent of authors some of whom express concern about the size of the loans being made by China and the virtual impossibility of them being repaid. Denghau Zhang points out the annual interest rate of Chinese concessional loans is two to three per cent with a repayment period of 15 to 20 years. China requires that loan projects are conducted by Chinese contractors with at least 50 per cent of equipment

and materials purchased from China. He expresses surprise at the lack of development in PICs despite their marine resources and large inflows of foreign aid.

Terry Murphy reflects on a comment he overheard in 1977 at a going-finis party in Port Moresby when a British aid worker declared 'this is the last major colonial possession to go independent and this time we are not going to stuff it up!' Some 40 years later, with reports of incompetence, gross corruption in government and violence on the street in Port Moresby and other major PNG cities Terry thinks it seems unreasonable to ask 'did we stuff it up?'

And from stuff-ups to a successful development example. It is nearly 30 years since Jo Dorras and Peter Walker arrived in Vanuatu from five years in Zimbabwe. In those 30 years they have built a very successful and multi-faceted NGO which is based on a theatre company with a paid staff of 80 well trained Ni-Vanuatu actors and film makers, teachers and musicians, together with two reproductive health clinics, a nutrition kitchen, sports grounds and a variety of training for young out-of-school teenagers. They work closely with young people and with the nearby Blacksands settlement. Jo says 'if I was being monitored and evaluated could I show I have changed? But that is old hat! Now I have to prove I am resilient and sustainable'! WSB has excellent relationships with their actors, the nearby village people, their audiences and donors. As New Zealander Luke Kiddell writes, good relationships are central to effective development partnerships. He feels that Aotearoa New Zealand's links with the nations of Oceania are historical and strong and that more could be made of these connections. Maori, and Maori worldviews, for example, could play more central roles within Aotearoa's development partnership within Oceania. Glenn Banks also considers the importance of relationships:

There is a sense in which our academic identities as social scientists in PNG are as much about our relationships in PNG, and hence more Melanesian, than the ideal individual neo-liberal university subject. We need to build relationships with those with whom we co-produce knowledge as we become in a way, a product of these relationships.

### Reflecting on WAD, WID and GAD: Women's journeys

Gender issues are an important inclusion in many of the papers here. As a student at the University of Papua New Guinea in the early 1970s, Penelope Schoeffel was involved in women's liberation discussions and imported social movements such as Black Power and Women's Liberation. Weekly forums were held outside the university library to debate such topics but efforts to attract PNG students were a failure. She writes that efforts to develop Pacific-wide gender projects will invariably fail as the region is culturally diverse and there is considerable cultural diversity in the roles and rights of men and women—an obvious fact that some consultants and aid workers are unaware of. She maintains that when infeasible gender components are included in project designs and monitoring frameworks, it adds to the cynicism about gender so often encountered in the consulting profession. The same cynicism is evident in

Colin Filer's paper which is based on his experience in the role of the social impact and gender equity specialist in a PNG Renewable Resources Sector Working Group. He takes us on a merry romp through some of the more idiosyncratic aspects of aid, tied aid, and consulting. Leading on from Colin's experience with gender inclusion, Anna Gero et al discuss research that was to define what gender transformative climate change action might look like and provide insights for programming in the Pacific and beyond! 'Gender transformative', they explain is defined as an approach to 'actively reduce gender inequalities to enhance achievement of project goals'.

## Mining and its long term fall out

As an academic who has worked at, on and around Porgera mine for more than 25 years Glenn Banks is regularly faced with the dilemma of how to respond or contribute to NGO or media interest in issues in which he has expertise. Glenn writes that there has been a constant debate at Porgera over the years—from landowners, community and company—on local governance, and specifically the 'retreat of the state' and reluctance of the company to pick up responsibility for the delivery of core government services. The invariable question is 'does this lead to dependency'? Banks feels that the mine situation is sometimes distorted by NGOs and the media. This year he has been approached by the company—Barrick—to again help them navigate local complexities around resettlement and social monitoring while also having conversations with prominent landowners and friends who come asking about the same, but from the other side!

Bougainville, as Tony Regan points out, is still recovering from the impacts of the nine year conflict and violence over Bougainville Copper Ltd and the closing of the mine following disputes about the distribution of mining revenues from the Panguna mine. It is anticipated that the upcoming referendum regarding independence from PNG will result in a large majority for independence but there is the expectation that independence will be readily achieved and will result in significant benefits. It will be a difficult task, Tony maintains, managing the expectations. The health situation in Bougainville has deteriorated as it has in other mining areas. As Martha Macintyre points out, the mineral boom in PNG and revenues from oil and gas have raised the country to a middle income status yet health service funding is declining resulting in a health service in crisis—the result of unsound policies and catastrophic implementation failures. The projected improvements in government services have not eventuated and the problems with corruption and inefficiency in service provision are compounded by an apparent lack of concern for the health of the population. Malnutrition is prevalent and severe with stunting and wasting increasing. The key question is where 'does the money go?' The problem of accountability and muddled reporting do not permit clear figures for expenditure. Corruption and misappropriation of funds are rarely examined but are diverted or just 'go missing'.

## Perspectives of urban change

One of the most dramatic changes in the PICs is rapid and extensive urbanisation. More and more people are moving

to town and there is a dramatic expansion of settlements and illegal squatters where there is no infrastructure and no services. In the 1970s, as Keen and Connell point out, the colonial administrators saw Melanesian islands as places of plantations and villages and anticipated that the few Melanesian who worked in town would return to their home villages—except many didn't. Now, as in the 1970s it is recognised that Pacific Island cities were ill-equipped to deal with the steady stream of migrants, made worse by rapid population growth. Connell and Keen note that after decades of independence there is little indication that governments have come to terms with the permanence of towns and cities and the growing inequalities within them. Global evidence shows that steadily increasing inequality is bad for everything.

Jones points to the need to understand that Melanesian towns and cities often comprise numbers of Pacific urban villages on customary land, that operate in similar ways to rural villages but happen to be located in what is now town—or a city.

Michelle Nayahamui Rooney's poem considers, in a new way, urbanisation, the concreting over of land, and the impact this has on Melanesian lives. She speaks to the ancient ties to land and its boundaries and living an urban life in PNG. She maintains that:

Rather than viewing land tenure systems as irreconcilable, we may reach better policy insights if we work towards understanding that most Melanesian indigenous societies are two diametrically opposed systems and PNG people often embrace aspects of them both.

## The changing 'state of the Pacific'

Most of the papers in this publication point to dramatic, but often unanticipated, changes. Although Dornan, Muller and Wood, show that the Pacific Islands receive among the highest levels of aid per capita in the world it seems that aid has not often achieved what was planned. Population continues to increase rapidly; improvements in health status have stalled and in some countries women's and children's health is deteriorating; there is increased pressure on resources; growing inequalities; growing poverty and increased hardship; a lack of implementation of important laws; the growth of violence and corruption and, in Melanesian cities, an increase in ever present security guards. Towns and cities continue to expand and the urban poor live without security of either tenure or their safety while new and expensive houses and hotels continue to appear on the coastline and hills while coastal land passes into the hands of expatriates. And, as Éric Waddell has written, the power and influence of the state has been usurped by corporations.

Christine McMurray reminds us that continued rapid Pacific Island population growth will impact on future economies, health, environments, land use and sustainability. In the late 1960's the total population of the PICs was around 4 million, 50 years later it is more than 10 million and likely to double in 35 years raising serious questions of sustainability. Abbot and Pollard point out that given the PICs integration into the global economy most are now open to external shocks that could lead to increased hardship and poverty:

PICs are highly dependent on imported fossil fuels as their main source of energy and many now have an increasing dependency on imported food, leaving them susceptible to global economic shocks.

They maintain that without necessary reforms economic growth rates will remain low and hardship and poverty will continue, with increasing numbers of the elderly suffering from complications of non-communicable diseases. Poverty could increase further.

Tourism is providing considerable economic support in some countries and by 2017, Scheyvens and Movono show, tourism earnings were significant, providing between 10 and 70 per cent of GDP in eight South Pacific Island states. However, they say, this can come with negative environmental impacts. Continued attention to social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development are critical if tourism is to be an effective driver of development.

While there is a marked increase in Chinese involvement in the Pacific and in providing loans for infrastructure, Dornan, Muller and Wood write that Australia is still the largest provider of foreign aid to the Pacific and volume has changed little from 2007. However, the ways in which it is allocated has, with less to PNG and more to the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu and to regional programmes. Terence Wood reminds us that too often we, and our politicians, tend to speak of the Pacific as if the region were a singular undifferentiated entity concealing the different needs, different rates of progress and development challenges. This runs the risk of encouraging a one size fits all approach.

Finally, some good news. Joanne Webber and her I-Kiribati colleagues write of the success in including children with disability into school classrooms. Kiribati's Inclusive Education Policy of 2015 aims for all school aged I-Kiribati children to have full access to relevant quality

education, where possible in their local community school. Kiribati has introduced a one-year, full time Certificate Teacher Assistance course at the Kiribati Teachers' College which trains teachers to provide special assistance to children with disability. Australia, as the largest donor, is supporting the Ministry of Education's objective of mainstreaming education for children with disability.

## The future

While there are positive signs for the Pacific future including increases and improvements in education, better understanding of nutrition and the causes of ill health and much better understanding of climate change and environmental issues, lasting improvements in Pacific wellbeing will require that donors, and Australia in particular, have better knowledge and understanding of the many different Pacific societies. John Connell asks of Australians:

who really cares about the future of Australia's neighbours? It is a rare university course of any kind that makes any more than passing reference to PNG or the other Pacific countries...That remarkable doyen of PNG journalists, Sean Dorney (2016) has explained Australian absences and why lack of interest in Australia's nearest neighbour should be remedied. The only reference to PNG, in school curricula, he states, is to the Kokoda Trail. Journalists have abandoned the country, so reducing media coverage to the exotic dramas of natural disasters, tribal fighting and crime. Yet in northern Queensland, PNG is just four kilometres away...a more diverse partnership between two exceptionally close neighbours would be invaluable, even essential.

Finally, I would like to pay a special tribute to Sean Dorney, whose remarkable in-depth and insightful coverage of PNG and the Pacific, has informed so many of us for so many years.



## Looking back

Éric Waddell, University of Sydney<sup>1</sup>

One day, long, long ago, a man was fishing on the reef, and he saw something out to sea. It appeared to be an island, but it moved. He ran to the beach shouting 'An island is coming here', and quickly the people gathered on the beach to watch a sailing ship approach and anchor off the reef. The inhabitants of this island came ashore, and our island-world ceased to be. The world exploded, and our island became a remote outpost...the last place in a country which has few centres and much remoteness (Luana, 1969:15).

In the mid-1960s I spent 14 months in the Central Highlands of New Guinea studying the agricultural system of the Enga people, this in the context of my doctoral studies in the Research School of Pacific Studies, as it was then called. For much of this time I lived among the Raiapu Enga, on the southern slopes of the Lai Valley, overlooking the patrol post, mission station and airstrip at Wapenamanda. The Aruni—their clan name—at Sabakamádá built a house for me on the edge of their ceremonial ground, welcomed me into their homes and gardens, and responded with surprising patience, and occasionally with real interest, to my interminable questioning. Their willingness to share their lives with me, their generosity and above all their pride and dignity left an indelible mark on me. Even today, 50 years on, scarcely a week goes by without my thinking about the time I spent in what we call today Enga Province. In this respect I share without a shadow of a doubt the sentiments of Joël Bonnemaïson, a fellow ethno-geographer, who I first met in Canberra in 1968:

Local studies commenced in the 1960s and continue to be practised, *differently*. For those researchers who undertook them it is an extended immersion...in another society, a first confrontation between ideas and the reality of 'fieldwork,' and often a kind of initiation. **We all return from it changed, respectful of those whom we have met** (Bonnemaïson 1993. My translation and emphasis).

### The Golden Age

With the benefit of hindsight I now realise that I had experienced what another of my contemporaries, Bill Clarke, called the Golden Age in PNG, that brief but magical period for both the *observers* and the *observed* that was suspended between the end of tribal fighting and the onset of global capitalism. It was a time of discovery of other ways of inhabiting the earth. It was also time without fear which nourished expectations of a more generous and caring world to come. The Highlanders welcomed us inquisitive strangers into their land. Our mutual concern was to get to know each other and, quite naturally, to collectively benefit from the ties we were in the process of establishing. In my particular case I was deeply impressed by the sophistication of the Enga agricultural system, in other words it's absolute *intelligence*, this in a context of climatic marginality and demographic pressure. By the extraordinary order and beauty of the humanised landscape too. Indeed Bonnemaïson created a vocabulary to describe a similar world in Tanna (Vanuatu): magical gardens, enchanted territories, cultural plenitude.

In the 1960s the land belonged unequivocally to those who inhabited it. The colonial state ensured relative peace and freedom of movement, its primary concern being to establish a *pax australiana*, while the corporation, with its insatiable thirst for resources to nourish the global economy, was yet to rear its head. Living temporarily on the edge of the *sing-sing* ground at Sabakamádá I was able to appreciate something of the quality of Raiapu Enga life; the easy mix of work and leisure and, with regard to the latter, the wealth of casual conversations, of social relations and of ceremonial activities. I felt inspired, both intellectually and emotionally. Certainly it wasn't paradise—but then does such a place exist?! There were inequalities in material wealth and hence in the exercise of power. There was a *big man* and one or two *rubbish men* among the Aruni, but there was no abject

poverty, no exclusion. Rather the *big man* took the *rubbish man* into his household such that, in return for his labour, he was cared for. The *big man*, for his part, was called upon to defend the interests of the clan (community) as a whole. Further, with the exception of high infant mortality and some protein deficiency in the diet, the general health status and life expectancy of the population as a whole was surprisingly good.

There were inevitably moments of questioning on my part. I think particularly of the time when the young bachelors, following their return from the clan's *sadárú* (initiation) ceremony in the hills, *ran amok* for 24 hours or so. It was a ritualised moment of individual frustration, largely symbolic violence and anger prior to settling into adult life as a formally delineated, and hence constrained, member of the group. The deceased Kanak leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou about whom I wrote several decades later (Waddell 2008), offers a vivid description of the New Caledonian equivalent of this adult world the young Enga men were on the point of entering:

Landscape, village layout, society, the deceased and mythical beings constitute a whole that is not only indivisible but still practically undifferentiated...**The space of the tribe appears in this way like the immense stage of a perpetual theatre where each person plays his role at an assigned place** (Tjibaou 1976:284–285. My emphasis).

There was indeed little place for individual expression or non-conformity among the Enga such as were a feature of my own world, and I certainly reflected on this profound difference that characterised our respective lives. Yet it was never a source of concern or judgement on my part.

If my experience and my memories are of a place and a people of great beauty, I have nevertheless carried with me for over 50 years now the questioning of an old man who would often visit me in my house and who otherwise spent much of his time chatting with kin on the ceremonial ground just behind. His name was Komeyá and I cherish a

Image 1: Komeyá, the lapun man from Sabakamádá



photo of him. It is there, above my desk, and it nourishes my thoughts about the interconnected world in which we all now live, this even though my home on the shores of the Saint Lawrence River (Canada) is some 15,000 kilometres away from the Lai Valley. He was a *lapun man* who had known tribal warfare and the time before the irruption of Australian colonial administrators and foreign missionaries in his land. He was troubled by the totally unsolicited arrival of strangers in his land, strangers who showed no signs of leaving and who clearly sought to impose their will on his people. It was this concern which led him to ask me, time and again, the same question: ‘Why have you *kone* [red people] come here? What precisely do you want?’ I was young and I could offer no satisfactory (to either of us) answer to his querying. I no doubt talked about learning and sharing, about ‘the family of man’, about a desire on the part of the world from which I came to ‘help’. And I probably expressed the wish to build a better future for us all. But it was all pretty vague and incoherent. Certainly I had a good idea why I personally was there but I don’t think I had much of a clue in a broader, civilisational sense. Also, I was fully conscious of the fact that I was only passing through his land.

One extraneous event is inscribed in my memory of the late 1960s in Melanesia. It was the news of what I believe was a UNDP fact-finding mission<sup>2</sup> to the Solomon Islands, the objective of which was to identify needs and development priorities for the soon-to-be-independent colony. The UN body had been established in 1966 with the aim of engaging in a global ‘war on poverty’. In the case of the SI mission, the team rapidly came to the conclusion that the quality of life there was satisfactory and that, apart from investing in improved health services, the country should basically be left alone! Needless to say their report was rapidly condemned to oblivion since their recommendations did not fit with interests and vision of the emerging new world order.

I only returned to Enga country briefly since my doctoral field research. It was in 1972–73 and it involved two visits with a single purpose, to look at the impact of the 1972 frosts on the population and, more specifically, to identify their strategies for coping with such an extreme event. The nature of the crisis meant that I spent most of my time on the edge of the Marient Basin (near Kandep), where people were living at an altitude of around 2,400–2,500m and crop loss due to the succession of frosts was substantial. The Aruni, living at a significantly lower altitude—c.1,700–1,800m—and on the lower slopes of a relatively incised river valley, had for their part experienced no significant ground frosts and attendant damage to their crops. I nevertheless profited from the occasion to visit Sabakamádá. What a welcome I received! I recall walking in through the mounded sweet potato gardens, the joy of seeing old friends and neighbours, our spontaneously embracing each other, and asking for news, talking of births, deaths and other personal events that were of primary concern to us all as *fellow human beings* whose lives had been interwoven for a time and had been nourished by memory since my departure back in 1967. It was a moving experience and I thought once again about *the family of man* and of the bonds that unite us all.

Then I left, never to return to Sabakamádá.



## Change

By virtue of my new research mandate I travelled reasonably widely among the high-altitude Enga and I became conscious of the groundswell of change that would inevitably transform the Highlands in the years to come: the development of the cash economy with, notably, an increasing number of trade stores stocked with alcohol; the sense that old tribal grievances were re-surfacing; the emergence of 'pay week' and 'rubbish week' in administrative centres, with the attendant domestic violence; Toyota Landcruisers and pick-ups abandoned by the roadside. I sensed being witness to the slow emergence of a new kind of disorder and new forms of instability characterised by a situation where there would be few 'winners' and many 'losers', where the Enga as a whole would lose control of their destiny, and where, in other words, a new kind of chaos was emerging. The Golden Age appeared to be coming to an end and I too was experiencing a growing sentiment of loss. I was uneasy.

Largely unconsciously I think, PNG slipped slowly over the horizon as I moved on in life. I was partly drawn by my newly developed roots and dreams in French-speaking North America. However another part of me remained firmly grounded in the Pacific, a Pacific that had nourished me as a young man and had helped mould my values and world-view: the celebration of difference, learning from other peoples, recognising the crucial presence of the past in our lives—Epeli Hau'ofa would later describe this state of mind as 'pasts to remember'—and the vital role of culture, hence of collective identity and the collective good as being the essential foundations for political action. I had, largely by a process of osmosis no doubt, learned a great deal about life in the course of my PhD research in the New Guinea Highlands and I was determined to re-enter Oceania in a different capacity.

In the 1980s and 1990s I spent extended periods teaching at the University of Hawai'i (Manoa), the University of the South Pacific (Fiji) and the Université de Nouvelle-Calédonie. This meant I now had Oceanians as colleagues and students, notably at USP. Both offered me a different perspective on the world of Pacific Studies and indeed the business of scholarly research in general. Islands and island peoples were no longer the object of my interest, to be viewed through the prism of scholarly debate and pre-occupations in metropolitan countries. Rather they were fellow teachers, friends and students who invited me to read the world from their perspective and according to their firmly grounded and pressing preoccupations. I started listening to voices that were consciously positioning themselves outside the scholarly—particularly disciplinary—mainstream. In the case of USP I think particularly of Epeli Hau'ofa, a PNG-born Tongan who had studied and engaged in field research in anthropology, Epeli quickly realised that he had been formatted to deliver a clinical, disembodied and ultimately desperate view of his own people, be they in PNG, Tonga, Fiji or elsewhere in the Pacific Islands:

[A]fter decades of anthropological field research in Melanesia we have come up only with picture of people who fight, compete, trade, pay bride-prices, engage in rituals, invent cargo cults, copulate and sorcerise each other. There is hardly anything in our literature to indicate whether these people have any such sentiments

as love, kindness, consideration, altruism and so on. We cannot tell from our ethnographic writings whether they have a sense of humour. We know little about their systems of morality, specifically about their ideas of the good and the bad, and their philosophies (Hau'ofa 1975:61)

They [anthropologists] do not know how we feel (ibid:58).

Furthermore, in teaching anthropology at USP in the 1980s and early 1990s, he quickly came to appreciate that this perspective, dictated by foreign knowledge and transmitted according to the dictates of foreign scholarship only served to belittle his students and render them powerless:

I began noticing the reactions of my students when I described and explained our situation of dependence. Their faces crumbled visibly, they asked for solutions. I could offer none...I was actively participating in our own belittlement, in propagating a view of hopelessness. I decided to do something about it (Hau'ofa 1993:5).

That 'something' was to abandon the cold, disciplinary confined intellectualism of the international academic community in favour of an approach to knowledge and understanding as embodied by the Pacific Island peoples of which 'I [Epeli] am emotionally a part.' By the mid-1990s he had come to the conclusion that approach would be centred on arts and culture, 'an Oceanian way of transmission of knowledge',<sup>3</sup> a way that was firmly grounded in the past. Such an approach would ensure that the architects of this creative world set their own rules rather than be subject to dictates imposed from outside.

Insofar as the political arena was concerned, it was the Kanak (New Caledonia) independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou who attracted my attention. It too was in the early 1990s, that is at the same time that I re-established close contact with Epeli. Jean-Marie, like Epeli, had spent the first decade of his life in the village, close to the land, immersed in the closely-woven fabric of social life and experiencing a Melanesian universe that was defined at least in part by the constant presence of the past. Like Epeli he also studied anthropology, in his case in France, although he didn't complete his PhD. The path he chose in early adult life was the Church rather than the University, and as a priest in Nouméa he experienced the same shock as Epeli as a professor in Suva:

During the year I was curate in Nouméa...what a lot of drunks I gathered up in the evening...to take home...And I often experienced that discourse, cries from the bottom of the dungeon...the tears that recall the lost land...and who proclaim...who get angry, who fight, who struggle...but who find comfort in alcohol (Tjibaou 1989:19).

Like Epeli, he chose to pursue studies overseas, first in the broad field of development studies and then in anthropology, with the intention of 'looking for the analytical tools that would help better understand the situation here [in New Caledonia] (ibid:17)'. The time he spent in France and his experience in social action once back home led him, as with Epeli, to become a severe critic of Western development models, centred on industrialisation, accumulation, uniformisation, individual gain, and on erasing the past.

Hence his conviction, even as a politician in the 1980s, that it was necessary to return to one's roots, one's cultural identity in order to lay the foundations today of an authentically Melanesian destiny:

[T]he search for identity, the model, lies before us, never behind. It is being constantly reformulated. And I will say that the challenge right now is to include the maximum number of elements belonging to our past, to our culture, in the model of mankind and society that we aspire to for the creation of the city (Tjibaou 1985:1601).

Not surprisingly perhaps, Jean-Marie would typically commence gatherings of the Kanak independence movement by thanking the ancestors for being present. It was yet another illustration of the fact that he, like Epeli, was deeply concerned with the future of the Pacific past. Both recognised the promotion of a dynamic and firmly grounded Oceanian culture and identity to be the only possible way forward.

It was about this time—the early to mid-1990s—by virtue of the changes I had been witness to here in Canada and because of my increasing familiarisation with the writings and actions of the likes of Epeli and Jean-Marie back in Melanesia that I was finally able to formulate in my own mind the answer to the *lapun* Enga man's question; 'Why have we *Kone* come to the land of the Enga? What precisely do we want?' That answer was simple, direct and troubling;

We want your primary resources—forest products, copper ore, gold, nickel, oil, natural gas, fish—to help meet the demand of the rapidly expanding global economy. We want your labour, to produce coffee and palm oil in response to global consumer demand. And we demand your integration as consumers into that same economy. In other words, we are seeking new markets too. We want everything of value to us, at minimum cost and with maximum benefits to the investors.

All this means of course on terms where the vast majority of Enga/PNGns/Melanesians are condemned to the role of simple onlookers in an arena where our avowed aim is to transform your lives. I was mortified at the thought, and I still am today. Why wasn't I aware of this back in 1966? What had happened? Was I in fact some kind of passive and unconscious agent in the process of mass and totally uncompromising externally directed change? The question is not an easy one and, in seeking to answer it, I can only really speak for myself, although I believe the likes of Joël Bonnemaïson, Bill Clarke and Epeli Hau'ofa shared most of my sentiments. Unfortunately they are no longer with us to tell their version of the story.

## The rise of corporate power

This is neither the time or place to provide a summary of post-war economic history. It is nevertheless vital to highlight the fact that a major change in direction in terms of North-South relations occurred around the 1980s. In the aftermath of the Second World War our principal preoccupation in what came to be termed the 'developed world' was one of human justice, poverty elimination, the end to war, rebuilding entire countries and continents, all this in

the spirit of sharing in as generous a manner as possible. These were the values I certainly learned and then practised as an adolescent. I volunteered with the Service Civil International (SCI), going to work camps in France and Switzerland. We were Catholics and communists, pacifists, vegetarians, hippies before their time, school teachers. I recall a Swedish Jew and a German former Messerschmitt pilot in one of our camps. I worked a while for the Abbé Pierre in Paris. We were all working to build a better world for all. We endeavoured to speak each others language, we sang each others songs and we called each other *camarade*. We were fascinated by the diversity of the human experience and we believed ourselves to be citizens of the world, hence enthusiastic members of the *family of man*.

This is not the first time I use the expression. It refers specifically to an exhibition of 503 photographs of people from around the world that was first presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1955. Over the following decade it travelled around the world and was seen by over nine million visitors. It offered a fascinating portrait of mankind, highlighting both the diversity of the human experience and the sense of being part of a single family of global dimensions. My generation was deeply marked by this humanist vision of the world and it was, implicitly at least, this which in the early 1960s took me to PNG and on to the Enga, in search of my fellow men. I think it fair to say that the exhibition mirrored a post-War era where governments, and the international alliances and agencies they created, were concerned with human justice and dignity—to include self-government—the reduction of poverty, the improvement of the health and nutritional status of entire populations. Wealth generation and profit were not yet primary preoccupations. There were obviously profound ideological divisions with regard to the way to proceed; the communist and capitalist blocs, the non-aligned movement. However, ideology apart, they could all be considered societal projects. This was the case with PNG in the mid/late 1960s. Australia was preparing the country for political independence. I felt it to be a reasonably generous and caring time and I had no sense of myself, the colonial administration or the Christian missions being agents of subversion of Melanesian society. Certainly we didn't really doubt that they would quite spontaneously want to share some of the 'benefits' of Western civilisation. We perceived our actions to be an appropriate path to 'improving' the daily lives of the Enga but not one of radically transforming or destabilising them.

What we now term economic development, measured in terms of such quantitative parameters as growth, profitability, competitiveness, gross domestic product, etc, has its roots in the USA and no doubt started to take form as a global initiative in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Its first major manifestation was the Marshall Plan for European reconstruction. While the plan set the foundations for the creation of multinational corporations, it was the state that was the major actor in development, both national and international, and interests were directed primarily to social and economic justice and the building of solid national institutions. As first an adolescent and then a young man, I was witness to and, as a SCI volunteer, a tiny

actor in an initiative of global dimensions that I and those around me believed to be a noble and generous endeavour. It was those concerns and those interests which drew me to PNG in the 1960s.

It was in the following decades, notably in the 1980s, that a shift occurred, with the progressive transfer of economic initiative from the state to the private sector. This shift was accompanied by a fundamental change in intentions. The corporate world expressed little interest in social welfare, or any form of integrated regional development. Its overriding concern was with profit, ideally short-term, to be acquired through unlimited economic growth across a world increasingly free of barriers to the movement of goods, services and capital. Where states proposed a shared vision of the future and were accountable to their citizens, corporations have much narrower interests and are only accountable to their shareholders. The state is now largely at the service of these enterprises. Society has little meaning in the eyes of the corporation. Indeed wasn't it Margaret Thatcher, that architect—along with Ronald Reagan—of the brave new world, who asserted 'There's no such thing as society!'<sup>1</sup>? It was more of a premonition or, perhaps a programmatic statement, than a fact at the time. Certainly today however, with the withering of the state and the unleashing of the corporation and financial oligarchies, society has been transformed into a largely unstructured mass of consumers, and society into an infinite number of individuals, throughout the world, Enga Province included.

I had no idea back in the 1960s that this would be the shape of the world to come. However I do now know that Komeya, the old Enga man at Sabakamadá, had every reason to ask me a question for which I had no satisfactory answer at the time. I also know that I do not believe in economic development and unlimited growth as practised today. It is a cruel and indeed absurd agenda in terms of the rapidly growing inequalities within communities and between peoples, and the accumulation of largely useless commodities it generates. And it is an absolute disaster for the biosphere. Confronted as we are with the pollution of soils, water and air, the decline in biodiversity, starvation and the massive dislocation of human populations, time is fast running out for us all. Another mass extinction could conceivably occur, and this time it could conceivably be *homo sapiens*.

I think it is fair to say that all those who I have named in the preceding pages—Joël Bonnemaïson, Bill Clarke, Epeli Hau'ofa and Jean-Marie Tjibaou—ceased to believe in development strategies as formulated in the metropolitan countries. Perhaps they ceased to believe in economic development at all. Certainly there came a time in their lives when they no longer espoused the litany of industrialisation, accumulation, growth and individualism. Jean-Marie Tjibaou dreamed that one day, in the not too distant future, the Kanak people would be invited to sit at the 'banquet of civilisations' in order to contribute to a shared discussion on the future of the world. Epeli Hau'ofa strove

for cultural and intellectual independence for his Oceanian brothers and sisters, this through the independent development of arts and culture firmly grounded in their own past. This alone would allow them to design their own future. As for us visiting researchers from the West who, in the 1960s and 1970s, had the good fortune to be immersed in rural Melanesian society but who only came to appreciate the significance of the experience several decades later, allow me to share some of Joël's thoughts summarised in a paper I wrote in his memory:

On the island of Tanna he was witness to the encounter of two truths, one with and the other without real roots. More important, he observed through their confrontation, 'a conflict of ideas that was of global significance' and he came to the unavoidable conclusion that *it is more important to live culturally than it is to survive materially*. Otherwise our very existence is without meaning. Finally, in order to realise this dream, which had unexpectedly become universal, he had the sentiment that it was necessary to 'refer at one and the same time to the past and to the challenges of the present,' both to ensure that all peoples can live decently and honour their ancestors, and to 'recreate the unity of the world' (Bonnemaïson 1997:514).

And for this new world to materialise he recognised that the West had to cease being *the giver of lessons*.

Looking back to the 1960s all this was perhaps unconsciously revealed to us at the time but there certainly wasn't the sentiment of urgency to pass the message on to the world from which we came. So we only returned home transformed individually by the experience because, in reality, we had only left to observe, rarely to listen and discuss. What a conversation I might have had with my *lapun man* if he had been able to share his preoccupations with me for, in the final analysis, he was not perhaps asking me a question. Rather he was inviting me to engage in a conversation, a conversation between equals.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> Honorary Professor, School of Geosciences, University of Sydney.
- <sup>2</sup> Cited in Hereniko and Stevenson 2012:10.
- <sup>3</sup> Not having kept any record of the event in my files, I am not 100 per cent sure it was a UNDP mission so I shall attribute the lack of recall to a time when, to borrow a poetic image of Epeli Hau'ofa, 'moon and red wine play tricks on my aging mind'!

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# A space for hope? A view from the edge of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea

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In 1974, in a small Volkswagen, I passed my driving test (at the fifth attempt) in the (then) empty, wide and flat suburban streets of Canberra. A month later I drove a Toyota Land Cruiser over the spine of Bougainville's Crown Prince Range, beyond the rapidly growing Panguna copper mine, already the core of the economy that was intended to be the basis for Papua New Guinea's future prosperity. Independence was only a year away. Canberra's suburbia had not prepared me for negotiating three massive rivers, with their fluctuating rocky beds. Predictably, I eventually capsized.

I was on my way to Siwai—my home for the next 16 months—watching PNG move to independence in mid-1975 from what proved to be a political, cultural and geographical distance, and to witness Bougainville's parallel separatist struggle to become the Republic of the North Solomons. But that day I was off to meet the Chair of the Siwai Local Government Council, which, like the colonial state, was on its last legs before village councils, intending to follow local precepts, took over. The Chair was Anthony Anugu, murdered almost twenty years later by the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), a death yet to achieve reconciliation.

Tony persuaded me to wait while he listened to a crackling broadcast from Radio Bougainville (*Maus Bilong San Kamap*). He was waiting for the cocoa market prices—to decide if making the long trip with dozens of bags to the other side of the island—across those three same rivers, so often in flood in the wettest part of the country—was actually worthwhile. After a few minutes and a few operations on his calculator, we began to converse.

I had read the definitive book on Siwai, the American anthropologist Douglas Oliver's *A Solomon Island Society* (1955), that described Siwai society in 1938–39. A classic, especially for its description of 'big man leadership', it had been one of my course texts at University College London a decade earlier. Now I was finally there—to look at what 35 years of change had meant for Siwai—a period that had, amongst other things, brought a remarkable explosion of cash cropping, and the construction of the Panguna mine barely 60 kilometres away. In a morning's touring nearby villages and markets in his 4WD, conversing in English, and watching Tony navigate electronic technology, it was all too obvious that substantial changes were happening. 1939 it was not.

These were exciting times. The whole of PNG was changing. Australia's only colony was heading to independence, with reservations that the country was being pushed too fast by Whitlam's ALP government's commitment to decolonisation, but also to shedding its responsibilities as fast as possible. The movement to independence was slow and difficult. Secessionism in East New Britain, Papua and later

Bougainville, conservatism in the highlands and disunity in parliament, all hampered progress. Developing a country of such geographical, cultural and linguistic diversity was always going to be difficult. I arrived into a political maelstrom.

## Visions and ideologies

Not entirely coincidentally, I had come indirectly from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex. The first development studies think-tank in the world, it was pioneering a progressive ideology associated with some its earlier fellows, inspired by Dudley Seers, the first director. Seers wrote of the political economy of nationalism, Richard Jolly propagated the notion of redistribution with growth, and Michael Lipton blamed urban bias for some part of why poor rural people stayed poor. Robert Chambers arrived a little later to work on participatory rural development. Interdisciplinary approaches were very much oriented to rural development, and, in a way that seems unthinkable half a century later, to equity and often to socialism (Tanzania's *ujamaa* socialism was regularly invoked), and with development being more important than growth. I had worked with Michael Lipton on a village studies programme, although most of those villages were in India and a key focus was the green revolution.

Based in Britain and funded by the British government, IDS tended to focus on Africa, where the main phase of decolonisation had just ended, as Harold Macmillan's winds of change had swept through, and the problems that faced newly independent states were becoming apparent. Such winds were only slowly wafting into the Pacific and few IDS Fellows had much knowledge of the region, although Bill and Scarlett Epstein had worked around Rabaul and Bernard Schaffer had analysed PNG politics. In different ways they too were wedded to the small-scale.

Two others, whose time at IDS was quite brief, had a greater influence on development in PNG. Harold Brookfield, the first geographer to become a Fellow, arrived at IDS after an already peripatetic career. Brookfield's work linked political economy to cultural ecology, evolving from work on land use, tenure and culture in the New Guinea highlands. Collaboration with the anthropologist Paula Brown brought his first major book on the region (Brookfield and Brown 1963), and emphasised the significance of small-scale local studies, agriculture and environment. That led to his classic *Interdependent Development* (1975).

While Brookfield saw himself as both iconoclast and 'outside man' because of his detachment from geography's quantitative revolution, his work had enormous influence. A wave of geographers followed, both geographically into the highlands (Eric Waddell and Bill Clarke) and philosophically

into the small-scale studies that he advocated, and I too was following. Most of those who focused on the small-scale were determinedly practical, notably Diana Howlett's collaboration with Elspeth Young and Robin Hide, *Chimbu: Issues in Development*, which became known as the 'Green Book' in Simbu, opened with a quote from E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, and was translated into Tok Pisin. Bruce Carrad, David Lea and Kundapen Talyaga's equally interdisciplinary volume on *Enga* (1982) took a similar perspective. Gerard Ward, the first Chair of Geography at UPNG, suggested structures for a *maket raun* in the Highlands, while Marion Ward was working on improved infrastructure for southern Bougainville. Anthropologists, in Bougainville were pursuing similar directions, seemingly more practical than at any other time, (Jill Nash, Don Mitchell, Mike Hamnett and Gene Ogan) as elsewhere, all perhaps conscious that in this new nation so much might be done and so much needed to be done. Even economists, notably Fred Fisk, my mentor and employer, had become intrigued and enthused by small-scale subsistence systems, and been much influenced by Ray Watters, the New Zealand geographer working in Fiji and by the anthropologist, Richard Salisbury's pioneering *Stone to Steel* (1962) (Fisk 1995). These interdisciplinary small scale studies became the hallmark of work on the Pacific region, many summarised in Brookfield's (1973) *Pacific in Transition*, so much so that the prominent American geographer, Marvin Mikesell, identified a 'New Guinea syndrome' where 'this once remote and mysterious island has played a role in the recent history of cultural geography comparable to the influence of Sauer and his students from Mexico' (1978:8). Some part of all this was gestating at the IDS in the years before independence.

The second 'outside man', Keith Hart, came to IDS two years earlier in 1971 where he first propounded the notion of the 'informal sector' (for which he received little credit), a perspective that was taken up in a seminal study of employment in Kenya that involved key IDS participants, co-directed by Richard Jolly and Hans Singer. That approach was to bear fruit rather later in PNG (see below).

## On the eve of Independence

As PNG began the process of decolonisation some of the IDS perspectives reached the Antipodes. The Australian administration moved away from its reliance on World Bank formulae and commissioned the British economist, Mike Faber, who had worked in several East African states, to produce what amounted to a development plan for the new nation (Overseas Development Group, 1973). Coincidentally Mike Faber was appointed Director of the IDS in 1982. The report became a landmark for the conceptualisation of development in PNG, welcomed the informal sector, argued for greater local control of the economy, especially through a reduction in dependence on foreign aid and foreign capital investment. No mention was made of growth. Ironically it coincided with the first exports coming from the Panguna mine, much the most substantial foreign investment in the country. Its egalitarian aims were reflected in the policy statements of the government

coalition and the one real political party, the Pangu Pati. At the same time various radical scholars, including René Dumont, Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, many with African experience, whose visits to PNG were either brief or non-existent, called on PNG to adopt a yet more radical development strategy (Connell 1997:26).

Keith Hart was part of the Overseas Development Group team, bringing to bear his West African experience, and shortly afterwards offering what was the nearest thing to a theoretical underpinning of the report, in a paper, unfortunately neglected since it was published in a PNG journal, *Yagl-Ambu*, hardly likely to attract wide interest. Entitled 'A Model of Development to Avoid', and drawing on his and Faber's experience in sub-Saharan Africa, Hart challenged inequality and reliance on the formal sector, centralisation, foreign control of the economy and male bias, and so sought to encourage development away from formal economic analysis and prescriptions.

In rather less radical form the report evolved into an Eight Point Plan that focussed on rural and regional development, local ownership and control, and equity. Idealism and ideology could easily be subverted or bypassed. Yet there was also optimism and good will. Annual Waigani Seminars offered positive policies and directions. The combination of decentralisation, decision-making by consensus, self-reliance and an emphasis on development rather than growth were combined into what was often regarded as a 'Melanesian Way' of development (Narokobi 1980), a rhetorical and populist stereotype generally useful for political mobilisation. A more radical political edge came in *Development and Dependency* by Azeem Amarshi, Ken Good and Rex Mortimer (1979) that sought to stimulate socialism. While at a national political level the Eight Aims were largely rhetorical irrelevance when it came to formulating actual development policy (Connell 1997:27-8) they did at least inform the approaches that many scholars, myself among them, were then taking in PNG. Imbued with these ideas, and an IDS heritage, I arrived in Siwai seeking to make some small contribution to understanding development and to the actual practice of development. Meanwhile self-government had been achieved in 1973 and in September 1975 PNG became an independent state.

## Siwai visited and revisited

After first visiting Siwai from 1974-76, I returned for much shorter periods in 1981, 1988, 2001 and 2016, eventually enabling a discontinuous, but highly fragmented, understanding of Siwai society and economy over a 75-year period, a situation unusual in Melanesia. I investigated agricultural change and the emerging diversity of livelihoods, employment, and migration and political and personal aspirations, during a period that Fisk would probably have described as 'subsistence affluence' linked into cocoa growing and wage and salary labour, often at the mine, where employment offered status, prestige and the best wages in the country. The cocoa trade brought new forms of local economic differentiation; larger growers constructed fermentaries, purchased

cocoa and invested in stores and trucks as they became entrepreneurs.

In parallel with the success of cocoa, the local and regional economy expanded and diversified. Greater administrative interest had brought roads, schools and aid posts, but most consequential was the construction of the Panguna copper mine. A trans-island road brought direct access to the mine and east coast towns and the port, enabling increased cocoa incomes and access to the mine markets (to make food and handicraft sales). By the mid-1970s, after a decade of extraordinary change, a diversity of income sources generated considerable wealth. There seemed good reason to be optimistic over the future, as incomes were considerable, savings possible, school fees payable, diets adequate and good access to health care and education. I had confidently written in 1976, a year after independence, and with the mine having reached peak production:

Bougainville's successful economic future is assured. Ever increasing areas of cocoa, backed by copra, provide a solid permanent basis for economic development and enable the benefits to reach every household...rapidly rising educational standards seem likely to ensure that these assets can be developed adequately and the income invested to secure the future (1976:654)

At that moment of euphoria, equity and uneven development were forgotten, and even Walt Rostow's notion of self-sustaining growth appeared validated.

Yet an extended rate of clearing of timber, for new agricultural land and as fuel for the fermentaries, brought erosion, the degradation of streams, loss of habitat, the consequent reduction of biodiversity, a reduction in nutritional status and questions over sustainability. Ecological risk now accompanied economic risk, as pressure on resources intensified. Cocoa, capitalism and cash represented a more materialistic order, and the emerging problems of the 1980s soon led to a growing sense that material gains could not so easily be equated with development.

Nonetheless, in a good mood, as we contributed to the turnover of South Pacific lager, Anthony Anugu proclaimed, with only a degree of hyperbole, 'We're all millionaires now'. For all that Tony enthused over the remarkable material success of Siwai, he also talked of Nyerere and equity, and of those few villagers who had been marginalised in the expansion of cocoa. Much later in 1982 he became the MP for South Bougainville, with ideas of a more equitable rural development still never far from his mind.

While landlessness was always an issue, all visions of rural prosperity and progress collapsed completely in 1988, when Panguna landowner disputes over environmental degradation and the distribution of profits and compensation payments closed the mine indefinitely and escalated into a decade long crisis. Demands for secession were spearheaded by the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, leading to civil war, temporary blockading of the island, the collapse of every facet of the island economy and much loss of life until a measure of peace was restored in the mid-1990s (Regan 2010). Violence and tensions were particularly complex and endemic in Siwai, symbolised by several

murders, including that of Anthony Anugu, even within villages, well described by a Siwai journalist (Hatutasi 2015). In the last years of the century, Siwai was rebuilding as people sought to (re)-construct a structure of successful development, still perceived to be based on cash cropping, especially of cocoa, the most consistent source of wealth, while seeking new niches in the capitalist economy.

The crisis had taken a major toll on social life. Local markets had revived, but on a very small scale, partly because subsistence was now ubiquitously important as wage employment had collapsed and partly because cash was scarce. Gardens were faring poorly, because of intensified pressures on the land from both return migration and continued high population growth rates and the ravages of a new insect pest. I concluded in 2001 that, while restoration was slow, Siwai was very gradually returning to better times where cocoa would again play a key role, alongside other agricultural products. Struggle, and a degree of uncertainty attended change, reflected through a lack of leadership at local and provincial levels, and real disadvantages as Siwai returned to the 'periphery' of the nation, and no longer with a mine at the core of the island economy (Connell 2007). The continued need for reconciliation complicated movement towards stability. The years of violence had traumatised many, eroded trust, respect and sense of community, and devastated half a century of peaceful change and evolution.

## The Last Time?

My last visit to Siwai came in August 2016. There were remarkably few obvious changes from 2001. The population had steadily grown—'papa God will provide'—and youths were now marrying earlier. Villages had continued to fragment as people moved out to settle on their own land. Subsistence cultivation had continued to intensify but rice and noodles were standard component of diets. The sense of change was invariably interpreted negatively, whether that involved new Solomon Islands grubs damaging the sago, or Arawa being no longer the town it used to be. There was some nostalgia for the days when mining thrived. The Bougainville crisis, that had badly divided Siwai, was still painfully recalled and many key reconciliations, including that for Anthony Anugu, were yet to be completed. Local government was barely functional and provincial government too distant. Inaction was epitomised by '*no gat mani*'. Politicians were seen as the main *spakmen* (drunks) and their talk was simply '*suga tasol*' (just sugar).

Any sense of strategic planning, even for infrastructure, had failed to reach villages, while large sums of money were being largely wasted by national and provincial politicians on poorly designed projects (mainly roads) that fitted into no plans or objectives. Roads were worse than ever, bridges had collapsed, hampering market access. Reaching Arawa now meant driving through seven flood-prone rivers.

Cocoa was as significant as ever but not particularly well managed so incomes were limited and frequently contrasted with the cost of living. Copra was hanging on. Occasionally people were reminded of the virtues of new crops but by distant agricultural officers who rarely visited or communicated effectively. Experiments with other crops such as

vanilla and chillies had been thwarted by distant or satisfied markets, but pepper had been tried and there was a minor revival in peanut production. Once again, Siwais were trying to develop and keep open a range of livelihood choices and strategies. Pressure on land had further increased, which meant both consolidation of land ownership, more disputes over land, and more requests for Oliver's book, deemed to be the definitive source on land tenure.

Prawns and possums had survived, more resilient than I had anticipated, despite insecticides getting into streams and bush, and habitat trees becoming more distant. The bush had receded further, a function of population growth, reduced fallow times and the introduction of chainsaws. While Siwai no longer had a central market, multiple tiny markets existed, as households sought to make some income by selling the tiny surplus they sometimes had of peanuts, betel nuts, greens, bread and homemade '*plaua*' (buns). Locally marketed production was less than it had been 40 years earlier.

Evident on the land, where social structure is firmly inscribed, the new world of choices and opportunities had destroyed the old order of certainty, security and stability. Greater flexibility meant less social order, tensions over land tenure and inheritance and a range of opportunities for leadership, and so for conflict. A diversity of possibilities and directions meant frustrations of choice and outcome and various (dead) ends. While it was frequently commented that 'too many think only of money' it was also a reflexive comment on the limited benefits of cash cropping, and the lack of redistribution. Cash crops now locked up land that once was redistributed while more of the forests have been cleared. Growing socio-economic differentiation emphasised both new and entrenched inequalities and further individualism at the expense of cooperation and redistribution. Land continued to provide security and certainty but, in a context of continued population growth and ecological degradation, its strength was diminishing. The realisation that future populations would have limited access to good land was now, at last, widely acknowledged.

## Urbanisation and modernity

A crucial change was an invisible one. More people had left to work in towns than ever before and remittances were becoming significant. Migrants had gone into business and Siwais were talking of themselves (and being talked about by others) as the 'Chinese of Bougainville'. Far away in Buka, the largest business in Bougainville, with over a hundred employees was owned by a Siwai entrepreneur. It constituted a significant loss of rural human resources. I feared for urban bias.

More had married beyond Siwai with complex repercussions in a matrilineal society. Many children of such marriages, unsure of their place in rural society, had moved to town, while older people spoke wistfully, and without racist overtones, that 'the colour of our skin is changing'. Just as, when people recognised that increasingly bananas were becoming a staple, it meant 'we're becoming like the Tolai'. Local ethnic and cultural identity was fading.

Adequate health care was more remote than it had been half a century earlier and older people made no use of it. Bougainville no longer had an optician or a dentist. New diseases had arrived, including a virulent cerebral malaria. Water tanks were rare and no more than a third of village households had toilets.

Obesity and diabetes ('*sik suga*') were urban problems though rural health was adequate. Education was more costly and fewer children were completing high school while the 'lost generation' from the crisis was struggling and finding recourse in a potent home-brewed 'jungle juice'. Marijuana had been added to 'jungle juice' as a source of temptation to youth. Sorcery and domestic violence had made unwelcome appearances. HIV/AIDs, contracted elsewhere, had brought village victims. Mobile phones had belatedly arrived and were highly popular although reception was rare. Facebook too was in place. As state services and institutions had become more distant so frustrations increased.

Loss of many of the material aspects of tradition, above all the men's houses (*kaposo*) that characterised Siwai and dominated Oliver's account of big men, and the grand rituals, and the social redistribution, that accompanied life transitions, as capitalism replaced exchange, was readily evident. Few *kaposo* still existed, and the timber from which they and the *garamuts* (slit drums) had been made was now hard to find. Men no longer met there. At Tonu village a new one was being constructed to mark the United Church's centenary. Tradition was returning but only as empty practice.

Values had also changed, involving what so many men and women saw as simply the loss of 'respect' (partly seen by men as women wearing trousers!). Men recognised that women were particular sources of strength and reconciliation during and after the crisis, and central to household economies, but it remained a men's world. They were increasingly conscious that they should help women in the gardens, and spread the burdens of labour more equitably, and all had learned from regular NGO courses and programmes, such as '*Planim Save na Kamap Strong*' (Gain Knowledge and Become Strong), that gender equity was important. That did not mean they welcomed it.

Efforts to revive 'tradition', one named '*Kisim Bek Kalsa*' (Take Culture Back), had unsurprisingly failed. In the place of the last Siroi village *kaposo* was a football pitch. It was much as Tania Li (2014) has described a part of rural Indonesia: 'no paint and feathers, no carvings, costumes, music or dance, no scary savages or noble ones, just a lot of poor people leading hard lives'. Siwais were not particularly poor but they were very far from the subsistence affluence of 40 years earlier, and there was music and dance, but now it was a Melanesian version of rap and reggae, blasted out from boom boxes and 'discos'.

The shards of modernity were everywhere: villagers called Elvis, bits of guitars and washing machines, football pitches on impossibly dangerous surfaces but with corner flags and referees, overgrown buildings from NGO and AusAID projects that had run their course after a couple of years, or had clashed with some local interest or challenged land tenure, more frequent use of Tok Pisin (and, in a single



morning, such phrases as ‘sweat equity’, ‘child abuse’ and ‘food security’, somewhat separated from their moorings). Though the crisis was receding so too was a Siwai in harmony with local values and ecologies. Education was more costly and fewer children were completing high school, let alone contemplating university. At least in several villages more educated women had established small informal versions of Early Childhood Education that offered some hope for the future.

The most striking change of all was the rise in the most central Siwai village of the Kingdom of Papaala, the outcome of what had been a notorious pyramid money scheme (UVistract), now become a political entity and theocracy, under the rule of King David Pei II (formerly Noah Musingku), with its own army, currency and ‘foreign relations’. The Kingdom was based on a combination of biblical lore, morality and prophecy, specifically rejecting both the governments of Bougainville and of PNG, and emanating from a combination of distaste for the Bretton Woods agreement and the World Bank, island history and Siwai tradition: one by-product of the civil war and the crisis. The strength of the Kingdom was argued to come from the proper interpretation of the bible, links to local land, a new ‘local’ calendar, and recognition of Siwai custom. I managed a two hour audience with the King himself (bedecked in a suit, and both crown and shell money). It was the only conversation I had in English in Siwai, and watched over the distribution of new Bougainville kina money, minted in Australia, designed to replace PNG money.

Difficult times called for simple, pure solutions and HM (as he was referred to by his supporters) was a charismatic individual. Revivalism with a modern twist should probably not have been so unexpected. The difficulties of the 1970s, as Bougainville sought its own independence separate from that of PNG, had brought the first reversion to a more ‘traditional’ order in the establishment of more localised village councils in the place of local government councils. During the economic boom years of the 1970s and 1980s the past receded but resurfaced in the wake of the crisis, with the incarnation of ‘chiefs’ who were both knowledgeable in modern ways and respectful of Siwai ‘tradition’ (Connell 2007). The emergence of chiefs was a function of a need for local leadership and for order after years of chaos. Multiple, often desultory, attempts sought to raise awareness of culture, in the sense of leadership, marriage and clan structures, both in an educational sense and as real structures linked to development, but it proved difficult to reach consensus on what practices were actually customary. The persistent turn to ‘custom’, even through the invention of tradition, marked the continued struggle for identity and worth in complex and fluctuating times. Siwai turned inwards and backwards to establish a social, and assumed historical, basis that might take them forwards. They thus sought to combine a greater degree of cultural continuity with the impossibility of denying the necessity for economic development.

### Loss of tradition and leadership

Almost without fail, whenever I encountered someone who remembered me from before they would remark: ‘*olgeta*

*lapun i dai pinis*’ (‘all the old men have died’)—not merely a statement of fact but a symbol of the loss of those who knew about and valued ‘tradition’, and a feeling that little of real value had replaced this. Frustrations were as generalised and incoherent as those of most Trump, Hanson and Brexit supporters, particularly with government and the unfulfilled promises, corruption and venality—or simply its absence—and the unequal livelihoods and lack of leadership.

Few had a clear sense of what constituted development, for themselves, Siwai or the nation. Towards the end of my stay an educated Siwai arrived from a distant village; he sought advice on how development might be achieved and what exactly it was. After a wide-ranging conversation for most of a morning he thanked me, pulled from his basket a five kina note (about \$2) and thanked me for my advice. Much surprised I accepted the rewards of my first consultancy in Bougainville. I am far from sure I was of any help. But perhaps I had been; before I left for what might be the last time I was asked to ensure that some of my ashes would be buried in Siwai. At least I knew that I too was now a *lapun*.

### Falling off the edge?

The search for a form of development that combined the local and the global, refuted any simple notions of linear change. Siwais sought progress, in terms of variants of capitalism, but also attempted to preserve and strengthen culture. Their co-existence demonstrated the manner in which change embraced both opportunities to escape the constraints of kin and community and desires to re-establish autonomy. Interplay between local and global, past and present, was at the heart of the desire to determine destiny. But achieving such compatibility had become more challenging and more confusing, and people lacked trust in their own leaders let alone always distant politicians and bureaucrats. The Kingdom of Papaala offered one more example of the attempt to diversify livelihoods. Siwai was slipping back into remoteness, as Siwais had become, in Diana Howlett’s (1993) felicitous phrases, a ‘terminal peasantry’ stuck in an ‘infinite pause’.

Returning intermittently emphasised the constant reversion to ‘culture’, the repeated quest for alternatives, the evident difficulties in achieving a form of development for all, and a search for order, success and *respekt* (a word now quite embedded in the language). It seemed to offer that quintessential Gramscian moment: ‘The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born’. Siwai was experiencing considerable travail in finding a place in the world, not quite modern but with precious little resemblance to the *Solomon Island Society* that Douglas Oliver described for 1938–39.

Creating chiefs provided symbols of local and national culture and identity, strengthening these against the influence of distant institutions, as they sought to re-invent a traditional order and regain autonomy. After a century of substantial change, few had any clear sense of what constituted development, for themselves, Siwai, Bougainville or the nation, and even less therefore how to achieve it. Like villagers

elsewhere in PNG, ‘many were plainly confused about the specifics of where they wanted to go and how to get there. Some degree of vagueness, confusion and inconsistency is part and parcel of culture’ (Smith 2002:9–10). Indeed, as Paige West has observed, for the Gimi people of the highlands: ‘the peoples I have worked with want as many different things out of life as there are people in [the] village’ (2006:xvi). In Siwai it was no less complicated, confusing or frustrating than it had ever been, and, while the trajectory of change in Siwai, especially in its violent civil war, was unique, parallels abounded.

If villagers lacked vision, that was to be expected, but so did politicians, aid donors and alien governments. But then politicians are the new big men, better described by Keir Martin (2013) as ‘big shots’ increasingly detached from their rural origins, self-interested and bereft of moral obligations. As Victoria Stead (2013) observed, politicians and villagers involved two very different articulations of power and authority, and two competing cartographies of centrality and marginality. Siwais constantly sought to, and had to, take charge of their lives, develop their own systems of production and consumption, engage in the complexities of new structures of development, which required response to the vacillations of global, national and regional politics, economy and society. They remain eager to adopt and innovate but with little assistance, input or guidance from beyond.

The visions that once nurtured a vague hope that ‘small is beautiful’, even if some big was essential, have disappeared, and for the moment it seems impossible to resuscitate them. Any focus on subsistence economies has faded fast, and notions of sustainable development are scarce. Paul James and his colleagues (2012) offered a reminder that alternatives exist—a rare jolt to the senses—but few took notice. They too were no more than cautiously optimistic about the virtues of dialogue, grassroots activism, critical self-reflection and respect. If only politicians and bureaucrats were similarly convinced of the need to use the wealth from mineral resources boom for real development. It grows harder to assemble and validate the case for a distinctive vision and practice, amongst droughts, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes—and climate change - and the need to think about risk and resilience. What need indeed for equity or environmental justice? Meanwhile the informal sector in PNG has been ritually derided, dismissed and frequently squashed and removed (Koczberski et al 2001).

Ironically Bougainville is moving towards a referendum on its political status in 2019. Once again secession is mooted. Central to debates and disputes over the viability of a future independent Bougainville is the possibility of finally reopening the mine, closed now for three decades, raising multiple questions about ownership, compensation, environmental change, growth and/or development, but above all over whether history might be repeated as tragedy (but certainly not as farce).

## Australia’s neighbours?

But who really cares about the fate of Australia’s neighbours? It is a rare university course of any kind that makes any more than passing reference to PNG. As Keith Hart himself has recently observed ‘The West is in the grip of a moral panic—or perhaps political breakdown’ (2017:1), and in these self-interested and populist times, although PNG remains the largest recipient of Australian aid, aid has fast declined, and Australians have lost interest in PNG. In outer suburbs throughout Australia there are streets named Madang, Rabaul and Bougainville, but it is doubtful if these names mean anything much even to the residents. Meanwhile the ANU, where I began my Australian life, downgraded the Pacific title from its Research School, and believed it had little need of history or geography. Even so an aging generation of geographers (Bryant Allen, George Curry, Gina Koczberski and Mike Bourke) have developed valuable insights into cash cropping, and drought and hazard responses. Anthropologists are still there in diminished numbers and they too have retained a practical bent (evident in the work of Colin Filer, Michelle Rooney, Paige West, Nancy Lutkehaus and others).

That remarkable doyen of PNG journalists, Sean Dorney (2016), has explained Australian absences and why lack of interest in Australia’s nearest neighbour should be remedied. The only reference to PNG in school curriculums is to the Kokoda Trail. Journalists have abandoned the country, so reducing media coverage to the exotic dramas of natural disasters, tribal fights and crime, and it is doubtful if even a few Australians know the name of the Prime Minister. Yet in northern Queensland, PNG is just four kilometres away. Australia seems almost desperate to ignore PNG, especially now that Manus is used as an intendedly clandestine dumping ground for asylum seekers, hence its aid goes unmonitored and wasted, and criticism, advice, support and guidance are muted. How depressing is it that limited trade, investment and small market size, have sent Australia and Australians elsewhere (Batley 2018). Meanwhile other nations move in with even greater kleptocratic intent. The evidence over Australian concern for its smaller Pacific neighbours, and not merely PNG, over refugees, climate change, migration and trade, suggests that the future offers rather too much more of the same, which may return to haunt us intellectually and practically. As I write the new Australian Prime Minister has just declined to attend the South Pacific Forum, but has headed in the opposite direction. As Sean Dorney recently reminded ABC viewers there is a very different Manus. So too there is a different Bougainville, indeed many different Bougainvilles, cautiously moving towards a new future. For both PNG and Australia, and for Siwai, spiritedly struggling for development, a stronger more informed relationship and a more diverse partnership between two exceptionally close neighbours would be invaluable, even essential. Bridging flooded rivers and bridging a crucial geopolitical relationship would be valuable starts and enlightened entanglements.

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# Finding and losing direction in PNG's development

*Elizabeth Cox, Technical adviser to women led NGOs*

## My perspective

My perspective on life and 'development' in PNG is from below and inside, rather than from above and outside. It is micro more than macro and empirical rather than academic. Being in, and part of PNG, has been my privilege and not a platform for a career trajectory into regional and global travelling and consultancies. I spent 40 years of my life living and working in the East Sepik Province. Twenty years were rural district-based and focussed—but connecting across districts and eventually provinces, through vibrant networks of rural development organisations and leaders. Looking back, I recall great energy among people fueled by a national development vision, framework, mood and multiple people-centered efforts to achieve what we now call sustainable development goals. I spent another 20 years in Wewak facilitating networks reaching out into the wider Pacific and the world. I have worked across all key development sectors and a wide range of development agents—local, provincial, national, as well as regional and occasionally, international NGOs. I also worked intermittently with PNG government in education, health and community development, and with the university and the UN. But my life has always revolved around and looped back in cycles to Sepik and community and family there.

In PNG I have always shared a house with PNG family and friends. Sometimes theirs, sometimes mine. I have been moved, enlightened and challenged by so many good PNG women and men and I cannot and will not abide by working and living arrangements that stereotype, separate and scaremonger between non-locals and locals. I regularly engage with, and reflect on, life and times in PNG with enormous pleasure, satisfaction and affection. I now 'live' in Melbourne, but I don't have a 'home' there and very few people I call family. I still call Sepik and PNG home.

I enjoy the riches of longstanding friendships and a wealth of vivid memories of struggles at the coalface for inclusive, locally led development. Many of these efforts could not be sustained into the long term, for many different reasons, but they served as building blocks and foundations for future local actions, the formation of new organisations and the development of local development knowledge and leadership. In recent years, Jiwaka has become my beloved second home—where I witness fresh energy in women-led initiatives to build a new province free from tribal conflict and violence. I have just returned from a two-month visit to Jiwaka and East Sepik, reminding me that the best way to experience and enjoy PNG is being out on the streets, in the markets, walking, talking, laughing and learning with local people and honouring perseverance, humour, joy and tenacity of many good people in very difficult and challenging times.

## A safe, welcoming and inspiring country

I had a privileged entrée and a somewhat unique lived experience in PNG. I arrived pre-independence, through a student-led political and cultural exposure programme, conceived and implemented by PNG student leaders for Australian students who admitted complete ignorance of their nearest neighbour. The 'Village Scheme' as it was called, aimed to engage young Australians in the essence of PNG family and society, through total immersion into local host community.

In 1972 I was hosted for two months by a family in the Nebilyer Valley, in the Western Highlands Province. My hosts were in mourning for their 'big man' father and night after night sought explanations through séance and divining. I witnessed daughters who behaved as if 'possessed' as their deceased father tried to communicate what caused his death. Weird things happened but they definitely did not point to any one person they believed responsible and no immediate acts of retribution occurred. Most young men were in prison for engaging in tribal fighting, yet war cries were frequently yodeled across the mountaintops and people regularly went through the motions taking up security watch around homes and donning full regalia in preparation for battles that failed to transpire. Relations with the local (colonial) police were tense and I witnessed multiple culturally awkward raids by the riot squad, wearing tear gas masks to 'well-staged' local surrender ceremonies, with symbolic breaking and burning of (worn out and discarded) spears.

I was a 20-year old young woman, travelling on my own. I felt more welcome, safer and happier with my local hosts than I did in the company of men and women living in the many macho and blatantly racist colonial communities that I encountered throughout my travels. The heartfelt generosity and caring of my hosts changed my outlook on life forever. No doubt I was naïve, and definitely, my host community had been disrupted by colonialism, but in those other-worldly eight weeks, I did not witness hostility and violence directed at women, and I certainly did not sense any personal danger or insecurity. I continue to feel at home and comfortable with, and much-moved by, Highlanders who wear their hearts on their armband (sleeve). Highlands women are full of energy, love and productivity. They are different in many ways to the Sepiks who I have since lived with and loved, for more than four decades.

After my two months induction to PNG life in the Nebilyer Valley, I travelled to Madang and then by boat to Wewak and up the mighty Sepik River, where I serendipitously walked into a 'volunteer opportunity'. In 1973 I settled easily into life and work at the coalface of post-independence rural development work. Life was full, intense and exciting. It was a time of palpable optimism

and the promise of self-determination. I witnessed highly participatory local-level consultations in writing the world-class PNG Constitution and I met the founding 'fathers' John Momis and Bernard Narokobi. Bernard became a brother and was my guru and guide into PNG culture, always there when I needed help. These were heady and euphoric early independence years. There was a strong sense that the core values and key principles of the Constitution could be realised. Women leaders like Jean Kekedo, Nahau Rooney and Margaret Nakikus were equally instrumental and inspirational in setting priorities and developing strategies for development and change.

### **Rich local culture and turbulent colonial and war history**

This was a particular time in Sepik history. Anthropologists came and went and today, Sepik artefacts and stories are the proud possessions of many European, American and Australian museums. The Basel Expedition of the early 1970s documented much and bought a vast collection, as they feared local culture was rapidly disappearing and could be lost. Books were published and films made. Most remain unknown and unseen by Sepiks as there are no libraries, cultural centres or museums in the province.

Local history, since first contact remains largely unrecorded. For decades I was living and working daily alongside many people who had experienced many violent upheavals of their culture, communities, families and their way of life. Life-changing and often brutal encounters with early German and Australian expeditions; early, often aggressive missionaries; the outbreak of war and large-scale occupation of villages by the Imperial Japanese Army leading to killing, mass slave labour and sexual slavery (comfort women). Sadly, the women and men who witnessed, experienced and participated, often by force, in the tidal waves of a century change that swept across the Sepik, have died over the last two decades, their suffering not acknowledged or understood.

Once the war was over, post-war reconstruction of colonial centers was accompanied by a local government system that served the interests of the Australian administration. Head taxes were collected and non-payment resulted in imprisonment or removal, relocation and enforced labour of young sons. Other minor misdemeanours like failing to build a toilet meant imprisonment, so that the government stations always had a fresh supply of free manual labour for grass cutting, drain digging and general maintenance. Private recruitment of men from remote rural areas, to work on plantations in Madang and Rabaul, continued long after this trafficking was made illegal. In the early 1970s, female-headed households were extremely common, and Sepik women have since worked for many years to end absent husbands' 'remote control' of virtually abandoned wives, exposing the vulnerability, asserting the rights and recognising the contribution of these long-suffering women.

I believe that Sepiks have not been supported to know and process their past and take control of their future but have been thrust headlong into ever-changing structures of

government and systems for delivering goods and services. In hindsight I realise that I should have read more widely, stopped and asked more, listened and recorded more, so that I better understood what people had been through and how that shaped the way their families and communities were functioning and their capacity to respond to new development opportunities. It is never too late to start recording local oral histories and I highly recommend it.

During a recent long trip along the Sepik River, I had an opportunity to film a short oral history account by one of my many Sepik papas who was born around 1935 in the remote swamplands in Angoram. Out of his heart and mouth poured impromptu detailed stories of systematic removal of cultural artefacts, an abrupt end to male initiations, custom law and justice, a vivid account of the brutal first-day and ensuing violent years of Japanese occupation, the years of bonded labour in support of post-war reconstruction and mining around the goldfields of Bulolo, and the expectation that as the local councillor, he would report on his people in ways that made him an accessory to securing free forced labour for the colonial administration.

In another village we screened short documentary films made in Sepik villages by anthropologists in the early 1970s. They have been locked away in remote European libraries for 40 years. In Korogu village, we screened the last known performance of an important mask dance and met the last living dancer. The documentary triggered emotional memories and tears and has prompted me to several initiatives to support digital repatriation to enable local access.

### **Caught up in the drive for development**

But back in 1973, I spent too little time and paid insufficient attention to the rich cultural legacy and the trials and terror people had experienced in the past. I was caught up in the post-independence euphoria that excited and motivated citizens towards a home-grown vision for development and change. There were clear calls from the founding Prime Minister's Office that rural people and women were equal and important, and for development to be locally led, participatory, inclusive, sustainable and a good fit with PNG ways. The national mood and messaging were captured in popular radio broadcasts, repeated in political speeches, in slogans on t-shirts and community conversation. They inspired an emerging local civil society. As a westerner, child of 'the sixties' I brought to my new life and work in PNG, strong commitment to human rights, gender equality, non-violence and respect for the natural environment. I felt my values and beliefs were a good fit with the core values of the PNG Constitution and the direction that development seemed to be taking at that time. For decades I felt I was in the right place at the right time and these early days and the decade-long journey thereafter were the happiest, most energized, creative and productive years of my life.

For the 20 years I was based in Angoram district, the inland Gavien Settlement Scheme was my home, and the Sepik River was 'my backyard'. This was the springboard

from which to work with many local colleagues and leaders on a range of health, education and community organising and ‘active citizenship’ initiatives. Together we were able to reach out to and connect the whole of Angoram district, through women’s leaders, to most other districts of the province.

These were the days of snail mail, yet most small district centers across Sepik had multipurpose post offices where citizens could have a postal address, easily send and receive mail, do their banking or make phone calls across country or overseas. Village trade stores were common and district centers enabled trade in local products and to buy basic supplies to supplement local self-reliance. Trips to provincial capitals were rare and special treats. Health services were largely free, and education was low-cost and largely affordable. Access was not universal and far from ideal but seemed to be more manageable for families than today. Mothers, in particular, prioritised children’s education and saved their hard-earned kina from food production and trade at local markets to cover costs.

## **Development in the 1980s**

Well into the 1980s I witnessed fully-functioning, well-supplied aid posts (80 in Angoram District) and regular Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and immunisation mobile clinics. Schools were well-supplied and supervised with dedicated staff and enthusiastic students regularly visited by inspectors. Bottom-up, locally-led development was straightforward and uncomplicated. It was possible for progressives and innovators to take part in national planning dialogues, the Waigani seminar, and regular national food and nutrition conferences. Their ideas and experiences, and priorities and concerns were listened to and balanced the more academic and technical presentations. When excluded and ignored by local government officials, it was possible for local civil society leaders to phone influential people in the PM’s office, the National Planning office, the Law reform Commission and the Ombudsman Commission. These institutions were in touch with, and informed by, progressive grassroots development workers and organisations.

The PM’s office sponsored promising local rural development leaders and organisers and their simple subsidies yielded very significant changes in local development. In East Sepik women were particularly responsive, active and increasingly organised. The National Council of Women was being established (from the top down). PNG Women were gradually finding their voice nationally and locally as the world observed an international Decade for Women and made much progress on forging new global norms and standards. In Sepik we were able to inform and connect rising local women leaders and enable the local to global links that guided the East Sepik Council of Women (ESCOW) in changing the way it worked—from the ‘sports, sewing and cooking’ activities of colonial women’s clubs, to local-level priority setting, and to locally designed, small grant funded programmes.

For many years we tested the flexibility and adaptability of top-down development initiatives, insisting that they fit to the local context rather than expecting local

people and organisations to fall in line with top-down directives and ‘delivery targets’. During those years I lived side-by-side with inspirational young rural leaders and local women leaders. We worked together as close colleagues and co-workers and maximised opportunities for their ideas and work to be seen, heard and credited.

By stretching and bending the parameters of one of PNG’s first integrated rural development projects, we could work with dedicated and resourceful teachers and enthusiastic students in dynamic and creative school-based food gardening nutrition programmes. We linked these with emerging village-based women’s organisations and helped reinforce them with locally written and produced songs and drama, that aired on radio and travelled out on village tours. Together local schools and communities ran local programmes that made people feel proud of, and content with, their rural lifestyle, appreciative of their abundant resources and optimistic about a Constitution and government policies that prioritised their participation and progress. People made their own posters, screen printed T-shirts, and tuned into regular radio programmes that informed, educated, connected and mobilised ‘ordinary’ village people.

Up until the late 1990s we were able to do much with relatively very limited external resources. Small and flexible grants made a big difference. Women, in particular, were actively organised, travelled and networked across the province, between provinces and with Pacific regional civil society and women’s movements. ESCOW became a powerful membership organisation, led from ‘below’, designing and implementing actions for food security and nutrition education, water, sanitation and hygiene, community-based health care and appropriate technology to lighten workloads and diversify local products. Sepik women found their voice and agency. Sepik women leaders then, were mobile, active, courageous and outspoken on human rights, gender equality, environmental conservation, lack of female representation in provincial politics and administration, corruption and mismanagement. There was frequent, heated dialogue yet a healthy respect between women leaders and men in provincial politics and administration.

## **Self-determination eroded and local knowledge buried**

During the 1990s, Sepik women’s human rights NGOs and emerging environmental and NGOs and CBOs took their place among an emerging home-grown and led national civil society network, with its dynamic communities of practice and dialogue on key development issues. For a brief moment in PNG’s political history, these movements offered huge potential to counter disturbing trends in national development. National government was making a significant shift away from people-centred development to a focus on enclave, extractive industry development projects. After the Bougainville crisis and in spite of revelations of massive corruption in the logging industry, the floodgates were open and many rural districts became host to massive extractive industry projects that by and

large have failed to deliver for the nation. Instead, they have left local populations in abject poverty and conflict. The associated rhetoric predicted economic booms and promised free health and education, increasing choices and opportunities for all citizens. But these have proved empty, deceptive and distracting. Sadly, many civil society activists and leaders sold out, making deals with their adversaries in order to finance personal political and economic ambitions.

‘Development’ subtly and steadily shifted from delivery of information and services at community level through locally trained and motivated facilitators, to fly-in/fly out consultants designing, implementing and evaluating. In this scenario, locals can only play a marginal role. Their energy and creativity dampened by multiple levels of contractual obligations, complex matrices and reports, computerised accounts and internet-based access to grants, daily communications and social media reporting. Onerous documentation and expensive, unreliable and often inaccessible information and communication media have pushed local organisations to the margins of development. The roles of the Papua New Guineans is now secondary or as junior partners to international NGOs or private global management companies contracted by international donors. The capacity of local development workers and organisations is measured in conformity to deadlines and in providing extensive written documentation. The themes and language of development are forever changing and increasingly mystifying. They mask corporate appropriation of local organisations, their initiatives and knowledge in flashy digital knowledge portals and conference presentations. PNG’s social and economic dualism is reproduced in the offices, operations, career opportunities of donors and INGOs.

We have arrived at a point where external consultants with no local experience or language call the shots. Local culture and history are not on their radar, and they assume a local development *tabula rasa*. In fact, local organisations have designed, developed, tested and used with great effect many of their own ways of working, teaching, mobilizing people, breaking down barriers and facilitating change. In Sepik we have so many resources dating back to the 1970s that proved appropriate and effective. There are stories, illustrations, messages, popular media and case studies that have informed, guided and added fun, colour and flavor to local actions for change. Many people in Sepik remember how simple songs educated them about the Constitution, gender equality, human rights, child rights, food security, nutrition, environmental conservation, HIV and AIDs, citizenship and good governance and more. There is local research, training manuals and toolkits that have never been published and shared because regardless of the current rhetoric on monitoring, evaluation and learning and local knowledge building and sharing, donors do not support publication and dissemination of local development history, knowledge and resources. Newcomers too often fail to recognise or respect what went before them.

Not surprisingly, the wheel is being re-invented all the time. Sepik’s local development veterans roll their eyes when hit-and-run consultants declare that menstrual taboos will prevent women from direct participation in WASH

programmes. Sepik women broke through those barriers almost 40 years ago, and local experts have all the strategies and tools to counter chauvinistic men who might want to rebuild them. Local women leaders shrug their shoulders in despair when other consultants describe the enthusiasm they generated during a quick-fix consultation in a remote rural area, to introduce (for the ‘first time’) a new programme for community-based health care providers. In fact, Sepik has a 60-year history, of women and men trained and supervised to deliver health care—giving lifelong service but now mostly dismissed and rendered invisible.

## **Gender equality and ending violence against women**

In recent years I pulled together PNG’s 40-year history of efforts to achieve gender equality and end violence against women, starting with policies of the founding Prime Minister’s office, papers presented in early Waigani Seminars and the efforts to change laws to protect women from violence that were demanded by the early National Council of Women (circa 1980), taken up by the law Reform Commission and promulgated in a national campaign. These led to PNG’s national survey and many unique community-based initiatives that were once regarded as pioneering and progressive by world standards. They were largely led by women’s NGOs and CBOs. Many local women’s movements adopted a human rights and gender-responsive approach 20 years ago, consciously aligning their work with global and national commitments to end gender-based violence against women. Knowing this history, it is both startling and annoying to see all work in this area being re-invented through top-down, consultant-led large programmes and new organisations financed by multi-year, multi-million grants, while the founding workers and their legacy of local organisations have been largely forgotten and remain starved of funds. More shocking is the claim that alliances of extractive industry corporations, DFAT and Australian universities consider themselves the vanguard and new knowledge creators and disseminators of efforts to end violence against women. DFAT funding of partnerships with extractive industry, and relatively new NGOs raises many questions about the ethics, power and privilege and offshore, backdoor resourcing deals. But more importantly it violates fundamental principles of good development practice by allowing non-PNG personnel and practitioners to assume leadership and limelight.

Since the global financial crisis, Australian INGOs, many of them church-based, have relied on government funding. In PNG they are increasingly operating as contractors for DFAT-funded sector-based programming with the PNG government (Law and Justice, Governance, Child Protection). Local NGOs are engaged as field-based implementing partners and are generally required to take a back-seat in programmes driven by INGOs. INGOs have increasingly introduced operational models that downplay the local ownership, leadership, self-determination and innovation that once characterised PNG civil society and social development. Their operations are increasingly detached from community, as their offices, staff, consultants

and volunteers join the circles of privileged expatriates, encumbered by excessive security requirements and costs.

Once local development organisations are linked into these new structures and processes of 'development delivery' local knowledge, innovation and creativity are captured through monitoring and evaluation strategies, data collection and seminars and ultimately cast as outcomes of external inputs rather than local intellectual property and products. Resistance and complaints are few. Local critics are deemed difficult, combative, dangerous and marginalised by those who control the way development resources flow.

### **Return to the Constitutional 'compass'**

No amount of externally driven glossy publications, spin, conferences, blogs and portals or 'unequal' partnerships will

bring back the focus on local ownership, leadership and learning that blossomed briefly post-independence. Sincere efforts to build inclusive development of the economy and society require systematic dismantling of a dual economy and the apartheid that has widened and deepened in PNG post 2000. More appreciation of PNG culture and history is needed. Acknowledgement of local capacity and nurturing of local potential is fundamental. More credit is due to the people, organisations and ways of working that made significant change and progress on social development possible immediately post-independence. We need more crediting of local knowledge, rather than revering external consultants, donors and INGOs. We need to restore the bottom-up, people-centred heart, soul, pride, hope and empowerment that once characterised locally led development. Local civil society must ultimately rise again and resume an integral and influential role in PNG's development.



# Half a century of agricultural development in Papua New Guinea: A *didiman* reflects

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## Introduction

In May 1970, I flew from Port Moresby to Rabaul, via Lae, en route to my first posting as a research agronomist (*didiman*) in Papua and New Guinea (PNG). Looking from the aircraft at the tiny villages on both sides of the Owen Stanley Range, a moment of mild panic arose: What if I did not get to spend time in such villages? I need not have worried. Within weeks, I was learning about agriculture from ToBernard, ToPiritae and others in Napapar Village and spending time in villages in the Baining Mountains of New Britain and on New Ireland. Over the next 48 years, I have worked in villages in all 85 rural districts. By chance, the most recent fieldwork in mid-2018 has been in Morobe and Central provinces, not far from those villages that I saw from the air all those years ago.

After completing a degree in Agricultural Science at the University of Queensland, I was appointed as a Food Crop Agronomist at the Lowlands Agricultural Experiment Station at Keravat on New Britain, where I was based from 1970 to 1977. During that period, I completed a Master of Agriculture from the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in Port Moresby, working on aspects of sweet potato crop physiology. Standards were high at UPNG then. Many of the academics later had distinguished careers and many former students from that period have played a significant role in PNG's development.

From 1978 to 1983, I was based at the Highlands Agricultural Experiment Station at Aiyura in the Eastern Highlands as Senior (and later Principal) Research Horticulturalist. This was a period of intensive fieldwork in many locations. As well, I provided technical support for 20 other agricultural researchers in the highlands and lowlands. I then undertook a doctoral degree at the Australian National University, seeking to understand the causes of food shortages in the PNG highlands. This was a wide-ranging study, with long data runs, intensive research in two villages and two districts and using other data from the entire PNG Highlands Region.

Since completing my PhD in 1988 I have had academic appointments at the ANU but my entire career for the last 48 years has been in PNG where I worked on many research, development and training projects. In this a paper I reflect on some aspects of agriculture in PNG and consider its future prospects.

## Information for agricultural development

When I commenced my career in PNG, there was limited accessible information on village agriculture. Much had been written by anthropologists, geographers and others, but this was not readily available at an agricultural research station. This was particularly the situation in the New Guinea Islands

region. There were a limited number of recent publications by anthropologists such as Panoff (1969), and unpublished reports by agriculturalists, some of which were later published, including by Carman (1980) and Bruyn et al (1980). However, most published observations on village agriculture in the Islands Region had been made prior to the Pacific war. Initially, I relied on a limited number of texts, such as the *Report of the New Guinea Nutrition Survey Expedition 1947* (Conroy and Bridgland 1950) and the Jacques Barrau's classic monograph by *Subsistence Agriculture in Melanesia* (Barrau 1958). During the 1970s, many more relevant publications appeared, including papers published in the *PNG Agricultural Journal*, *Science in New Guinea* and *Harvest* magazine. In the early 1970s, there was only one other food crop agronomist in PNG. The number of people engaged with food crop research and development increased during the 1970s, as did our access to publications by social scientists.

A major drought and series of frosts impacted much of the PNG highlands in 1972. This provided a wake-up call to many in the Department of Agriculture who had developed the attitude that there was little that could be done to improve food production. The realisation that much was not known about food crop production, particularly with sweet potato, the staple food in the highlands, boosted research and development on food crops. The change in attitude allowed me to propose and help organise the first conference on food and nutrition in PNG, which was held at the University of Technology in Lae in 1975.

A high proportion of agricultural research in PNG is never published and is effectively lost. An important outcome of such conferences is that research and development outcomes are recorded and are available for future use. Major food and nutrition conferences have been held in PNG in 1975, 1980, 1983 and 2000 (Wilson and Bourke 1976; Bourke and Kesavan 1982; Levett et al 1992; Bourke et al 2001). Unfortunately, no such conference has been held in PNG since 2000 and much valuable research and development experience in food production over the past 20 years cannot be accessed by others. Occasional major food shortages have given some impetus to publishing data. Major drought and frosts in 1997 provided the stimulus to hold the Food and Nutrition conference in 2000. The 2015 drought and frosts resulted in the publication of some of the lessons from that event (Kanua et al 2016). It is important that such conferences are held from time to time, with the papers made available in both electronic and hard copy.

## The role of agriculture in the PNG economy

In the early 1970s, exports were dominated by agricultural, forestry and marine products, particularly coffee, cocoa and copra. There was no petroleum or mineral production. Today, exports from PNG are dominated by gas, petroleum

and minerals (73 per cent of exports in 2017), while agriculture (9 per cent), timber (7 per cent) and fish (1 per cent) contribute a lower proportion (OEC 2018).

However, agriculture continues to provide most of the food consumed in PNG (over 80 per cent) and most of the cash income for rural villagers, that is, the majority of the national population (Bourke and Harwood 2009:29, 130–137, 284–291).

Under five child mortality is a useful index of development and social progress in any society. I have examined the relationship between economic activity and under-five child mortality rate at a district level in PNG (Bourke 2012), using child mortality data from Tran et al (2012). The conclusions were:

1. Child mortality rates are *lowest* in urban areas OR in rural areas where agricultural income is higher, and the physical environment is relatively good.
2. Child mortality rates are *highest* in remote locations, where the environment is poor and there is no significant economic activity, aside from subsistence food production.
3. Locations where a major extractive industry, that is mining, petroleum and logging, is the only significant source of cash income have a *high* child mortality rate.

How do we explain these relationships? Income from domestic and export agricultural products is associated with lower rates of child mortality. I suggest that this is causal—I call this ‘slow development’. The income that households gain from selling produce accrues to them much more slowly than the fast money from mineral, petroleum or forestry projects. It takes a lot of hard work to earn income from agriculture and it is more likely to be invested in better housing, health care and children’s education.

In contrast, the large sums of money given to some villagers, mostly men, by developers of mines, petroleum and logging is quickly dissipated on alcohol, travel and young women. Very little is invested to raise the living standard of the household or invested in children’s education and health.

## Changes over time

Attempts have been made to grow many crops in PNG, with more failures than successes. From the 1880s to the early 1940s, attempts were made to produce tobacco, cotton, rice, maize, castor oil, sisal hemp, kapok, coffee and other crops (Denoon and Snowden 1981). Some were grown commercially for some years, such as sisal and kapok, but mostly with limited success. The most important cash crops in this period were copra and, to a lesser degree, rubber.

For over a century, more attention has been given to rice, than any other single crop. For example, there was more research done on rice and a few other grain crops than on all other food crops over the 50-year period 1928 to 1978 (Bourke 1982). The effort to produce rice continues, despite a history of failure for over a century and production of only a few hundred tonnes per year compared with three million tonnes of sweet potato and hundreds of thousands of banana, other root crops, and sago (Bourke and Harwood 2009:138–144, 168–172, 412).

There have been significant changes in the relative importance of the export cash crops since the Pacific War. In the 1950s, copra and copra oil were by far the most important export crops, as indeed they had been prior to the Pacific War (ibid:294). Coffee and cocoa became more important in the 1960s and 1970s, to be joined by palm oil in the 1980s. Now, palm oil and other oil palm products are the most important agricultural export with a value greater than coffee and cocoa combined. Production of palm oil continues to expand steadily, while production of the other export tree crops is static or has declined in recent decades in response to declines in real returns.

Virtually all fresh food and betel nut is produced by rural villagers, as is most coffee, cocoa and copra. In contrast, smallholders produce about a third of oil palm bunches. Thus, despite oil palm dominating agricultural exports, it is only the sixth most important source of cash income for rural people, after coffee, fresh food, cocoa, betel nut and copra (ibid:286). Production and processing of oil palm is however an important driver of the local economy, particularly in West New Britain, Milne Bay and Oro provinces and, to a lesser degree, in New Ireland, Madang and Morobe provinces.

A major shift in the rural economy has been the increasing importance of sales of fresh food, as well as other locally-produced products including betel nut, betel pepper, marihuana, firewood and fish. Production and sale of fresh food and other produce is now a major contributor to rural villagers’ cash income and thus their welfare. In the early to mid-1990s, fresh food was second only to coffee as a source of cash income for rural villagers (ibid:286). It is almost certainly the most important source now. Coffee production has been stagnant for decades, so production per person has fallen. Villagers in the Highlands Region who have good access to the Highlands Highway have moved from growing coffee to sweet potato, potato, cabbage, carrots, other vegetables, oranges and pineapples. Kristie Benjamin of Kuka Village in the Asaro Valley west of Goroka explained the reason for this in late 2017:

*Bifo mipela weitim kopi sisin tasol. Mipela komparim na mipela pinim kaukau mani emi winim kopi mani. Mipela i no gat inrist nau na olsem mipela i rausim kopi. Kaukau emi laif bilong mipela nau.*

Previously, we depended on seasonal income from coffee. We compared the income from coffee with that from sweet potato and found the latter to be superior. We are no longer interested in growing coffee and have removed it. Sweet potato supports us now.

Many reasons have been offered for the stagnation of coffee production—aging trees, poor road conditions, theft of berries, land grabs and security issues. These factors all exist. However, the dominant reason is that returns on villagers’ labour inputs for coffee are lower than what they can receive from growing fresh food (ibid:412). For the plantation sector, it is low returns on invested capital. After reviewing the reasons for the poor performance of the export tree crops in PNG, a New Zealand economic consulting firm concluded:

...what has been holding back a more rapid expansion in PNG's export crops has been primarily the profitability in producing them (NZIER 2006).

A number of factors drive demand for fresh food in PNG. Firstly, there is a large and growing population living in urban or rural non-village situations, including mineral and petroleum exploration camps, schools, plantations, church and government stations. Secondly, there are marked contrasts in the physical environment, often over short distances, particularly for altitude (temperature) and rainfall seasonality. Thus a crop which grows well in one location may not produce as well elsewhere. The greatest contrast is between temperature in the highlands and the lowlands, but contrasts in both annual and seasonal rainfall also favour different crops. The greatest volume of trade in fresh food takes place between people in the highlands and accessible parts of the nearby lowlands. Thus betel nut, coconuts, mango, peanuts and watermelon move from the Markham Valley, Ramu Valley and nearby locations in Madang and Morobe provinces into the highlands. Sweet potato, potato, cabbage, carrots, onions, garlic and other vegetables are transported from the highlands to Lae, Madang and other lowland centres.

Good road networks are needed to facilitate trade between people living in contrasting environments. Thus, many people are excluded from such trade as the road networks do not exist, or roads are in such a poor state of repair as to make trade in fresh produce unprofitable. There are fewer opportunities for trade in fresh food where ecological conditions are similar, for example, in parts of the New Islands Region. However, even in these places, sale of fresh food, betel nut and other agricultural produce is commonly the most important source of cash income for rural villagers.

An important factor in facilitating the marketing of fresh produce has been the emergence and growth in the role of intermediate traders. Up to the end of the 1960s, fresh food was sold by the producer to the consumer, with no intermediate traders (Brookfield 1969:2; Epstein 1982:12). From the early 1970s onwards, intermediate traders emerged, moving a limited range of fresh food initially, including betel nut, coconut, peanuts, mango and watermelon (Bourke 1986). Over the past 50 years, the range and volume of produce purchased and sold by intermediate traders has increased greatly. The marketing chains for fresh food have fewer actors compared with those for betel nut as it is moved from the lowland villages to urban centres or the highlands (Sharp 2016).

The rate of addition of new products has slowed in recent decades, but it does continue. People now sell significant volumes of oranges, pineapples, onion and garlic in fresh food markets in the highlands. Twenty years ago, limited volumes of pineapple and oranges were sold while onions and garlic were not grown commercially. Importantly, the quality of the produce continues to improve as producers learn from market signals, at least in locations close to where it is grown. The volume, range and quality of fresh food being moved by intermediate traders to mineral and petroleum

exploration and production camps in remote locations is impressive.

Many obstacles prevent the transport of fresh food to the market. Supply is irregular and often in poor condition by the time that it reaches the consumer. However, this should not blind us to the impressive gains that have been made in marketing fresh produce, particularly in the past half century.

## Successes and failures

Over the past 70 years, successful agricultural production may be grouped as follows:

1. **Export tree crops, particularly coffee, cocoa, copra and oil palm and, to a lesser extent, tea and rubber.** Because of low to modest returns on villager's labour inputs, production is stagnant or falling for most of these now, aside from oil palm. However, income from these crops has supported many villagers with improved education, health and food security for many decades.
2. **Domestically marketed food crops and betel nut.** This sector has expanded from a tiny base 70 years ago when there was little urbanisation. Villagers have increased production rapidly since the devaluation of the PNG currency in the late 1990s when locally grown food became more competitive with imported rice, wheat-based products, vegetables and fruit.
3. **Animal products.** The most important are chickens, eggs and pigs, but also ducks, goats, crocodile skins and honey.
4. **Crops grown in smaller volume.** These include vanilla, balsa and eaglewood, where returns on labour are high and marketing chains developed.

A number of factors determine whether an agricultural enterprise will be successful or not. The most important for villagers is returns on their labour inputs. This is the case for export tree crops where production is stagnant or has fallen, including coffee, copra and rubber. It also applies to grains, particularly rice, as well as spices including chilli, pyrethrum and cardamom and other crops. The transition in locations with good market access, particularly near the Highlands Highway, from export tree crops to domestically marketed food crops is driven by the better returns on villagers' labour inputs for fresh food. Other factors are also critical, including the increasing demand from those in urban and rural non-villager locations, transport links and, in some cases, the presence of intermediate traders.

## Future prospects

Subsistence food production is likely to continue to underwrite the village and national economy, as it always has. There is increasing pressure on productive land from population growth and climate change as the oceans continue to rise, temperatures increase, and rainfall patterns alter. This will place increasing strain on food production in some locations, particularly on atolls, other small islands and in the central highlands of New Guinea. The move to more productive food crops is likely to continue as soil fertility declines, particularly with greater production of cassava but also more sweet potato, triploid banana, African yam (*Dioscorea rotundata*) and maize.

The change from a focus on export markets to the domestic market is likely to continue as transport links and marketing networks improve, more people move out of agricultural production and people respond to signals from the market.

There are excellent prospects for further expansion of domestically-marketed food, including fruit of Southeast Asia origin such as durian, mangosteen and rambutan, but also high-quality pawpaw, mango and other long-established fruit. As well, there is unmet demand for vegetables which are popular with people from Southeast, East and South Asia. There is a huge market in Port Moresby for fresh food. There are also good prospects in other markets for greater sales of the staple foods, vegetables and fruit.

The challenge remains to provide high-quality produce at an affordable price in large volumes. If that challenge can be met, prospects for significant expansion in sales of staple foods, vegetables and fruit are good.

Production of some of the well-established export tree crops is likely to continue, with oil palm and cocoa having the best prospects. Other possible cash crops include indigenous edible nuts (*galip*, *okari*, sea almond and Polynesian chestnut), eaglewood (agarwood) and some of the spices.

Consumption of meat, fish and other animal products per person is low in PNG. If people's income increases, the demand for foods of animal origin will probably increase greatly, as it has in most of the rest of the world. Increased consumption will depend on increases in real income. Should that occur, one can expect a good future for sales of meat and fish.

I have no reason to alter my view that efforts to grow rice, wheat, grain legumes and other grains by villagers will not succeed, despite significant resources being directed at this, as has been the case for over a century in PNG. These crops could become attractive, but only if there were a very large increase in price.

To date, easy gains have been made with adoption of new crops and animal species, but this era is drawing to a close. Future gains will be increasingly dependent on innovations by villagers, entrepreneurs, intermediate traders and researchers. Future success may come in unlikely places, such as that achieved by the Community Livelihood Improvement Program of the PNG LNG project in Hela Province (Bourke et al in press).

Further gains in social development, as measured for example by under-five child mortality, are likely to continue to be linked with agricultural development, including more efficient production of subsistence food, cash crops and animal enterprises. My overall sense is that agriculture has a bright future in Papua New Guinea.

## Note

Thousands of villagers have taught me about how they grow food and cash crops in PNG. My greatest debt is to them. Hopefully, I may have contributed a little to their development of agriculture. Sue Halden-Brown edited a first draft of this article.

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## Some reflection on 40 years of working in development in the Pacific

*Patrick Kilby, The Australian National University*

My first encounter with PNG was in 1975 when, as an undergraduate agricultural science student, I was required to spend the summer break on a farm. I chose a Catholic mission farm in Milne Bay near Alotau in what was to be an early encounter with international development. This small mission farm with a few cattle was just enough to keep some local people employed and provide some income for the Catholic mission. A few years later I had my first serious taste of development work as part of the East Sepik Rural Development Project (ESRDP), an Asian Development Bank funded project that followed the integrated rural development projects model, which were very fashionable at the time. It was the first of nine such projects across PNG that were implemented until the early 1990s. ESRDP like most of these schemes was probably less about integration and more about a bevy of small stand-alone projects covering East Sepik province whose parliamentary electorate was held by none other than the father of the nation, Michel Somare; he wanted his province to host the first of these ADB projects.

The ESRDP seemed to cover almost everything from a rubber settlement scheme, a buffalo project, a dried fish project, dryland rice, and a nutrition project. As a 1989 review found:

far from being integrated, project components were disparate, separated in space and benefited only particular groups of people. Projects were integrated only by being implemented in a single province under a single management organisation.

In the case of ESRDP all except the nutrition programme were a failure due to poor planning, poor economics, and a veritable flood of foreign consultants with little local knowledge of the context. On top of that the buffalo project brought bovine TB from Australia. This led to a follow-up project to shoot—from helicopters—the rogue buffaloes. As can be common among agricultural projects, this one introduced alien technologies into a complex but often efficient largely subsistence agricultural system, all in the name of modernisation. Rather than building on existing systems, new monocrops were introduced, which led to any number of economic and social issues. One thing I learnt from those 1980s schemes is that we are destined to repeat the lessons from history—we still try to introduce marginal cash crops into efficient subsistence systems.

My role was to set up the livestock department at the Sepik Agricultural College, which was one agricultural college too many (there were three already, at Mt Hagen, Popondetta and Rabaul). It struggled for the next 10 years and finally closed in 1992. Twenty years later it was resurrected as the Maprik campus of the University of Natural Resources and Environment, but by 2018 there was little evidence of it being active. Nonetheless, my two years

there spent teaching students from all over PNG—both women and men—was great. One memorable experience was a field trip to a village in a swamp close to the Sepik River, where people lived almost solely on a sago ‘porridge’ harvested from sago palm. This trip over a few days, staying in the village, was great exposure to lived nutrition issues in poor regions of PNG. Experiencing it was the best way to learn about it, though most of the students may have disagreed. For me it was an enjoyable time although life seemed to be in an apartheid world where outside the workplace expats lived their own very privileged lives with little local interaction. Three years, therefore, was more than enough for me. Now I teach students from the Pacific here at the ANU and their stories and challenges are very real for me.

### NGOs in service delivery

My next foray into PNG was in the NGO world. This was during the 1980s and 1990s when NGOs were seen as the answer to governance failure, and a likely way to replace the service-delivery level work of government. The delivery of services has always been, to some extent, the domain of NGOs, churches and other charitable organisations as it speaks to a central tenant of most religions. But it is tricky when they are asked to take over government services rather than complement or supplement them. In PNG, churches have always had their schools and hospitals—they are easy entry points to communities and gives them legitimacy. However, there was fierce competition in PNG between churches with the weakening of a government presence in the provinces.

Attempts have been made since the 1980s to have an NGO strategy in the Australian aid programme to use the NGOs for what is referred to as democratic governance in the country. During my visits to PNG in the 1980s local NGOs were mainly concerned about local-level issues and were lobbying government to address them. The issue, therefore, became more complex when foreign governments started to fund local NGOs for programmes that seem to impinge on the sovereign government. In practice, these programmes were more about service delivery and gave the government reason not to engage in these spaces. The *Strongum Government Strongum People* programme, according to AECOM, the managing agent, was reaching 87 of the country’s 89 districts and spent over \$70 million on 400 projects. How sustainable or effective these 400 projects are is another question. Like the ESRDOP discussed earlier there was to be little evidence of integration among a hodge podge of small projects.

The other part of this is reduction in government services in remote villages due to the high costs of delivery. Due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of these villages the provision of services are very high cost, and incentives

for people to live and work in these places is high. The planned investment in infrastructure through loans from China won't meet the needs of remote communities and make it less likely that government will expand services to these areas. In essence, the government is withdrawing from these areas; what this means for the future is anyone's guess.

## **Family violence**

My last foray into the Pacific was in the almost intractable area of family violence, which is endemic in the Pacific. World Vision had implemented a community vision for change project in a small number of locations in the Solomon Islands. Dr Joyce Wu and I were involved in an evaluation of the Honiara projects, which looked at gender-based violence in peri-urban and urban communities. The model being adopted was adapted from World Vision programmes in parts of Africa, and sought to train faith leaders and others, as well as other supporting community activities, to challenge local patriarchal norms by exposing the pastors and other religious leaders to the scriptural basis for respectful relationships. This project was built on two assumptions: first that preachers are susceptible to, or even can change, what they preach; and secondly, that members of congregations base their behaviour on what they 'hear' at a church service.

Our evaluation found that women 'heard' the 'message' much more than men, and that a broader approach was required that complemented the religious messages. It also found that the material had been prepared in African countries, and did not translate well into the Solomon Islands context so resources were required to adapt the material. Finally, behavioural change is something that takes much longer than the project cycle of three to five years, and so the small steps made in this project should lead to larger steps being made in later iterations of the project. As with most projects interventions, the donor or the sponsor may not have the patience to wait. This programme should have a ten to 20-year time-frame and be very adaptive and flexible in how it approaches these issues.

## **Impacts of choice for Pacific Island states**

The final reflection I would like to make is the changing landscape of the Pacific as countries are given more choices in terms of their donor partners. This means they can set out a development path that donors, such as Australia, New Zealand or the US, may not agree with. The terms governance or good governance is in vogue and the Paris

Principles of Development cooperation are very much entrenched in those notions of governance, which are largely based on a Western liberal tradition. For some decades there has been a contest between China and Taiwan to curry support in UN fora and the focus on small island states in the Pacific is a relatively low-cost way of gaining votes in the UN General Assembly.

By 2000 the contests between Taiwan and China had more or less passed with China being dominant in the Pacific with only a handful of countries retaining support for Taipei. In the 2000s and in particular the 2010s, China has moved beyond just competing with Taipei for UN votes but has moved to challenge Australia, the US and other donors in the Pacific and their influence. There have been substantial infrastructure investments and conscious efforts to build warm relationships with Pacific Island governments, including hosting parliamentary visits to Beijing and the like. This has created a strong competitive environment for Pacific countries that from time-to-time object to the governance agenda, and the lectures from Australia among others.

The other advantage from growing Pacific competition is that erstwhile donors such as the UK and the EU that had given up on the Pacific are coming back in a tug-of-war for geo-political influence across the Pacific and further afield. The problem is that a lot of the funding is in the form of loans. China has a record for easing the loan burden by forgiving or rescheduling but it also has a record of trading equity for debt. In the long run, this may have sovereignty implications around who controls key infrastructure, and the possibility of Pacific Island states become more and more like vassals states.

So, in my 40 years of experience in the Pacific I have witnessed many changes as countries become more assertive in their own development direction and massive Western-led development projects are being replaced by massive Chinese-led infrastructure projects. The competition for providing funding will focus on the prestigious projects. Service delivery to remote and marginal communities will most probably suffer, and be left in the hands of poorly supported NGOs whose funding is at the whim of foreign donors who may not see it as a high priority. What this means for urbanisation and migration from remote communities has not been fully assessed. Geography means Australia or New Zealand for that matter cannot ignore the Pacific. But, the renewed interest in the region does present opportunities for closer partnerships that recognise the fundamental challenges the Pacific faces, more as result of geography than anything else.

# The Papua New Guinea Development Bank 1971–74<sup>1</sup>

Rodney V Cole<sup>2</sup>, Consultant

Over the last 50 years I have had the privilege of observing, sometimes participating in, events large and small that have changed for ever the quiet backwater that was the South Pacific. Now, reflecting on the past, I wonder how often those who presently control the destiny of the region pause to consider the consequences of past decisions. Sadly, I believe the pace of this new Pacific, and the world generally, is such that there is little time to reflect on what has gone before—the way is forward, and let us not be hindered or confused by decisions of our predecessors! With this in mind I have embarked on my own Pacific Journey to reflect my personal experiences and tell of some of the social, economic and political events that have shaped the nature of the region in this century.

## Banking in PNG

In 1971, subsequent to Fiji achieving political independence, I made a complete career change becoming a development banker in PNG. This proved to be an exhilarating, if at times frustrating, challenge involving, as it did, the introduction of Western concepts of credit to a population well versed in the philosophy of pay-back, but without experience of the time constraints imposed by the modern-day banking fraternity.

I suppose I should have been alive to the fact that PNG, as an Australian colony, would be very different from Fiji by virtue of comments from two very different sources prior to my arrival there. Talking of the general level of development of indigenous people, the Deputy Administrator in PNG remarked, ‘You will find our blacks different from those in your country’. I was taken aback at what I felt was an unfortunate reference to Papua New Guineans and responded to the effect that in Fiji we never thought of people on the basis of skin colour. He replied that I was likely to be in for a surprise if I thought Australians were as tolerant of racial differences as I seemed to imply. The second was a letter from a Colonial Officer Under Secretary who had visited PNG. She wrote, ‘People seem to speak well of your bank, the locals referred to it as *Giving away money with three hands*—it should be an interesting experience for you after Fiji’.

The background to banking in PNG at the time influenced what was possible. PNG had a difficult time during World War II with substantial areas invaded by the Japanese then fought over as Australian and American troops wrest back control. When war receded Australia again took back full administrative responsibility but with the competing demands for available capital from the more vociferous mainland states little was done to promote social and economic development along the lines adopted in British colonies. There was no such thing in PNG, for example, as the Colonial Development and Welfare legislation of Fiji. The role of the administration seems to

have been directed mainly, to keeping the peace through regular rural patrols. Commercial development was left strictly in the hands of the large trading houses, Steamships Trading, Burns Philp, and Carpenters, with the minor roles filled by Chinese store-keepers. Religious bodies provided the bulk of the education and medical services.

With a population of just over two million, spread over some 300,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with at least 700 different languages, the task of development must have daunted the most sanguine of administrators. But there were pressures, not least from the Decolonisation Committee of the United Nations, which had a particular concern for the one-time German colony. Australia invited the World Bank to review the economic potential of the country with the objective of helping plan a programme to expand and stimulate the economy and raise living standards. The comprehensive report included recommendations for a facility which could extend credit to both Indigenes and Europeans. While Australian banks did exist, their policies were not designed to provide credit in the amounts and on term suitable to the bulk of the population. The outcome was the enactment of an ordinance setting up the Papua New Guinea Development Bank (PNGDB). There was adequate room to allow an imaginative management to make a positive contribution to the future economic welfare of the nation. Both the Australian Government and the World Bank were generous in their financial backing with the former providing grants and the latter long-term concessionary loans. I was to be its CEO with no previous banking experience!

PNGDB was obliged to draw heavily on expatriates to fill technical positions but local staff were recruited and trained in-house as well as given opportunities for tertiary training. The new bank was fortunate in its original board members. Sir John Crawford played a major role in encouraging innovative practices so desperately needed in this hugely under-developed country and Fred Fisk whose experience in development finance was able to provide the management with valuable guidance in the formative years. I encouraged my technical advisers to be as innovative as practical—not an easy ask of traditional bankers but one that received an eager response from the Chief Economist, Barry Shaw from ANU.

We had branches in most provinces where the main concern was to provide small, principally agricultural loans to local borrowers. Because of the need to develop loans and lending practices appropriate to a country that was, for the majority of the population, experiencing the role and use of credit for the first time, it was necessary to be imaginative and innovative rather than an experienced banker. Adapting an idea from Malaysia we set up a small factory, Wakabaut Footwear, to manufacture thongs as cheap footwear with a special design for Highland customers, called the Chimbu—short and wide! The process was simple but I regret to say the project was not a great



success in the long run but demonstrated that there were opportunities for small-scale manufacture by local people provided we could introduce adequate training systems.

More successful was my effort to get local Papua New Guineans into commercial shops. The inspiration came from Kuala Lumpur where efforts to get local people into low-level trading was based on the purchase of trade stores by local authorities and then putting the *bumiputra* in as manager/owners. Not quite so simple in PNG as a Chinese friend told me. There was no way, he said, that the Papua New Guineans could compete with his people who were prepared to work long hours and manage their businesses with efficiency, while PNG store keepers would keep odd hours, be forced to give limitless credit to *wontoks* and confuse profit with turn over and eat the stock. To overcome the negatives and with the full support of my staff, we bought out the wholesale business of my friend from Ocean Trading Company and then hired him to train our budding entrepreneurs in all aspects of store management. After a year's training we were making progress. We bought 10 Chinese owned stores (many Chinese were preparing to leave as independence was approaching) and put in our trainees as managers under close supervision for a year. They were then given the opportunity to buy the business at cost, less their training expenses. It worked. Eventually over 100 stores were in PNG hands.

## Travelling in PNG

Because so much of our business involved the rural community we had quite a large staff in the rural division including a number of professionally trained Papua New Guinean agriculturists. I was keen that these latter staff members should be properly aware of the practical problems faced by our generally illiterate clientele. In order to ensure appropriate skill levels I arranged to acquire a small farm on the outskirts of Port Moresby where they were required to act as managers on a rotational basis of three months, running the farm as a paying proposition. Not all were happy with this as it meant dirty hands and bent backs but I persisted and it proved quite a success until I left when my successor sold the place!

As CEO I was expected to travel quite widely through the country. I did not relish travelling by air as these were the days before GPS and finding a landing strip relied on being able to see it. It gave me the jitters, especially when together with the pilot I had to look out for the landing strip—a system commonly known as 'Eyeball Mark 1'. There was always the prospect of identifying the wrong airstrip and having to abort a tricky landing just before

touch-down, or flying in circles waiting for cloud to lift before we could find the airstrip. It also meant having to find the airstrip before dark, not always easy when bad weather could render one airstrip after another, invisible and when daylight was fading.

One flight in particular stays in my mind. We were to fly to Popenetta in a fairly well set up DC3 but just before we boarded our aircraft was 'high jacked' by a local football team, so we were left with a similar aircraft but with no internal lining, canvas bucket seats down the side and a metal floor. The weather closed in and we were forced to fly exceedingly high to try to miss too heavy a buffeting. The plane tossed about in a very frightening manner but to make matters worse the fuselage was heavily bombarded by hail—the noise was horrible. Sir John Crawford who was travelling with us was white and I was white watching him and immediately directed the Secretary to keep feeding him his favourite Glenfiddich whisky from the supply in a large esky which was slithering up and down the aisle. We made it and all was forgiven—eventually. His only comment was, 'Rodney, don't ever do this to me again'. Certainly there was a hell of a dent in the whisky bottle.

## Time to go

I suppose the most satisfying moment in PNG was opening our own building. We had been allocated a site in Waigani and I was determined to use it before I left PNG. The design was important—open plan with some space for letting out space, a good training facility and, very important, adequate staff facilities. The whole complex was tastefully landscaped and as I was keen to add some local colour we engaged a Papuan, Rude Fame, who was talented in steel sculpture. The result was two larger than life figures—one of a Mekeo dancer, the other a young girl.

The opening of the building was a good note to go out on. My next, very different adventure was the Development Studies Centre at ANU and that is another story.

## Notes

- 1 Note from the editor: This paper comprises excerpts I have taken from Rodney's books *Life's way-stations*, published for private circulation but printed here with the permission of the author and excerpts from *A Pacific Journey*, 2001, R&J Cole Consulting, Canberra.
- 2 Rodney was born and worked in Fiji under the British Colonial regime as an administrator until Independence in 1971.

# ***Dua tu ga?*—everything’s the same—or is it?<sup>1</sup>**

*Jenny Bryant-Tokalau, Consultant*

This paper started out as a commentary on urban growth and its impacts in Pacific Islands as so much of my career has focussed around that broad issue, but on reflection I realise that all the strands of research and activism have absorbed a much wider perception of development, its links and strands. My interpretations of urbanisation, housing, squatting, land tenure, inequalities, poverty and environmental pressures, including climate change, are really all about agency, listening and who makes decisions. Local voices in these discussions are loud and strong, but there remains an almost wilful misunderstanding and lack of actual engagement by donors, NGOs, governments and others, including academic commentators.

## **The early years in PNG**

My years of working across the Pacific could be presented in a number of ways. There is the personal development of a young academic carrying out research in Fiji in the early 1970s followed by arrival in Port Moresby in 1975 where I was somewhat overwhelmed by the drama, beauty, vibrancy of a country approaching independence (not to mention the drama played out every day at the University of Papua New Guinea!).

There is too much to encapsulate though, for after all, ‘remembering is a partial process’ (Clarke 2003:1), so instead I shall attempt to weave some threads of those 45 years (and still counting) in the Pacific and try to make some sense of how perceptions of development have differed and changed. An important part of this is my academic training, having been raised in the south of New Zealand and at Otago University, immersed in a physical landscape perception of the world where we were rigorously schooled in the spatial approach to geography. Of course, once actually out in ‘the field’, I found that life was so much more complex than places on maps. In the Pacific Islands independence movements, elections, employment, economic change, song, painting, poetry, social classes, religion, global politics and so on, all invariably played their part in ‘development’. Today this would go unsaid, but in the 1970s it was an awakening for many.

What I learned at the University of Papua New Guinea and from living in Port Moresby was undoubtedly far more than the students learned from me. As a new university (with rather a lot of Australian funding) staff and students were able to travel for fieldwork and for all of us the experiences were hugely rewarding. Visits to new urban settlements in Lae, as part of urban geography courses, to Wau and Bulolo for human ecology, to Kuk to observe the recently uncovered ancient agricultural practices, the search for beehives at 7,000 feet, and swimming with Gerry Ward’s migrating coconuts were all part of being a geographer. The geography department was headed by William C Clarke (Bill) who was not only a mentor, but also became

a great friend. His approach to life, geography/anthropology, and all around him was gentle and enduring. The patient explanation of human environmental relations, pointing out the significance of human activity (including magic, formal religion, gardening and scientific knowledge), can never be under-estimated. Students who studied under Bill Clarke, both in PNG and later in Fiji, never forgot those connections. Without saying so explicitly, what Bill believed in and constantly reminded us all, is that ‘development’ is far more than income and power.

Along with this aspect of learning, what was going on in Moresby and the entire nation, was thrilling, at times confronting, and probably livelier than I have experienced since. The imbalance in male–female student numbers, concern by parents for their offspring living away from villages, the rapid growth of urban centres, greed and class divisions were minutely examined and debated by academics and students alike, leading to stimulating discussions and arguments, both on and off campus. Who could ever forget Azim Amarshi, Ken Good and Rex Mortimer arguing the future of an independent Papua New Guinea, the development of exploited, peasant classes, and the dangers of foreign capital? But also, who could forget the local art scene and theatre company, and their impact on students who easily related to a production of Sophocles’ *Antigone* by immediately finding parallels with their own village communities? And in Arts, the first year humanities course that involved staff from all disciplines—history, geography, anthropology, religious studies and languages, contributing lectures that included philosophical debates, millenarian movements, and great global explorations, had a profound impact on all of us and provided the groundwork, I believe, for our students to see both the imperfections and possibilities for the world, including Papua New Guinea.<sup>2</sup>

My own research, carried out with significant student assistance, was in the settlements of Port Moresby, Rabaul and Madang, looking at the possibilities of affordable housing for the growing wave of urban migrants. But that work remained very spatial, filled with maps and statistics. It was ‘manageable’, but didn’t scratch the surface of what was really going on in the settlements. Later reflection and appreciation of people’s views certainly demonstrated that all the planning in the world can never lead to ‘development’ (whatever that is) unless the people are part of the planning. Even then, *o cei e lewā?* or ‘who decides?’ Who makes the decisions was a grumble in the 1970s and remains fiercely felt today.

## **Australia and the Pacific**

Five years of living in Victoria, Australia teaching at Monash and working on Aboriginal housing and marginalisation, came as a deep shock in the late 1970s. After Pacific countries, it was hard to understand how societies

could remain so polarised. I learned a great deal in those years about what is **not** development, and how little voice Aboriginal communities had, despite dramatic and successful attempts at establishing Aboriginal legal, health and housing services. I was told by my own department not to work with Aborigines in Victoria as there 'were none'. Mercifully I ignored that piece of advice and found a home of sorts with the Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra, and anthropologists Di Barwick and Mike Heppell. The guidance of these anthropologists, but also the long discussions and debates with many Victorian families, individuals such as Penny Bamblett, Herb Pettit and Wayne Atkinson, and academics especially Elspeth Young, certainly expanded my horizons, and for that I am ever grateful, if saddened by the lack of progress since made by white Australia. Development in this case, clearly does not include the voice of the original inhabitants. The pull of Pacific countries and people were so great (and of course I was sure that much was happening where people had their own voice) and I returned to Fiji in 1983.<sup>3</sup>

So, it was back to the Pacific, and more lively discussions on 'doing development'. The University of the South Pacific (USP) was as 'interesting' and complex in 1983 as it is now, albeit a very different place. Staff were relatively young, along with the more senior 'old hands' of Pacific academia. There was a mix of expatriate and a growing cohort of locals, largely from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Political views were diverse. While some thought that geography was only about landscapes, in my opinion it was far more important than some gave it credit for. There was no anthropology, only sociology, but mercifully for those of us on the 'outside', 'Eveli Hau'ofa was chipping away from within, and brought some levity and considered opinions to the faction of rather serious, dour and exclusive young academics. I ignored a great deal of this. It was all a bit introspective for me.

Geography at USP in 1983 was headed by Bill Clarke, and the largely male department tended towards biodiversity, agriculture and industrial development, but increasingly in a broader development context. I became very involved once more in population and urbanisation, now more concerned with uneven development, inequalities and even the presence of 'poverty' (a term that raised considerable debate both publicly and with governments). More male appointments included John Overton, Paddy Nunn, Lionel Gibson, Joeli Veitayaki and Frank McShane, each of whom brought wider perspectives to the department with interests in coastal development, structural adjustment and the by now obviously changing environments of the Pacific. It was some years though before Aliti Vunisea joined the department and brought her work on women in fisheries to the fore. Such gender imbalances were not uncommon in geography departments and development debates in those days. At the University of Papua New Guinea there were two of us, and at Monash the same. Mercifully the balance has shifted in most departments. It took much longer for women's role in the household, workforce, environment, agriculture and fishing for example, to become an integral part of research and policy.

Although teaching loads were heavy, class sizes large, and the rigours of distance education, as well as on-campus, made for busy times, there was plenty of energy to spare. Our fieldwork with students ranged widely throughout Fiji, and across the Pacific for distance teaching and research. USP was never just about Fiji, even at the main campus in Laucala Bay, Suva. Students came from 12 Pacific nations and in 1984 there was also an intake of *kanak* students from New Caledonia, brought in via Vanuatu in order to get around the need for countries to be part of the USP intake. This group of lively, French speaking students, largely male, as well as those from across the region became a significant part of my life for many years and even now—as they too face retirement, many are involved with my ongoing work, often facilitated by the senior positions that they now hold.

### Development in the 80s and 90s

In terms of 'development' in the Pacific, the 1980s and 1990s were highly significant. As most countries were now politically independent, edging towards it, or facing political turmoil due to a range of issues brought about by greed, the search for power and social and economic disparities, interest in the nature of such unfairness was high. In geography, my courses on poverty and inequalities proved popular, especially with students from Solomons, Vanuatu and Fiji. Supported by the Fiji Muslim league, as well as various Christian churches and community leaders, our students were permitted and assisted to carry out extensive interviews in settlements around the city, leading to some excellent reports on living conditions, some of which I still believe should be published. Good connections between the SPC, Forum Secretariat, government departments and international agencies also gave us access to data, and some excellent guest lectures. Students had considerable exposure to the rapidly changing realities and challenges of a fast-changing Pacific, and many of them were able to return home with some of the tools to make sense of it all.

Geography at USP also had a deep appreciation of environmental change, human relations with the physical environment and the broad parameters of 'development'. With John Connell of Sydney University, I for some years edited the newsletter 3WD which outlined development issues, information about conferences and meetings, interesting snippets of news to share with the academic community, students and other contacts across the Pacific region. In addition, before SPREP set up its first headquarters in Noumea, USP was very active, not only with teaching, but also, essentially, environmental education, through practical demonstrations of human environmental interaction and change. Early trips to view the implications of, for example, ginger farming on steep slopes and pine planting spring to mind, but also of significance was the commencement of the non-government organisation, SPACHEE,<sup>4</sup> based out of USP. Randy Thaman, with many others from the wider community, government, students, and staff from across the University established this very active organization.<sup>5</sup> By 1988 we had recruited a fulltime research assistant (Rohini Murti), established a library, produced a regular newsletter

and bombarded the media with letters about unsustainable development (often these were ignored, but we did manage regular slots on Radio Fiji on Sunday mornings). Eventually SPACHEE moved off campus, but its legacy is seen in the significant role the university continues to play across the region today. Geography graduates such as Ana Tiraa Passfield (Cook Islands), Netatua Prescott (Tonga), Ernest Bani (Vanuatu), Naomi Biribo (Kiribati), Joeli Veitayaki (Fiji), and many others, have had significant roles, not only in regional organisations, but also in shaping environmental policy for their countries and regionally. In global climate change debates, USP graduates are still in the forefront. Nothing has galvanised the debates more than (finally) the recognition that climate change has a very obvious human face.

But where is the agency in such development? My lengthy personal journey as a geographer, working across the Pacific, including in the late 90s and early 2000s as part of UNDP, developing and managing aid projects across the Pacific, raised many questions, most of which have been posed by students, academics, villagers, government and aid officials throughout history. 'What is in it for us?' 'What will this research/aid/knowledge bring us?' In endeavouring to get countries to ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity for example, just one country, Tuvalu, declined for several years to finally sign, being only too aware of the commitment the country would then have to make in terms of regular reporting, quarterly financial reports, international conferences and so on, all to be carried out by the very limited local pool of qualified individuals. That decision was made by Enele Sopoaga, then Minister for Foreign Affairs and later to become Prime Minister. Only he was far-sighted enough to question the terms of such development assistance. Eventually Tuvalu did decide to participate in all global environmental conventions. No matter how much development practitioners claim to talk with people, there has been very little recognition, hearing of and belief in people's own voices and knowledge.

In Australia I found that the voices are often silenced, and in Pacific countries, many of Amarshi, Good and Mortimer's (1979) sad predictions have come to fruition. Rich entrepreneurial classes are flourishing, and not listening to what their own communities are saying. There is great store set by Western science and formal education for example, but limited support for indigenous scientific knowledge, no matter how often Pacific academics and thinkers such as Hau'ofa, Konai Thaman and Joeli Veitayaki remind the public of what has always existed and of the thousands of years of learning and teaching, much of which remains, despite alternative versions of 'development'.

## **Sustainable development?**

In recent years my work on urbanisation and environmental issues has focussed on coastal urban informal settlements and the issues surrounding land tenure in cities. The provenance of coastal zones, investment and urban pressures lead not only to environmental damage, loss of sustainable livelihoods and growing inequality and need to be taken much more seriously than they are today. The urbanisation

of the Pacific may seem insignificant in global terms, but in reality, if people's voices and understanding of local environments are ignored, such change will have permanent consequences, which will most likely lead to growing alienation of people from their land, as well as inevitable physical and social change.

Another phase has now begun. Global meetings, even when involving large numbers of young Pacific islanders can only achieve so much. I, like so many others, still believe that there are forces that through their own hidden agendas continue to marginalise countries, including those in the Pacific, largely because they are 'small'. Intellectually, development literature has rejected 'smallness' as a factor in development, but in reality, the power games played out at the global and regional levels have little to do with the daily realities of 'ordinary' people (Hau'ofa 1993:2), especially those without access to power and resources (Bryant 1993:89).

Plans for the sustainable development of countries in the global south for example often failed to involve people in the management of their own resources. What was clear to me in the 1970s and is even more clear now, as it was to Hau'ofa, is that no one lives the single dimensional lives that much of the literature on poverty, urbanisation, environmental degradation, climate change would have us believe. People in the Pacific, as elsewhere, live their lives by participating in and conducting multiple lives with multiple connections yet are still judged and assessed merely on income, or status, or ethnicity or political affiliations. The complex web of borrowing, negotiation and patronage that goes on, makes it difficult to come to agreement at these global and regional meetings about how 'development' should be carried out, yet Pacific countries are still considered small and powerless, despite the fact that the greatest ocean areas of the planet are under Pacific management. A good example of this is how, in modern parlance, one of the new approaches to development is 'the blue economy'. This blue economy, like so many of the global tropes of development, must be very carefully monitored and managed by those who live within Oceania. Only then can it avoid (and maybe not even then) rampant destruction of coasts, oceans and fishing stock whilst promising the 'sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health' (World Bank 2017).

## **Conclusion**

Possibly as a result of my recent publication on indigenous Pacific approaches to climate change, which included a chapter on indigenous knowledge systems and urbanisation, I was recently invited to a small conference in Europe which aimed, the organisers wrote, to find 'effective and sustainable ways of dealing with climate change'. Of the 35 papers delivered, only a handful were practical, honest and delivered with some humility. There was a vast divide between the approach of current and past USP geographers, including several who had studied at USP, and some anthropologists whose views of the Pacific were based around 'their village' or 'their island'. This was unfortunate as I had anticipated that

such views and interpretations were long in the past. The few planners and practitioners present tried to bring balance to the meeting, but in the end, the main discussion of the group was whether to publish either a special edition of a journal, or an edited book where chapters were to be between 7,000–8,000 words long! One wonders what exactly either of these choices will deliver to Pacific ‘development’ and more especially, who will ever read the publication?

Plus ça change, plus *c'est la même* chose my Kanak students would have said. And *o cei e lewā*? Who decides what to do? Development is such a fraught and widely interpreted term.

## Notes

- 1 Vinaka vaka levu to Dr Paulo Geraghty of USP Fiji for the suggestion of the title, and with whom I had spirited correspondence over the meaning of development ‘then’ and ‘now’.
- 2 I still believe that other universities should institute such compulsory courses for all first-year students, no matter what their ‘discipline’.
- 3 Going to teach at USP in 1983 was a return as I had been a student volunteer there in 1972, returning the following year to carry out post graduate research on Rotuman migration. Many of the connections and friendships made at that time continue today.
- 4 South Pacific Action Committee for Human Ecology and the Environment.
- 5 Significant to the success of SPACHEE were individuals from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, all with a powerful interest in the future development of the Pacific Islands. These included Bill Aalbersberg (a food Chemist), Alifereti Tawaki (Botanist), Lionel Gibson

(Geographer and Development Practitioner), Asenaca Ravuvu (Forester), Dick Watling (Botanist), Suliana Siwatibau (Energy Analyst) and Alf Simpson (Geologist).

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# Reflections on Pacific Island development

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## Pacific values

Development in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) as in virtually all of the global South has been primarily capitalist development. PICs have become part of the world economic system that also has an associated politico-military or security complex. Fiji through its role in the United Nations peace-keeping activities in various places of conflict has become integral to this global military-industrial complex (Teaiwa 2005; 2015). While colonialism—which across Oceania lasted between 400 to less than a 100 years—began the process of integration into the global economic system, over the last 50 years the changes in PICs have been rapid and transformative. According to the late Sir Albert Maori Kiki, former Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea it was for him ‘ten thousand years in a life-time’ (Kiki 1970). This paper takes a critical ‘world system’ approach to this incorporation and the related forms of development and underdevelopment of PICs. Scholars have noted since the 1950s that PICs have dualistic economies comprising cash and subsistence; the term hybrid societies has also been used. Simultaneously there has been conservation and dissolution of Pacific modes of production and social formations. Pacific values and institutions that maintain and promote reciprocity, sharing and caring across communities, and especially in sustaining the most vulnerable are fundamentally human values. Although, there has been incessant pressure to make all factors of production—land, labour and capital—‘freely’ available for sale in the market, PICs have resisted commodifying land.

My PhD supervisor, the late Professor Tom Bottomore of the University of Sussex once said in a conversation that ‘everything under the sun is development’! Obviously in this reflective piece there cannot be any attempt at dealing with so many dimensions of development. There are numerous significantly novel aspects of PICs’ development including the reduction of the tyranny of distance with internet connectivity and modern avionics; globalisation and the push for ‘free trade’ which has been lopsided, in favour of bigger and powerful countries; the entanglement of PICs in international criminal activities including drug and people smuggling; the heightened promise of tourism as an industry of comparative advantage for small island states; and their commitment to pursue the global 2015 agenda of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), having had rather mixed success regionally with the 2000–15 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This reflection addresses seven contemporary development issues: the diversity of development attributes and potential among PICs; the relationship between private and public sectors; Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and development partnership; migration and remittances; urbanisation; patriarchy, gerontocracy and gender; climate change and its consequences. Relative to other developing countries and keeping in mind the supposed ‘dough nut’

effect of comparatively stagnant development, the smaller PICs have done generally well in terms of the quality of life of their people; larger PICs have not developed to their potential.

## Development attributes and potential of PICs

Teo Fairbairn-Dunlop (1994) the distinguished Samoan economist, categorised PICs into three groups based on their size, natural resource endowments and potential for development. Melanesian countries—PNG, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands and Fiji—appeared to have the greatest potential for economic growth and development; the middle-sized countries of Samoa, Tonga (and Tahiti) had relatively limited resources; and the rest of Polynesia and most of Micronesia had the least amount of natural resources and very limited scope of growth and development. The diversity among PICs is clearly shown by PNG, which has an abundance of natural resources and enormous cultural diversity with its people speaking more than 800 distinct languages. In physical size and by population, it is bigger than Aotearoa/New Zealand. In contrast Nauru and Tuvalu are among the smallest independent countries of the world with land areas below 28 sq kms and populations of less than 10,000 people. Culturally, they are homogenous (Crocombe 2001).

Interestingly enough as noted above, over the last 25 years, Polynesian countries have done relatively well in terms of comparative economic growth and social development compared to the Melanesian countries. Although resource rich, political instability and unsatisfactory governance have hampered economic growth and development in nearly all Melanesian countries. State capacity and corruption of public servants in their dealings with private sector representatives have been widespread. This has been especially rampant in extractive industries such as mining, fisheries and logging.

## The relationship between public and private sectors

The ‘private sector is the engine of growth’ has become a standard mantra for economists, business people and policy-makers. An examination of PICs’ economies and societies will show that for much of the colonial and post-colonial period public sector has been the dominant actor in these economies, and where there is a private sector to speak of, it has been dependent on government for all kinds of support. The reason for this is that PICs have small markets, local businesses have been generally miniscule, and where present, foreign investment has been directed at enclave extractive activities. In this context, the state has led development in terms of state owned enterprises, employment generation, infrastructural development, investment in banking, labour relations, and being a partner to the emergent private sector. Regulatory frameworks including licensing and taxation have provided the arena for corruption, graft and bribery.

Governments continue to be the major employer in most PICs. ‘Washington Consensus’ type reforms have led to a massive brain drain in a number of countries because there is very little scope for investment and employment in the private sector. The Cook Islands, after the Asian Development Bank-led reforms, is an example of this. This country’s books are more balanced but the stock of skilled nationals in the 1990s is depleted.

Businesses run by individuals, families and foreign companies have been present in all PICs since the early 20th centuries. These were generally established in capital port towns and cities, and in some instances had branches in the hinterland and outer islands. In Fiji, Samoa, PNG and New Caledonia there is a relatively large private sector comprising small, medium and large enterprises. Sugar milling in Fiji, mining in PNG and New Caledonia, and tuna fisheries in the Solomon Islands have led to either the establishment of urban centres or their expansion. Fly by night logging companies bulldozed dirt roads into valleys and plateaus and mountain slopes of the interior regions of these countries leaving behind severely deforested areas that are subject to erosion and landslides (Nanau 2011; Kabutaulaka 2008). The absence of forest cover means that vulnerability to flash floods has increased significantly as evidenced by the Honiara floods of April 2014.

## Overseas Development Assistance

ODA or aid to PICs has been significant (Crocombe 2001; Howes 2011). It has been an important factor historically in the much better social indicators of health, literacy, gender equality and a range of infrastructure and utilities in Polynesia. In the larger PICs aid has had more limited impacts. A significant proportion of Australian aid came with RAMSI to the Solomon Islands and helped to put an end to the tensions, and brought back peace and stability. However, much of the aid given to PICs is boomerang aid, meaning that the funds eventually go back to the donor country by way of procurement of goods and services, payment to consultants, and salaries of personnel on the ground. Aid effectiveness is seen as a big issue in the region and in the context of stagnant economies (Hughes 2003; Slatter 2006). However ODA has not been purely directed at economic pursuits.

Historically, aid has never been based on a country need basis but has been provided for geo-political, and even commercial reasons. This can be seen through how aid is directed by metropolitan imperialist countries to their former colonies. Australian aid is deployed in the region primarily to PNG and to a lesser extent to the Solomons and Vanuatu. New Zealand aid is primarily given to Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau with which it has colonial and on-going relations with. French aid goes to the French colonial possessions, and USA aid is primarily directed to its former Micronesian Trust Territories. European Union aid is directed at the larger countries (Fry and Tarte 2015; Naidu 2006).

Up to the collapse of the USSR, Australia, New Zealand and the United States with the support of France engaged in cheque-book diplomacy to keep PICs under the ANZUS

umbrella. Strategic denial was a keystone principle of these countries against the USSR (Henderson and Watson 2005). They form with Canada and the United Kingdom, the ‘five eyes’ spying on all forms of electronic communication in the region (Hager 1996; King 2013). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, USA basically moved out of the region leaving its deputy sheriff, Australia, the regional hegemon in charge of ANZUS security and strategic interests. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc resulted in reduced aid (to Micronesian countries, for instance), and a push for neo-liberal reforms by Australia and New Zealand. Although the notion of ‘development partnership’, ‘participatory development’ and ‘empowerment of beneficiaries’ of development came into vogue during the 1990s, Australia and New Zealand tended to remain directive and even dictatorial with regards to PICs.

In the current period, a new cold war has ensued as China’s overtures and cheque-book diplomacy have gripped a number of the larger PICs. China has become the second largest provider of ODA to the region after Australia. Its presence has given some leverage to PICs to resist Australia and New Zealand’s dominance and to seek alternative support for development assistance. The Chinese approach of no interference in the internal affairs of PICs, in contrast to the push for ‘good governance and the market’ by Australia and New Zealand has found a ready audience among PICs. This is particularly evident in coup-prone Fiji and some other countries that have issues of governance (Fry and Tarte 2015; Kabutaulaka 2010).

To counter the growing Chinese influence and its global Belt and Road Initiative, there has been a sudden upsurge in foreign interest in the region. The USA, EU, Britain, France and Japan are re-establishing and/or strengthening diplomatic ties and postings, as well as indicating a willingness to pump more aid to PICs. From a Pacific standpoint while the escalation of cold war tendencies are disconcerting, the rivalry among the donors does provide them with more negotiating power, and alternatives. There has been therefore a paradigm shift in Pacific diplomacy (Fry and Tarte 2015).

## Migration and remittances

Migration is ubiquitous in the Pacific (Bedford and Hugo 2012). Writing in the mid-1980s on development in PICs, Bertram and Watters (1984) arrived at a new model of development for the smallest PICs. This model was named MIRAB—migration, remittances, aid and bureaucracy. Unlike the trajectory of development in continental countries particularly Europe and USA where agriculture gave way to industry and then to services, in these PICs there was no possibility of industrialisation because of small markets, limited natural resources, cost of production, and isolation from major markets. Instead the major export of these countries would be their people, as labour power earned more abroad than in the islands. The migrants would then send remittances home to their families to meet their needs. A transnational corporation of family and kin evolved from this nexus of migration and remittances. Family and kin strategically decided in which countries of the Pacific rim to deploy their able bodied young men, (and increasingly young women).

Over the last 30 years, 'MIRABleness' has permeated many PICs including Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Northern Marianas. For Samoa, remittances contributed between nearly 35 per cent of GDP in the 1990s; 25 per cent between 2004–08 and around 15–20 per cent in most recent times. Remittances were the largest foreign exchange source for Tongan contributing close to 35 per cent of GDP since the 1980s and currently around 25 per cent of GDP. In Fiji remittance income is the second largest source of foreign exchange and contributes over half a billion Fijian dollars to the national economy. In the Marshall Islands remittances contribute to nearly 15 per cent of GDP (Jayaraman et al 2009; Connell 2005; World Bank 2006; Kaitani et al 2011).

Given the experience of migration and remittances elsewhere, concern has been expressed regarding 'remittance decay' meaning that over time there will be a trend towards declining remittances. At a conference at the Victoria University of Wellington in 2004, a number of prominent scholars observed that remittances continued to increase in the Pacific context (Bertram 2006). It has also been noted that remittances globally exceed the amount of ODA and contribute significantly to poverty reduction, and access to education and health services. Remittances have generally improved the standards of living of the recipients (World Bank 2006; Jayaraman et al 2009).

Recognition of the benefits of migration and remittances has become a central pillar of some PICs in negotiations relating to regional free trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand. The latter country through its 'Recognised Seasonal Employers Scheme' (RSE) has over the last decade recruited short-term labour migrants from Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga and Kiribati for its horticultural and viticulture sectors. The number of recruits stand at over 10,000. Australia too has joined in the recruitment of Pacific Island workers for short-term employment in agriculture, tourism and the age care industry. Melanesian countries such as PNG, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are being included in these schemes. Vanuatu has embraced the RSE arrangement and research shows that workers, employers and respective countries' benefit from the scheme. With issues relating to the lack of employment opportunities in sending countries and their 'youth bulge', short-term labour migration is seen as a safety valve. Inter-generational issues as well as gender inequality affect the prospects of young people in PICs.

## Urbanisation

Port towns and cities are generally colonial creations and originally they were sites for European settlement, and where islanders' movements were severely restricted (Spoehr 1963). However, over the last 70 years internal migration and urbanisation have increased in all PICs reaching peak levels from the 1970s. Over the last 30 years urban growth rates have outpaced population growth in most PICs and especially in Melanesian countries where a majority of inhabitants are still rural. It is likely that in the next 30 years all these countries will have predominantly urban populations. While urbanisation is seen in recent years as a positive trend that contributes to increasing economic growth, and towns and

cities are seen as centres of creativity, serious environmental and social issues have become manifest. These are largely the products of unsatisfactory governance, and a lack of national and urban planning. A majority of towns and cities lack adequate roads, water supply, housing, sewerage and garbage disposal systems, and employment prospects of migrants are limited.

The absence of planning and adequate infrastructure and utilities is most starkly shown by the mushrooming of informal settlements throughout PICs from Kiribati to Timor-Leste and from the Marshall Islands to Fiji. Honiara, Port Moresby, Suva and Port Vila as well as the Ebeye Island in Kwajalein Atolls are overcrowded slums with substandard housing, and an absence of basic sanitary facilities and water supply. Accompanying such settlements has been the growth of the informal economy as residents seek to eke out a living from casual employment and micro-enterprises (Naidu and Vaike 2016).

More positively, there are strong linkages and relationships between indigenous islanders living in urban localities and their rural relatives. The former provide cash, goods and services to their families and kin in the hinterland. Besides, the remittances provided by them, urban households host visiting relatives who come to urban centres to access health and other services. It is not unusual for such households to comprise extended families, and often look after the children of relatives who attend urban schools. Rural relatives in turn support their urban kin from time to time by bringing food and artefacts. There is mutual support during times of life crisis (McDonald, Mohanty and Naidu 2014).

## Patriarchy, gerontocracy and gender

It is apparent that Victorian England influences and practices brought by missionaries in the late nineteenth century, and British colonial laws reinforced patriarchy in PICs (Emberson-Bain 1994) and the rule by older men (Griffen 2006). This is evident in the relative absence of youth (15–35 years) in leadership positions in most countries. It is also evident in only seven per cent of women in Pacific parliaments. In some countries there have been no women MPs for years. There is also an absence of women on boards including within state owned enterprises. Men, and especially older men have hitherto wielded political power and control over resources and commercial activities. There is widespread violence against women that is based on prevailing cultures and the power that men wield in societies (Hunt 2014; Jalal 2016).

Most PICs have laws that proscribe homosexuality and religious institutions reinforce them by considering this sexual orientation as sin. Sexual minorities are fearful of laws that proscribe sodomy and 'unnatural acts'. In some PICs there is tolerance of transgender people but in others they are the subject of ridicule, discrimination and even hate crimes that extend to violence and even murder.

The dominance of males in society, the political power of older men, and gender inequality characterised colonial and post-colonial development and requires tackling. The rise of civil society organisations that represent women and youth reflect the beginnings of change in the current status



quo. Only Samoa has implemented the policy of a quota of women MPs in its national parliament. PNG has talked about temporary special measures for some time without taking any action.

The United Nations conventions relating to the human rights of women (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women), children (Convention on the Rights of the Child), people with disability (Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), and minorities (Convention on the Rights of Minorities) together the first generation of rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have either been ratified by a majority of PICs or generally resonate with the missions of regional organisations. However, there remains a dismal shortfall between PIC state parties' rhetoric and implementation of these fundamental human rights including the rights of workers.

### Climate change and its consequences

Extreme weather events and sea level rise have affected most PICs and pose existential threats to atoll states that are generally below three metres in elevation. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), COP 21 Paris Agreement sought to limit green-house gas emissions to keep global temperature warming to 1.5 degrees. Progress towards this goal appeared to be made when the major emitters of carbon dioxide and other gaseous pollutants of the atmosphere agreed to sign on to the Agreement. However, the United States, the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter has withdrawn from the Agreement. China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, Nigeria and other South countries prioritise national economic growth over environmental pollution. Even on existing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the likelihood of extreme weather events and sea level rise causing catastrophic disasters for river delta states and small island countries are already apparent and worsening. There is increasing recognition of these threats to human security in the region.

There has been talks and expert advice on mitigation (i.e., reducing greenhouse gases) and adaptation (i.e., building resilience to climate change effects). PICs produce .03 of greenhouse gases worldwide, and therefore their role in mitigation is extremely marginal. Meanwhile the biggest greenhouse gas emitter in the region, Australia, continues its reliance on coal powered electricity generation, and the mining of coal for exports. A controversial major new coal mine is being established in Queensland with port facilities close to the Great Barrier Reef. There is little evidence of any serious commitment to mitigation measures by this major emitter (MacLellan 2016). However, there is a large sum of 'guilt money' in circulation to support adaptation measures in PICs. These include relocating people from vulnerable islands and from coastal regions to higher ground; the planting of mangroves; building of sea walls; and experimentation with a range of food crops to make them more resilient to higher temperatures, arid conditions, and salt water inundation. These measures are important and worthwhile responses to climate change, and do have developmental significance, especially food security.

However, given the enormous threats posed by the failure of continental countries to mitigate, these measures can be seen as rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

### Conclusion

Small island states including PICs are caught in a maelstrom of environmental and economic forces not of their making, which have serious social and political consequences for them. These include having to relocate completely from their home countries for the smallest atoll states. Increasingly but rather too slowly, there is a realisation that PICs' development changes are as varied as the islands themselves. While, with the possible exception of PNG, they are small in size, they exhibit the same structural features as global South countries. These include growing social inequality and poverty as well as significantly increased human mobility, internally within countries and abroad. Urbanisation is almost ubiquitous with its associated challenges.

This paper examined seven aspects of PICs' development without getting into policy options. The latter is implied as in the case of urbanisation that requires serious deliberations regarding governance at the local and national levels as well as building capacity in urban planning (Storey 2016). Engaging with customary land owners in and near urban centres as well as other places of economic growth that will attract migrants, as well as with regards to relocating residents of vulnerable coastal areas is critical. The enormity of change in PICs requires a lot more research, reflection, and search for policy options and from the experience of global South countries and PICs must not be left to so called development experts and consultants, especially those who are located in or come from multilateral organisations and international financial institutions. Indeed, the strength of Pacific islanders lie in their cultural values of reciprocity, communal ownership of land and natural resources, strong bonds of kinship, and sharing and caring in families, in communities and across national boundaries beyond the 'sea of islands'.

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## Pacific reflections: A developmental journey

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My introduction to aid and development was in Africa—three years in Sierra Leone and four in Tanzania. It was a valuable experience against which, over the last 44 years, I have continued to consider, view and review development and change in the Pacific.

Sierra Leone was three years of coups and chaos followed by four years of drought and starvation in up country Tanzania. We seemed to attract trouble. We arrived in Sierra Leone in the worst wet season on record, serious political unrest, armed Guinean troops in the streets and talk of attempted coups. What with weather and threatening tribal war not for nothing was Sierra Leone known as the ‘white man’s grave’. It is also the early grave of a high proportion of Sierra Leoneans and a frighteningly high proportion of children. In the wet season so many children died that not all deaths were recorded. When we were there, this provided would-be members of the notorious Leopard Society the opportunity to gain membership by killing a child in the ‘way of a leopard’. It had become too much of a risk to kill an adult as tradition demanded. Coups were a bit close to home when at 3am an army jeep rolled up to our door and four soldiers waving guns demanded my husband, as Director of Broadcasting, open up the studios so they could broadcast to the nation that the army had taken control of the government. With some jiggery pokery with the transmitters switches it was next morning before they realised their message had not been heard by the populace. As in the Melanesian countries, Sierra Leone comprised different ethnic groups in addition to the ethnically mixed coastal population made up of returned slaves.<sup>1</sup> Mining was an ongoing cause of unrest, rumour and sometimes, amusement. Big diamonds were big news and big trouble.

The trouble in the peaceful and stable Tanzania of Dr Julius Nyerere was an act of deliberate provocation from Uganda across the lake. We had no sooner arrived in Mwanza on the shore of Lake Victoria than General Amin began bombing the town. Was he going to land troops and attack? With no access to any overseas or local news and no access in or out of the town we could do nothing but wait and hope that UNESCO might give some thought to its staff. The airport was closed to civilians, petrol pumps were in the hands of the army, the ferry to Kisumu in Kenya and the train to Dar es Salaam were not running, and it was the wet season which ensured all roads were impassable. It was the last real rain we saw in four years. We left for Samoa with up country Tanzania in severe drought, the small town on the lake edge swollen with rural refugees—a high proportion of them old women in poor health<sup>2</sup>—the market almost empty and the stores with only locally produced instant coffee, toothpaste and cans of unrecognisable Chinese ‘content’—no telling from the label if it was food or floor polish.

### Welcome to the Pacific

We arrived in Samoa, almost direct from Tanzania, at 1.30am on a bright moonlit night, the moon catching the long line of surf on the reef and glinting on the coconut fronds on the road into Apia. It was 1974. It was paradise. No dead cattle, no bombs, no monkeys stripping the mango trees, no hippopotamus clearing out my entire lakeside garden of corn, no drought, no leopards coughing at night in the granite boulders up behind the house, and no hot swirling red dust of the Sierra Leonian harmattan or waterfalls of rain, no guns or gun shots, no menacing drums at night of the women’s Bundu society preparing for the circumcision of young girls. Oh, what a relief!

I still have a clear image of that drive from the airport into Apia through old WESTEC coconut plantations, the fat cattle, roadside piles of coconuts, lush vegetation, tidy clusters of open thatched fales with the occasional kerosene lantern burning, trimmed grass and gardens, white painted roadside markers, large white churches and the bright white of surf on the reef—and the calm.

Ten years later some of the traditional fales had been replaced by concrete block houses with electricity; the space between villages had become smaller and the road much busier. The population was around 120,000 and although annual population growth was around 2.35 per cent population density remained relatively low through high outmigration to New Zealand. As in many Pacific Island countries land was still held under customary tenure. Specific parcels of land belonged to specific families with its use under the control of the extended family *matai* or chief. If family members moved away and did not continue to support the family in some way they could effectively become landless. Land could not be sold or leased, nor could it be used as collateral for loans. This ensured that the bulk of land remained in Samoan hands.

Today, it is almost continual development from the airport into Apia. The population is almost 200,000, life expectancy is 76 years, and infant mortality 15 per 1,000 live births—indicative of a reasonably effective health service with good accessibility. Fertility is going down and women now have on average four children while 20 years ago it was six. The small pickup trucks with the family riding in the back have been replaced by large numbers of very large SUVs—second hand from Japan. Some years ago land was reclaimed in the centre of town for multi-story government buildings; the market has moved; the beautiful circular traditional fale that served as Parliament House at *Mulinu'u* has been replaced by a large ugly concrete building that looks out of place among the few surviving palms. The town with its central white clock and the few remaining historic white wooden buildings cower behind a three meter high black volcanic rock sea wall, in the hope of keeping the Pacific Ocean at bay. The poorer end of town, down in the swampy land, has expanded and so too have poverty and landlessness, although officially neither exist. More people are larger and the data for heart disease, hypertension and diabetes are, along with the Marshall Islands, among the highest in the world.

Land is no longer secured by law for future generations. In 2008, with I suspect much persuasion from Australian economists, the Torrens system of land tenure was passed into law with considerable public outcry and without the referendum required by the Constitution. Presumably land and *matai* titles will no longer be dependent on one another. In my opinion this is a seriously backward step that will hasten landlessness and poverty (See *Taua'a* this issue) and result in situations similar to those in Vanuatu where almost all land on the coast of Efate is in the hands of expatriates. The Ni-Vanuatu, whose clan land this was, were forcibly removed and no longer have access to either land, the sea or fishing rights.

Samoa continues to have high educational attainment with close to 100 per cent literacy. There is a thriving national university and more young women than men are achieving academic qualifications. Migration to New Zealand and the west coast of America continues and for some years now there have been more Samoans in South Auckland and Los Angeles than in Samoa and increasingly they enrich New Zealand film, music, theatre—and rugby. Remittances have been a major component of the economy for the last 30 years.

Our time in Samoa was greatly enriched by our Samoan friends and neighbours, Penelope Schoeffel and Leasiolagi Malama Meleisea were an encyclopaedia of knowledge about Samoa history and culture as well as development theory and Tupai Sei Apa and his wife Jenny joined us for wonderful evenings playing music and provided good advice about Samoan negotiation. With their help, we came to a very Samoan understanding with our neighbour the Commissioner of Police whose pigs, illegally unpenned, regularly demolished my vegetable garden. The pigs got all our kitchen food scraps, the pigs stayed home and occasionally we got a piece of pork! Win, win.

## **Fiji and the University of the South Pacific**

While in Samoa I took some University of the South Pacific extension courses which proved another wonderful source of information about Pacific island cultures, land tenure, land use and environmental degradation. Through the crackles and static of a temperamental, very old, black and white TV in Samoa's USP Extension Centre, I met Ron Crocombe and Randy Thaman of USP. Both lively presences even through the static screen. As a journalist and broadcaster I enjoyed doing primary research for course essays many of which ended up being published. To me this was nothing new. It was my job—I wrote for publication or broadcast. But USP lecturers were a bit stunned. I was equally stunned 18 months later when ANU offered me a PhD scholarship with only a USP BA as academic qualification. I continue to find it amazing and I continue to find those early USP courses topical and useful.

We arrived in Fiji to find a note from Ron Crocombe asking if I wanted a job at the Institute of Pacific Studies for which he was the director. Who could refuse? Access to all that Pacific knowledge and enthusiasm and at the same time I could finish what had turned out to be a BA. Fiji was calm and quiet, the university grounds lovely and studded here and there with students' small mixed vegetable plots as part of the agricultural course. In town, Victoria Street was relatively sedate, the National Council of Chiefs was in little evidence, and as in much of Africa, the professional class and the business people in Suva were largely Indian. The old Grand Pacific Hotel, in its faded colonial splendour, was still functioning. Health services and the education system worked reasonably well and our children settled happily into *Veitu* primary school.

The University of the South Pacific, now in its 50th year, was in my opinion the best possible university to learn about development and under development. Most useful of all were the geography field trips—some of them a week or more long. We walked up river beds to remote rural villages, we hiked up to the plateau, we slept on the floor of village houses, we spent the nights dancing the *taralala* and the days doing transects of forested and cultivated slopes, or sitting, counting and talking to market stall holders; we visited Indian and Fijian farms, and for weeks I accompanied agricultural extension officers, one of them a woman, to a variety of farms and garden plots. It helped me understand the different life styles and forms of agriculture in Fiji and make lasting friendships even at the cost of an endlessly

numb throat from the paint stripping green *yanqona* (kava). We had wonderful teachers—the best development geographers you could hope for—Ron Crocombe, Bill Clarke and Randy Thaman.

At USP, I was constantly reminded of the more socialist and community-oriented approaches to development being promoted in Africa by DFID, ODA and the Universities of East Anglia and Sussex. There were several African lecturers whose courses tended to be left wing and socialist. Karl Marx was on the reading list and Julius Nyerere, with his socialist experiment of *ujamaa*, was on the ‘development’ agenda. I was quick to support Nyerere’s socialist dream when the more right wing lecturers criticised it having never seen it in action. I had been involved in it, teaching journalism and broadcast skills at an Agricultural Technical College outside Mwanza where equality was seen as paramount. We did practical work recording and talking to people in rural villages and running courses for teachers, to support their double teaching loads.<sup>3</sup> Nyerere, or the *Mwalimu* (teacher), as he was known was a deeply charismatic, thoughtful doctor whom his people revered. He was a true ‘man of the people’. I do not think it strange that of all the relatively newly independent countries in Africa and some in the Pacific, that Tanzania is one of the few that has not at some time descended into chaos.

I have never returned to live in Fiji or Tanzania but I have continued to work in Fiji for short periods and to give workshops at USP on research and presentation skills, writing research proposals and policy briefs and supporting the Oceania Development Network on the executive committee. There have been many political changes since I lived there—coups, a military takeover, imprisonment for no seemingly valid reason, suppression of the media, suppression of the church—the Methodist Church was forbidden to hold its wonderful and very popular annual choral competition; and as in Africa, many Indian families were forced to leave. Today, sugar is no longer an important component of the budget, sugar plantations, rail stock and crushing plants are falling into disuse.

When I visited Suva early in 2018, many of the businesses and shop signs were Chinese and the sleazy end of town had become very unsavoury. In the time since I lived there, many of the 99 year leases held largely by poor Indian cane farmers became due and were not renewed, effectively dispossessing many Indian families who could not afford other land. Some were resettled near Nasinu but have not enough land to provide an adequate living. Their housing and living conditions are poor. Health remains relatively good but as in other Pacific Island countries there has been a rapid increase in obesity and lifestyle diseases. Department of Health personnel report that the disease profiles of Indians and Fijians, as in the past, differ with a higher incidence of cancer and heart problems among Indians and a greater incidence of infectious diseases among Fijians.<sup>4</sup>

But some things do not change. The museum, with its wonderful display of *waka* together with the navigational charts of their journeys, reminded me yet again of the extraordinary skills Pacific Island people had for negotiating their oceanic lives. Skills that are now largely lost.

Boat building and navigational skills and the important ceremonies that surrounded them are replaced by diesel driven ships and the knowledge of the stars, swells, birds and colour of the sea lost to GPS, which, along with the ships, are usually in the hands of outsiders. The Grand Pacific Hotel, that great bastion of colonialism, has been rescued from complete dilapidation and very tastefully restored and is now the preferred hangout for those on expense accounts. All it needs now is a palm court orchestra to complete the colonial experience! I actually played in one at the old GPH—for a movie—dressed appropriately in black and white with ruffles.

The other unchanging feature of Suva is the buses with their canvas flaps for windows, their deafening roar, clanking, double de-clutching gear changes and great billows of black diesel exhaust. I felt quite nostalgic riding up the hill from USP and down into town.

## And so to Vanuatu, the Solomons and PNG

My travelling and work in the Pacific, some of it with the National Centre for Development Studies at ANU and some as a UNICEF Regional Adviser for East Asia and the Pacific, has been largely unplanned and serendipitous; and over 44 years has included all Pacific Island countries with the exception of Rapanui and the Marquesas. Graham and I are two of the few people who have been to Wallis and Futuna, Kwajalein and Ebeye. From a development perspective, the places that stand out for me are Vanuatu and PNG, although the impact of climate change in the atoll states—Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Kiribati—is of considerable concern as they are literally being washed away. For me PNG and Vanuatu exemplify some of the best and some of the worst types of development, so much of it imposed from outside and seemingly for reasons that are diametrically opposed to the kind of development that might improve the lives and opportunities of most of their peoples. The speed and extent of the divisions between rich and poor is heart stopping.

## Looking back in Vanuatu

Pre-independent Vanuatu was unusual. When I first went there it was a condominium with both French and British oversight—a divided community with two of everything—French schools/English schools, French hospital/ English hospital, French gaol (much preferred by the Ni-Vanuatu as the food was better)/ English gaol, French Catholicism/ English Protestantism. Whole islands were of one religious denomination. Pentecost and most of Efate were Anglican, Malekula and Espiritu Santo were Catholic, only Tanna retained its traditional religious ceremonies; some communities there still do. Pre-independence, the British residence was near the top of the hill on Iririki Island in the harbour and the French residence on a hill, at exactly the same altitude, on Efate! Rumour has it both residences had large telescopes on their verandahs to keep an eye on what the ‘opposition’ was up to! It was the perfect plot for a Gilbert and Sullivan opera! This pre-independence colonial division continues to influence education and development in Vanuatu. The unnecessary doubling up of services

remains a very expensive option in a poor country but I do not see it changing any time soon. There are still not enough schools or teachers to provide an education for all children and government services still do not reach more remote villages on the outer islands. The mainline churches however, do—a fact that is now only being recognised by the development community.

As in other newly independent countries in the Pacific, Christianity was an important factor in the selection of the new country's leadership as it was the churchmen who had had overseas education. Vanuatu's first government was led by an Anglican priest, Father Walter Lini whom I met when I first went to Vanuatu in 1979 to help a group of Ni-Vanuatu write a book on the new leaders—*Yumi Stanap*, and a more general one on the country, *Vanuatu*. All chapters were written by Ni-Vanuatu; both were published by IPS; and all these years later they are still in print and on bookstands in Port Vila.

### Communicating development in Vanuatu

But there have been some very successful 'developments' in Vanuatu. In those earlier days, 1984, I recall walking down the main street in Vila and hearing a lot of laughter and singing coming from behind the shops. Ever inquisitive, I followed the sound to the old cultural centre by the harbour. I was surprised to find 10 or so young Ni-Vanuatu and an Englishman, Peter Walker, practising ways to involve an audience in dramatic action. Peter, recently arrived from Zambia, was a drama teacher experienced in community theatre and alternative ways of providing information and education about key health and nutrition behaviours. It was the start of what was to become, in my opinion, one of the most successful and sustainable development projects in the Pacific, Wan Smolbag Theatre (see Jo Dorras, this issue). Over 30 years they have developed a professional troupe of Ni-Vanuatu actors, singers, lighting specialists, cameramen, editors, and producers. They have special reproductive health clinics for young people in Vila and Luganville and a large youth centre with sports and teaching facilities in Tagabe, Port Vila. The centre is used extensively by young people from the nearby settlements around Blacksands.

WSB performs live plays to rural audiences in remote villages, radio programs, films, television series and for three years produced a wonderful television soap shown, to great acclaim, across the Pacific. It was called 'Love Patrol'. Set in a police station it dealt with common problems—family violence, rape, abuse, lack of money for schooling, the situation of women, drugs and reproductive health and nutrition. More recently, they involved the entire settlement of Blacksands in developing and performing a community drama, watched by an estimated 50,000 people. They were far ahead of other organisations or governments in the Pacific (including Australia and New Zealand) in promoting the ability of people with disability. They put on plays about disability, and had an actor with a disability who regularly appeared in their performances. He still does.

WSB was a joy to work with. It was unusual to see community participation in action and to listen to the actors

sitting around on the floor discussing themes for future dramas, using their own and their communities' experiences and language to shape the plots and action.

And I will never forget the tour of Pentecost Island with one of the WSB acting troupes carrying not much more than one small bag of props. For the first time I understood the value of going barefoot. Well, you didn't have much option. Walking through the forest between villages after heavy rain ensured that when your foot sank deep down into the mud not even shoes that were laced on tight, stayed on! The performances I saw involved deforestation and timber contracts with Indonesian and Chinese loggers. The drama considered the impact of logging and included dramatic disagreements between women and men about its advantages and disadvantages. The entire village was then involved in small group discussions about their own situation and what they might do.

DFID, as in Africa, was instrumental in supporting drama as a means of promoting development in the Pacific. In the 1980s in both parts of the world there was considerable concern for communication and how developmental ideas and change could be encouraged. Local drama was one means. In the Pacific, DFID supported WSB in Vanuatu; Te Itibwerere Theatre and TeToa Matoa in Kiribati and Raun Raun Theatre in PNG. As an organisation, DFID was good to work with, innovative and prepared to try something new. I was really sorry when they left the Pacific and that no other organisation was prepared to continue funding theatre although it often produced excellent results.

The other AusAID funded project in Vanuatu that in my opinion had great potential to assist rural people was the Church Partnership Program, axed by AusAID after four years and an excellent review. The ways of donors are truly mysterious. A similar program in PNG continues.

### And so to PNG

When I first went to PNG, we stayed in the ANU house at Boroko. While we were exhorted to lock the wire gates each night, we often forgot. Later times when I stayed in town, I walked early morning down to Ela Beach for a swim. Today this would be considered madness both because of raskols and the heavy pollution of the water and beach. Now people live behind razor wire fences, tall locked gates with armed security people to let you in and out. Bright lights around the compounds are on all night and early morning the security pickup trucks go by, full of guards and dogs. How different would this be to being in gaol? But Papua New Guinea is perhaps the most amazing and most beautiful country I have worked in and the people delightful to work with. My first visit to the Wahgi Valley was a revelation that all my reading had not prepared me for and walking with a health patrol up from Goroka was one of my great Pacific experiences. Orderly villages and gardens, relatively healthy people and a seemingly settled way of life. I have not been back.

Most of my work in PNG over 30 years was in rural health service delivery—a progressively worsening situation as aid posts lost their health staff and fell into disrepair,

health centres could not get adequate supplies of even basic drugs or dressings, although drug cupboards were often full of out of date totally obscure and unnecessary drugs. Money earmarked for provincial and district health services never got there or was never spent on health. Even the World Bank could never find where or how the money vanished. It was disappointing to see village apathy with regard to health facilities. For example, at a health centre in Enga, although there were reasonable facilities for MCH and deliveries and an aid worker trained in deliveries, no deliveries had taken place there for three years because there was no clean water. This was because the metal guttering had rusted through, so no water went into the tank. This could so easily have been fixed but for three years nobody, neither health worker nor villagers, considered it their responsibility; the women believed that because it inconvenienced only women, men considered it of no importance.

## Religion and the churches

In my opinion—from reviewing, evaluating, planning rural health service support programs in almost all provinces in PNG—it is clear that were it not for the church run health services, who somehow manage to maintain staff and support although their funding bases have been shrinking for many years, there would be virtually no health service in PNG. For five years, on a rural health service advisory team, at least twice a year we included in our report the advice that if Australia wanted to have an impact on improving the health and health services of rural Papua New Guineans it needed to find a way to support the church run health facilities. We cut and pasted the same paragraph probably 10 times! This fell on deaf ears or blind eyes. But six years or so later, I was pleased to see the AusAID introduction of the Church Partnership Program.

## Looking back on development and change

Over the last 44 years there have been overwhelming changes in all countries in the Pacific that I have worked or lived in. Only a few of them relate to development assistance. These changes are increased population; the move to town, most particularly to the ‘settlements’; the decline of existing infrastructure and inability or lack of will of governments to maintain it; the increased divisions between the haves and have nots and the increase of urban poverty; the loss of traditional or communal land and with it the loss of security; the social, environmental and health problems that accompany mining; the increased visibility and involvement of the Chinese; the decline in fishing stock; changes in diet and lifestyle and the dramatic increase in obesity and lifestyle diseases, most specifically diabetes. Fresh fish once an important part of the diets of coastal peoples has been replaced by Japanese or Chinese canned tuna; bread has replaced traditional root crops; and sugar is in everything. Many of the Pacific towns are much less secure than in the past. Violence and theft are common and security personnel and their guns and dogs are becom-

ing an unremarkable sight. One of the most rapid ‘developments’ has been the almost instantaneous ‘take-up’ of mobile phones—evidence of remarkably effective marketing. How could we use the same model for promoting health?

This all seems negative and I wish I could be more positive about what I have experienced. Certainly, many more children are now in school and there are real opportunities to get tertiary education; maternal and child health care have improved considerably but those gains now need to be maintained. There is more awareness of climate change and the environment and I see more young and middle-aged urban people out walking or running early morning. More young people are involved in sport and there are more opportunities for young Pacific Islanders to travel overseas and within the region. Certainly, English language is much more widely spoken and spoken well, opening up wider possibilities for many young Pacific Island people.

From a ‘development’ perspective, I witnessed over many years, the change from social development that took into account different cultures and histories and acknowledged the importance of stories and spoken word, to an economic approach that was large scale and concerned with numbers and economic growth—almost at any cost. The university focus on development economics and its mantra of ‘growth’ mirrors the loss in Australia of development studies as a multi-disciplinary course. Although the trickle-down theory has been disproved, it seems to remain the rationale for the current development approach.

What I find disappointing is the move from small scale to very large scale development projects, as though size was somehow more effective. I am astonished to find that in development agencies there remains the belief that development is linear and that ‘development’ can be designed on a logframe with neatly arranged inputs and outputs when so clearly development is not linear just as impact of a project cannot be planned—development has a life of its own only to be guessed at, usually incorrectly.

From my 44 years experience, it is the small scale, intensive, long term projects both in Africa and the Pacific, that have resulted in benefits for people. These activities are usually supported and carried out by NGOs.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, was where slaves rescued from slaving ships were ‘set free’.
- <sup>2</sup> In rural households, when there is not enough food for the family, elderly women who are no longer productive members of the family can be accused of witchcraft and cast out from the community. Some end up in the town at the market where they collect rotting or badly bruised fruit.
- <sup>3</sup> School teachers voluntarily taught evening literacy classes for adults and often morning as well as afternoon classes to allow more children to attend school.
- <sup>4</sup> For the last 15 years data has not been collected by ethnicity.

# A glimpse into Samoa's political, economic and social landscape since 1982

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## Introduction

This paper examines the past 36 years of Samoa's political, economic and social landscape since party systems of government first infiltrated the political scene in the form of the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP). The paper considers the achievements and shortcomings of the HRPP from the perspective of one who grew up in a one-party state system. Numerous other scholars (Meleisea 1987; Meleisea and Schoeffel 2015; Crocombe 1987), development commentators (Abbott and Pollard 2004; Toleafoa 2013) and donors (AusAID 2012; 2015) continue to provide critical assessment of the country's political, economic and social status. These lend support to many of the issues discussed here.

The HRPP rose to power after the Public Servants Association (PSA) strike of the 1980s that brought down the government of Tupuola Efi. Harnessing support from the PSA and unionised organisations such as the Samoa Teachers Association was enough to legitimise the party that formed government in 1982 and remains in government to the present day. To stay in power for so long has required HRPP to pacify the nation's labor movements (including gradual removal of the PSA), and to instill a sense of national development. Equally important has been the inherent system of patronage and reward of the party faithful. While Samoa's version of a democratic government has been a mixed bag of Samoan cultural ethos and modern democratic principles such regimes are vulnerable to corruption and inefficiency, as brought to light in the 1994 Controller and Chief Auditor Report to Parliament with its allegations of financial irregularities and corruption related to the state-owned Polynesian Airlines. This culminated in the sacking of the controller and chief auditor, and the airline's closure. The assassination of the Minister of Public Works in 1999 during the celebration of the party's 20th anniversary was a dark moment in the party's history.

## Assets and debt

Eighty-one per cent of land in Samoa is customary owned, with the remaining 19 per cent as public and free hold. Customary land allocation for family use remains the prerogative of the head of the extended family (*Sa'o*) with matters of land grievances among extended family members against the *Sa'o* settled by the Land and Titles Court. The Land Titles Registration Act of 2008 which introduced the Torrens system signaled a major change in the administration of customary land. The new law opened up customary land for leasing and mortgaging purposes for the sake of economic development, particularly commercial farming. This is an expedient move by the government considering that only 14.2 per cent of the land is suitable for agriculture, the remainder is classified as either moderate to severely

unsuitable for agriculture or forestry production (Wright 1963). Many Samoans at home and abroad remain skeptical and fearful that the Torrens system opens up opportunities for alienating customary land. Local media abounds with criticism of the HRPP government particularly in relation to enacting the new law without calling for a referendum as stipulated in Section 109 of the Constitution. But with the ruling party controlling more than 95 per cent of seats in Parliament, a referendum would be meaningless and costly for a country already burdened with a debt level that has reached more than 50 per cent of GDP over the last five years.

Many critics, including Australian Senator Fierravanti-Wells and the IMF, are pessimistic about Samoa's ability to service its debt, notably to its biggest creditor China. Samoa and China have enjoyed 40 years of diplomatic relations, characterised by Chinese-funded projects in health, education, sports, environment and trade. Chinese citizens are taking up residency, setting up businesses (retailing, wholesaling and restaurants) and leasing business space from locals. A handful are intermarrying with Samoans, though many prominent Chinese-Samoan families trace their ancestry to the first wave of Chinese indentured laborers who arrived in the late 1800s/early 1900s to work in German plantations. The Chinese-Samoan union is a desirable mix to strengthen the Samoan-Polynesian gene pool. Essentially, China's presence in Samoa, in the form of concessional loans, grants, specialist doctors, gene pool, or the Confucius Institute housed at the National University of Samoa, is changing the political, economic and social landscape of the islands for the better.

Like the indentured labor movement that brought the first wave of Chinese and Melanesians to Samoa in the late 1800s, today formalised labor mobility agreements under PACER-Plus provide a much-needed solution to youth unemployment. The 2007 Recognized Seasonal Employer Scheme (RSE) allows Samoans temporary work in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture sector; a similar arrangement with Australia commenced in 2011. Labor mobility—be it Chinese contract workers or Fijians care givers coming to Samoa or Samoans going to New Zealand, Australia or other Pacific rim countries—adds a positive dimension to the country's political, economic and social landscape. Anecdotal evidence suggests improved incomes and increased standards of living within households that have at least one person participating in the RSE. For rural households that includes increased cash flows, construction of brick houses and churches, purchase of flat screen televisions and white goods, and the establishment of small businesses such as taxi operations and shops. Acquiring new skills and experiences enhances self-esteem and elevates the households' social-economic status in the village community, which is an intangible benefit of RSE and a significant cultural construct in the Samoan psyche.



Arguably, labour mobility under RSE can be described as a natural evolution of international migration from Samoa to New Zealand in the 1960s and subsequent years. The difference is in the temporary nature of the former. Migration continues to provide an important source of remittances which are now estimated to be 18 per cent of GDP. Despite questions raised about the sustainability of remittances as a source of income support, the proliferation of money transfer operators other than the commercial banks and Western Union, the increasing number of temporary migrant labourers in the RSE scheme, as well as the steady increase in Samoans migrating under the Samoa immigration quota scheme suggests a sustainable and guaranteed flow of private cash transfer.

### **1990s: Public sector reform**

Public sector reform and institutional-strengthening projects in the mid-1990s effected significant and much needed changes in the structure and processes of the public service. There was significant downsizing of departments, through separating policymaking and service delivery, while other departments with complementary roles were merged to form ministries. The Value Added Goods and Services Tax (VAGST) was introduced in 1994 and replaced by the Goods and Services Tax in 2015 and a clergy tax was implemented at the end of June 2018. Despite much dissent and threats by some of the clergy (Congregational Christian Church of Samoa) to contravene the law, there is hope that the rule of law will prevail. Some deficiencies in the 1990s reform are beginning to show. A recent Cabinet directive will see the re-merging of the Ministry of Health with its service delivery arm, the National Health Services, following continuing sector underperformance including the duplication of roles, ballooning levels of senior management, perpetual shortage of medical and nursing staff, and poor health service delivery particularly in primary health care awareness and prevention programmes.

### **Social and economic change**

There has been a general improvement in the population's health status including increased life expectancy for both men and women and declining infant mortality. However, the rise of diabetes and non-communicable diseases is of concern. In less than three decades a significant proportion of the economically active population has become obese—an outcome of changing diet and sedentary lifestyles. In 2005, the National Kidney Foundation of Samoa was set up to deal with a rising incidence of renal disease—one impact of diabetes and hypertension. The unit started with six patients, today they have 120 patients undergoing treatment and there are many more undiagnosed or at risk.

Investment in rural training activities to improve home-based business opportunities have increased female labour force participation rates. Similarly, a marked improvement in the number of women in leadership positions in government, corporations and Parliament is a testament to government honoring global agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against

Women. A lapse in government policy to address social protection for people living with disability, the elderly and unemployed young people are critical areas that need urgent attention given the high rates of crime, youth suicide and economic hardship in urban and rural Samoa. The re-focussing of formal education programmes to accentuate technical and vocational education in partnership with Australia is a positive approach to capacity building for potential migrant labour.

Two-thirds of households depend on agriculture for subsistence and cash income. Samoa has unfortunate experiences with the low prices of commodities such as talo, (k)ava, cocoa and coconut particularly at the end of the 1980s. The cyclones in 1990 and 1991 and the talo blight of 1993 wiped out 90 per cent of the talo crop, with dire consequences on exports and local consumption. Talo production has only started to pick up in the last 10 years with new and improved blight resistant varieties. However, climate change challenges and natural disasters will continue to pose threats to Samoa's exports of talo, cocoa and coconut products. Given the vulnerability of agriculture to natural disasters and shifting commodity prices in the global markets, the government has responded by engaging Chinese aid to fund crop diversification projects such as the farm demonstration projects that introduced tunnel houses to grow different varieties of vegetables. The project that started in 2010 is slowly gaining grounds in introducing new vegetable varieties as well as improved harvests for farmers. However, transformation can only be achieved through clear government direction and commitment.

Investment in information and communications technologies such as the newly installed submarine cable system has enhanced the speed and flow of the internet. This is important, to enhance public service delivery in distance education, e-health, e-commerce, tourism, etc. The government remains hopeful that this \$57.4 million investment will positively affect productivity and growth in the long term.

### **Aid and infrastructure**

The start of the new millennium was marked by extensive aid-funded improvements to infrastructure. Roads, water and sanitation, airport and port facilities, education, energy and telecommunication stimulated significant economic growth. Major road improvements connecting Apia to its hinterland have been completed well in advance of the 2009 road switch. The upgrade saw the number of private car ownership almost triple. Cheap second-hand cars came in from Japan and low to middle-income households can now afford to own vehicles. Many of the construction and road upgrade projects are ongoing. While it is arguable that many of the aid-funded projects (Chinese in particular) are built by Chinese companies using Chinese labour, a significant component of the work is sub contracted to local companies. The newly upgraded Faleolo International Airport, costed at SAT\$147 million and built by the Shanghai Construction Group, saw local contractors supplying heavy equipment, concrete, asphalt products, and other services. The state-of-the-art airport, opened in March 2018, has yet to witness the

300 passengers per hour flow through at arrivals declared by the government. We may have an airport comparable to Auckland international, but it takes more than a flash airport to entice tourists into the country. Distance, isolation, and the high cost of air travel are some of the challenges the government has yet to address.

Tourism is the second-largest revenue source for the country, and the upgraded airport was justified on the basis of boosting tourism and trade, as well as supporting a national carrier. Samoa Airways is doing all it can to fulfill its mandate, but the high costs of air travel and the competitive nature of the airline industry implies the national carrier will have to do more than rely on the government for its budget allocation. Code sharing with Fiji Airways enables Samoa to tap into the North American and Asian markets. Selling 30 to 35 per cent shares to Air China or China Eastern Airlines will not only help pay for our Chinese built airport, but will also boost the occupancy rates of many locally owned and operated hotels.

Investment in information and communications technologies (ICT) such as the newly installed submarine cable system has enhanced the speed and flow of information via the internet. This is important to enhance public services delivery in the areas of distance education, e-health, e-commerce, tourism and many others. Regulations and policies to guide and protect users against malicious and illegal use of the internet for criminal activities have been developed to keep up with the rapid progression in ICT. Meanwhile, government remains hopeful that this \$57.4 million investment will generate a positive effect on productivity and growth in the long term.

## Conclusion

As we approach 60 years of independence, considerable social and economic changes have taken place. Our social-economic journey as a modern state under the stewardship of the HRPP is best characterised as aid driven, results based and debt cumulative. Samoa graduated out of LDC status on 1 January 2014, on the basis of improved social and economic development irrespective of its rising debt. As the government is mindful that Samoa could not have achieved much without getting into debt they have put in place a strategy for national development over the next four years that is committed to prudent management of economic and natural resources to enable sustainable and wider opportunities for all.

Growing the private sector by drawing in foreign direct investment is a slow, difficult undertaking. The high cost of doing business, diseconomies of scale, unskilled and unreliable labour, high cost of transport and electricity are longstanding challenges

Climate change is the biggest game changer for Samoa. The physical environment has evolved for the worse, with increasing rainfall, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and loss of reef and coral ecosystems. An increasing debt and possibilities of power struggles in the HRPP for the next generation of leaders can obstruct future development plans and could have an adverse impact on economic and social development. But strengthening bilateral relations, cultivating fresh relations with emerging regional economic powers, and forging new partnerships with global environment fund providers to support climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives provide a pathway to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

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# Papua New Guinea highlands—Family field work in 1979–80

*Mary-Jane Mountain and Barry Shaw*

## Introduction

‘BURNT! THE VILLAGE IS ABANDONED!’ October 1979—1,700m above sea level in the rugged isolation of Simbu Province in the Papua New Guinea highlands. We—Mary-Jane, Barry and five month old daughter Emma—looked aghast at the village where, three times previously, archaeologist Mary-Jane had stayed and excavated, enjoying the villagers’ cooperation and friendship.

Finally, we meet somebody who explained the situation. ‘*Bigpela pait behain, wanpela man i dai pinis, ol man i stap nau long kalabus—ol meri na pikinini I go pinis.*’ A nearby village had attacked our village and during the fight one of their men had been killed. This has resulted in many of our village men being sent to jail. The remaining men and all the women and children had fled. Gardens were destroyed. The men’s house was burnt and the magnificent, shady tree in the central point of the meeting area in front, had been chopped down. This had been a village of around 80 people.

Some villagers had now returned and a new village was emerging on another nearby ridge. A men’s house and five or six sturdy women’s houses were already occupied. Further houses were being rebuilt and gardens replanted with quick growing vegetables, such as pumpkin for green leaves.

Negotiations took place and arrangements were made to provide a house for us at an agreed price. A few days later a procession of village women, men and children trudged uphill with Mary-Jane and Barry, carrying crates of archaeological equipment, food, cooking gear and Emma. Then, in our newly built, small village house, an exhausted Mary-Jane and family unpacked and arranged bedding, including a ceiling-hung bassinet and food storage hung away from the bush-rats who were attracted by the food.

Our village house was the beginning, middle and end of our relationship and acceptance into the community. On previous visits Mary-Jane had rented a village house but now we required a family house. It began with negotiations to build and pay for a house in the village just large enough to sleep, cook, work, store artefacts, socialise, conduct a health clinic and sleep visitors. Once the price was negotiated, the house was built in a few days. It was a temporary structure, rectangular with thin pandanus matting floor and walls unlike the solid, circular local houses. Sheets of building paper lined the walls for more warmth and protection. We bought a sheet of corrugated plastic for part of the roof to provide daylight to the inner room and the rest of the roof was thatched. Then we added some planks to make a shelf/table.

We assumed that the house would be used by the village once we departed. We assumed wrong. As we prepared to leave demolition began! In remarkably orderly fashion villagers took back whatever they had provided in building the structure. Wooden stumps, corner posts, pandanus walls,

bamboo floor and thatched roof were rapidly removed by their owners. Only then did we realise that villagers had each ‘loaned’ components and were now taking them back. Why were we surprised? It was a very sensible way of providing a temporary house.

Next day it was down to work. There were discussions with village leaders to obtain clear approval for Mary-Jane’s project. Trusted men, who had been employed in previous work, assisted with detailed plans for the archaeological excavation, and it was agreed who was to be paid as field assistants for excavation or child-caring. Barry was excavation photographer, cook and buyer of necessary goods from local towns. He also played his own role in the village.

## Negotiating life as a family in the village

Village living as a family was a wonderful but challenging experience and very different from Mary-Jane’s previous visits. We became part of the multiplicity of relationships that make up such a community. Life was unpredictable. We expected cultural or communication misunderstandings to create problems—yet so many such activities went very smoothly. But some apparently straightforward tasks proved complex.

The village made Barry magistrate and he mediated and settled many minor and a few major disputes in a semi-formal court in front of all the village. It was important that villagers knew and supported the findings so that they would uphold them. He also conducted a village health clinic every morning outside our house dealing with minor accidents and illnesses and organising hospital referrals. Women’s requests for fertility assistance and contraception were common. This indirectly involved him in many of the relationships between villagers and within their families.

Villagers were angry that Barry’s health clinic was available to those from nearby areas and demanded they not be treated because it ‘took away from the village’. After discussions over many days they remained insistent until Barry said ‘the medicines and supplies belong to the government, not the village’—they had come from Goroka Hospital. Even so, they were uncomfortable that ‘foreigners’ and ‘enemies’ came into the village for treatment.

The large men’s house was next to ours. About 20 village men, older boys and male visitors slept there while women and children slept in smaller houses for each family. Long ago it would have been prohibited to women but now it was a wonderful communal facility for meetings and discussions and a weekly Christian gathering with hymns and discussion. They referred to themselves as Lutheran.

BANG! Bang-bang...crack..smash...thud...bang-bang-bang! Just as dawn broke Barry went into the men’s house to investigate. Men with sticks were bashing the sleeping

platform, the walls and clothing. *Planti musmus i kaikaim ol!* Bedbugs! Eating us! Later Barry offered help. 'Put all blankets and clothes in the morning sun and kill those remaining in the house. Bedbugs don't like sun and fresh air.' 'No. Someone will steal them.' 'One of you watch to stop any stealing.' 'No. That person will steal some.' Finally it was agreed that three people were necessary to watch each other, and that it would be done in three day's time. On the day, after long discussions and disagreements the bedding and clothing was put in the sun and to the relief of all, the bedbugs reduced. Two more days of sunning and no bedbugs—they were very thankful: 'OK, now you know what to do whenever the bedbugs get bad', Barry said. 'No', they said, 'we can't do it without your knowledge and commands'. What seemed easy and straightforward became difficult.

Having a small baby put relationships between us as outside researchers and the villagers on a very different trajectory to earlier visits by Mary-Jane, who had previously arrived, with an experienced Papua New Guinean field assistant or with a group of university undergraduates from the University of Papua New Guinea. Now we were just a family of outsiders and we needed assistance in caring for Emma. An arrangement was easily made with a few individual women to carry and care for Emma daily for a week at a time while Mary-Jane was occupied at the dig. When Emma was hungry she was brought to the site. All work would stop and everyone had a break, a cigarette, some roasted *kaukau* (sweet potato) or sugar cane. We were anxious about this arrangement and insisted on some straightforward rules: keep Emma off the ground, away from runny noses and don't pass her to other people. This worked perfectly, there were no problems. Emma was breast-fed by Mary-Jane for the entire period of about five months, slept in a hanging cot or played during the day in a swing made by Barry, both hung from the ceiling rafters to protect against the nightly bush rats.

All Emma's nappies and clothes were dyed donkey brown to disguise the inevitable mud and dirt. Mary-Jane negotiated washing facilities. We had plastic buckets in the house to soak and scrub but clothes needed a rinse in running water. This meant joining the rest of the village at the local stream. Immediately we were given a place, which was downstream from other clothes and body washers. Absolutely fair—our baby stuff was seen as more contaminated. We got our drinking water further upstream from a fast running waterfall and boiled it. Cooking was done on a kerosene stove or an open fire in the front room of our small two roomed house. Wherever possible we bought food from the villagers but little was available.

## Archeological work

Excavation arrangements continued smoothly from those established through previous visits. The custodian of the site had been identified in extensive negotiations and agreed payments on the first visit. His family members were amongst the first to be employed as site labour. Only men worked on the excavation. They collected buckets of sediment, took these to the sieves and riddled out the loose

soil, leaving stones, bones and any other materials to be scrutinised. Anything that was humanly made or used, including all bone fragments, was retained and taken back to the village for cleaning, labelling and packing.

Thousands of years ago people were moving along the mountain ridges of the island of New Guinea. A well-used walking track/route passed in front of our rock shelter where people had camped, eaten and slept. The excavation had already established human presence more than 20,000 years ago. These people lived alongside several animals totally unknown in the region today. Overall, fieldwork objectives were met and an important part of the prehistory of Papua New Guinea was uncovered due to the cooperation, skills and hard work of the team of villagers who assisted us.

On our first morning we were wakened from exhausted sleep by a loud, harsh, human, wavering cry coming through the thin pandanus woven wall. It was that essential means of highland communication, *bikmaus* (shouting, yodelling), sending messages great distances across mountain valleys.<sup>1</sup> Weary, we went out to find the cause of the noise only to realise that our temporary house, next to the men's house on the edge of a ravine was a point used for *bikmaus*. 'They are warning us a big rain is coming', we were told. A week later the message was 'a white man is walking up the hill to meet you', and an hour later Wayne Warry, an ANU anthropologist appeared.

*Bikmaus* became unexpectedly important and useful to us. Mary-Jane was excavating some distance from the village and hears a yodel 'Emma is hungry and crying, Will I bring her to you?' Mary-Jane asks her assistant to reply, 'Yes, bring her up here and I'll feed her.' This was another example of community skills proving unexpectedly important and useful communication. 'Bring three empty buckets to the excavation', was a message later in the day. *Bikmaus* made it possible to conduct an archaeological site survey of a high slope on a mountain, where five of us (family and two assistants), could work some distance apart in thick vegetation and keep in touch.

This excursion to the site had also made it clear to us that we were totally unskilled in walking through head high kunai grass without skin cuts from the sharp cutting edges of the vicious leaves. When Barry carried Emma in her backpack she cried from the shallow cuts. The solution was almost instantaneous—a teenage boy, who was carrying equipment, offered to carry Emma, in her own homemade backpack, high on his shoulders. She never had a scratch on her. He was caring as well as skilled and totally comfortable with the baby, who had a great time travelling up high in style. There were many occasions when men offered to take care of Emma and earn the money that was going to their wives. Men were certainly competent child minders but it was important to be able to provide the women with cash, which they could spend on their own families.

## Time to go

Our final day was *amamas* (happy) day. After many moving and generous speeches, and tears, there was a give-away to our village friends of our no-longer-needed but useful stuff.

Choosing recipients was culturally impossible so we divided items women's-men's. The women ran a raffle and to our delight and surprise the winner gave items to the others. For the men there was a *banara* (bow and arrow) competition—the winner to take the men's pile. We asked men to determine the firing line from which their arrow would knock over a small stack of tin cans. Then arguments began. Each bragged about their superior *banara* skill and moved the line back, back, back... The competition began—twang! the arrow falls far short—*narapela man*, twang! *nogat gen!*—*narapela, nogat*—every arrow short, every man failed. Quietly, the final competitor, a teenager, stood, fired and... clang-rattling! Perfect shot—then twice again... the braggers shook his hand, avoiding his eyes, some grimaced. Perhaps like some Australian blokes we thought!

### Final reflections

Looking back almost 40 years on this amazing experience we both realise that it was one of the most influential periods of our lives. Both of us had done field work in various parts of the world before. Barry in India, New Zealand, Fiji and several areas of PNG. Mary-Jane in UK, Europe and the PNG

Highlands. Barry spoke good *tok pisin*. Together we had some prior and valuable bush skills and experience but neither of us had ever been a family with a small baby living in a small Highland community that was re-establishing itself after a bruising and violent episode. We were quickly accepted as outsiders-insiders who brought some useful resources and employment cash at a much-needed time.

There were difficulties and problems but overall it was an extremely productive visit in which tensions and misunderstandings were overcome through negotiation and reciprocity. Emma was accepted as part of the village and she thrived on the stable and caring relationships and probably gained useful childhood immunities through close skin contact with her temporary carers (and the mud and dirt). The skills and generousities of the villagers made our stay comfortable and successful. We hope that we in turn made a difficult period for that village a little easier. For us, a great experience: each day *we knew we were alive!*

### Note

- <sup>1</sup> A good recording of PNG Highlands bikmaus is at: <https://app.box.com/s/k5v5mvuyqs>

# Aid to Papua New Guinea: A personal view

*Terry Murphy, Consultant*

## Introduction

*Port Moresby, sometime in 1977, a 'going finish' party at the home of a retiring senior Australian bureaucrat:* The mood was bright, a mixed crowd of men and women, expatriates from various places and Papua New Guineans, mostly young. A British aid worker I was talking with declared, 'This is the last major colonial possession to go independent, and this time we are not going to stuff it up'. The 'we' he referred to presumably included official aid donor countries, multi-lateral agencies from the UN, and the development banks—the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank—plus a host of NGOs providing technical assistance and volunteers. Some forty years later, with reports of incompetence and gross corruption in government, and violence on the streets of Port Moresby and other major PNG cities, it seems reasonable to ask, 'did we stuff it up?'

## Aid and development in PNG

When I arrived in Port Moresby in June 1977 hope was in the air, along with vibrant enthusiasm for the tasks ahead. Although the hundreds of Australians who had been running the country until independence in 1975 were now filtering back to Australia, golden handshakes pocketed and available for whatever came next, hundreds of new 'expat' consultants and volunteers had arrived to advise the young Papua New Guineans who were moving into senior government positions on how to run the country.

Having been privileged to live in Papua New Guinea for more than five years spread over 18 and travelling to some of the country's most remote areas I am happy to declare it one of the most beautiful places on earth. That diverse and rugged geography has resulted in multifarious social structures and hundreds of distinct languages and cultures. Some of the most stunning creations in the world of traditional art and artefact originate from the country's varied cultural centres, not to mention its unique flora and fauna. It is a place of awe and wonder.

But in spite of 43 years of relative political stability and an occasionally wobbly pattern of electoral process, can it be said that the country, with considerable assistance from 'us', continues to progress towards long-term democratic stability and economic viability?

From among the *mélange* of official aid advisors and NGO staff and volunteers, there emerged a continuing stream of ideas on ways to make PNG work, within its social and geographic complexity. One young volunteer, having observed that in the Highlands, where tractors to work the coffee plantations were common, more often or than not they were moving wagon loads of village people not coffee. He noted that a tractor capable of moving at speeds of up to 60 kilometres per hour and carrying six people was then available on the international market. This,

he declared, could be the answer to a modern rural transportation system. It wasn't. Four wheel drive utilities have ultimately filled that niche.

Somebody else thought up the *LiK Lik Buk*, based on the then very popular Whole Earth Catalogue, a compendium of traditional technologies that would provide simple, inexpensive tools to improve village lives. Published in English, it was not very useful back in the village. When translated into Tok Pisin it still failed to flourish. Although widely spoken, at the time Tok Pisin was a singularly oral language, still under development as a literary tool.

A more ambitious project was the attempt to transform Papua New Guinea into a centre of raw silk production, with a testing and training centre in Mt Hagen and a production base in the isolated settlement of Tari. Although the mulberry trees which provide the basic food supply for silkworms grow well in the Highlands, silk production is a complex industry requiring a reliable labour force, and easily accessible markets. Even though staffed with skilled sericulturalists, the project failed to identify either and eventually failed for lack of interest.

On the grander scale, in response to the country's large importation of rice, an earlier attempt at rice growing would be further developed in the Mekeo District west of Port Moresby. Considerable funding was allocated for development, including purchase of two large mechanical harvesters. I visited these enormous machines at Bereina, where they had been sitting unused for many months at the project site, mostly serving as informal parts bins for other machines and vehicles. To the best of my knowledge, they never harvested a grain of rice. The Mekeo clearly understood that the strong demand in Port Moresby for their preferred crop, betel nut, provided a more profitable return on their labour.

The list of imaginative if impractical schemes could go on. However, the big money was on the tried and true, following then current economic theory and experience elsewhere: Papua New Guinea would transition to a modern economy based on export oriented production, primarily in agriculture, and import replacement. Mining was also very much on the cards, with the massive Bougainville Copper Mine already in production, and early exploration underway for what would become the infamous Ok Tedi Mine.

## Developing a modern democratic state

It is easy to chart the failure of varied attempts at the development of a modern democratic state, and to make fun at the naivety of some of the programs and technology tried or suggested, but with such a complicated natural and social geography, who could say what would or wouldn't work in supporting the transition from traditional to modern.

For several hundred years the modernising world had bypassed the great island of New Guinea as too difficult to penetrate and lacking in obvious potential for exploitation.

Its people were happily left alone to carry on as they had for thousands of years. But the colonial land rush of the 19th century would only end when the last remote island had been tagged 'protectorate of' or 'colony of' to identify it as part of the emerging global order. In the Pacific, only Tonga managed to maintain a semblance of independence. Defensive competition among the European powers meant the colonial imperative, no matter the cost or utility of acquisition, must proceed. For New Guinea, first the Dutch claimed the western half of the island in 1848, then the Germans put their hands up for the northeastern quarter including Manus, New Ireland, New Britain and Bougainville in a deal with the British, who brought Papua and associated islands into the imperial fold in 1884.

Once a colonial regime had been established, steps had to be taken to justify the cost of maintaining it. Australia had acquired its right to colonialist status as a gift from the British Empire, which offered it Papua as a kind of going away present on federation in 1901. Australia demurred, lacking the resources to manage a colony while focussed on the need to consolidate the varied agendas of its own former colonial entities, officially accepting the gift only in 1906. New Guinea was added to the colonial equation after the settlement of German claims was worked out at the end of the Great War. Rather than looking to some possible economic gain, Australia was mostly concerned that no other power was established in the near vicinity, but it needed to fund the cost of administering the new possession. Thus began the search for economically productive development opportunities. Little attention was given to the development of the resident populace, with education and health mostly left to the Christian missions.

In the colonial period agriculture and mining had both proven to be successful investments. The German occupiers had focussed on coconut plantations, which Australia continued. The discovery of gold at Edie Creek in 1926 and the extensive development of the Wau/Bulolo gold field was not only profitable for its owners but provided important royalties to help pay for Australia's colonial administration. Postwar investments in coffee in the Highlands resulted in a highly valuable export crop.

## **PNG involvement in development**

Significantly, very few proposals for Papua New Guinea's development had input from Papua New Guineans, who had managed to survive, and even prosper for thousands of years on the resources of lowland swamps and highland forests. When the Leahy party of miners looking for gold broke through the clouded mountain passes into the Wahgi Valley in 1933, they were astonished to find tidy villages with sophisticated gardens cascading down the hillsides. Later excavations in the valley produced evidence of early agriculture as much as 10,000 years ago, suggesting that Highlanders were among the world's first farmers.

Although the developmental history is important, in order to fully understand the continuing challenges facing Papua New Guinea, it is essential to examine its unique physical and human geography. The main island is mostly mountainous, with a central chain dominating the landscape

from west to east, the high point of Mt Wilhelm rising to 4509 meters. The lowlands are largely water logged with major river systems emptying vast quantities of rainfall captured in the mountains, and funneled down to the seas in steep and often fast flowing river systems. These rivers over the eons have carved deep channels cutting through the land, which has resulted in a scattering of small human communities isolated from one another, each with a tendency to develop its own language and cultural practices. Given this challenging landscape and its diverse social structures, and particularly its traditional land holding pattern, where land is held in common by the community, it is difficult to see how a period of more intensive colonial development would have been possible. Even now, 43 years since independence and 73 years since the end of the Pacific War, 80 per cent or more of the population still lives in traditional rural communities.

New Guinea was administered separately from Papua with the two colonies amalgamated in 1945, at the end of the Pacific War. Rabaul, administrative seat of New Guinea, was a total ruin from incessant Allied bombing during the war, so Port Moresby, which during the conflict served as military headquarters and had extensive infrastructure development, became the centre of the now unified colony. Given a widely dispersed and little educated population, and minimal developmental investment prior to the war, when the major colonial empires of France and Great Britain began to show cracks after 1945, there was little possibility of organised native resistance to Australian oversight, or for local governance. In developmental terms, the Australian government was starting almost from zero. It was notably slow to take up the challenge, in part because of the cost of rebuilding war damage, and loathe to front up with much money until pressure from the UN ramped up.

Nevertheless, between 1945 and 1950 as Sean Dorney has noted, the Labor government invested in physical and social infrastructure '...sixteen million pounds—forty times what had been spent on both territories in the five years leading up to the war'<sup>1</sup> as Australia crawled toward an independent Papua New Guinea. By the time I arrived in Port Moresby two years after independence, Australia had put in place significant and critical nation building infrastructure: a system of microwave repeater towers established a national communication system, at least among provincial centres; air strips at most provincial capitals could land smaller passenger jets or turboprops; and construction of the Highlands Highway enabled land transport of goods and people from Lae, on the coast as far as Mendi in the Southern Highlands.

## **Independence and development assistance**

With independence, Australia's colonial investments continued in another guise as development assistance, going through two phases, first as grants in aid of budget support; second, replacing the direct support with defined project assistance in which most of the funding was allocated to contractors managing projects. This change was initiated so Australia, in consultation with PNG, could direct it where they agreed it was most needed, but partly to ensure

minimal misallocation of funds, and significantly, to mollify Australian consulting firms, who could see great potential for profitable involvement in PNG. With most of the project money subsequently paid out against consulting contracts, it would have had little impact on PNG's budget flexibility.

Having spent several decades involved in development projects of various kinds, including my years in PNG, I can affirm that it is satisfying, even exciting at times, to define a real problem, say in health or education, and then with project funds at hand, over the course of two to five years, work to solve that problem. The difficulty is in differing time scales: projects are seldom more than five years long, whereas the problem may suggest a need for a much longer commitment, say 20 years. Much of the money will have been spent on consultant salaries and costs, plus overheads, and a profit margin for the contracting company. Also, when projects are completed there is a tendency for enthusiasm to wane, skills acquired in training to fall into disuse, and operating costs to revert to local budgets, and as often as not, to simply be defunded.

Ascertaining the real or long term value of project aid can be difficult, since the measurable impacts may not be visible for years, or even decades, with successful implementation often dependent on factors outside the control of the project. For example, a World Bank funded PNG project in family planning, which I was involved in, slowly ground to a halt toward the end of its first year. Although the planning documents covered every activity in detail, with every possible risk apparently considered, the Bank had not anticipated the government would simply run out of cash. Since the Bank loaned its funds on a reimbursable basis, that is, the recipient paid up front and was reimbursed against verifiable expenditures, all project work stopped, until the government found more cash.

This is not to say that no project is worthwhile, some may be very successful, some abject failures, but I would argue that for PNG, the aggregate impact of project assistance, that is, of many projects over many years, has been important because Papua New Guineans involved have repeated contact with outside expertise, and new methods and technology are introduced that may be adopted and adapted, often in ways not anticipated in the original projects. There can be as well a useful exchange between contractors and local participants, with important learning going both ways. Testing this argument would, of course, be difficult if not impossible.

### **Did we 'stuff it up'?**

However, little of the news coming out of Port Moresby these days is good news. Violent crime tops the list, with inefficiency and corruption in government a sore spot. Health statistics are dire, and education is a disappointment.

Shotguns and assault rifles have supplemented, if not actually replaced, spears and arrows in Highlands tribal fighting, with disastrous consequences. The list goes on. So, did 'we' stuff it up? Did the contributions of the aid donors, the development banks, and the NGOs fail badly in their support of this young and fascinating country?

My answer is that development assistance since independence, however large or well managed, has had limited impact on the course of the country's development when measured against the complex structure of PNG society and culture. It is this which has determined the evolution of the political system, and consequently the direction of economic development. As noted above, PNG's rugged geography has resulted in a populace isolated in discrete groups each with its own language, cultural practices, and importantly, group loyalties. This meant in the beginning establishing a colonial government required convincing several hundred distinct societies that there was a new master in charge.

And with independence, it also meant that in the Westminster system of government, installed by Australia, political strategies would necessarily evolve to cope with a gathering of elected members with little sense of belonging to a coalition of the like-minded, resulting in unstable shifting coalitions whose loyalty was never guaranteed. Members were elected to parliament on the basis of their commitment and ability to advance the interests of their electorates, which given the first past the post system (later modified) along with a large number of candidates, could see a member elected with a miniscule percentage of the total vote cast. As the electoral system and the management of business in Parliament has evolved, the cost of forming a government and maintaining it has seemingly left limited energy for the complicated business of running the country.

Economic development has largely been driven by outside forces investing in resource extraction, including gold, copper, oil and gas, and forestry. Although providing royalty income for government, extractive industries have limited impact on wider development. In a sense, the relatively easy money of royalty income means government can avoid the careful consideration and budgeting required to address long standing issues like violent crime, urban immigration, violence against women, and tribal fighting, not to mention the ongoing need for better health and education facilities and transport infrastructure.

Forty three years after independence, Papua New Guinea's problems are theirs to resolve. Donors are no doubt standing by to assist as needed.

### **Note**

<sup>1</sup> Dorney, S, *The Embarrassed Colonialist*, p.18



# Looking back on 30 years of development drama

*Jo Dorras, Wan Smolbag Theatre, Vanuatu*

I arrived with my family in Vanuatu in January 1989, nearly 30 years ago now. Time enough for a good sized tree to grow or for a child to reach middle age—a long time. So what have I seen and what, if anything, have I learnt? If I was being monitored and evaluated could I show I have changed? Of course that's old hat, now I have to prove I am resilient and sustainable.

I remember arriving on the tiny island of Efate at night in the rain with three tired and miserable kids and a partner already missing Zimbabwe where we had lived on a high plateau on the border with Mozambique for six tempestuous years. The smell of rotting vegetation filled the air and the rain was coming down in sheets. A teacher from the school I was to be teaching at came to meet us and we shepherded our exhausted and confused kids through the dark January heat and the crumbling airport to a dingy hotel room. Where had we landed up? Vanuatu? It sounded like a distant planet. And what were the people like? Who were they?

In the morning, I had to go to the bank and sort out my papers. We were all up by sunrise and by 7:30 I wandered out of the hotel onto the main street looking for the bank. The main street consisted of a few squat buildings against the backdrop of the sea. Oh! The sea...the sea. It was light blue and deep blue and turquoise blue! And it was still...not like a wind-driven English sea. I got to the bank in less than a minute and it wasn't open yet and wouldn't be for an hour and a half and the heat was ratcheting up. I walked up the hill to the government buildings, they were crumbling; crumbling more than the Zimbabwean Government buildings we had visited in Harare.

The town was very quiet and cars passed at irregular intervals. It looked as though not much happened in Vila town.

Alone and alien we went from town to the school where I was to teach for the next five years. A large number of British people were teachers or heads of department there and there was a British aid-funded principal. Many of these people had taught all over the old colonies of the British Empire. I was new at this game. Peter, my partner, and I had gone to teach in Zimbabwe through answering an advertisement from the Zimbabwean Government, desperate to find teachers to teach the hundreds of thousands of black Zimbabwean students who were able to attend school after independence in 1980—another story. I had answered another advertisement for the job in Vanuatu, again as a teacher, but this time working for British aid. So I was in the aid world now—whatever that meant.

We were given a teacher's house in the school compound and it was clean and bright with chairs and a table and a fridge! We couldn't believe our luck! If they'd seen what we'd been living in in Zimbabwe the other British teachers would have had a fit.

My British teaching colleagues were often very nice, but so isolated from the people of the island. We lived in a

compound and there was no obvious way into life outside. One physics teacher told me as he was leaving after six years in Vanuatu that his greatest regret was never to have been to a local person's house. None of the teachers spoke Bislama or even really admitted to it existing, along with the 180 or so local languages. The Ni-Vanuatu teachers always spoke to us in English. At the school only English was supposed to be spoken. In the Anglophone schools, we taught to a British international exam system and in the Francophone schools to the French curriculum and the *bacalaureat*. Yes, English and French education systems running side by side in a tiny country with no resources, but at least the students were learning about the persuasive language of advertising and vineyards!

## A town like Alice?

But the school had resources—a zerox machine or roneo—(now antique) and class sets of books! We also had a very flexible syllabus, which meant we had to plan every lesson. But there were class readers that had to be learnt and understood in order to pass the yearly exams. Books! Some of them were pretty much unreadable or like 'A Town Like Alice' totally inappropriate. I tried reading it out in class to make it more interesting but it was wasted effort. Each lesson, I opened it up on the last page I'd read, only to find myself having to say something like... 'and in the distance he saw the Bongs crossing the desert'...What?! What are Bongs? It slowly became obvious that it was a group of Aboriginal people walking or riding across the land and the white heroes of the story didn't see Aboriginal people as people at all. I looked at the students, black Melanesians, in shame and horror, but luckily they were in a trance-like state induced by the deadliness of the book. But maybe one or two looked angrily at me. I can remember nothing else apart from my deep shame. I may have talked about Aboriginal people and racial stereotyping, but it's a hard subject, and Ni-Vanuatu youngsters didn't seem to know about racial prejudice, slavery or even the apartheid system that was common knowledge in Zimbabwe and still existent in South Africa. Such things were not on the syllabus even though similar horrors had happened in these islands too. We didn't even learn about the struggle for independence and why it happened. But do we learn any of that at school today? The massacres of Aboriginal people in Australia are not taught in school are they? I binned the book after that.

The students, like kids everywhere, were lots of fun and enjoyed doing crazy things and having debates, and probably taking the piss out of me. The debate I remember most, ended with a chair being thrown across the room by one of the boys—and in Vanuatu the students are famed for being quiet and submissive! But when the debate is 'Girls should be able to wear trousers', boys will be boys. So add lack of gender awareness to the list of things people weren't aware of back then, but the same arguments still rage, although 'gender' is now a much bandied-about word.

We had come to a land of physical dangers; earthquakes, volcanoes, cyclones. We were told endless stories about Uma, a terrible cyclone that had struck 18 months before we came. It had torn the roofs off many of the brick houses in Vila and destroyed whole areas of the settlements. The winds took every blade of grass out of the ground, people said. It had left lampposts bent to a few inches about the pavements. We saw the useless bent posts for many a year after. When cyclone Fran hit during our time at the school, 25 people from the settlement across the road, where our friend Lilly lived, ran to our brick house for safety. The settlement houses were all made of sheets of corrugated iron, with sand bags and ropes holding the roofs down. Lilly and I sat in a bedroom drinking whiskey and watching the roof moving up and down in the wind and horizontal rain battering the walls and feeling scared to death. Peter, my partner was away with Wan Smolbag in New Zealand, performing a play to travel agents to increase Vanuatu's tiny profile overseas. But at least we were all safe in a permanent house, at least until with a loud grating sound a tree came through the roof. People swept water out all night, while I tried to comfort my kids. The morning came and the exhausted group went back to what they imagined would be their devastated homes, only to find that all their houses were totally untouched.

## Community theatre

Within a week of us arriving, while I was trying to plan my first lessons and pay some attention to our own kids, who were happily running wild on the school compound (just like in Zimbabwe) my partner, Peter Walker, had pinned up notices—zeroxed!—all around town asking, in Bislama, who wanted to join a community theatre group. Amazingly 15 people turned up to the first meeting; all Ni-Vanuatu. Four of them were part of Lilly's family, the friend we had met swimming in the lagoon below the school. We didn't realise that the lovely lagoon was actually full of *E. coli* from the run off from the school and the surrounding settlements. Peter, got virulent diarrhea from swimming there.

In the first meeting of the group of would be actors at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Peter showed a film about Raun Raun, a famous theatre group in Papua New Guinea. They had made a wonderful operatic piece around creation myths, all in custom dress and performed in a large theatre. We watched entranced; it was so beautiful! But we couldn't do that. Luckily there was a second piece, a rough and ready play in a village setting that we could aim for! And so we started.

The first thing was, what did people want to make a play about? The group's selected topic was a young man coming to town from the islands and all the things that happen to him. We talked about it all and came up with a rough story. And soon we were actually rehearsing a play, in Bislama! It was called *Aelan Boe* (Island boy). We were all very excited, but how would we put the play on? Money! Funding! We were on the way to becoming more involved in the mysterious world of aid.

Meanwhile for me as an employee of British aid, another part of the aid world came into view. I was called to a meeting

of all British aid-funded personnel in Vila. We were divided in classes (in the British sense). Line officers, like me, the lowest rank, and Technical Cooperation Officers; there may have been another rung up, but I can't remember now. I walked into a conference room on the top floor of the Beza club, some sort of expat hangout, to find 200 hundred or so British people. The vast majority of whom were working in areas I knew nothing about. The meeting consisted of asking whether mailing costs (we wrote letters then) could be refunded by the British Government; how the hardship allowance, yes there was one, was determined, and other 'development' topics.

What did all these aid people know about Vanuatu? What did I know? Very little, but it was clear we were all living in very different worlds. White people lived a rich life in big houses with servants and a great lifestyle and most black people lived in shacks with no running water or electricity; and on the islands, in villages with water problems and no electricity but it was a better life there, people could grow their own food and live their own culture, at least that was what everyone said. And then there were the French and the Vietnamese. We never even met those groups.

We met Ni-Vanuatu people through Lilly's family, and the other actors and doing the plays in all the areas where local people lived. We started to love Efate, and it wasn't as small as it had seemed, because there were lots of people and different settlements and the sea! On the ocean side from where we lived there was a reefy beach, where we spent hours with our children looking in rock pools alive with creatures, like the little brightly-colored nudibranchs called Spanish dancers, because of a flowing skirt-like fin floating out from their bodies. Baby octopus skittered between the rock pools and great clumps of soft coral grew over the reef edge.

The land too had creatures: little frogs lived in the garden and parrots shot between the trees. When we went 'home' to England to see our families, I dreamt of Mele Bay and the blue transparent waters. I wanted to go back!

## Birth of an NGO

By the start of 1990, Wan Smolbag had funding for four actors' salaries from Community Abroad, now Oxfam Australia. Glennys Romanes had come out to watch the group perform a play on HIV/AIDS in Melemart and she felt it worked, so we received funding for four full time actors. We were an NGO! We were a development organisation! Suddenly everyone wanted plays about everything. It was a way of taking information out, in a country where most people only had functional literacy if that and we operated in the spoken word.

We had commissions for plays about clean water, vaccination and tourism. But we were desperate to get core funding so we could plan and do more plays. In 1994, we had meetings with a British aid officer in charge of health in the region and he decided we were just what they wanted! We magically received core funding and enough money to increase the number of actors to 11 and to rent a warehouse

in Tagabe near a settlement area called Blacksands. We had a base and a community to work with. I left teaching and came full time into the group. We needed lots of plays and the writing process was fascinating; because people talked about their lives and what they thought about anything we needed to make plays about.

Being core funded, we could choose the issues the group felt were important. So in 1995 we worked with kids from Blacksands, doing workshops for months and then making a play called, 'The Road to School' because so many of them wanted to go to school but couldn't. A few years later in 1997 we made a play with 83 people from the community of Blacksands about the area they lived in. When they had arrived, about 25 years before, it had been dark bush or forest, which they had cleared for the custom land owners. They talked about how many fish there had been in the sea, describing people collecting them in baskets just by walking into the sea; they talked about the stones that had other lives as devils at night; and the stealing and drinking, and the way young women were used by older more powerful men.

Around this time the aid world got up and hit us. We had to be reviewed. Were we any good? What were we achieving? We were a theatre group and not like other projects, so we needed a theatre expert, and a development expert to report to the donors. The development side of the review was Pamela Thomas whom Peter had met in Australia and a theatre expert from England. Pam was very positive about the developmental approach and the continued involvement of the community but the other reviewer felt we were not really making development theatre. In his opinion theatre should be made with communities by communities. Paid actors were anathema and everyone could be a writer and director. But once he saw the play we developed with the entire Blacksands community he changed his mind and we got a good review. Our donors, DFID, were pleased, and then pulled out of the Pacific!

We learned a serious lesson: funding is dependent on many things you cannot control.

## Project-based work

So we lost core funding and found ourselves driven to project-based work and learned very quickly to identify the current aid agenda and most important what is being funded. Where's the money? HIV! Let's do HIV! Where's the money now? In environment! Let's do environment! In water and sanitation (WASH), Let's do WASH! Where's the money now? It would make a great theatre game. The only thing that we had going for us in this strange new game was that we had a core activity, making plays and now films. And you can make plays and films about anything. So, we didn't hire and fire depending on the project, we stayed together like a big family.

But project-based work involved writing endless log frames including goals, objectives, outputs, outcomes, activities, risks—for everything! I wrote one for an education project and asked a volunteer from Australia who was working with us to check it. Daonvy was very bright, efficient and hardworking. She would be able to tell me if it

was OK. I left her to peruse the document and when I returned some 30 minutes later she was fast asleep on her desk. Ohh...they were so boring and such a waste of time! All that paperwork! Sorting out your outcome from your output still sends me reeling.

But the aid world was changing; huge projects were what the donors wanted. They were being tendered out to large consultancy companies that often ran out of universities. Teams of consultants trotted into view, all shiny and well-dressed often with very nice shoes that never went near the mud in the villages. Huge projects, that ran for five years or more, were setup in many sectors including health, education and water. How could we tap into this?

## The youth centre

Meanwhile we did a lot of work overseas trying to replicate ourselves. By 2005, Peter was becoming thoroughly disillusioned with trying to train up endless theatre groups, who were meant to carry on without funding or any support as there remained a complete lack of understanding about the need for communication in planning and implementing aid funded programmes. He was asked by Oxfam to write some case studies of the young people we worked with from Blacksands. They often didn't go to school, and lived in shacks without water, electricity or toilet facilities and saw a lot of violence. They had few places to play sport or learn anything. A desk officer at Australian aid met Peter in a supermarket and he talked about the case studies and how he would love just to work within a kilometer radius of Wan Smolbag, rather than spend masses of time and money going overseas. A few days later we were invited to the Australian High Commission and they talked to us about opening up Smolbag to youth; and the amount of Australian aid money they would be willing to give. As we left Peter said: 'Did she say \$50,000 or \$500,000?' We had to write an email to double check. It was \$500,000!

So Smolbag became a youth centre as well as a theatre and film-making hub. The youth centre was a fascinating development and has been successful due to the amazing people who work there. To mention a few: Alpha Solong, the hip-hop teacher who started with us in 2005 and is now deputy youth-centre manager. Some of the youth have been taught by Alpha since they were small, and that makes him very special to them. So many other staff give their all to the young people at the centre, in nutrition, art, computer, sewing, circus skills and fire-dancing, thanks to Rik Hinton, who turned up for three weeks in 2010 to see the group working and got stuck.

In March 2015, Cyclone Pam hit. A previously unheard-of category five cyclone. Uma had been a category three. Many people from the surrounding settlements (and there are many more now that Blacksands has spread) ran to Smolbag for safety and stayed living and sleeping in our theatre and rehearsal and nutrition centre space until they rebuilt their homes. Suddenly there was no food; all gardens destroyed, houses wrecked—misery. And into this flew another set from the aid world, the disaster experts. There were so many of them and they came from far and wide. One young lady had come from the Middle East to do

surveys on all the islands about people's housing needs. 'Would anything happen after the surveys found that people lived in shacks with very little access to running water and electricity', I asked? She wasn't sure about that, she said. About three weeks later she disappeared never to return. Many, many surveys about sanitation, food security, disaster preparedness were completed and people started to go into hiding when groups of researchers appeared. Then the Nepal earthquake happened and the disaster experts vanished.

### **My understanding of aid**

So what do I understand about aid and projects now? Without people who care and have skills, nothing good can happen; and without wonderful finance staff willing to work all hours and people with first language English to write reports to the donors, no AID money will flow. Donors can take risks too. They have put taxpayers' money into our unusual organisation. We have been core funded now for a number of years by Australian aid, New Zealand aid and Oxfam. Australian aid bought for us all the buildings that Smolbag works out of giving us security and a place where young people can play sport, hang out and learn new skills. Smolbag employs 80 full-time staff in jobs they mainly enjoy. Through the work of Wan Smolbag, the aid world has given so much to Vanuatu and in part, to the rest of the Pacific.

So it's 2018 now and what's changed? The population of Port Vila has more than doubled in size. People have been banned from swimming in the harbor because of the very high levels of E. coli. The schools are full but lots of kids still don't go to school. Schools are not great and the health system is not good either. Many people are only functionally literate if that. On the outer islands people die from curable sicknesses, but people believe it's because of witchcraft. Vila is busy now. Lots of cars and traffic jams. I occasionally hear but never see frogs; and parrots are a rare sight. I've not seen a nudibranch or little octopus for years. People live in shacks without electricity and running water, but there are many more solar lights and mobile phones and everyone is on Facebook. Endless young people are unemployed, but the seasonal worker schemes in New Zealand and Australia help many families. There are many more tourists and many, many more expats buying land and building luxurious houses. Buildings are going up everywhere, hotels, houses, apartments. It is much harder for people to reach the sea and large areas of coastal land have been sold, displacing the traditional owners. Land is worth a lot of money, which makes the settlements more insecure. People are often evicted and their homes and gardens trashed.

And I'm 30 years older. And I wonder, however 'resilient and sustainable' we may become, if we can go on like this.

# ***Ko Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa te moana—the Pacific is my ocean***

*Luke Kiddle, Victoria University of Wellington*

I am a *Pākehā* New Zealander living and working from home in Ngatimoti in rural Tasman at the top of the South Island, or *Te Tau Ihu* (the Prow). I also work and stay regularly in Wellington across the strait in the North Island, or *Te Ika a Maui* (the fish of Maui).<sup>1</sup> I see myself, and my children, as of the Pacific. Aotearoa New Zealand's links with Pacific Island countries are cultural, historical, and, for the most part, close. Personally, I have been lucky enough to spend considerable time living and working in, and learning from, Pacific Island nations. This short paper presents some reflections, interwoven with my own family story.

My first visit to the Pacific was to Rarotonga as a 15 year old in 1993 as part of a school geography trip. This was a formative experience and greatly influenced my interest in travel and other cultures, notions of different development trajectories, and subsequent academic and work choices. I will never forget going to the movies in Rarotonga and the raucous, infectious laughter through all of *Home Alone 2!* We visited local schools, attended a church service, and I will also never forget our shortcut to the meteorological office with the geography teacher urging us 20 boys to sprint across the international airport runway! It wasn't fenced in those days.

## **Introduction to Fiji**

From 2002, I began to regularly visit the Pacific for work or study. I remember well my first visit to Suva in 2003.<sup>2</sup> After a regional education conference in Nadi, my mentor and friend, Professor Vijay Naidu, from the University of the South Pacific (then at Victoria University of Wellington), had invited me and another student to spend a couple of nights with his family in Suva. While driving from the Coral Coast approaching the outskirts of the capital I was struck by the giant openair rubbish dump in what should have been a picturesque coastal location.<sup>3</sup> Although, what really struck me were the similarities to my hometown of Nelson—where, until the late 1980s, a similar giant coastal openair rubbish dump, with thousands of seagulls, greeted visitors arriving from Picton and Marlborough. I partly miss Sunday visits and fossicks at that rubbish dump with my father and siblings. During my visit to Suva the stark contrasts within Fiji were clear: the postcard version that most visitors see of the tourist areas of the Coral Coast and western Viti Levu, and the more everyday reality that most visitors to Fiji still do not see, of poverty and growing informal settlement in the towns and cities.<sup>4</sup>

In 2008 my wife Esther and I with our six month baby, Ada, moved to Suva for my PhD field research in informal settlements. We had been in Fiji all of two minutes when Ada was plucked from Esther's protective arms by a Fijian woman who promptly disappeared outside the customs area. Esther was quite surprised, but quickly got used to it. My field research explored perceived security of tenure and

incremental housing improvement in seven case-study informal settlements in the greater Suva area, Lautoka, Ba, and Labasa in Vanua Levu. I felt privileged to have nearly six months for field research. I did not need to rush, so I could have a slow start to interviewing with connections and some relationships established with communities first. During my field research I was continually reminded of the daily struggle for the majority of Fijian families, typically trading insecurity of tenure (if indeed they had that choice) for better access to employment and education opportunities. We have stayed in contact with a few families we met during my field research, particularly Avikash and Dia who, as new parents themselves, we first met in their home, divided from Avikash's parents, in Bouma, a small informal settlement on the banks of the Labasa River. The family later moved to the Suva area and currently live with their now three children in an informal settlement in Nasinu. The family is currently supported by Avikash's work as an upholsterer. Incrementally, their economic situation has improved. I greatly admire their warmth, generosity, fortitude and quiet determination.

Amid the continuing glow of new parenthood, Esther and Ada accompanied me to western Viti Levu and Labasa, and sometimes into communities when I was interviewing. Some of Ada's key early milestones were in Fiji: I remember vividly her learning to crawl in our flat in Suva. She ate mountains of papaya as her first solid food. Small tastings of sweet Fijian tea and Coca Cola while accompanying me into informal settlements were unexpected though. Those were halcyon family days in Fiji. Our family grew too, with our second daughter Sanne born a few months after our return to New Zealand. Later, in both 2012 and 2014, we were able to return for visits. Fiji has a special place in my heart, and the connections I have are incredibly important to me.

## **Working in aid**

After completing my PhD I started work at the New Zealand Aid Programme, part of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAT). We moved back to Wellington. February 2011 was a challenging month: I was submitting my thesis, beginning full-time work for the first time in four years, and our third child, Gabriel, arrived. It was also a difficult time at MFAT. Morale was low. The New Zealand Aid Programme was in the middle of a restructure, to be followed by a wider MFAT restructure in 2012. Murray McCully, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, was taking an extremely active interest in the aid programme, and particular projects, and directing significant change. A new focus on sustainable economic development meant that large economic and renewable energy projects began to receive priority. Overall, spending on economic development doubled from 15 per cent of total aid spending in 2009 to 30 per cent in 2015 (Spratt and Wood 2018:25).

I was employed to manage the economic development portfolio of the Solomon Islands programme: particularly some large transport infrastructure projects, a fisheries partnership, and a support programme to Solomon Islands Inland Revenue. In January 2013 we were posted to Honiara where I was to manage the same set of activities. It was a positive change: I was looking forward to working more closely with the Solomon Islands Government and other in-country partners. It was a big move for our young family. Gabriel turned two years old the day after we arrived. Both of the girls began their schooling in Honiara. Peace and stability had been restored to Solomon Islands, but the tensions period was still not that long ago, particularly in peoples' memory and consciousness. The military component of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), largely confined to base over their last two to three years, departed in 2013. We stayed for just under three years. Work-wise it was extremely busy, and at times absolutely exhausting.

## Development in the Solomon Islands

At times I was personally conflicted. Solomon Islands, despite many years of support from donors,<sup>5</sup> still lagged considerably behind many other Pacific nations in key social indicators. However, New Zealand continued to focus its support on economic development. Health indicators were particularly poor.<sup>6</sup> The National Referral Hospital in Honiara did not have a good reputation with locals disparagingly referring to it as 'fifty-fifty', reflecting perceived chances of making it out of it alive. Donor confidence was undermined by significant fraud within Australia's support to the health sector of nearly AU\$1.5 million (Betteridge 2013)—one of the largest in Australian aid history. Solomon Islands could be a confronting place and for most Solomon Islanders life was a daily struggle. School fees and other cash needs were enormously difficult for families to meet but traditional reciprocity within the *wantok* system, and access to a subsistence garden provided important safety nets for many. Solomon Islands' vulnerability, particularly for informal settlers living in hazardous locations, was highlighted by the Honiara floods of 2014 which killed 21 people, almost all from the Koa Hill settlement adjacent to the Mataniko River in central Honiara where 239 dwellings were destroyed (Yeo, Butcher-Gollach and Bonte-Graptent 2015).

Solomon Islands has an extremely youthful population. Latest census information, for example, shows that 60 per cent of the population is aged under 24 (Evans 2016/17:3). The shift of this youthful population into working age is perhaps the most significant development challenge for the nation. Formal sector jobs are scarce. The informal and subsistence sectors continue to be vitally important for livelihoods (Union Aid Abroad 2008). However, young people are the future of Solomon Islands. A significant proportion of the country's population were born *after the tensions*, for example. When we departed Solomon Islands in December 2015 I felt a sense of the youthful spirit of Solomon Islands, promising hope for a peaceful, prosperous future.

## The New Zealand connection

In late 2015, just a couple of months before our posting in Solomon Islands was to end, I visited Rennell, a Polynesian outlying island south of Guadalcanal that is part of the tiny Rennell and Bellona Province. MFAT's interests were two-fold. Firstly, New Zealand in the 1990s had supported the work to see East Rennell inscribed on UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites in 1998. However, East Rennell had recently been moved to UNESCO's list of World Heritage in Danger<sup>7</sup>—at a time when New Zealand had just agreed to target tourism development as a key sector of engagement within the development partnership with Solomon Islands. Secondly, considerable extractive activity was occurring in West Rennell, including logging and, more recently, bauxite extraction. The mining in particular was extremely divisive and controversial. We wanted to get a better handle on what was going on.

Landing in Tingoa in West Rennell, the small provincial capital, I was immediately struck by Rennell's strong connections to New Zealand—of course, not altogether surprising in a Polynesian island within a majority Melanesian nation state. The Rennellese language is extremely similar to Māori. Locals greeted each other with a familiar nose-to-nose, sharing of the breath, greeting (*songi* in Rennellese; *hongi* in Māori). New Zealand silver fern and All Blacks emblems and paraphernalia were everywhere.<sup>8</sup> Polynesian myths and legends were strong—including of Maui, the 'great trickster hero of Polynesian mythology' (*Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* 2018:3) usually regarded as a demigod. I later became aware of, and watched, a 2007 Māori Television documentary, *The Lost Waka*, arguing that links in genealogy, mythology and *lapita* design between Māori and the people of Rennell and Bellona were extremely close.

Rennell was a fascinating island to visit. East Rennell, dominated by Lake Tegano, the largest insular lake in the Pacific Islands, was truly unique and pristine. However, the originally-hoped-for tourists were just not visiting. East Rennell was just too remote and expensive to visit. The lack of economic benefit, or other tangible returns, were clear and placed strain on customary systems protecting the World Heritage site.<sup>9</sup> 'World Heritage for what?' was a common refrain lakeside (Kiddle 2017; Smith 2011). While fascinating, I also found Rennell incredibly depressing. The largely unregulated extractive activity on West Rennell was causing extensive social division and conflict. Reflecting the findings of recent research on communities with close links to resource extraction (World Bank 2013), alcohol and other drugs were causing considerable conflict. It was messy and complex. The status quo seemed a bad path forward for the island, the province, and also for Solomon Islands. I argued that New Zealand had a stake; particularly given New Zealand had supported the work ahead of East Rennell's heritage listing and had made the decision to support tourism sector development as a focal area of engagement.

It is often mentioned that good relationships are central to effective development partnerships. This could not be more true in the Pacific. Epeli Hau'ofa wrote of Oceania as a 'sea of islands' (1994). The Pacific Ocean dominates and

defines our vast region; it is our sea of islands. Aotearoa New Zealand's links with the nations of Oceania are long lasting and strong, but more could be made of these connections. Māori, and Māori worldviews, for example, could play more central roles within Aotearoa New Zealand's development partnerships within Oceania.

My work in the Pacific has been personal. The Pacific has shaped me, and my family. As I write this I am currently coordinating and teaching in a second year human geography/environment studies paper at Victoria University of Wellington; Environment and Resources—New Zealand Perspectives. Early on, we ask students to prepare and present their own individual *mihimihi*, or personal introduction reflecting connections that the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand have to land, water, and other natural resources. Here is mine:

*Tēnā koutou katoa,*  
Hello everyone,  
*Ngā mihi ki a koutou katoa,*  
Greetings to you all,  
*Ko Tuao Wharepapa/Mount Arthur te maunga,*  
*Tuao Wharepapa/Mount Arthur is my mountain,*  
*Ko Motueka te awa,*  
Motueka River is my river,  
*Ko Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa te moana,*  
The Pacific is my ocean,  
*He tauwiwi au,*  
I am non-Māori,  
*Ko Ed tōku Papa,*  
My father is Ed,  
*Ko Liz tōku Mama,*  
My mother is Liz,  
*Ko Oliver tōku tuākana,*  
My older brother is Oliver,  
*Ko Finbar tōku tēina,*  
My younger brother is Finbar, *Ko Eve tōku tuāhine,*  
My sister is Eve,  
*Ko Esther tāku hoa wahine,*  
My wife is Esther,  
*Ko Gabriel tāku tama,*  
My son is Gabriel,  
*Ko Ada rāua ko Sanne āku tamāhine,*  
My daughters are Ada and Sanne,  
*Ko Luke tōku ingoa,*  
My name is Luke,  
*Nō Nelson ahau,*  
I come from Nelson,  
*Kei Ngatimoti au e noho ana,*  
I have settled in Ngatimoti,  
*Nō Moana-nui-a-Kiwa ahau,*  
I come from the Pacific,  
*Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.*  
Greetings to those who have passed, who  
are living, and who are yet to be born.

## Notes

- 1 Te Tau Ihu, or the Prow, is the Māori name for the top of the South Island. Te Wai Pounamu, the waters of greenstone, is the name for the South Island, and Te Ika a Maui, meaning the fish of Maui, is the name for the North Island. The Māori name for the Pacific Ocean is Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, the great sea of Kiwa, who is one of several divine guardians of the ocean. Wellington is called Te Whanganui-a-Tara, or the great Harbour of Tara, who was the son of one of the first Polynesian settlers of the region.
- 2 My parents had visited Fiji in 1973 for their honeymoon. They were looking to buy a hifi stereo and someone had mentioned to them that duty free savings, when compared to the cost of similar electronics in New Zealand, would cover the costs of flights, which was exactly right. As a kid I remember looking at photos from that trip, including of some hippy camping experiences on the then-very-different Natadola Beach.
- 3 This had been replaced by a modern landfill by the time of my next visit to Suva in 2007.
- 4 Only about 6 per cent of visitors to Fiji make it to Suva (Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association 2018).
- 5 Solomon Is dependency indices. Pryke (2013), for example, calculated that across 2009 to 2011 Solomon Islands had an Aid-to-Gross National Income ratio of 51 per cent, second in a global list.
- 6 WHO data (2016) shows that life expectancy in Solomon Islands was 70 for males and 73 for females. The probability of dying between the ages of 16–60 was 164 in 1000 for males, and 126 in 1000 for females (WHO 2018).
- 7 As of the time of writing, East Rennell still remained on this list, joining 54 other sites globally (UNESCO 2018).
- 8 Rennell and Bellona are the rugby powerhouses of Solomon Islands.
- 9 Amid fanfare at the time East Rennell was the first site globally to be inscribed on the natural criteria that was under customary management.

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# Reflections on 30 years of development collaboration in Pacific countries

*Deborah Rhodes, Independent consultant*

In the mid-1980s, as a young graduate in the Pacific Branch of the Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB)—predecessor to AIDAB and AusAID—I recall a supervisor saying to me ‘you are at the bottom of a very long and steep learning curve’, which felt rather harsh at the time. More than 30 years later, I realise he was factually correct, even if lacking in encouragement.

There has been much to learn about the reality of development cooperation, Pacific countries and the broader world of change—and my role as a development practitioner and facilitator. Thirty years later, I feel I am just beginning to understand the many complexities involved and to feel confident with some potentially useful approaches and tools. While undergoing this intense process of learning—the ‘working environment’ has changed significantly. Metaphorically—while working out how the jigsaw pieces fit together—the picture in the jigsaw continuously changed—in many ways not even a jigsaw anymore, but some other board game, with a set of changing rules not understood by all players. In this paper I weave three threads together over these 30 years: my own learning as an ‘aid practitioner’; changes in the Pacific countries where I work; and changes in understanding about the concepts of change and development and the aid sector itself.

## My journey

My curriculum vitae lists diverse roles as a programme and project manager, facilitator, programme designer, evaluator, researcher, trainer and mentor. Notwithstanding the 10 Pacific countries I have worked in and books and papers written in over three decades—I feel more humble now about my role and understanding of change and the Pacific region than when I arrived in Tonga in 1986 on my first official work trip. Like many young aid workers, I believed my career goal was to ‘make a difference’—an idea that now makes me shudder. My goal shifted to minimising harm caused by poor judgment related to making a difference—which confuses participants in my training courses, who ask ‘are you saying that we should not become aid workers?’ The answer to this question—and other fundamental questions about the aid sector—challenge me daily.

Aid workers may experience a blurring of professional and personal frames of reference. As a young public servant, working ‘professionally’ appeared to mean: learn what more experienced bosses tell you; know how to work with policies and systems; make thoughtful decisions about what aid should be delivered and how; and write well. I learned these skills from very capable people—some who remain dear friends to this day.

Many Pacific projects I worked on in the mid-1980s were related to infrastructure including construction of the

University of South Pacific (USP) library in Suva, airstrips in several countries, and causeways linking atolls in Kiribati. Over time, both aid and my professional focus shifted to social development topics.<sup>1</sup> I have been privileged to learn from leaders such as Elizabeth Reid<sup>2</sup> and Shamima Ali on gender equality and women’s rights (see Howe 2017) and Setareki Macanawai on disability inclusion (ESCAP 2014)—and to work on governance, leadership, health, education and law and justice programmes.

During an overseas posting—in a location where the time zone fortunately did not align with Canberra office hours and before the internet—I learned a great deal about the realities of aid. Understanding corruption, diplomacy and diverse interpretations of ‘good practice’ change and development entered my frame of reference. An experienced European Union aid official once marvelled at my enthusiasm for effective development programming, stating ‘I’ve never actually seen a successful aid project’. ‘What a cynic!’ I thought. I left the public sector not long after returning to Canberra.

On joining the non-profit sector, I found work tasks remarkably similar to work for the government—travelling to fascinating countries, meeting interesting people, managing staff and writing documents for government officials. The values and personal frames of reference underpinning our work were, however, quite different. Passion, partnership, respect, shared understanding and collective commitment were deemed critical for supporting developmental change. Development was seen as a long-term cooperative process of advocacy, calling out injustice and supporting and facilitating others respectfully—to achieve changes they prioritised in their lives. The transition to drafting letters to a Minister about bad aid policies and practices—after years of drafting response letters for the Minister—was a formative, and on one occasion, threatening experience. Meeting diverse Australian volunteers who sought to contribute and learn in the Pacific and other countries was a joy. Developing the Pacific Technical Assistance Mechanism—a new scheme to respond to Pacific governments’ specialist personnel needs—was a career highlight—the scheme has continued over 20 years. During this time I began to understand more about the links between one’s values and beliefs and the ‘practice’ of aid.

After two decades as a practitioner, I could feel a degree of cynicism and despair creeping in—a common response in the development sector to the perception that development will not happen because of ‘problems’ in developing countries. For me, this view was founded on an inaccurate portrayal of Pacific countries as lacking in capacity and commitment. While useful for justifying aid expenditure, this widely held view contradicted my experience of highly capable Pacific Islanders, working with robust community institutions and complex organisations. These Pacific Islanders appeared to be drowning

under unreasonable foreign expectations with little space to articulate and work on their own objectives.

Experience as an independent consultant with a diverse range of clients has enabled me to learn, test and clarify 'good' or 'appropriate' practice. Writing two books about how understanding one's own and others' cultural values are critical for engaging in the process of strengthening capacity—and training thousands—have been rewarding elements of my work. My belief that developmental change needs to be largely self-driven, similarly led to understanding the critical importance of leadership and collective action. A key ingredient in change is respectful intersectoral collaboration—which led to developing skills in group facilitation and partnership brokering. I now try to provide space for Pacific people to pursue social change on their own terms, to reflect and learn about what works for them. Where aid funding is available, I seek to facilitate shared understanding of the role of cultural values, power and collaboration in determining priorities—and believe these approaches and skills are more critical than technocratic approaches dominating contemporary aid.

In 2006, I fortunately encountered the concept of strengths-based thinking—just prior to facilitating a planning process with the national council of chiefs in Vanuatu on the interface between *kastom* governance and introduced forms of governance. Learning strengths-based tools changed my practice and my understanding of development and the Pacific. Success associated with these new ways of working gave me confidence to argue for more widespread adoption in my submission to a review on the future direction of Australia's aid programme (DFAT 2011). As a problem-based lens is disrespectful across cultures and undermines potential for trust-based collaboration—the opposite approach therefore has the opposite effect. A Pacific woman leader said, after I described the approach: 'You mean we can receive aid and still be respected? That would be different!'

Learning about disability inclusive development has been a feature of my career as well as an emerging development shift in Pacific countries in the past 20 years. Pacific disabled people's organisations (DPOs) contributed to changing policies, programmes and attitudes. Less than 20 years ago, a small group of Fijians met under a coconut tree to discuss the establishment of a movement to address the rights of people with disabilities—leading to the formation of the self-managed and highly successful regional organisation, Pacific Disability Forum. In 2002—after using the rights-based approach for a few years—Fijian DPOs applied to an Australian aid programme for a training course to help strengthen advocacy and management skills among their members. Winning this training contract was a turning point in my career. Meeting Fijian DPO leaders led me to undertake research for a Master in International Development—focussing on the consequences of the shift from charity or medical approaches to rights-based approaches. Learning about these ideas since then, including as an adviser to AusAID on its Disability Reference Group and co-founder and leader of the Australia Pacific Islands Disability Support—an Australian NGO dedicated to supporting Pacific disabled people's organisations

(DPOs)—coincided with Pacific DPOs and some Pacific governments making positive steps towards disability inclusion. Such an effort is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability and the Sustainable Development Goals—highlighting the critical idea of 'leaving no-one behind'. The value of Pacific leadership, collective learning and partnership are clearly demonstrated in this area of work.

Research for my Master's degree confirmed disability inclusion is consistent with collectivist values underpinning Pacific communities. Once made aware of the idea that people with disabilities have the same rights as others—Pacific communities have changed attitudes. When change is led by respected leaders, consistent with cultural values and supported by collaborative partnerships—there is a good chance of success. Tavola and Whippy found in the 2010 UNICEF report *Pacific Children with Disabilities*:

The overall situation of people with disabilities has improved in the past decade with increasing awareness and slowly changing attitudes. This is largely due to the continued advocacy of disabled persons' organisations who advocate for the rights of people with disabilities (2010:39).

Learning about links between Pacific cultural values, capacity and perceptions of change, has been particularly engaging and rewarding in my career. Finding a balance between deepening understanding about how to apply core principles and remaining open to new ideas is required.

## Perceptions of a changing Pacific

Communities in Pacific countries have experienced many changes in the past three decades, as they have in the preceding thousands of years—yet much has stayed the same. Depending on one's perspective, changes and the lack of change are positive or negative. While sustaining strong cultural values associated with collectivism, hierarchy and relationships, Pacific communities have responded quickly to the introduction of mobile phone technology, begun to tackle diverse effects associated with climate change and juggled competing influences associated with globalisation and geopolitics. Pacific communities have recognised and affirmed the value and diversity of cultural practices—through strong church systems, regional cooperation and institutions such as the Vanuatu Cultural Centre.

The lives of Pacific children in many rural villages and remote islands may not differ markedly from those of their parents and grandparents—except for ubiquitous mobile phones. Access to health and education services, dominance of church life and power of village leaders may have changed little. In urban areas, different influences now shape lives, with increased access to information, services and networks, new ideas and products.

The 'youth bulge' in the period of independence caused angst for many commentators on the Pacific. As an undergraduate student at ANU in the early 1980s I recall this was taught as an important development issue. Through a Western lens, too many unemployed youth are seen as

potential threats to peace and stability—related to the negative effects of urbanisation, lack of employment growth and perceptions of disenfranchisement—leading to mob violence and instability. I recall a dog-eared cartoon on a noticeboard showing a volcano about to explode, representing the youth bulge in Solomon Islands. The 2011 UNICEF report *State of the Pacific Youth* found the 15–24 year age group accounted for nearly two million people, dramatically described as follows:

Continuing high population growth; rapid urban expansion; political volatility; under-performing economies, now further weakened by the impact of the global economic crises; and the rising cost of food point to a future for many young Pacific Islanders that holds an increased risk of entrenchment of poverty and broadening disparities, which will cause widespread discontent. Without a major investment in young people, they may well flounder as a generation, undermining the capacity of Pacific Island countries and territories to escape aid dependence, develop economically and, in some cases, even survive as viable societies. (UNICEF 2011:5)

Kaiku argues this view of the youth bulge in the Pacific does not reflect Melanesian understanding of society, in which ‘cross-cutting and extended networks among younger generations of Melanesians and Papua New Guineans are a positive source of strength and stability largely ignored by youth bulge theorists’ (2017:11). That something like the youth bulge could be seen so differently depending on one’s cultural perspectives, illustrates—in my opinion—the implications of cultural value differences for many other development areas. Most Pacific youth live and flourish in rural villages with their families where strong cultural systems prevail in relative harmony with the natural environment—despite fears of widespread instability. In summary, different cultural lenses produce different analysis.

Collectivist values prevailing in Pacific countries mean communities are generally able to cope well with or minimise the effects of big changes—both negative and positive—including disasters. Traditional approaches to holding dialogue and seeking agreement—such as *talanoa*—are increasingly understood by external institutions as effective ways of working in the region (UNFCCC 2018). Decision making based on consensus is a challenge for Western cultures in which arguments are won and lost, voted upon and contested afterwards. I recall attending a Pacific regional meeting where an Australian politician—tiring of the unresolved discussion—called for a vote, only to be hushed, as Pacific representatives negotiated a consensus decision. The humanitarian sector’s recent localisation agenda is another indication that it is not only wealthy foreign aid donors who can respond effectively to disasters. Valuing Pacific cultural strengths is a major focus of my own practice—not always shared in the broader official aid programme.

The increased pace of change and exposure to diverse external views through social media, test Pacific communities’ abilities to maintain stability and minimise uncertainty. If individuals generally comply with group norms—and group decisions are based on what is deemed best for a village, church congregation or island community—Pacific

societies can then sustain traditional practices. Compliance with group norms by definition counteracts individual initiatives and can be oppressive, particularly in gender terms. Traditional hierarchies can stifle diverse thinking and constrain change agendas, just as highly individualist hierarchies can limit collective action. Like other communities around the world, however, Pacific communities and cultures change—in response to internal and external influences. A ni-Vanuatu leader told me once ‘of course, we want change, but we just want to do it our own way, rather than be pushed by others who don’t understand our context and our culture’. Change happens in largely unpredictable ways, the result of multitudes of influences—not all for the better. During a visit to a small island in Vanuatu, for example, while marvelling at an extraordinary sky full of stars and the joys of village life, my colleague and I were confronted by a plate of tinned meat and rice for dinner, provided as ‘a local meal’.

When leaders in hierarchical and collectivist cultures perceive a change will benefit communities, changes are generally more likely to be adopted. Anyone working in Pacific contexts knows that local leadership and ownership of change processes are critical, regardless of the merit of the idea proposed. The importance of this idea largely underpinned the conceptualisation of the Pacific Leadership Programme, a major Australian aid funded programme which supported some excellent leadership practice over a decade.<sup>3</sup> For Pacific countries which achieved independence in the 1970s and 1980s, legal, educational and institutional systems inherited from colonial powers have changed to varying degrees in the past 30 years (Jowitt and Newton-Cain 2003). In some cases, the reach of introduced governance is limited, so people’s lives are barely affected by changes. Many laws and systems relating to employment, education, public services, gender equality and justice have been updated and support or lead social change. Other institutions and systems operate alongside and give degrees of recognition to traditional systems, for example in law and justice. Some systems remain out of date due to the absence of specialised expertise or lack of leadership demand for change.

Notable shifts have simultaneously occurred in awareness about gender equality, children’s rights and disability inclusion among aid donors and across the Pacific. For example, at a regional summit for Pacific leaders in 2012, a gender equality declaration helped galvanise leadership action in a number of countries (Pacific Islands Forum 2012). Fiame Naomi Mata’afa—then Minister of Justice, now Deputy Prime Minister in Samoa—said ‘leaders have taken it on board as a priority’ (Wilson 2014) something that would not have occurred in Canberra or Samoa in the 1980s. In 2013, Samoa passed legislation against sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace—while similar draft legislation is being developed in Kiribati, Vanuatu and Tonga (ibid). The acclaimed work of the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre and other local efforts and partnerships, have contributed to widespread changing attitudes towards women. Pacific countries and development partners have raised awareness about gender based violence and discrimination at regional and national levels, which is beginning to achieve change.

While few women play roles in formal government structures in the region—comprising three per cent of parliamentarians (DFAT 2012)—women are active leaders in other spheres and are making changes at community levels. Gender parity has been achieved in education in most Pacific Island states, except PNG, Tonga and Solomon Islands, with girls outperforming boys at the secondary level in Samoa and Fiji (Wilson 2014). It is easy for outsiders and Pacific Islanders to critique the slow pace of change. But in Western historical terms—change from hierarchical, collectivist cultures to egalitarian and individualist cultures—sometimes took centuries and revolutions. My experience suggests that use of participatory and strengths-based approaches to support locally-led, culturally-respectful change is more likely to succeed than negative critique and unrealistic targets.

### Perceptions of changes in development cooperation

In 1984–85, ADAB began funding ‘women in development’ projects, in response to emerging recognition that women had not benefited equally—if at all—from decades of aid. An early proposal from the University of PNG (UPNG) to make student accommodation safe for women, for example, included the installation of wire cages around stairs and windows. In 1986, after speaking about ADAB’s women in development policies at a conference—an interviewer from Radio Australia asked if these ideas were being imposed on Pacific countries. I suggested he ask the question to the Fijian women who had requested assistance from Australia to address women’s safety and rights. Over subsequent decades, I have been infinitely impressed by the sustained commitment and success of these Fijian women leaders—in the face of enormous challenges. Partnership and financial support provided by Australian aid is significant but it is the women who have led and achieved change in Pacific countries—recognised in 2018 by being awarded the Mitchell Humanitarian Award.<sup>4</sup> This exemplifies the role of aid—to support those in the region who want to and can make changes.

As a new graduate, I had been enthused by the Government’s response to the Jackson Review of Australian Aid of 1984 (Sibraa 1985), which, among other things, emphasised the importance of aid to the Pacific region. In 1985, I witnessed a major shift from ADAB sending regular multi-million dollar cheques to the Government of Papua New Guinea—after confirming the Australian Treasury account had sufficient funds for a cheque not to bounce—to the decision to develop aid projects. Over subsequent years, as I managed Pacific regional and bilateral programmes, I learned more of the complexities of politics and power, the value of networks and relationships and the relevance of cultural values for understanding change. These topics have been recognised more recently in the ‘thinking and working politically’ literature, now influencing aid delivery in the Pacific and beyond.

Australia’s development cooperation institutions and systems have changed significantly over the past 30 years.

Like many others, I see largely negative consequences of the demise of Australia’s dedicated aid agency. Now DFAT manages the aid programme, decisions about aid to Pacific countries are made by diplomats more often than development specialists. It is harder for Australians and Pacific Islanders to know what programmes are underway and what they are achieving. It is also increasingly difficult for aid practitioners to agree with decisions made and approaches used in programmes. With my knowledge about how change happens, aid effectiveness and Pacific cultures—this situation causes me concern.

Reviews of the official aid programme have changed the purpose, focus and ways of working in Australian aid and international development. Programmes have become larger, more complex and ambitious than before. Recent experience of aid in the Pacific region shows that lessons learned are rarely applied—innovation appears more important than long term and adaptive partnerships necessary to achieve systemic or institutional change. In change-oriented Western cultures, new leaders—ministers, ambassadors or advisers—want to demonstrate new directions. Following the loss of AusAID, reduced numbers of specialists in aid and development practice have exacerbated the likelihood that projects will be ineffective in supporting inclusive developmental change. Evaluations I have been involved with in recent years seem to highlight a mismatch between aid systems and contemporary thinking about how to support change in Pacific countries. DFAT officials have told me ‘don’t tell us what we already know, tell us how to be innovative.’ To me, the missing clause is ‘...as we won’t apply good practice.’

To take us back to the metaphorical jigsaw—the Pacific development picture may never be completed. Sadly, the current development game—linking countries, communities and individuals in highly complex ways—now appears to be played with neither ‘us’ nor ‘them’ knowing the purpose of the game or the rules.

### Notes

- 1 At the time of writing, a shift back to infrastructure programmes appeared to be happening.
- 2 Elizabeth Reid had been appointed the world’s first advisor on women’s affairs to a head of government by the Australian Labor Government of Gough Whitlam in 1973 and worked with ADAB in 1985–86 on early women in development policy and training.
- 3 The programme itself was subject to diverse changes and expectations over time, culminating in closure in 2017. See the DFAT Evaluation Report at: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/pacific-leadership-program-phase-3-independent-evaluation-management-response.aspx>.
- 4 Commenced in 2017, the Mitchell Global Humanitarian Award recognises Australians and others supported by Australian aid who have made an outstanding contribution to the cause of international development. The Award is named in honour of leading businessman and philanthropist Harold Mitchell AC. For more information see: <https://devpolicy.crawford.anu.edu.au/department-news/7332/mitchell-global-humanitarian-award-launched>.

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## From women's lib to WID and to GAD: Reflections on the evolution of woman-conscious events and programmes in the Pacific Islands

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As a student at the University of Papua New Guinea in the early 1970s I observed the trends of the times including timid buds of 'Women's Liberation' that emerged in student and staff discourses. In the 1980s, as a consultant and for academic purposes, I researched donor projects for community-based 'Women in Development' in Samoa, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. In the late 1990s, the tide turned towards policy focussed regional and national programmes for 'Gender in Development'. This paper reflects on these events and looks critically at their outcomes.

When, in the early 1970s, I was a student at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) the campus buzzed with excitement about decolonisation and prospective independence as well as about imported social movements such as 'Black Power' and 'Women's Liberation'. Weekly forums were held outside the library to debate such topics. These were the halcyon days at UPNG, founded in 1965, and fully funded by Australia, closely linked to the Australian National University, and staffed by overseas academics, most of whom who had made names for themselves in political sciences, anthropology, sociology, archaeology, human geography and history, law and science.

As a student at that time I belonged to a feminist 'consciousness-raising' group of university women, all expatriates, and our earnest efforts to attract PNG women students to our group were fruitless. Then as now, there was a deep ambivalence about feminism among PNG students, women and men alike, seeing feminism as Western and with a deep discomfort about feminist critiques of PNG customs such as bride-price and customary female subservience to males. I recall one of my fellow students speaking at a UPNG forum saying that she would not oppose bride-price because it was a proud tradition of her people, but when the time came, she would pay her own! One PNG woman who briefly and tentatively joined our group withdrew when her boyfriend, a fierce exponent of anti-colonialism, accused her of buying into 'white-woman' thinking. Her difficulty was that the national discourses of the time emphasised pride in *kastom*. How could she join a group of expatriates who rejected female subservience to social norms?

### Women and development in the Pacific

In the 1980s when teaching at the University of the South Pacific I was approached by a senior researcher there to develop a programme for women and development, as some funds for this had been made available. I was asked because my PhD thesis and first publications were on gender, status and social transformations in Samoa. However, I was unable to take this on because a number of Pacific Islander women at USP felt it would be very inappropriate for a non-Pacific Islander to do this work. While my feelings were hurt at the time, I recognise that this was a legitimate concern, Pacific Islander women rightly wanted agency, to define their own issues and propose their own solutions. Since that time, although I have researched gender, social change and development for the past 40 years, I have never been connected to any Pacific Islander women's networks or organisations. In the early 80s I was employed as a coordinator for what was then named Woman and Development Network of Australia, an initiative funded by what was then AIDAB, with the objective of encouraging NGOs to address women and development in their programmes. The network brought together such disparate entities as the Australian National Council of Women and women-only development feminist-activist groups, eventually failing to satisfy the agendas of either. In 1985 it morphed into

the International Women's Development Agency, which is still active. Since then I have undertaken dozens of consultancies in the Pacific Islands and Asia as a gender specialist or social assessment specialist as this kind of assignment is termed in aid-speak.

The Women in Development (WID) to Gender in Development (GAD) transition and methodological approaches have been extensively documented so there is no need for me to discuss it here, but I will now reflect on the abiding preference in Pacific Island countries for the WID approach rather than GAD. For 50 years the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC, formerly the South Pacific Commission) operated the Community Education Training Centre (CETC), which trained women in practical home economics and village welfare with a curriculum that included food and nutrition, handicrafts, and vegetable gardening. In 2014 it was transferred to the University of the South Pacific (USP) to become the Diploma in Social and Community Work at USP's School of Social Sciences, while the vocational courses became a USP Certificate in Applied Community Development for USP's Regional Centre of Community and Continuing Education.

CETC graduates have staffed community programmes offered by churches, and women's divisions in Pacific Island governments since the 1970s with a strong WID emphasis, working with women's organisations that are typical of rural Pacific communities, church women's fellowship groups and village-based women's clubs, associations or committees. Women's divisions in Pacific Island governments mostly date back to the 1950s, and to notions of the time about pathways to social development through the education of women in improved family health and hygiene. They continued to have this focus until the 1990s, when the emphasis in development thinking and advocacy in aid programmes changed towards GAD. In this new paradigm, women's divisions were encouraged to engage in policy development toward great gender equality and equity.

In the 1990s this new direction often met with resistance, sometimes passive and sometimes vigorous. The staff in women's divisions were both trained and oriented in their interests towards rural women's organisations and, in general, favoured the kind of WID programmes that had been around since the 1950s with their focus on the family and the home and on training activities that offered women the chance for enjoyable get-togethers. However, most of the WID-oriented projects for women with income generating objectives (collective vegetable gardens, poultry raising and so forth) that I observed in the 1980s and 90s failed or were not sustained because of the problems of using a collective entity (the women's group) to promote economic activities that normally belonged to households. For example lavishly funded poultry projects for women's committees in Samoa in the 1990s failed because, although the collective enterprises were technically successful, profits were insufficient to share money with all the women who worked on them and so to sustain their interest in continuing it. It could have worked as a household enterprise, however. Donors do not normally support projects that benefit individual households in the name of women's economic

empowerment, yet the Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI) in Samoa (that began as a women's project) now works successfully mainly with both women and men in households on economic projects. WIBDI recognises that in Samoa, as throughout the rural Pacific, the basic productive unit is the household, typically with several sources of income from farming, fishing, labour and remittances.

The gender approach has had little impact on rural communities throughout the Pacific where there are differences and often gender inequalities, in the household and in the public roles of men and women. Leaders of women's groups have been understandably unwilling to challenge gender inequities in local customs, religious beliefs and norms. This reality was well known to the staff of women's divisions in government departments, which explain their resistance to the GAD approaches advocated by donors, rather than the WID activities that pleased rural women. At the same time, because women's divisions regarded women's issues as their own responsibility and also relied on external project funding, few favoured proposals to establish gender desks or gender focal points in other arms of the government to provide gender analysis of programmes so that women had equity in them. These sorts of gender initiatives have not produced the expected results. Typically the roles of gender focal points were assigned to young woman who lacked authority or the support of their managers to participate in formulating the programmes, policies and practices of the government agencies that employed them.

Another difficulty has been the trope of Pacific Island women. The Pacific Islands region is characterised by considerable cultural diversity, including diversity in the respective roles and rights of men and women. The roles of women and men are based on different cultural beliefs concerning what activities are appropriate for males and females. Gender roles have changed over time as a result of external influences and economic change, but general patterns remain. Overall, rural populations tend to be more conservative than urban populations about the roles and rights of men and women. Cultural differences on gender norms are particularly significant in relation to food production and income from agriculture and fisheries. A few years ago when working with a team designing an agricultural finance project for Samoa, a team member said to me that he thought Samoan women could make good money collecting and carrying coconuts. His Pacific experience was confined to PNG where he had observed women doing this. But in Samoa, or Tonga this would not be acceptable work for women as it is usually done by young men, and would also disgrace families who were expected to keep their womenfolk close to home.

I have often felt ambivalent about the application of gender analysis to development projects when, as a gender specialist, one is expected to make specific monitorable recommendations for a remedial activity for women's empowerment. For example, I recently worked on a gender analysis of a particular agricultural commodity in Samoa that described the different roles of men and women in



growing, processing and selling it. My co-researchers and I concluded that what would benefit grower households, both women and men, would be improved extension services, and that there were no specific interventions that would assist women in particular, thus disappointing our client. There is pressure from donors to make recommendations for gender inclusion in monitoring frameworks as for example in an infrastructure project in Vanuatu, which required a specific and monitorable proportion of construction labour to be contributed by women. I won't waste space here to explain why, in the circumstances of this project, this was infeasible, except to say that if implemented it would have placed women in a very unsafe situation. When infeasible gender components are included in project designs and monitoring frameworks, it adds to the cynicism about gender so often encountered in the consulting profession.

## Violence against women

In recent years with the conversion of UNIFEM to UN Women the focus on gender has shifted towards addressing violence against women (VAW). Although this has been a concern since the 1970s (when PNG had a law reform project on the issue), the HIV and AIDS epidemic in the Pacific and particularly in PNG, and increased attention to rape and wife beating and other cruelties to women, has increased attention towards masculinity and men and the recognition that the term gender encompasses males as well as females. In development discourses gender has, until recently, almost always been interpreted to mean women. Most development projects aim for women's empowerment and gender equity in education, health, employment and participation in political processes. But the emphasis has been on women and if men and masculinity are considered at all, it is mainly in the context of the problems faced by women.

It has proved difficult to take the message about VAW to rural Pacific Island communities where the prerogative of a man to beat his wife is generally accepted. For example, a few years ago a Samoan documentary film-maker showed his film on culture and violence against women to a large rural Samoan audience (Percival 2015). The film was intended to encourage a conversation about the wrongs of wife beating and family violence, and the screening was followed by what was intended to be an awareness raising group discussion among audience members. However, one by one, older women rose to their feet to explain that wife-beating and predatory male sexual behaviour was the fault of women, not men. If married men strayed, their wives were to blame for not satisfying their husbands. If teenage girls were raped or sexually molested, it was the fault of their negligent mothers—or perhaps the girls themselves. In line with their understanding of Christian teaching, if wives were beaten, they had failed in their duty to submit to their husbands (see Schoeffel, Percival and Boodoosingh 2018). This illustrates how important it is to get the churches to become more socially active in addressing the tensions between modern notions about individual human rights and traditional patriarchy and the emphasis on collective interests. Recently, efforts have begun by theologians in Fiji

and Samoa to engage the clergy on issues of family violence in Christian teaching.

## Addressing customary inequity

There is no doubt that women/gender discourses in development planning and theorising have had many successes particular in government services such as education, where girls lag behind, and most significantly in law reform. However, international commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW have seen more lip-service than action on structural aspects of gender inequality embedded in traditional customs and religious beliefs, and the way in which these were being reshaped in modern contexts to preserve gender inequalities. In 1994, Pacific Island countries and territories adopted the Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (PPA). In its initial form it contained anodyne commitments to family, peace and care for the environment but it was revised for 2005-2015 and 2018-2030 with a stronger gender focus and targets for women's legal and human rights, access to services, and economic empowerment.

I now work for the Centre for Samoan Studies of the National University of Samoa. Samoa makes an interesting case study; it is a party to CEDAW without reservations, but in 2012 the CEDAW Committee pointed out that, contrary to the Convention, electoral laws in Samoa restricted woman's opportunities to stand for election to parliament. Only chiefs (*matai*) are eligible to contest parliamentary elections, but very few *matai* are women (around 11 per cent nation-wide). Samoa also committed to Goal 3 of the 2000-2015 MDGs; to promote gender equality and women's empowerment for which one of the indicators is the number of parliamentary seats held by women.

In 2013 the government passed legislation to allow special measures to require that 10 per cent of seats be held by women *matai* in parliament, so in 2016 after four women *matai* won seats, a fifth was appointed to achieve the 10 per cent quota. But as a post-election study found, the inequality lies in the customary practice in which women are largely excluded from local government in most traditional villages. There was a large Australian-funded project through UNDP and UNWomen to encourage women to stand for the 2016 parliamentary elections. This project was full of feel good activities and workshops but it was not designed to deal with the more politically sensitive structural obstacles that were detailed in a research report released a year prior to the elections (Meleisea et al 2015). Accordingly the intended impact was not achieved, as the same proportion of women (and three of the same women) were elected as in previous elections.

The conundrum facing Pacific women who are not among the educated middle class is that their cultural and religious norms disempower them in contexts which, in liberal Western societies, are considered to be empowering. As Saba Mahmood (2005) has argued, the secular liberal political traditions that underpin feminist theorising on agency, freedom and subjectivity have normalised the idea that all women desire to be liberated from structures of oppression. She points out that feminist notions of women's

agency assume resistance to gendered relations of dominance yet few Samoan women (or, probably, women from other Pacific Island societies) would agree, because such resistance would imply rejection of their customs and the word of God.

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# The soft underbelly of development: A journey through the wonderland of aid

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In 1992, the Australian Government decided to phase out the provision of budget support to the Government of Papua New Guinea (PNG), and to transfer the money to a package of sectoral programs delivered by Australian managing contractors directly accountable to what was then known as the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB). This was portrayed as a mutually agreed change to the 'development cooperation treaty' between the two countries, but was in truth a unilateral decision on the part of a donor who thought that the PNG Government could no longer be trusted with the management of free foreign money. In 1993, several teams of consultants were hired by AIDAB to help different parts of the PNG Government decide how they would like the new package of tied aid to be spent, even if they would no longer be able to get their hands on the actual money and the Australian Government reserved the right to ignore their wishes. This is the story of my own adventure in this momentary bureaucratic wonderland.

## The marginal consultant

The title of this paper entered my mind as I came to a milestone near the end of my adventure. It was a 'Working Paper on Social Impact and Gender Equity Issues in the Renewable Resources Sector'. This was the last of the working papers produced by the team known as the Renewable Resources Sector Working Group. The sector in question turned out to be quite a big part of the bureaucratic landscape, since it covered everything from agriculture and livestock, through fisheries and forestry, to nature conservation and sustainable development. The other members of my team were specialists in one or other of these branches of activity and were therefore working in a space with which they were familiar. But my space was a rather odd one, which is probably why an anthropologist like me was called upon to fill it.

In my role as the 'social impact and gender equity specialist', I was supposed to do three main things:

1. Look at the current pattern of PNG government spending in the sector and to make some assessment of its impact on what were described in my terms of reference as 'vulnerable groups'—specifically women, youth, and people living in the 'less developed' parts of the country;
2. Look at the current policies of both the PNG and Australian governments on a range of social issues, and to 'suggest practical options for the translation and application' of these policies in the planning and implementation of programmes and projects within the sector; and
3. Act as a sort of social conscience to the other members of my team, by looking over their shoulders and whispering in their ears to prevent their own recommendations from contradicting these social policies.

There were several social policy issues at stake, and for some obscure reason, these had been squashed into a single bag that was dumped in the lap of our team, rather than any of the teams working in other sectors. Someone had also decided that the gender issue was bigger than some of the other issues in the bag, like poverty, youth, social impact or community participation. So it was that I became a gender specialist, as well as a social impact sort of person, for the first—and most likely the last—time in my working life. Having been selected for this honour, and draped in the mantle of honorary Australian citizenship for a few weeks, I was left to meditate on this bag of soft and squishy issues while my renewable colleagues burrowed into the various line agencies where their national counterparts awaited the thrust of their sub-sectoral recommendations. Since there was no government department responsible for softening the edges of economic programs and projects in the renewable resources sector, my national counterpart was to be the occupant of a gender desk in the Department of Finance and Planning—but she went on leave the day before I started work and would not return until I had finished.

Since my brief was to do little or nothing for the first three weeks of our collective effort, and then to 'pedal very hard', as the team leader put it, for the last three weeks, my initial isolation was of no concern. But, by the time the three weeks was up, a series of misunderstandings had broken all lines of communication between myself and the rest of my team. So there I was, the only male consultant to tackle the gender question in the recent history of PNG, and the only anthropologist in the long line of AIDAB consultants marching or crawling around the corridors of the PNG planning process, now left to whistle in the dark while I waited for my metaphorical bike. That was when I looked again and thought I saw, beneath my terms of reference, the underbelly of development grow softer by the day.

## The Gender Desk

Some time later, when the pedalling was all over, and the bicycle had been returned to AIDAB in the form of a substantial invoice, I dropped the title of this paper into a short conversation with an American colleague who was breezing through Port Moresby on her way to the bush. She simply said she would not dream of reading any text which had this title. Slightly stunned, I changed the subject; then decided, after she had gone, that I could not allow my metaphor to die without a struggle.

I guess that my colleague's hostility was based on her belief that it was ideologically unsound of me to assimilate the question of gender equity to an anatomical equation which implies that the hard business of development is a purely masculine phenomenon. Certainly, my recent experience had encouraged me to think of Australian tied aid to

Papua New Guinea as a reptile covered in the thick skin or slimy scales of neoliberalism, but one which, like all other creatures of the swamp, had softer, social parts to its anatomy. The gender of the animal itself was not, I think, at issue here, except perhaps in the nightmares of Papua New Guinean public servants. The question is whether this way of thinking about the relationship between economic and social policy makes unsound concessions to the idea that one is masculine and the other is feminine. My main reason for giving a negative answer to this question is that the fertility of my chosen metaphor was rapidly detached from the gender question and its resolutions during the course of my brief journey through this jungle of post-colonial relationships.

All the other consultants in my team, and most of the consultants in all the other teams, were launched into PNG from a briefing in Canberra at which they were told, in no uncertain terms, to keep the gender question constantly in mind as they toyed with the finer points of sub-sectoral policies in PNG. In case they should forget, each was supplied with a bundle of photocopied documents called the AIDAB WID Kit, which seems to have accounted for the bulk of the paperwork that each brought back to Port Moresby. I myself was excused this form of initiation, but I did get the mandatory WID Kit, and was left to deduce for myself that the concept of 'gender equity' was now to be considered as an ideological advance on the concept of 'women in development', which made the kit seem slightly second hand. Yet nothing was entirely new. When my assignment brought me to my appointment with the first assistant secretary in charge of the Women's Division of the PNG Department of Home Affairs and Youth, I could tell from the weary look in her eyes that I should instantly apologise for being the umpteenth consultant that month to ask the same set of questions, and receive the same set of answers, about her government's perspective on the need to have, in every local project funded by the international community, a special place for women or gender.

She handed me the home-grown equivalent of the AIDAB WID Kit, with which I might have done an instant bit of reciprocity, but along came an image of Crocodile Dundee in a New York subway, and I decided against it. She told me about the hiccups in the 'gender mainstreaming' project in the Department of Finance and Planning, about the 'institutional strengthening' of her own division by another group of well-meaning consultants funded by the Asian Development Bank, and about the grand question arising from both quarters—which was whether the cause of gender equity would best be served by moving her division into the Department of the Prime Minister, thus leaving youth, sports and religion to languish under the second least popular ministry in the PNG Government, or by putting extra gender desks in line departments, following the model already established by yet another group of well-meaning consultants in the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources. This had all the makings of a question without an answer. At least the lady knew my wife, so we talked about our children for a while, and this helped to lighten the tone of my departure.

In the meantime, the other members of my team had done such a good job of minding the gender question that I could hardly find a point in all their draft reports on which to prove my greater conscientiousness in this respect. The best that I could manage was to savage the livestock specialist for failing to observe the tendency of smallholder cattle, once on the run from their male owners, to make a horrid mess of village water supplies and thus force the local women to spend more time fetching water for their families. The livestock specialist reacted with a lazy flick of the tail, but that was not quite the end of the story. For in my pursuit of causal relationships, from women to water to cattle to fences to men, I had gone so far as to trace the origins of this scenario to what I described as 'the vigour of the colonial administration'. Out came the team leader's red pen, and no appeal to gender equity was going to save this phrase from the diplomatic wastepaper basket.

And herein lies the rub. The big stakes in this game were colonialism and independence, and in an ethnographic sense, the quality of counterpart relationships between Australians and Papua New Guineans, whether they be occupants of gender desks or any other kind of desk within the total structure of the state. That was because the men and women on both sides could see that there was nothing much to gain from dealing in the idea that Australia could either make a major contribution, *or* constitute a major obstacle, to the PNG Government's efforts to deal with gender issues in its own peculiar way. The gender question was not about to slide to the bottom of the local political agenda, nor would it cease to flow through the many forms of aid to PNG. Gender desks might well proliferate, and relevant reports would certainly accumulate. Even anthropologists might find some way to turn their gender discourse into policies that would have had some beneficial impact on the lives of Melanesian women. But these eventualities did not contain the means by which my clients, in this present case, could get to grips with the most problematic aspects of their mutual relationship.

## Crocodile Dundee

Armchair diplomats would have seen or heard the signs of strain in Australia's relationship with its former colony, the latest of which were evident at the Brisbane forum held to commemorate the future of the tied aid programme that I was supposedly helping to plan. According to one newspaper report, the Australian government minister responsible for such matters told his audience that gender equity and sustainable development were cornerstones of Labour Party policy on foreign aid. A female bureaucrat from PNG responded by saying that countries like Australia had obtained part of their concept of 'sustainable development' from the traditional experience of countries like her own. Apparently, she did not think it appropriate to extend her theme of egg-sucking grandmothers to embrace the status of women. Senior (male) PNG politicians bemoaned the imminent loss of their budget support, while one senior AIDAB official probably bemused the whole of the PNG contingent by comparing tied aid to a dose of castor oil—a

commodity whose metaphorical value is not widely appreciated in Melanesia.

The cause of mutual enlightenment, though not the cause of diplomacy, would have been better served by the seriously unsound image of our old friend Crocodile Dundee. What the Australian hero was pulling from the back of his trousers was not the AIDAB WID Kit but a much more terrifying weapon—IMPLEMENTATION, otherwise known as Getting Things Done, which the PNG Government stood accused of not doing very well.

Not, of course, that anyone would care to compare PNG to an unlucky black mugger in a New York subway, nor would Crocodile Dundee pay passing smart-alecks like me to penetrate the thoughts of his assailant. From my experience, Waigani was a much less threatening, but somewhat more mysterious, environment in which to do one's bit for international relations. The mystery, in this case, was the question how and why specific aspects of my terms of reference became the focus of a tussle in the larger war of nerves between two clients who had roughly balanced claims on my allegiance.

The nature of this balance was explained, to some extent, in the second stage of our initiation into the Renewable Resources Sector Working Group. Assembled one morning at the summit of the Australian High Commission, our mission was described to us by the high commissioner in terms so diplomatic that they almost escape recollection. But the gist of his message, as I understood it, was that we should not think of ourselves as Australians working for the Australian Government, but as Australians in inverted commas being paid by the Australian Government to work for the PNG Government. This meant that we should not be telling our PNG counterparts what the Australian Government wanted the PNG Government to do with Australian aid to PNG, but should instead be helping our PNG counterparts to tell the Australian Government what the PNG Government wanted the Australian Government to do with Australian aid to PNG—always assuming, of course, that this message could be presented with a form and content thoroughly consistent with all the relevant policies of both sides. And if, by chance, we found ourselves in the company of any PNG official ranked higher than a first assistant secretary, we should keep our mouths shut until reinforcements could be sent from the High Commission.

Alas, this briefing did not arm me for the diplomatic incident that I encountered, some weeks later, when my frantic pedalling produced the first draft of the first half of my working paper. This contained, amongst other things, a dutiful comparison of Australian and PNG government policies on all of the social policy questions contained in my terms of reference, including the one about gender equity. But when I came to discuss this draft with my counterparts in the PNG Department of Finance and Planning, I was simply told to delete all reference to Australian government policies.

My mouth fell open. 'B-b-but', I blurted out, 'my terms of reference.....' I seem to recall that my voice faded away at this point, as I saw the frowns harden on the faces of my

audience, and fell to pondering the possibilities. Should I call for reinforcements from the High Commission? Would the Australians pay me if I consigned their precious policies to the waste paper basket? Who wrote these terms of reference anyway? I took these questions away and laid them at the feet of my team leader, feeling like a double agent whose cover is about to be blown twice at once. His mouth did not fall open. 'It is a little odd', he mused, 'for I believe your terms of reference were written by Finance and Planning'. Could this be true? If so, then I should surely make a stand. Now it was the team leader's turn to frown. 'Are you looking for a fight?', he asked. 'Oh no', I said, defensively. 'Then do what they want', he concluded. So I did.

Once the Australian policies were safely out of the way, and my AIDAB WID Kit had been left to gather dust in the corner of my office, I could relax into the idea that the Australians had allowed me and my terms of reference to be taken hostage by the Papua New Guineans, and all I now had to do was apply myself to the purchase of my own freedom by manufacturing a truly indigenous form of social policy. Having learnt my lesson in diplomacy, I did not dare to pose this problem too directly as I forged my working paper through successive conversations with my national counterparts. At first I thought it might be an accident of international relations, because my most talkative counterpart was not a Papua New Guinean at all, but an Englishman like myself, one of several sent out in short bursts by the British Government's Overseas Development Administration to plug holes in post-colonial bureaucracies. Here we were, one Englishman representing Australia taken hostage by another Englishman representing PNG, together like St George on horseback, ready to repel the ghastly dragon domiciled in Canberra.

With the benefit of hindsight, this perception of the situation might explain an Australian lack of interest in my own little weapon, but does not explain the way that real Papua New Guineans have sought to escape the clutches of tied aid. Even at the time, it was difficult enough to think of the State of PNG as a damsel in distress because its normal reaction to any species of global monster, from the World Bank to Amnesty International, nearly always reminded me of a tortoise. And a tortoise, unlike dragons and St George, or even castor oil, does have the merit, as a metaphor, of being INDIGENOUS.

So let us put our fable in a place where it belongs—the swamps and lakes of Papua New Guinea. Tied aid is like a crocodile; the local state is like a tortoise; perhaps there are some human hunters in the story too. But where is social policy?

In this context social policy was like a blanket or a kitbag, maybe even like the AIDAB WID Kit, not much use for hunting crocodiles. But in this wrapping there were several potential weapons, and the one that was selected for this purpose was not the gender equity issue but the question of community participation in development. This became the sharp end of my working paper:

The question of how to achieve the meaningful participation of target communities in the planning and implementation of programs and projects in all sectors (not just

the RRS) is now regarded as a question which needs to be given priority over the question of how to ensure that this same process is properly informed by specific GOPNG policies on social impact, gender equity, youth involvement, or NGO delivery of services. This question is given priority because the process of government is widely perceived as one which presently delivers very little to rural communities except a growing sense of frustration and alienation. This in turn is due to the growth of an 'implementation gap' between the intentions and the results of government activity. If this gap cannot be bridged, then there is no point trying to establish criteria for choosing between target communities or paying particular attention to the needs of women.

This paragraph concluded the section that AIDAB wanted me to call 'Emerging Issues', but was placed there at the insistence of the PNG Department of Finance and Planning, and thus set the tone for the final two sections of the paper—'Criteria and Mechanisms for Project Planning and Implementation' and 'Priorities for Donor Assistance'.

Why would the Papua New Guinean side see this kind of argument as a way to express their growing sense of frustration with the whole AIDAB sectoral review process? After all, it reads like an admission of defeat on the part of the PNG Government, and might even be taken as an open invitation for large numbers of Australian consultants to walk right in and rectify the situation. So what on earth (or in the swamp) was going on? I still didn't know for sure, and even if I did, I might not find it politic to write it down. So let me retreat behind the cover of my metaphor, and conjure up the image of a Melanesian Crocodile Dundee uttering a magic spell before the hunt. It goes like this:

Australia, you say my state is ineffective, so do I, but this must be your fault, so you can pay the price for your mistake with your tied aid, and I shall laugh at you. Yes, you can spend this money on yourselves, Australians, then you will have to go where we, like angels, fear to tread. So send your armies of contractors and consultants

to the countryside, and throw your weight around, then see how much the people love you now, how much they want you back. You know you cannot eat this bait, Australia, and you will choke on it, yet you must try it all the same, it tastes so good. You think the state is me, but I am not the state, the state is yours, the state is nothing but a tortoise, I can eat you both.

If I had time to embellish this paper with some more conventional ethnographic wisdom, I might now take you on a short trip round the magical and mythical properties of crocodiles in relevant parts of Melanesia. But, to cut a long story short, I will only repeat what one of my friends from the Torricelli foothills (where there are no crocodiles) once told me about a method of hunting them that he thought was used by some people of the Sepik River. If they saw one sleeping on a river bank, he said, they would creep up on it and very carefully place a series of cane hoops around its jaws. Once this was done, they would wake up the beast, by tapping it on the head or poking it in the belly, and then despatch it with their spears. Neither my friend nor I could tell whether the hoops were intended to protect the hunters against the consequences of their own poor aim, or whether they simply wished to play a gratuitous joke on the crocodile before they killed it.

## Conclusion

In the end, I dedicated the final draft of my working paper to Margaret Nakikus, former head of the Social Planning Division in PNG's National Planning Office (and wife of former prime minister, now Sir Rabbie Namaliu), who tragically died of leukaemia while I was making my way through this wonderland of aid. That was a rather pointless gesture, since hardly anyone read the paper. Given Margaret had a better understanding of gender equity and other social policy issues in PNG than any of the characters that I encountered on my journey, I now rededicate this paper to her memory.

# Beyond a token effort: Gender transformative climate change action in the Pacific

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## Introduction

Gender inequality, unequal power relations and discrimination are barriers that often prevent women, girls and people of diverse sexual and gender identities from equal representation and participation in many aspects of society. Addressing these issues in climate change programming is crucial, given the ways in which climate change can amplify existing gender inequalities (CEDAW 2018). Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. Although the diverse cultures of the Pacific have adapted to severe weather over the millennia, the broad range and severity of climate change impacts require new interventions to ensure lives and access to basic rights are protected. All sectors and all levels of society—from local to national, rural to urban—require new ways of working to adapt to climate change. These new ways need to ensure that marginalised segments of society, including women, girls and boys, people of diverse sexual and gender identities, people with disability and indigenous people, are considered. ‘Gender transformative climate change action’ seeks to address some of these issues, by transforming underlying norms and behaviours, relations, systems and structures to ensure gender equality.

The Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney (ISF-UTS) led research in March-June 2018, commissioned by Plan International Australia (PIA) to support their global commitment to strengthen policy and programming objectives to be more gender transformative. ISF-UTS researchers worked alongside PIA’s Pacific-based programme managers and partner organisations in the Pacific to undertake this work. Their inputs, guidance, contextualisation and co-authorship on this paper helped ground the work in the context and experiences of Pacific Islanders.

This paper describes dimensions of gender transformative climate change action (GTCCA) in the Pacific. The next section outlines how the research was undertaken and is followed by examples of five dimensions of GTCCA. A conclusion provides a summary and suggested next steps to implement a GTCCA approach.

## Research design and practice

The objective of the research was to define what gender transformative climate change action looks like and provide insights for programming in the Pacific and beyond. PIA’s strategy aims to have 90 per cent of its programs be gender transformative by 2019 (Plan International 2017; Plan International 2018). Gender transformative is defined as an approach to ‘actively reduce gender inequalities to enhance achievement of project goals’ (Vunisea et al 2015:13). The research built on this definition, exploring dimensions of

a gender transformative approach to programming and enablers of effective gender transformative climate change action.

Conceptual perspectives for the research were informed by Plan International policies and programming and also drew on literature in the broader development sector. A gender transformative approach emphasises how gender initiatives relate to power and social justice. Gender transformative change requires individual agency through raising awareness of power inequalities and opportunities, strengthening of relationships in the home and community, and organising to influence structural change in policies and institutions (Hillenbrand et al 2015). The research also considered how people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics experience social exclusion and vulnerability to climate change in particular.

Three aspects of climate change action were considered in the research: 1) climate change adaptation, including activities by Plan International’s local partner organisations; 2) climate change advocacy; and 3) climate justice, which recognises that those who are least responsible for the cause of climate change are those most at risk to its consequences.

The research methodology reflected a strengths-based approach, focussed on learning and transformation. Emphasis on qualitative methods of data collection revealed positive programming practices and lived experiences in the Pacific context. A modified version of appreciative inquiry was used to discover past success and their enablers, visions for preferred futures and actions to take as part of gender transformative climate change action. Learning and transformation was an important part of the research approach and aligned with feminist methodology. This approach intentionally privileges marginalised voices in the research and provides space and an audience for women’s knowledges, values and capabilities to be affirmed and to potentially have influence in local settings.

## Research methods

The research used combined methods of document review (secondary data) and stakeholder interviews and participatory group processes (primary data). ISF-UTS researchers first reviewed documents from research, gender and climate change policy and programming approaches of Plan International and other development agencies implementing programmes in the Pacific and developed a synthesis that informed the focus of the case study research and research questions. The Solomon Islands and Fiji were selected as countries for in-depth learning where PIA are implementing climate change programmes with local partners. The two contrasting country contexts meant replicability of findings

could be tested between countries. In the Solomon Islands and Fiji, ISF-UTS researchers interviewed stakeholders from government, regional organisations and community-based organisations who had experience implementing climate change, environmental or gender-focussed programmes. ISF-UTS researchers conducted participatory group discussions in the Solomon Islands with facilitators from the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) in Hulavu Village, West Guadalcanal Province, and in Fiji with facilitators from Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF) in Nasau Village, Ra Province.

To learn their experience of past programmes, women and men of various ages were engaged in village level research activities. This included questions about: the extent of participation of different community groups and individuals in climate change adaptation activities; changes and impacts of programming; and visions for future climate change adaptation programming. ISF-UTS researchers conducted thematic data analysis in relation to the research questions and comparative analysis to compare different perspectives and experiences of gender responsive climate change action.

### **Ethical research and limitations**

Ethics was an important consideration at each stage of the research project. A standard ethics approval process was undertaken by the researchers through ISF-UTS. Informed consent was gained from all research participants. The feminist research methodology employed emphasises that the knowledge produced is a partial perspective (Haraway 1988), and historically and culturally situated. The researchers recognised their limitations in not being from PICs and encountering social privileges as ‘white outsiders’ to the research population. The partnerships with local organisations PCDF and SIDT were important to ensure research protocols were appropriate to the local context and staff were engaged in meetings following primary research to make sense of the research findings to capture nuanced meanings.

Inclusion of marginalised groups in the research was minimal due to the limited scope of the research. The timing of the research did not allow for in-depth engagement of children and youth, whose perspectives would have been valuable to the research. People living with disability and sexual and gender minorities were not included in the research in a targeted way, because at present PCDF and SIDT do not have a dedicated focus to identify and work with these individuals in the communities they work with. We aimed to overcome these limitations as much as possible through the use of secondary data.

### **Key dimensions for a GTCCA approach in the Pacific**

Drawing on document review and consultations in Fiji and Solomon Islands with key stakeholders within civil society, government, donors and village level consultations with women and men, we have distilled the key dimensions for GTCCA in the Pacific into the following five points. The first describes the underlying principle that for change to be

sustainable, it must be embedded in the appropriate local context. The second dimension is to work with existing enabling organisations that are already working in any given context. Third, to recognise that change occurs across multiple dimensions. Fourth, to recognise that GTCCA is a complex process with uncertain outcomes and lastly, that inclusive legal frameworks can stimulate changes in norms and attitudes. These five dimensions are described in more detail below.

#### **1. For gender transformative climate change action to be sustainable, it needs to be embedded in the local context**

An underlying principle for all dimensions of the GTCCA approach is that change needs to be driven from within and informed by the local context. Local voices need to be demanding the change and be the drivers of relevant and appropriate actions that can be sustained. Local actors will understand the context in which they are operating in terms of culture, environment and politics. Local actors are also more likely to understand which pathways are likely to lead to more sustainable change, for example changes in laws and policies in relation to climate change and gender equality as prompts to changes in norms and attitudes (see key dimension five).

For any change to be transformative, it also needs to be inclusive of representation from the diverse interest groups it seeks to affect. The concept of ‘nothing about us, without us’—the motto used by the Pacific Disability Forum and other disability and marginalised groups worldwide, encapsulates the sentiment that to be effective, policy change needs to include the voices of those who are most affected by the policy, voices often excluded from debate. For GTCCA, this means including women, girls, people of diverse gender and sexual identities and people with disability. Inclusion of these voices will help to ensure changes are implemented in such a way that account for, and are embedded within, the local context—be it the cultural, environmental, social or economic landscape. The other dimensions described in this paper hinge on GTCCA being implemented in the appropriate local context.

#### **2. Work with existing enabling organisations**

Across the Pacific, there are a range of local gender-focussed and women’s non-government organisations, as well as climate change focussed NGOs already providing support and training to strengthen capacity, and advocate for issues including gender and climate change. Partnering with these existing NGOs helps bring together different skill sets and expertise, and will be essential to enact GTCCA. To ensure climate change projects are locally owned and are informed by the social context in which women in the Pacific live, agencies must meaningfully engage with local organisations, including women-led organisations (CARE 2017). These local organisations have pre-existing relationships with marginalised women and girls, as well as government, private sector and churches at the community level, while also having the appropriate expertise to include gender transformative activities in their programming.



Our research revealed several examples of gender and women focussed NGOs working to promote women's participation in climate change actions. In Fiji, this was particularly strong. For example, FemLINK Pacific is a feminist media organisation based in Fiji (but works in other PICs) focussed on overcoming the inequality of women's participation in decision-making. FemLINK programmes include Women's Weather Watch, which addresses women's exclusion from planning and coordination in times of disaster by providing early warning information on tropical cyclones through the media such as radio. Another example is Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality in Fiji, which is an NGO active in advocating for greater gender and social inclusion, including within climate change action. DIVA for Equality was active in the Pacific Partnerships to Strengthen Gender, Climate Change Responses and Sustainable Development. In the Solomon Islands, Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands is an NGO active in promoting women's education on climate change. Vois Blong Mere aims to provide the means for women across the Solomon Islands to connect with each other and produces two women's radio programmes with informative and empowering messages for women.

In addition to partnering with organisations with gender expertise, partnering with local and regional organisations with strong skills in climate change would enable a skills transfer and capacity building for local staff. Pacific organisations with climate change skills include the University of the South Pacific's Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, or NGOs such as the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network. Lane and McNaught (2009) also highlight the value of collaborative practice in the context of climate change action in the Pacific. Such an approach, which brings together communities, meteorological services, development practitioners and other experts, enhances a shared understanding of climate change risks as well as broadening the spectrum of options for adaptation.

### 3. Change occurs across multiple dimensions and sectors

Gender transformative change occurs across multiple dimensions (from individual to institutional); levels (from local to international); and all sectors (for example, education, infrastructure and agriculture). Gender transformative change operates at the individual level with changes to consciousness, self-esteem and empowerment, and equitable access to resources and opportunities; as well as at an institutional and systemic level with changes to cultural norms and practices, and formal laws and policies (Rao and Kelleher 2005).

Interventions for gender transformative approaches target multiple actors and institutions including household, community groups, organisations, private sector, subdistrict government, and national government. A broad approach to change connected across multiple dimensions, levels and scales is critical to extending gender-focussed programming to be gender transformative. Similarly, tackling the challenges of climate change also requires working across these multiple dimensions—and for both gender and

climate change, transformation across these dimensions needs to be connected.

Gender transformative climate change action involves multiple entry points for inclusive and active participation. Meaningful participation of marginalised groups in decision-making and action must be prioritised. Strengthening participation of different groups within communities and building relations with other private sector and government stakeholders is complementary for influencing transformative change. The research identified the need for both women-only spaces for women's dialogue and empowerment, and spaces for collaboration of women and men together. For example, women, as a traditionally excluded group, benefit from their own spaces for dialogue to increase their knowledge about climate change and adaptation options. This knowledge enables them to contribute to community-wide climate change action in assessment, design and decision-making and be valued for their contribution. Women's spaces also provide a safe place to build their individual confidence and express their perspectives, recognising in many contexts they have been excluded from decision-making roles. For example, separate focus groups for men and women on issues around the gendered impacts of climate change allow differences in perceptions of risk to emerge and be discussed. Furthermore, maintaining these separate spaces accounts for the cultural norms which often present barriers to women speaking up in front of men, thus allowing them space to speak freely on issues relevant to them (Lane and McNaught 2009).

Part of promoting a GTCCA approach involves empowering women in women-only spaces, however, GTCCA also requires such practice to occur in tandem with women and men working collaboratively for climate change action. The women and men 'side-by-side' approach involves men valuing the contributions of women and the shared benefits this brings for the community. Men's engagement in programming will increase men's acceptance of the changed and more empowered role of women in building resilience to climate change (CARE 2017). Stakeholders interviewed for the research recognised the unique knowledge of women about climate change based on their gendered roles and responsibilities. Building from local cultural contexts, engaging women and men together strengthens relationships in community life and creates collective commitment for gender equality in climate change programming (Lane and McNaught 2009). It is also important to recognise that this process alters the balance of power, and there is potential for heightened risks to women of gender-based violence, thus monitoring mechanisms are required to measure both positive and any adverse consequences (Hillenbrand et al 2015).

Other groups who experience exclusion, such as sexual and gender minorities and people living with disability, also benefit from their own spaces to increase their knowledge about climate change and build self-confidence and solidarity. Supporting these spaces for dialogue, and thus supporting a GTCCA approach, should be combined with equal opportunities to participate in trainings, public forums and decision-making regarding climate change action. Inclusive participation between diverse groups in society

and with government, community-based organisations and private sector—and importantly, connections to other actors and institutions—contributes to leveraging change for gender transformative outcomes.

A key dimension that supports a GTCCA approach is that it occurs across spatial scales—from local to international. In international policy, the gender dimensions of climate change have been recognised in the Gender Action Plan, approved during the United Nations Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties 23 (2017). Similarly, the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development also emphasises cross-sector linkages as part of a transformational change agenda. At the national level, some government agencies in the Pacific recognise the need to build inclusive coalitions for climate change action. For example, in the Solomon Islands, government stakeholders related to areas of climate change and the environment identified the need to include consideration for gender and social inclusion in the government's climate change policy. In Fiji, a newly formed task force led by the Department of Women is aiming to promote stronger cross-sector collaboration between government and civil society on gender and climate change. Initiatives such as these can build linkages between sectors and provide a platform for gender transformative climate change action.

#### 4. GTCCA is complex, non-linear process with uncertain outcomes

It is important to recognise that gender transformative climate change action is a complex, non-linear process with uncertain outcomes. Climate change action needs to be responsive to uncertainty, similarly gender transformative programming needs to recognise that the trajectory of change is unknown (Hillenbrand et al 2015). Adaptive programming is required for both climate change action and gender transformative change. This is due to the underlying uncertainty surrounding both change processes, and that both are influenced by multiple external factors (Lenton et al 2008). Outcomes must be specific, designed locally, informed by local contexts and require engagement from multiple stakeholders at multiple levels within any given country context. The non-linear complex change process needs to be recognised and navigated well in order to make the best contributions through development programming.

To respond to uncertainty, development actors need to be equipped in processes that are iterative, open to learning and informed by reflective practices. Notions of adaptive pathways (Wise et al 2014) are helpful to navigate uncertainty, to define trajectories of change and also define monitoring mechanisms, decision triggers and feedback which enables course correction of new adaptive pathways towards transformative change. Likewise, action-learning activities (Reynolds 2011) are core to navigating uncertainty, with learning embedded within all activities and a recognition that the adaptive pathways will be required based on the changing contexts of climate change as well as social movements towards gender equality and social inclusion.

Definitions relevant to climate change are equally relevant to consideration as part of gender transformative climate change action. For example, incremental change refers to small, sometimes discrete changes that do not take into account the system in which they are situated. Incremental adaptation therefore refers to actions where the aim is to maintain existing approaches e.g. technological, institutional, governance, and value systems. Examples include adjustments to cropping systems via new varieties, changing planting times, or using more efficient irrigation (IPCC 2014). Changes in the fundamental attributes of a system are referred to as transformational change (ibid). Such transformations can occur at multiple levels (e.g. local, regional, national). Transformation is considered most effective at the national level, as it reflects systemic change, taking into account the country's approach and priorities to achieving sustainable development. GTCCA needs to include complementary activities that contribute to both incremental and transformative change.

As noted above, GTCCA requires action towards both transformational as well as incremental change, addressing immediate needs now and enabling long-term societal change. Although the endpoint is unknown, programming can focus on achieving discrete immediate and intermediate results that are stepping stones to longer-term transformation of gender relations, and adaptation to climate change. The notion of 'stepping stones' is described by in an AusAID/ADB paper recognising that process of change involved in empowering women are complex, 'change is rarely linear: breakthroughs in one dimension may be followed by setbacks in others' (2013:14). In this context, it is important to select gender equality outcomes that are realistic within the time frame of programme and project cycles, and that change is sustainable over the long-period and beyond NGO programming. It is also essential to identify immediate and intermediate results and indicators that are stepping-stones to transforming gender relations and achieving gender equality outcomes (ibid). This approach recognises the non-linearity of change. Similarly, GTCCA must also be concerned with structures and systems which inspire rights and responsibilities for equalities. Therefore, programming should pay attention to changes in gender relations in households, markets, communities and governments across local, national and international scales (Hillenbrand et al 2015), as noted in key dimension three.

Importantly GTCCA has at its core a concern for discrete changes which are responsive to the changing context, and at the same time a focus on changing the systems which are at the core of creating vulnerability and inequalities. Gender transformative climate change action involves challenging power structures inclusive of norms and attitudes which necessarily takes time for sustained change. Therefore, it is necessary to design adaptive and responsive programming that is embedded in local contexts and driven by local stakeholders (as outlined in key dimension one). A theory of change approach which captures multiple pathways to influence change and identities stepping stone outcomes can be an effective means to communicate programming options as well as monitor and evaluate programming contribution to change.

## 5. Inclusive legal frameworks to stimulate changes in norms and attitudes

Drivers of change regarding gender can come from a number of different angles. International and national legal frameworks, policies, plans and monitoring mechanisms can provide a mandate for a gender transformative approach across development programming in the Pacific, including climate change initiatives. Such legal changes can help to stimulate and promote changes in cultural norms and attitudes, which is essential for sustaining gender transformative change.

Changes in legal frameworks to recognise the gender implications of climate change is happening at the international level. For example, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979) provides a mobilising framework for gender equality. The CEDAW Committee recently recommended a gendered approach to climate change and disasters (CEDAW 2018), recognising that women's and girl's rights can be negatively affected by climate change. Many Pacific nations are signatories to CEDAW, thus are committing to operationalise practices that protect the needs of women, girls and people of diverse sexual and gender identities which are often heightened as a result of climate change and disasters.

National progress is also being made in some PICs to enact a GTCCA approach. For example, Fiji's National Adaptation Plan recognises that gender should be 'adequately integrated into adaptation projects across the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation stages' (Government of Fiji 2017:7–8). Subsequently, Fiji's National Adaptation Plan Steering Committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and seeks consultation with representatives from civil society organisations with gender expertise for implementation of the plan's actions. This provides an example of progress towards integrated and multidimensional action which brings together concern for gender equality and climate change action.

In the Solomon Islands, there have been important legislative and policy reforms in gender equality. Milestones were the establishment of the Family Protection Act (2014) and inclusion of gender equality performance indicators for Permanent Secretaries and Gender Focal Points for Ministries. In 2017 the Solomon Islands launched their revised Gender Equality and Women's Development policy, the revised Eliminating Violence Against Women Policy and the new Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan (Kernot et al 2017).

Whilst the examples above primarily highlight advancements for women and girl's regarding climate change, progress towards achieving equality for people of diverse sexual and gender identities is still limited in the Pacific—in some countries more than others. In the Solomon Islands, homosexuality is illegal with imprisonment as punishment. This discrimination enhances their vulnerability to climate

change (see for example Dwyer and Woolf 2018). Both civil society and government stakeholders interviewed during the research acknowledged the lack of programming to address inequalities for people of diverse sexual and gender identities and reported experiences of discrimination especially in rural areas. Any actions to address these shortfalls therefore need to recognise the lack of legal provisions, as well as prevailing social norms. Importantly, action towards stronger inclusion and equalities for people of diverse sexual and gender identities needs to be done sensitively and in line with existing civil society actions which are culturally relevant and ensure safety and protection in local country contexts.

A further challenge to realising recent legislative and policy reforms, is that, in the Solomon Islands—and many Pacific countries, a large percentage of people live in rural areas which are far removed from the national capital where laws and policies are made. Some laws and policies are often not known about, implemented or enforced in rural areas. Sometimes laws are not appropriate for remote rural locations and community by-laws become more fit for purpose. Thus, whilst there are laws in place regarding gender and climate change, protections and benefits are not always realised, especially by those living in the rural and remote locations. This highlights how changes in laws and policies relating to gender and climate change take considerable time to affect real change on the ground in rural areas.

## Conclusion

A gender transformative approach aims to tackle the underlying causes of inequality to overcome discrimination and inequitable power relations. Such an approach is critical in climate change programming, since gender inequalities can be amplified by the impacts of climate change. The research took a strengths-based approach, exploring elements of GTCCA that are already present in the Pacific region, in which to build upon to support a gender transformative approach. This paper has described these existing dimensions to implement a GTCCA approach. These dimensions include embedding the change process in the local context, building on the strengths already present and engaging with multiple sectors across multiple dimensions. It is also important to recognise that the change process is complex, non-linear and uncertain. Lastly, for sustainable change, it is important to work within—and also use—the legal frameworks to stimulate change. Organisations wishing to implement a gender transformative approach to climate change actions can therefore begin with these dimensions as entry points for more transformative change.

## Note

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## Twenty five years of grappling with Papua New Guinea's 'Dark Heart' in a 'Valley of Death'<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction: Place-ment

Places, geographers will tell you, are made by people. The discursive and material work of place-creation builds up layers of history, or meaning, like sedimentary rocks, each modifying, erasing and obscuring the previous, Massey's (2005:151) 'ever-shifting constellation of trajectories'.

But places also make people, and none more so than academics. Uncovering these layers of meaning, shifting through documents and dissecting contests, like a geologist or archaeologist, can construct and come to define us: our ways of thinking and meaning, what we value, even the patience we have with people, our understanding of time, and priorities, all of these inflect ourselves as researchers and as people. In this way Papua New Guinea, and the Porgera gold mine especially, has made me as an academic. They have set and framed my career, but they have also conditioned me in ways that have shaped my sensibility to questions of development, to the academic enterprise, and to the relationship between academic work and the broader social context.

There are two aspects of this 'conditioning' that will thread their way through this reflection: relationships and narratives. There is a sense in which our academic identities as social scientists are as much about our relationships, and hence more Melanesian, than the ideal individual neo-liberal university subject (Morrissey 2015; Berg et al 2016, for example). We need to build relationships with those with whom we 'co-produce knowledge': fieldwork participants, gatekeepers in communities, companies and states, colleagues, and those others in the academic environments around us. We do become, in this way, a product of these relationships, constructing identities out of them, just as Strathern (1990) has written of the relational, 'dividual' nature of identity in Melanesian societies. To give one example from debates about positionality among those working in my area, there have been some academics who chose to build sets of relationships that position themselves as advocates for communities impacted by mining. Others develop approaches and networks that construct themselves as 'consultants', while still others have constructed less catholic identities, working towards the notion of an 'honest broker' as someone who seeks to promote dialogue, understanding and deeper connections among the stakeholders. This latter is how I have sought to construct my academic identity and rationalise my work, seeking to leverage off my relationships established across a broad range of stakeholders to shift positions and forms of interventions that respond and adapt to the complexity and challenges of the extractives sector in different ways at different points in time. It is a positionality not without academic risk (none of them are) but it has provided opportunities to work with and across most of the different stakeholder groups through time: community, NGO, company, state, international institution, university and bilateral donor.

The second element flows from this: the narratives we tell about our work. Much of our fieldwork (as engaged geographers and development studies academics) is about listening to and collecting stories from people that are also actively, discursively creating and shaping through their words, their worlds and how others see and understand them. The positionality and subjectivities connected to the analysis and writing up of our work—the stories we tell in presentations, papers and lectures about the stories we collect—are our means of shaping the understanding of the world. But in many cases, and certainly for mining in Papua New Guinea, this is a contested academic and public arena, with others also crafting stories, and shaping discourses, practices and policies. This active carving out of our position, argument and debate through the narratives we use, is central to the construction of who we are as academics, in our own eyes as much as those of others. These two strands—relationships and narratives—will thread themselves

through this reflection, providing part structure and part rationale for my extended engagement at Porgera.

## Creating and contesting narratives of Porgera

This reflection is also written with some trepidation. It is in part sparked by a **piece** in the Canadian on-line journal *The Walrus* on the Porgera gold mine (Poplak 2016), and Alex Golub's (2015) Cause and Effect paper, an excellent invocation to anthropologists and other social scientists for a different form of engagement with the 'objects' of our academic research. As an academic who has worked at and on Porgera for more than 25 years, I'm regularly faced with the dilemma that many academics encounter: how to respond or contribute to NGO or media interest in the issues that we have some expertise in. In my case, Porgera has been something of a magnet for issue-based campaigns, narratives and occasional media hyperbole over the past 25 years, not entirely without cause. Golub (whose PhD was also focussed on Porgera) draws on recent political philosophy to suggest that in the case of the anthropology of mining we need to be asking, 'Who is responsible, how can we make our social processes more just, and how can we make ourselves more responsive?' I will return with my own personal and partial answers to these questions below.

By way of brief background, I first went to Porgera in 1992 for my ANU Human Geography PhD research (finally completed in 1997) and over the past 25 years have stayed engaged through contracted social monitoring research, impact assessment studies, University and donor-funded research, and commentator and reviewer of academic and policy-related work. In this time, I have been supported by company, community, state, local and international institutions, donors, and universities, and from the start, built sought to build relationships, networks and alliances across the various stakeholders, the 'honest broker' referenced above.

Having been involved in narrating the story of Porgera from a number of vantage points, I would point to four of the early documents I have written that have contributed to different narratives of Porgera, building different relationships, shaping my positionality and the understanding of different stakeholders, to an extent at least. The first was a report co-researched and written with the late Susy Bonnell, the 1996 Porgera Social Monitoring report (Banks and Bonnell 1997). This report, commissioned by the company under the auspices of their regulated requirement to 'do social monitoring' sought to bring mostly local stakeholders together to essentially come to an agreed statement on local change in the past year and map out ways forward. Despite largely achieving the first, a mix of corporate wariness and a well warranted local frustration at the slow pace of corporate attention to SML issues undid this as an on-going process. In a more academic sense, the chapters that contributed to Colin Filer's (1999) edited volume *Dilemmas of Development* I felt mapped out fairly clearly and in detail a lot of the dimensions of local change that the community had experienced. A third contribution has been to co-author with Richard Jackson, with support from the company, a book *In Search of the Serpent's Skin* (Jackson and Banks 2002) that provides a history of mining at Porgera, and the

development of the mine. Not only was this an opportunity to work with a legendary geographer of Papua New Guinea, it also facilitated a series of interviews with corporate and government figures from the early days of the project, a rewarding and illuminating process itself. This book became 'required reading' apparently among new expatriate staff at Porgera despite the fact that the binding was so poor that it could really only be read once before the pages fell out! And the fourth early contribution of note—because it extended my collaborations with Susy and Richard, and created networks to provincial and national levels—was the first 'Porgera Mine Closure Consultation Report' (PJV 2002), one of the first of its kind in Papua New Guinea. This should have been a useful document, but the mine closure date anticipated at that point (2006 for the end of mining) was rapidly overtaken by changing mine planning to the point now where there may still be another 20 years of mine life.

To return to my entry at Porgera, fieldwork there in the early 1990s was a stimulating and rewarding place to work: the mine was newly minted, people on all sides were open and receptive, and while violence was certainly present—from rock throwing at the market to what would now be regarded as fairly tame tribal fighting—it was a relatively safe and productive place to be as a PhD student. Portents of what was to come—fights connected to compensation, by 1994 in-migration beginning to appear as a serious issue, security, withdrawal of government, holes in the government systems, gendered violence—were certainly apparent (at least with hindsight), but they were not at the centre of the narratives I (or others) told.

From the mid-1990s, there was irregular, almost ephemeral interest from the international NGO community, leading to a series of running exchanges played out in the world of international media. Environmental themes dominated the early exchanges and stories, with CAA/Oxfam and ACF in the mid-1990s raising questions around the impact of tailings disposal (on the back of the Ok Tedi law suit), and ultimately a claim of 600 deaths downstream as a result of the mine, a claim that was never even partly substantiated. In the last decade it has been the disturbing accounts of human rights abuses, rapes and killings that have been the focus. Amnesty International (2010), Human Rights Watch (2011) and Colombia and Harvard Law Schools (2015) are among the most high profile of these, and they feed a regular set of one-off media reports of which the Walrus piece is simply the most recent account. The narrative has become one of dysfunction and devastation, and while in some respects this does represent the trajectory of community development change at Porgera, it is far from the full story, as discussed below.

There have certainly been some spectacular corporate failures along the way at Porgera, not least from the point of view of social science. Two mandated social monitoring programmes in the 1990s were disestablished, and an independent advisory body (Porgera Environmental Advocacy Committee or PEAK) has been poorly supported and now seems to have vanished from the web. All of these projects supported and narrated accounts that spoke to the complexity and often contradictions of development processes at Porgera, changes and transformations (such as in-

migration, see Bainton and Banks 2018) that were not reducible to a singular storyline. A long-standing antipathy to facilitating productive engagement with the social research community (two of my students were effectively told they would not be welcome at Porgera) have underpinned the inability (or complicit ignorance) of Barrick to come to grips with the complexity of the social environment they are facing (Burton 2014; Gilberthorpe and Banks 2012). And because the narratives we related (such as Jackson and Banks 2002, and Golub 2001) dealt with such a broad swath of processes and often negative changes that the corporation had little control over, they were not always comfortable stories for the company.

One area that has been a constant source of debate at Porgera over the years—from landowners, community and company—is local governance, and specifically the ‘retreat of the state’ and the reluctance of the company to pick up responsibility for the delivery of core government services. When I started at Porgera, I was convinced by the obviousness of the company position that they shouldn’t act as a surrogate government: it was an abrogation by the state, it would encourage dependency on the company, and would mean that the community could be worse off at the end of the mine life when the company left. As the years ticked by, and nothing changed—for the better at least (see for example, Java 2011), this argument became less compelling, and two theoretical frames helped me crystallise my growing disquiet. First, by adopting a community-based perspective on events at Porgera (what Sharon McLennan and I (2018) have suggested is a ‘reversing of the lens’), it was clear that from the local community perspective, they were far less interested in who would keep the hospital open, or who would make sure the schools functioned effectively, than they were in ensuring that these things happened. So 25 or more years of decent health and education facilities would be transformative to the community, regardless of who the provider was. And usually, they will prefer the well-resourced company to provide as the perception is they can do it more effectively (not unlike the neo-liberal view of the market being more effective than the state).

Linked to this is the connection to the debate, or often a corporate defence, around the development of ‘dependency’ in the communities in the proximity of the large-scale mines. The dominant development narrative is that these companies mustn’t encourage dependency and should instead promote ‘sustainability’ in its development activities, a narrative that Gardner (2012) argues is used by the corporations and the state to describe development that seeks to distance, detach or disconnect corporations from the long term development aspirations of the community. In this discourse communities need to be encouraged to take ownership of their own futures in sustainable forms of development: the ‘hand-up rather than the hand-out’. Encouraging sustainability to reduce dependency, then, has underpinned much of the rationale and approach of the company to community development at Porgera. Ferguson (2015:232) though, has provoked a broad discussion and critique of the implied negative connotations attached to ‘dependency’, instead arguing that a more realistic and

preferred community alternative ‘is more often an ability to become a dependant of (and thus to be able to make claims on) an actor with a greater capacity to provide and protect (whether this is an individual, a firm, an NGO, or indeed a political party or the state)’. In the Southern African context he analyses, and in Porgera, various forms of dependency and relationality have a deeply embedded historical and cultural legitimacy, and are sought in preference to the much more individualistic, risky neo-liberal project that underpins the intrusion of capitalist forms of disconnected development promoted by the sustainability narrative.

Returning to the reflective mode, I certainly can be castigated and asked where is the evidence that my involvement, my relationships and narrating (and especially the applied research and consultancy work) has made a positive difference for the community? One high profile advocate/critic of mining has directly asked this on several occasions, although we also tend to agree that his own involvement coming from the other (advocacy) side has had mixed, at best, outcomes/results. I like to think, obviously, that my work has fed into some change and has guided interventions and actions in positive directions, as indicated above in relation to four of the processes and stories I was involved in narrating. The ongoing need for resettlement from the SML at Porgera that was first flagged by Susy Bonnell and myself in 1996 (as the infamous Recommendation #96), is one example, and has remained a point of reference for landowners through a series of ultimately unsuccessful corporate attempts to initiate discussions and planning around this process. More broadly, my central involvement in the UNDP (2014) National Human Development Report for Papua New Guinea has had effects on national discourse around the place of extractive industries and development, and how to better manage the contribution of the sector, that built on my relationships and learning from 20 years of involvement at Porgera.

### **Porgera as one dimensional**

So, to finally turn to the crux of my trepidation with narrating this account, why do I feel so conflicted by the NGO and public reporting of Porgera? In part it is due to the often inaccurate or shallow reporting, and the evocative language used. The Walrus piece, for example, opens with the statement that PNG is a ‘volcanic absence’ (?!), lurking like a ‘shadow in the dead of the South Pacific’, and goes on to describe the ‘shuttered Porgera Market’ as ‘a wretched impromptu bazaar stretching the length of the city’. (City!). The local politics is crucially misunderstood (the Porgera Land Owners Association (PLOA) is not responsible for anything like as much as it is credited, thankfully), population growth rates in the valley are wildly exaggerated, PNG’s poverty rate is claimed to be twice what UNDP says it is, and the extraordinary claim made that once the mine closes, ‘Porgera would slide immediately into the Dark Ages’. Statements like this—and I’ve counted more than a dozen similar ones in the report—just frustrate me, and do little to shine a constructive light on the complex challenges that exist at Porgera.

My concern is that single issue investigations and evocative media narratives on attention grabbing issues

(typically also marked as being misleading or just downright incorrect) fail to address the broad range of issues, complexities and problems that communities face. The 2016 DevPolicy Blog by Camilla Burkot and Everlyne Sap, also points to the complexities around gender violence and (the now apparently unfunded) corporate attempts to rectify this at Porgera. Single issue solutions, framed outside the context in which they occur, are unlikely to produce satisfactory outcomes or the sorts of transformative, sustainable changes required to make a real difference in the affected communities.

So while I certainly fully support the good work (Human Rights Watch stand out in my view, factually and in terms of understanding the context), and even the intent of some of the less good work done on the human rights abuses, rapes and murders carried out by PJV security staff and police in the last decade, my trepidation lies in the belief that, to quote Alex Golub:

ultimately the indirect changes in the valley are even more worthy of attention, since they are obdurate and create a situation of profound and structural injustice for Ipili people. These include in-migration that threatens to turn Ipili into strangers in their own land, the almost complete retreat of the state and state services, generational conflict between parents who received houses and money from the mine, and their children who must live with the pollution, widespread interpersonal violence that results in a breakdown of law and order, alcoholism, and shifts in gender dynamics that have led to the rise of polygyny, the rise of HIV/Aids in the valley, demeaning sex work, and sexual violence. To just name a few.

Of course this might be seen as somehow devaluing the horrendously damaging (to women and to communities) rapes and murders, and I certainly would not wish to do so, but (and there in that one word is the crux of my trepidation) they are a part of a broader set of transformations that are occurring in these communities, changes which frame and contextualise and limit the scope of single issue 'remedies'. We must not take away the criminality or horror of the rapes and murder, but we must also demand a broader, more integrated holistic response to the situation at Porgera.

## Where to...

Ways forward? Alex argues we need to seek new ways to make ourselves be more responsive and engaged. Like him, I believe we as 'experts' (he cutely uses the Aristotelian term *phronemoi* for 'those who exercise practical wisdom') in the areas we work do have knowledge and explanatory power—a narrative—that can contribute to contextualise these debates in ways that situate (not excuse) practices and behaviours, and can constructively progress broader agendas for change for these communities. In this sense we should look for opportunities to open up and leverage wider debates off these single interest campaigns, and narrate, through a range of media, these stories ourselves.

We also need to become more open to working in other media, beyond our academic comfort zone—get out and engage in a range of fora—'multimodal in our scholarship' as Golub argues, even where, such as the case with mining

in the Pacific, there is a lot of heat (if not light) generated. Poorly grounded information and single issue campaigns can do damage to communities, meaning there is still a place and a role for us and our 'expert' accounts in an extended 'ecosystem' or network of actors (from within academia, NGOs, the communities, consultants, even corporations and the state) that are seeking to improve conditions in these communities or provide communities with greater control over their own futures.

I am convinced there is no magic bullet to many of the complex and often intractable issues that communities around mine sites face, but if anything this requires us as people with something of value to contribute, to more actively, and self-reflexively, seek out new forms of ethically grounded engagement, of different ways of narrating, of encouraging a wider view and tied-up connected approach to the myriad of issues that face landowners and other community members at Porgera.

In the contemporary academy, the ethical foundational point is usually the invocation to 'do no harm'. But in such complex political and ethical moments a realistic assessment of what harm is likely is virtually impossible: in this context, as in so much of social life, a systematic projection of impacts and effects in the short-term, let alone any further forward, is not a legitimate exercise itself. And there needs to be an assessment of whether doing nothing, of staying silent, of surrendering our own relationships and expertise, means that others will fill the discursive arenas and the spaces of practice and intervention that we vacate. These others may have less background (or pejoratively, less baggage), and be less attuned to the complexities and politics, and without the broad sets of relationships that longer-term fieldworkers and observers will have. There is then a political battle over who will fill these spaces, narrate the stories and seek to negotiate solutions for (and with) landowners—the only constant presence at Porgera, and a complex set of competing politics and alliances themselves. It is in this context that single issue campaigns driven by well-meaning but narrowly focussed interests can do little to address the complexities and challenges attached to the 'Porgeran condition'.

Relationships and narratives have got me a long way as a researcher, and as an academic. Recently after a couple of years of management (as Head of School) I have become increasingly convinced that my Porgera 'conditioning' on the significance of relationships and narrative are equally critical to effective management in the sector. Relationships with staff are obviously central to the role, but the school's interests are also dependent on me cultivating strong links with senior management, and with other key staff across the University that can facilitate securing support for staff in the school for their endeavours—sabbatical leave applications, teaching support resources etc. And good relationships with key senior decision makers have allowed for the successful transition of younger staff from fixed-term to permanent, secure employment. Likewise narratives about what we do, who we are, and particularly our successes, are a large part of the role: in a sector beset by uncertainty, it is important to ensure that there are positive reminders to management about the work that is being done by people and programmes within



the school. This narrative then becomes useful again come time to secure or defend resources within the institution. The cultivation and shaping of narratives internally are also critical, to give a sense of identity and coherence to what often appear quite individualised, disparate activities. Telling stories about ourselves, what values we want to uphold and how we want to operate also helps to create a constructive working environment and counter the rumour mill that functions in universities, particularly those under stress. Essentially if you don't narrate the stories, then others will fill the space.

To tie this reflection up, in many ways little has changed: I still follow and engage with issues at Porgera, through writing about Porgera, and through the relationships and networks that have accrued (and some eroded) over the past 25 years. So far this year, I have been approached by the company—Barrick—to again help them navigate the local complexities around aspects of resettlement and social monitoring, while also having conversations with prominent landowners and friends who came asking about the same, but from the other side. The tragedy and promise of Porgera continues apace, and it will continue to shape me, as an academic, a manager and as a person, far more so than I have been able to shape Porgera.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> O'Malley, N 2009, 'A walk through the valley of death: Violence surrounding a PNG mine raises questions about the company's responsibility', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 June, [www.smh.com.au/world/a-walk-through-the-valley-of-death-20090609-c29b.html](http://www.smh.com.au/world/a-walk-through-the-valley-of-death-20090609-c29b.html).

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# Post-referendum Bougainville: Development dilemmas

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Bougainville, currently an autonomous region of Papua New Guinea (PNG), is still recovering from the impacts of the deeply divisive and destructive nine year conflict there, from 1988 to 1997. Nevertheless it is preparing for a constitutionally guaranteed referendum on its future political status, which must include a choice of independence and must be held before mid-2020. At present, the target date for the referendum, agreed to by the PNG Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) for planning purposes, is June 2019, though it is likely that when the actual date is agreed to by the two governments that it will be closer to mid-2020. Although no opinion polling has been undertaken, it is widely believed that the referendum will see high levels of support for independence. Further, Bougainvilleans who support independence have high expectations in terms of the benefits that independence will bring to Bougainville. While the holding of the referendum is guaranteed, the constitutional provisions also provide that the results are not binding on the PNG Government. Rather, the national constitution provides that the PNG Government and the ABG must consult on the results, and subject to that consultation, the results are to be taken to the national parliament, which, according to the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) of 30 August 2001, has final decision-making authority on the future political status of Bougainville.

In mid-2018, with preparation for the holding of the referendum well under way, Bougainville faces some significant dilemmas. This paper examines some central dilemmas arising from the fact that not only does the ABG currently face a significant capacity deficit as it endeavours to develop autonomy, but also the limited levels of economic activity in Bougainville result in a tax base insufficient to provide the levels of government revenue sufficient for an independent government with financial autonomy.

## The Bougainville autonomy arrangements

The ABG is an elected government first established in June 2005. It operates under the provisions of Part XIV of PNG's national constitution, and the terms of the *Organic Law on Peace-building in Bougainville—Autonomous Bougainville Government and Bougainville Referendum* (the *Organic Law*), both enacted by PNG's parliament in early 2002 to give effect to the terms of the BPA. The BPA comprises provisions relating to three main pillars. The first is autonomy for Bougainville that is quite different to the arrangements applicable to provinces and provincial governments elsewhere in PNG. The second is disposal of weapons and demilitarisation of Bougainville. The third is the deferred referendum for Bougainville on its future political status. The arrangements for autonomy and the referendum have been constitutionalised.

The ABG is an elected body, established under the terms of Bougainville's constitution, itself authorised by PNG's constitution, which was developed by a Bougainville Constitutional Commission and a Bougainville Constituent Assembly between September 2002 and November 2004. The Bougainville constitution provides for a Bougainville legislature—the House of Representatives—made up of 40 elected members and an independent Speaker selected by vote of the elected members, a Bougainville Executive Council, a Bougainville public service (separate from PNG's national public service) and a Bougainville Electoral Commission. That constitution also empowers the ABG to establish a number of other Bougainville institutions once capacity and revenue is available. These include:

- A Bougainville judiciary up to the level of the equivalent of the PNG national court, with appeals going to the PNG supreme court;
- A Bougainville Public Prosecutor and Public Solicitor, and
- A Bougainville Ombudsman.

When first established, the functions and powers of the ABG were limited to those vested in the previous Bougainville Interim Provincial Government. In addition, the national constitution (section 290) provides a list of 59 other functions and powers which are available for transfer from the national government to the ABG, inclusive of such significant functions and powers as mining, land and natural resources, oil and gas, environment, and local-level government. A significant majority of these were never vested in PNG provincial governments. The transfer arrangements involve the ABG providing the national government with 12 months' notice, and consulting with it about how to jointly ensure that the ABG has the funding and capacity needed to exercise the powers and functions. When powers or functions are transferred, then all associated assets of the national government are also required to be transferred to the ABG (section 298).<sup>1</sup>

The financial arrangements are perhaps the weakest of the constitutionalised autonomy provisions, reflecting the fiscal crisis being experienced by PNG in the years leading to the signing of the BPA. Recognising that the Bougainville economy had been largely destroyed by the nine years of violent conflict, the arrangements assume that initially the ABG would be dependent on grants from the national government. Two main grants are provided for. One is the 'recurrent unconditional grant', intended to meet the costs of functions exercised by the ABG, and required to be adjusted upwards as new functions and powers are transferred to the ABG. The second is the 'restoration and development grant', the base for which was the K10 million (\$4 million) allocated to Bougainville under the development budget (the National Public Investment Programme) in 2001, which is adjusted

upwards annually in accordance with increases in the development budget. This is an arrangement intended to ensure that Bougainville would share in any significantly improved PNG financial situation.

Whilst initial reliance on grants was anticipated, the financial arrangements also embodied commitments to Bougainville moving as quickly as possible to achieving a high degree of fiscal self-reliance. To this end, the funding arrangements include several significant components. First, the ABG receives all personal income tax derived from workers in Bougainville. Second, a range of taxation powers is vested in the ABG. Third, revenue raised through company tax, customs duty and goods and service tax collected from Bougainville is paid into a trust account, and once the funds from those sources are greater than the amount of the recurrent grant, Bougainville will be regarded as having achieved 'fiscal self-reliance' and the two governments will then be required to negotiate the distribution of the revenue over and above the amount of the recurrent grant. At the time the arrangements were negotiated it was assumed that fiscal self-reliance was unlikely to be easily achieved without resumption of the large-scale mining in Bougainville which had ceased in 1989 as a result of the Bougainville conflict.<sup>2</sup>

## The Bougainville economy

It was the huge copper and gold mine at Panguna in the mountains of central Bougainville that provided Bougainville with a strong economic base before the conflict. But significant changes since 1989 have dramatically altered the economic situation. Three sources of change stand out. The first is the 1989 mine closure, which has continued ever since, with no immediate prospects of a re-opening occurring at the time of writing (mid-2018). Second, the cocoa and copra plantations that contributed about half of Bougainville's significant level of cocoa production before the conflict have never resumed production, resulting in a significant cut to the potential of agriculture production. Third, the advent about 10 years ago of a significant pest to the cocoa industry—the cocoa pod borer—has seen small-holder cocoa production fall by about half.

Nevertheless small-holder cocoa production, together with small-scale gold production, is a mainstay of the contemporary Bougainville economy. The two sectors together contribute production valued at about K200 million (\$AU82 million), which reaches the hands of about 15,000 cocoa farmers (Chand 2017) and about 10,000 small-scale miners (O'Faircheallaigh et al 2017). Putting large-scale mining to one side (the possibilities are discussed below) options for dramatic economic expansion are limited. The rapid expansion of small-holder cash cropping in much of Bougainville from the 1960s (MacWilliam 2013:144–149, 184–186, 193) together with very high rates of population growth limits the availability of new land for cash crops (Mitchell 1982; Connell 1988:84–85; Tanis 2005:456–457). The only major unexplored alternative source of revenue involves a rents tax on migratory fish species caught in waters associated with Bougainville, which could see a Bougainville government receiving as

much as K100 million (\$AU41 million) per year (Chand 2017). In relation to rental, since the ABG was established in 2005, it should have been receiving from the PNG National Fisheries Authority (NFA) the income derived by the NFA from those waters, but so far agreement on the payment has been difficult to achieve, beyond a token payment of K5 million (\$2 million) per year for each of three years, 2014–17 made early in 2018. Chand (2017) also points to the possibility of a fish cannery being established in Bougainville, but to date there are no plans in that regard.

## Funding and capacity needs of an independent Bougainville

In 2017, total budgeted expenditure for the ABG was K162 million (\$AU66 million). On the basis of comparisons with other small Pacific states, notably Vanuatu (which has a similar population to Bougainville) and Solomon Islands, Chand (2017) has estimated that an independent Bougainville would need an annual budget of between K836 million and K923 million (\$AU341–\$377 million), the assumption being that funding on that scale would enable an independent Bougainville to take on additional functions and establish the new institutions that would be required for independence. More significant is the low levels of ABG 'internal' revenue. In 2017, for example, all 'internal' revenue (inclusive of personal income tax derived from Bougainville remitted to the ABG by the PNG Internal Revenue Commission) was only K21 million (\$AU8.6 million), or 13 per cent of the total budget of K162 million (\$AU66 million). Most of the rest of the ABG's revenue was derived from national government grants. While ABG tax effort could undoubtedly be significantly improved, the current economic base is clearly nowhere near large enough to provide the tax base sufficient for an independent Bougainville to be financially autonomous.

Quite apart from funding, the ABG faces a significant public sector capacity deficit even as it seeks to achieve the relatively high levels of autonomy available under the constitutionalised autonomy arrangements under the BPA. There are two dimensions to that deficit. First, the ABG's Bougainville public service is struggling to deal effectively with the ABG's existing powers and functions. The reasons for this problem are multiple, but relate in large part to the destruction by the conflict of the impressive capacity of the administrative arm of Bougainville's pre-conflict North Solomons provincial government, and the significant difficulties experienced in multiple efforts made by the ABG to re-vitalise the public service in a post-conflict situation, where recruitment of competent staff has proved difficult, and where corrupt and similar practices that became entrenched during the conflict period have proved difficult to eradicate.

The second aspect of the deficit relates to the major difficulties involved in building the capacity necessary to exercise entirely new sets of powers and functions transferred from the national government. Powers and functions that the ABG inherited from the former Bougainville provincial government had almost all been transferred in the late 1970s, when the original PNG provincial government

system was being established. At that time the functions and powers transferred to the new provincial governments were ones until then being carried out in the provinces by national government departments through personnel based in each province. Transfer of functions to provincial governments also involved transfer of associated funding (through a minimum unconditional grant calculated on the basis of the cost to the national government of carrying out the functions in the province in question in the year prior to their transfer), as well as associated personnel, houses and offices in the provinces. It was in this way that most of the capacity the ABG needs to carry out its main current functions was realised. The current situation when the ABG seeks transfer from the national government of new functions and power is dramatically different, as in many cases the national government agency responsible for particular powers and function has never had any presence in any of the provinces, inclusive of Bougainville.

The transfer of mining powers and functions provides an example of how the constitutionally provided autonomy arrangements on transfer can operate in case of national government powers and functions, where the previously responsible national government agencies have not had any presence in Bougainville. Not surprisingly, mining powers and function were the first in respect of which a transfer request was made, soon after the ABG was established, with the original request for transfer being made late in 2005, very soon after the ABG was established. It took more than two years until March 2008, for agreement to be reached on staged plans for the transfer. It then took another five years for the ABG to establish its own mining department of about 28 personnel. The tasks involved were far more onerous and time consuming than had been anticipated. They included recruiting and training staff, providing staff with offices and houses, establishing internal practices and procedures, finding the significant funding needed for operational costs, and so on. While this may seem to be an extended period within which the transfer occurred, in fact there was a significant factor working in favour of the new department. This involves the availability of funding, which in the early years of the process of its development came from both a capacity-building trust account (see Regan 2014) and the World Bank—sources that have not been available in relation to implementation on the transfer of other powers and functions, and would presumably not be available to an immediately post-independence Bougainville.

If the ABG were to plan to transform into the government of an independent state, then even if cooperative arrangements were made with PNG for the handling of some functions (e.g. on an agency basis) there would be some entirely new agencies required, and similarly to the situation experienced with mining, there would be little or no existing Bougainville-based capacity available to become the basis for such institutions. The institutions involved here might include a judiciary, an ombudsman, senior management and training capacity for the police, a foreign affairs department, a multi-faceted taxation agency, to name but a few. The establishing of such new institutions

would face challenges of a similar nature to those experienced in establishing the ABG's Department of Minerals and Energy Resources.

## **Resumption of large-scale mining**

The ABG decision to seek the earliest possible transfer of mining powers and functions was driven by two main sets of factors. One concerned the fact that it was disputes about the distribution of mining revenues from the Panguna mine that were at the heart of the origins of the Bougainville conflict (Regan 2017), and so the ABG sought control of mining with a view to being able to ensure that the regulatory regime for mining could meet the particular needs of post-conflict Bougainville. The second factor was the concern of the ABG to be able to look to large-scale mining for raising the revenue needed for either autonomy or independence. From about 2011, the ABG put major effort into exploring the possibility of the Panguna mine re-opening. This involved two main sets of activities. The first involved engaging with landowner communities impacted by that mine, through establishment and operation of nine landowner associations representing different communities in the mine-impacted areas, and also engaging with the former mine operator, the majority Rio Tinto-owned Bougainville Copper Ltd (BCL). These efforts paused in December 2017, as a result of divisions amongst the landowner communities caused by a second group of companies that sought a role in development of the Panguna resource by establishing links with some Panguna landowner leaders. As a result of these divisions, which were in addition to the fact that a minority of Panguna area landowners opposed resumption of mining on any basis, the ABG decided to impose a moratorium on further exploration or mining development at Panguna—a decision that in mid-2018, BCL is in the process of challenging in the courts.

The second set of activities involved developing first an ABG policy on mining, and then Bougainville mining legislation, which recognised owners of customary land as the owners of any minerals found on or in such land, and giving the owners a right of veto over mining development on their land. That legislation initially maintained the moratorium on mining exploration and development on land other than that already the subject of tenements associated with the Panguna mine. That moratorium, originally imposed by the colonial government in 1972 was continued under successive PNG national government mining laws. The ABG mining legislation continued the moratorium but it also vested the ABG with authority to lift the moratorium and grant exploration licences and other tenements. The divisions amongst Panguna landowners have been a factor in decisions by the ABG late in 2017 to lift the moratorium in three new areas of Bougainville and to grant exploration licences over those areas. The ABG action was directed largely at improving the prospects of being able to derive the significant revenues needed for real financial autonomy for the government of Bougainville, whether autonomous or independent.

Engagement by the ABG with BCL before the ABG imposed its moratorium indicated that the reopening of the Panguna mine was likely to take six to eight years. Further, on the basis of experience elsewhere in PNG if any of the three exploration licences results in development of a mine, that it could be expected to take 15 years or more from exploration to operation. Clearly then, large-scale mining cannot be relied upon to provide Bougainville with the revenue needed to achieve independence soon after the referendum is held, which, at the latest, will be mid-2020.

### **Possible approaches to dealing with Bougainville's development dilemma**

In terms of both necessary financial resources and administrative capacity it seems unlikely that Bougainville will be ready for independence in the few years after the referendum is conducted. If PNG were to agree to independence immediately after the referendum, and were to do so without offering financial support to an independent Bougainville, and access for Bougainvilleans to such things as universities, teachers colleges, nurse training schools and so on, then on the basis of figures provided earlier in this paper, the situation for Bougainville could quickly become disastrous. Even if PNG were to continue funding for a time, at the levels it provides to the ABG, that would be nowhere near enough to support an independent Bougainville government. In fact, however, PNG Prime Minister, Peter O'Neill, who has been in office since mid-2011, has consistently indicated his own strong belief that when the issue of independence goes to the national parliament he expects that every MP will vote against independence. For example, in May 2018 he said:

After the vote in 2019, regardless of the question—the outcome must be tabled in Parliament...I can assure you that every Member of Parliament will vote in the interests of a unified and harmonious country (*PNG Post Courier*, 3 May 2018).

O'Neill is not alone amongst national government figures concerned about the possibility of independence for Bougainville. Such concerns are in large part related to fears that independence will be a precedent for other parts of the country. These fears were first in evidence before PNG's independence in 1975, when there were a number of micro-nationalist movements in various parts of PNG (May 1982). There are particular fears that Bougainville secession could encourage resource-rich parts of PNG to be candidates for separation. In March 2018, Prime Minister O'Neill said in relation to Bougainville that 'we worry about the unity of our country. We can't have every resource-rich province secede from Papua New Guinea. It is just unthinkable' (*The National*, 5 March 2018). Since the BPA was signed in 2001, every PNG Prime Minister has probably had concerns about not wanting to go down in history as the person who presided over the breakup of the country. Thus on the 40th anniversary of PNG independence on 15 September 2015, Prime Minister Peter O'Neill was reported as stressing that PNG would 'not be broken up under his watch' (Callick 2015).

In fact, there is no constitutional requirement that the results of the referendum must be considered by the parliament. While under the BPA the parliament has 'final decision-making authority' about the results of the referendum, according to the national constitution, those results only need go to the parliament if the consultation between the two governments that must occur post referendum decides that that should occur. If both sides agreed, then there would be other options open. Recognising its capacity and revenue deficits might suggest to the ABG that immediate independence is not a realistic option. In those circumstances, the two governments might agree that the issue does not need to be taken to the parliament for the time being. Instead they might agree to defer consideration of the independence issue. The ABG might then continue to operate as an autonomous region while it work towards achieving both the capacity and the revenue levels necessary for either true autonomy or independence. On the revenue side this would include obtaining the fisheries revenues provided for under the BPA, exploring the possibilities of a fish cannery being established, and seriously examining the possibilities of large-scale mining. Once Bougainville has built its revenue base, the issue of independence might then be considered by the two governments once again.

At the same time, a delay in decision making by the parliament would provide PNG with the opportunity to make it attractive to Bougainville to remain a part of PNG, under either the existing autonomy arrangements, or under some form of enhanced autonomy. The governments could continue to consult, and if necessary, negotiate, over a period of years, if necessary, on the appropriate arrangements for Bougainville.

### **Conclusions**

The central dilemma facing the Bougainville leadership arises from the fact that while there are strong expectations not only that there will be a large majority voting for independence in the referendum, but that independence will then be readily achieved and will result in significant benefits for Bougainville, at the same time twin deficits exist in terms of the ABG's administrative capacity and internal revenue. Those deficits make it difficult to envisage Bougainville being ready for independence soon after the referendum. If the expected vote in favour of independence does occur then in the period following the referendum, the ABG will face negotiations with the national government concerning the results and their implementation. It will face a difficult task of managing expectations in Bougainville while at the same time persuading the national government not to proceed to a debate in the national parliament directed to making a decision against independence.

The suggested way out of this dilemma is for both the ABG and the national government to agree that neither will take precipitate action after the referendum. Recognising the deficits that exist, the ABG should not press for immediate independence, while the national government should not proceed to an early vote on whether to say 'yes' or 'no' to the expected referendum vote in favour of independence. Rather,

the two governments should agree to continue to consult and negotiate on the referendum outcome over an extended period, with the ABG working to overcome its twin deficits, and the national government seeking to persuade Bougainville of the advantages of remaining a part of PNG.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the powers and functions of the ABG, see Regan 2013:431–434.
- <sup>2</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the fiscal arrangements, see Regan 2013:435–439.

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# Papua New Guinea's health services in crisis—sound policies and catastrophic failures in implementation

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The mineral boom in Papua New Guinea and the revenues from oil and gas extraction have raised its status to a 'middle income country', yet funding of services is in decline. Here I briefly review some of the problems in maternal health, infectious disease and emergency medicine that persist drawing on recent reports and interviews with Australian doctors who have provided training within the PNG system.

As a 'middle income country' PNG is no longer eligible for some of the funding from international agencies committed to improving health and alleviating poverty in developing nations. GDP has apparently improved but the promise of wealth flowing to the people and the government of PNG from Exxon-Mobil's liquid natural gas project has proven false. With this demise, the projected improvements to government services have not eventuated and in many respects the situation has worsened. The fluctuations in GDP since 2005 now reveal an ominous downward trend (Trading Economics 2018). The problems of corruption and inefficiency in service provision are compounded by an apparent lack of concern for the health of the population. In spite of an increase in budget allocation for the Department of Health many of the interventions in public health remain dependent on foreign aid agencies and research assessments of population health are almost all managed or funded by outsiders.

There is a crisis in public health in PNG. Like other social problems in the country it is a reflection of the poverty and inequality that now prevail. In spite of decades of financial and technical assistance for the health sector from the Australian Government, other international donors and a range of Non-Government Organisations, there are indications that the health status of the population is declining. Of particular concern is the increase in both communicable diseases and so-called 'diseases of affluence' that reflect dietary and other life-style changes. Cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes are among the top five causes of death. Respiratory infections rank highest.

Tuberculosis is now categorised as pandemic, with PNG designated one of the worst affected countries in the world. Drug-resistant strains have been identified in several provinces and treatment provisions are currently inadequate (Eccles 2016). It is the major cause of death for women between the ages of 15 and 44 and according to the Department of Health, affects over 435 in every 100,000 people. This, like most statistics on health in PNG, is a rough estimate. A more robust study of the incidence in Kikori in Gulf Province, undertaken by researchers from the Burnet Institute estimated the incidence to be 1290 per 100,000 people (Cross et al 2014) Reported cases of leprosy have risen 25 per cent in recent years, with women and children in rural areas disproportionately affected (The Leprosy Mission 2016). Cases of yaws are increasing.

## HIV/AIDS

When the first cases of HIV/AIDS were identified in the late 1980s, there was an immediate response from the Australian aid agency, AusAID, and for many years most of the funding from programmes on the disease came from external donors. There were dire predictions of a national pandemic and considerable debate on the strategies for prevention. In the absence of cures and the expense of treatments at that time there were widespread campaigns aimed at prevention. The most successful means of preventing sexual transmission, using condoms, proved to be the most contentious, with many Christian churches opposing their promotion and use (Hammar 2010). The current situation is somewhat brighter. Since 2010 there has been a 32 per cent decrease in the number of new infections reported and a four per cent decline in the number of deaths attributed to AIDS. But Papua New Guinea continues to have the highest incidence of the disease in the Pacific region with approximately 2,800 new infections and 1,100 related deaths reported in 2016. There were allegedly 46,000 people living with HIV in 2016, among whom only 52 per cent (46–58 per cent) were accessing antiretroviral therapy (UNAIDS 2018) In Australia 86 per cent of all those diagnosed are being treated and 93 per cent of them have undetectable viral loads. HIV/AIDS can be eliminated as a major threat to public health, but only if treatments are accessible, readily available and consistently supplied. The recent problems reported in May 2018 by Dr Glen Mola, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Papua New Guinea, that crucial pharmaceuticals were unavailable in PNG are illustrative of the ways that the best systems can be stymied by inefficiencies in other government departments (Mola 2018). Crucial supplies of HIV anti-retroviral drugs, syphilis treatment kits and oxytocin drugs (needed to treat newly delivered mothers in hospitals) and even basic equipment for suturing had run out. The shipment of drugs, part of New Zealand's aid contribution, had in fact arrived in Port Moresby, but was waiting clearance through customs. The person responsible for processing their release was 'missing' according to the local news report, and apparently nobody else was able or available to perform the task.

## Emergency medicine

Emergency medicine, like most specialities in PNG, is inadequately resourced. In 2015 there were only 10 specialist emergency physicians. While this has improved slightly over the past two years, the problems of their location, technical equipment and support looms large. Deaths from injury are high and underreported. Tribal fighting and criminal assaults, road accidents, drowning and deaths from falls are common, with PNG ranking 18th globally for deaths by drowning. While undertaking research in Lihir in New Ireland Province I recorded over 100 deaths at sea in the decade 1995–2005. I

doubt that any of these were reported to government agencies. In two instances boats that were overcrowded sank in rough weather, one resulting in the deaths of 38 people; four boats ran out of fuel and drifted, with several passengers dying from dehydration and hunger, some simply never returned and presumably all on board perished. The catastrophic earthquake in February 2018 in Hela Province accounted for over 150 deaths and many more injured. The remote location, lack of roads and absence of any proximate facilities to manage the emergency undoubtedly increased the death toll. The absence of clinics in rural areas means that people often wait until a person is extremely ill or, as often in cases of obstructed labour, near death, before travelling to a hospital in the nearest town centre. Many emergency presentations are preventable—they are the direct consequence of inadequate service provision in rural areas.

## Women and children

Of all the Millennium goals that were not achieved by PNG, those specifying improvements in women's and children's health are perhaps the most egregious failures. Papua New Guinea's maternal death rate of 215 per 100,000 is the highest in the Pacific region and among the worst in the world. While infant mortality has shown a steady decline since 2000, it currently stands at 37 per thousand live births, compared with Australia's 4.3 per thousand. A more startling comparison is that with the neighbouring Solomon Islands where the figure is 14 deaths per thousand live births. The lack of significant improvement in the last decades is indicative of the broader failures in health care for women. Maternal and child services concentrate almost exclusively on obstetric care for women. Given the high birth rate, attention to this aspect of women's lives is perfectly rational and necessary, but it excludes other aspects of women's health that are sidelined.

A recent PhD thesis (Crabtree 2017) presents a thorough but alarming analysis of the state of maternal health in PNG. Unlike many of the agency reports, she explores the complex factors that interact to restrict access and limit services for women. Inadequate staffing levels of trained midwives, low wages, poor working conditions and failures to implement national policies on maternal health are only part of the problem. There have been numerous national reports that recommend substantial changes to training, adaptation of services to local social and cultural circumstances and the urgent need to increase the number of health workers, especially midwives. These reports are invariably launched with fanfares and promises of reform, only to be shelved. Her findings:

...demonstrate what appears to be a locked-in absence of political will and priority to ensure women have access to maternal health care. Various feedback mechanisms within systems created a 'locked-in situation', where the system continues to revert to the status quo (ibid:136).

Recent reports of the high rates of child malnutrition and stunted growth in children under five years old are cause for alarm for the future health of a generation. Hou's

(2015:6) examination of the stagnant rates of stunting in the country found that:

Malnutrition in PNG is prevalent and severe, and varies across the regions. The overall stunting, underweight and wasting rates are high, 46 percent, 25 percent and 15.8 percent, respectively. Not only are the overall rates high; the severe cases among the stunted, underweight and wasted children are also high at around 50 percent in each category.

Moreover, as might be predicted, although the highest rate is in the poorest sections of the community, 36 per cent of children from families in the highest quintile for wealth are undernourished (ibid:4). There are significant regional variations, with the Highlands having the highest rates of stunting and malnutrition and the Islands the lowest. Dietary changes associated with modernity and the increased dependency on store bought food in towns has had deleterious effects on child nutrition, but there are numerous other factors that contribute. Diarrheal diseases, malaria, tuberculosis and parasitic infestations all exacerbate malnourishment. Cultural factors, such as long-held beliefs about nutrition that do not acknowledge the need for protein in children's diets and the privileging within families of adult men in apportioning the quality and quantity of food served, also contribute to the poor diets of children.

Childfund Australia observed that tuberculosis was becoming a scourge for children, many of whom are not diagnosed or treated (Chandler 2016). In June 2018 The World Health Organisation reported that a case of poliovirus had been confirmed in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. One six-year-old child presented with paralysis while two other healthy children were found to have the virus in their systems. After decades of mass vaccination, PNG had been declared free of the virus in 2000; the possibility of a resurgence of the disease is real given the low levels of completed, three dose vaccination. Reading this report, I was reminded of an experience in 2001, when waiting for a flight with three health workers who were travelling on a vaccination patrol. The flight was delayed for several hours and the polystyrene box with the vaccines sat on a luggage trolley in the blazing heat for that period, probably rendering the live vaccines useless. I raised this as a problem with the health workers and they dismissed my fears about a cold chain breach. They proceeded with their patrol. On another occasion, in 2003 I was driving along a major road and picked up three health workers walking in the heat of the day. Their vehicle had run out of fuel and they were scheduled to visit a village several kilometres away. As is often the case in Papua New Guinea, they were sanguine about their plight and confident that the mothers and babies would be waiting for them in spite of a delay of three hours. More recently a plane carrying supplies of polio vaccine was burnt by disgruntled voters at Mendi airport (ABC 2018).

## Challenges, contingencies and problems

These instances illustrate the contingent nature of some of the problems that affect health service delivery in Papua New



Guinea. Inefficiencies can often be attributed to circumstances beyond the control of health workers. There are no back-up plans to avoid a cold-chain breach; planes are late (or in the extraordinary case above, burnt); the department has used its fuel allocation and cannot conduct patrols; someone fails to turn up for work and so crucial tasks stop. Capacity building programmes rarely even acknowledge the complex contingencies that hamper effective government service delivery in the country.

One that is consistently reported is the difficulty of service access and delivery for people who live in rural areas—that is, the majority of the population. There are many villages that are inaccessible by road. Once again, there are excellent reasons for this problem. The mountainous terrain and high rainfall make road construction difficult and costly. Some major roads are regularly rendered impassable because of heavy rain damage or mudslides. In some areas hold-ups by criminals are a constant threat to travellers and transport. Fuel is expensive and owners of vehicles or small boats are often unprepared to take people to clinics or hospitals without a hefty fare paid upfront. Many areas of the country are dependent on air transport as the only means of travel to towns where medical treatment is available. But there remain many places where an arduous journey on foot is the only option for those seeking medical assistance. Limitations on access, in the sense of being unable to travel cheaply, quickly and easily to a clinic or hospital, remain a major impediment for many who would otherwise seek treatment.

Cultural factors might sometimes contribute to people's reluctance to use health facilities, but overall people are eager to avail themselves of Western medicine. In Lihir where, courtesy of the mining company, there is a well-staffed and well-equipped hospital with a reliable supply of pharmaceuticals, people flock for treatment. At times the hospital staff have complained that too many villagers present with minor ailments that could be dealt with in a village aid post. But the certainty of treatment ensures that the hospital is the first resort. Alice Street's 2012 study of bureaucratic practices in Madang Hospital revealed that people are eager to utilise services but their experiences reinforce notions of the 'absent state' and the failure of the government to provide care for its citizens. While some have suggested that beliefs in sorcery induce fatalism and inaction, there is little evidence to support this, as sorcery accusations usually arise as a consequence of death following attempts at cures. As numerous studies have shown, Papua New Guineans are pragmatists and will try numerous treatments, even when they suspect sorcery as the cause of an illness (Lewis 2000; Macintyre 2004). In a recent publication, Cox and Philips (2015) argue that the rise in sorcery accusations and killings is attributable to the decline in medical services and training and the extreme inequality that prevails in Papua New Guinea.

## Where does the money go?

In 2013 Papua New Guinea's National Department of Health published an independent report assessing the capacity of the department's various sections. The findings and the recommendations, couched in diplomatic, neutral language,

indicated that in spite of millions of dollars in donor aid and an increase in the national health budget, service provision, infrastructure and management were not functioning effectively. The problem of accountability generally and the muddled reporting mechanisms that do not permit clear figures for expenditure to be calculated makes it difficult to trace funds accurately. Corruption and misappropriation of funds are factors that are rarely examined in the context of health services, but rumour and anecdote support the view that often funds are diverted or simply 'go missing'. There is also a great deal of slippage and blockage in the flow of funds from national, to provincial and on to local health services. Funding simply fails to arrive at its designated destination.

In this brief summary of problems in health services I have made use of 'facts and figures' published in numerous reports. This is conventional and an absence of such information might be used as grounds for rejection of any argument about the current situation. But in the case of PNG, the collection of health data is itself a major problem. Lawrence Hammar (2010:154) drew attention to this in respect to HIV/AIDS:

What seems to be the case is this: so long as tables and charts, graphs and PowerPoint presentations are loaded with statistics and numbers, they come to have an 'aura of validity and rigor' even though they are riddled with internal inconsistencies, and despite that many data are missing and others, suspect.

Seven years later, The World Bank's 2017 economic report, *Reinforcing Resilience*, notes the many problems (although these are of course nominated as 'challenges' in the required vocabulary of economic development reports) that persist with data collection on health. Briefly, the data are fragmented across various agencies or departments and are not mutually accessible, with some departments often denying access to others; the quality of data are poor and unreliable; the national and international data are often irreconcilably variant on crucial issues such as staffing levels, expenditure and outcome statistics. Resolution of such problems requires commitments to change in numerous departments that no government of Papua New Guinea has been prepared to undertake. The 'locked-in absence of political will' that Crabtree observed as characteristic of the policies to improve maternal health, extends to all areas of health service provision.

Papua New Guinean and Australian governments rejected forms of tied aid several decades ago. Australian aid programmes have since striven to manage the systems through which aid funding is dispensed in ways that are less paternalistic and emphasise collaboration or partnership in all projects. But the analyses that ushered in the wave of projects on governance and leadership integrity originated in theoretical critiques in advanced capitalist countries. The enthusiasm of development theorists and practitioners for improvement in 'governance' embraced the introduction of corporatist managerial methods as the means to this end. Endless audits, flowcharts, grids, log frames, workshops and surveillance strategies later, little appears to have been achieved. Failures of leadership, breakdowns in communication, lack of transparency and a host of other systemic problems have

been identified and managerial solutions prescribed to resolve them. Often the failures can be attributed to the lack of resources that would facilitate implementation: sometimes these systems require increases in staffing, improvements in working conditions and technical support that are simply never made. But assumptions about the universal applicability of managerial systems not only ignore the practical difficulties for health sector staff in Papua New Guinea, they are blind to their inherent neo-liberal foundations. The establishment of private hospitals and clinics, which are too expensive for the majority of people but are the preferred services for wealthy businessmen or politicians and their families, is testament to the political cynicism that prevails. The gulf between rich and poor is widening and economic dependence on resource extraction incomes to narrow that gap has proven chimerical. There is no political will to tackle the multiple, complex problems that are manifest in poor public health generally and declining services to remote, rural communities.

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# Personal Pacific reflections: A retrospective essay on health aid, development and change

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## Introduction

As a child with asthma, reading was a common hobby as I only had rest to help me through an attack. This meant my exploration of the world began at an early age and was fed by my parents' commitment to social justice and service. It also meant that I was exposed to the necessity for access to health care, and a passion for a career in health. My father once read me a story about two young Australian girls losing a piece of jewelry at a beach, and their journey to find it took them to PNG and the Pacific Islands. That story set me on a path of in-depth learning of these places.

Learning about and appreciating different cultures and perspectives was a part of my life during my school years, although overseas travel was not affordable at the time. In high school, discrimination, inequity, poverty and social injustice issues struck both my heart and my head. Illustrative of this was my speech at Quota Student of the Year, presented as the audience ate dinner, about poverty and hunger in South Asia and the global need to bring an end to this situation. These childhood influences still underpin my development practice.

## The tertiary education journey

Inspiring people nurtured my personal vision to address these global health issues. Whilst training as a medical doctor my interest was sparked by public health and social medicine. I was taught by academics who had spent much of their formative years working as doctors in PNG and the Pacific and they advised me of the paths to take. At the time in Australia, social and health services reform were daily news items—community health services, universal health insurance, women's rights, Australian inequities and injustices, and the right to education. I was actively involved in these issues through the Australian Medical Students Association, and the International Federation of Medical Students Association which started my journey of developing lifelong networks of like-minded health professionals nationally and internationally. I was the Founding Director of the Asia Pacific Medical Students Association and using holiday work and a loan, started travelling to learn first-hand about health and health services beyond the Australian borders.

**Reflection One:** What I learnt through these years was the inadequate way we prepared our health professionals in standard curriculum (in any country) to be social justice advocates, to address ill-health prevention, and to understand the social determinants of health

The main health development practices of that time were 'go out and do it' yourself, or teach others to do some or all components of the job you were doing. That was not what I wanted to do. I wanted something else. So, after a few years

practicing in Australian hospitals (at the Royal Brisbane/Women's/Children's and in rural placements), I headed to Harvard. In Boston, my eyes and mind were opened by my colleagues—many senior health professionals, leaders and officials from Africa, South America and Asia—as well as by the content and the academics who delivered it. Again I was fortunate to have people willing to mentor me including:

- Dr Richard Cash who as a young US medical graduate worked in Bangladesh and helped the development and clinical trials of oral rehydration salt which has contributed significantly to the reduction of under-five child deaths, estimated over 50 million lives saved worldwide.
- Professor John Wyon who developed an approach of community based primary health care in Khanna, India with a strong longitudinal research basis, which informed the way primary health care was then delivered in many settings.
- Dr Gretchen and Warren Berggren who assisted the development of the Community Health Program of Hôpital Albert Schweitzer. Their work in the 1960s—including delivering neonatal tetanus vaccination at local community level and engaging local residents as community health workers to monitor patients care and outcomes—were ground breaking and foundational for the Alma Ata Declaration thinking on primary health care.
- Professor Arthur Kleinmann who took my nascent interest in social sciences and worked with me to develop a broader and more open way of seeing things.
- Professor Lincoln Chen, who helped me consolidate my thoughts on political determinants of health.

**Reflection 2:** From them I learnt not only content and competencies, but also the ethics of international health and development practice, evaluation and reflection of personal practice, cultural awareness, respect and inclusiveness, and to follow the dream of human rights and leave no-one behind.

### *The world now an oyster?*

My journey back to the Pacific detoured via Africa, where I lived and worked with NGOs, local government departments, international agencies, civil society groups, donor agencies and philanthropists on maternal, child and reproductive health, primary health care and intersectoral service delivery. The importance of accessibility, affordability, quality of care and political dimensions of health care were in my face every day.

- I saw how in urban slums in Nairobi, Marie Stopes was able to provide quality reproductive health care.
- I experienced how listening to a client's perspectives of services for family planning as well as using service delivery for decision making led my Zambian colleagues to improve the acceptability and effectiveness of family planning services.

- I understood the importance of intersectoral approaches for supporting rural and remote people's lives through work in Zimbabwe providing adult literacy, sustainable income generation and community based family planning services.
- I realised the sheer size and impact of the burden of infectious diseases and maternal health issues—colleagues, friends, my roommate succumbing to AIDS, cerebral malaria, maternal death. Twenty years on, a work friend showed me a picture of a reunion in Zambia, and very few of my colleagues were still alive.

Moving to Bangladesh for three years, the work of Judith Bruce and others on quality of care and Judith Wasserheit and colleagues on reproductive tract infections inspired me and again I continued to refine my approaches to work. My skills in and commitment to implementation research and to mixed methods strengthened during these years, supported again by colleagues, mentors and community members with whom I worked. My opportunity to be in the field most of the time, come rain or shine, remains a fond memory and invaluable grounding for my work.

Upon returning to Australia, I had academic and consultancy positions, which for me built my public health and development competencies but exposed me more to the ways of development agencies, funding and 'engagement'. It also brought me to my longstanding engagement with PNG and the Pacific.

#### *Beyond efficacy—what happens at implementation*

My return to Australia and the Pacific was at the time of the changes in global health and development thinking. The World Development Report of 1993 focus on investing in health and the concepts of disability-adjusted life year and best buys, set the scene for a new wave of how international and national agencies, concerned about health care delivery, would approach their investments and design. Although having been through the debate of comprehensive versus selective health care in the 1980s, it did seem that some of this debate, although with more sophisticated tools, was similar in advocating affordable essential rather than the Alma Ata universal access to health.

**Reflection 3.** Throughout my career to date I have seen the see-saw of development priorities and approaches which as a practitioner I can adapt to. But I have seen in country and through weak health services how it can distract the focus of health care providers, managers and policymakers, and at its worse can mean successful approaches are dropped because they are no longer supported by the donor agencies or global health development 'wisdom'.

A poignant moment for me was in a village in Sandaun province, PNG, where a community leader noted to me: 'This new health promoting villages thing sounds just like the primary health care thing we used to do.'

My work since 1992 in PNG and the Pacific has been both as full-time resident and short-term consultant or advisor in academic teaching and research roles, health programme support and policy advisor as well as on committees and taskforces. International approaches to

development assistance have continued to morph during this period. These include:

- sector wide approaches;
- the broadening of global health players to include agencies like the Global Fund for TB, HIV and Malaria, and Gates and other foundations;
- the development of public-private partnerships and increased recognition of the role of the private sector;
- a resurgence of interest in elimination and eradication of infectious diseases;
- rethinking of primary health care;
- information technology as a tool for service delivery;
- re-discovering the importance of human resources for health;
- increased concern about sustainability of health financing;
- searching for alternative mechanisms for funding health; and
- the MDGs and SDGs.

A common problem I have seen in the smaller nations in the Pacific, including PNG, is that people are faced with the need to adapt or sometimes reject some of the guidelines or priorities coming from the global health development community. Examples of these may include trying to add every priority that comes from a WHO resolution into an already weak, underfinanced health system that cannot maintain the basic primary health care packages for its citizens. Another common oversight I have witnessed is that external advisors and agencies don't look at the situation on the ground before they start to advise. Examples I have seen in PNG and the Pacific include:

- The dismissal in the late 1990s/early 2000s of non-communicable diseases as a priority, or being classified and funded as a common endemic health condition. Often this was because either it wasn't in the MDGs, or it was mistakenly classified as a lifestyle disease. I remember a donor agency manager saying: 'if they are wealthy enough to have lifestyle diseases they don't need our assistance.' Although this has changed to some degree, solutions may still not be fit-for-purpose culturally, nor for the capacity of the country, nor recognise and value what has already been done.
- Continued neglect of the urban poor and their needs, risks and vulnerabilities. Increasingly there are larger percentages of the poor living in urban settings, lacking access to water, sanitation, adequate housing and employment.
- Poor adherence to treatment protocols, including TB whilst in the care of a health facility. I continue to see the focus on treatment partners or apps as reminders when people are discharged into the community, but the habits they learn and the role models provided by health care providers not valuing adherence at the beginning of the treatment journey sets the scene for post-discharge behaviours. Adherence to protocols by providers and clients remains an under-addressed component of improving effectiveness of health care services and outcomes.
- Undervaluing the potential of the positive roles of men and cultural practices like *wantokism* by prematurely

labelling them as the problem, rather than engaging to see how they can be part of the solution.

Initiatives such as sector wide approaches that require major central whole-of-government engagement have also created a diversion of focus away from just trying to plan, finance, deliver, monitor and evaluate the basic package of essential health services to the majority. Although in theory it should reduce the overall burden of servicing donor funds, and should, as government systems are used, help to strengthen them, these theoretical gains have often not been achieved. I support the concept of government-led government owned, and use of government systems, but as many reviews have shown, the investment of human, management and financing resources in the early years of setting up sector wide approaches often left the health services delivery system under-attended and weakened. And it still seems hard for funders to be happy to measure the overall outcomes of all parties' contributions, rather remaining desirous of actual attribution of outcomes from their own contributions.

Many, if not the majority of Pacific nations, require overseas financial assistance to purchase and maintain health products and technologies that must be purchased with foreign currency and cost more than the health budget of the country can absorb. I remember when the new DOTS drugs for TB management, artemisinin derived therapies, and rapid diagnostic tests for malaria and antiretroviral drugs for HIV were to be introduced into PNG. The total costs of the required levels was more than the existing PNG pharmaceutical budget. External assistance to support the introduction of these essential products was required, especially as the country was also trying to introduce new childhood vaccines at the same time. Having sustainability over a prolonged period of time to assure the supplies are available, with support for logistics management is critical; but often three to five year funding cycles are the norm and inadequate to achieve the longer-term outcomes needed.

Another continuing problem is the lack of support for, and investment in, pre-service training and the facilities and personnel required to support this training. All too often, as we had found in PNG, short bursts of in-service training are provided to support the introduction of a new approach/drug/concept, but with no support or even effort to review the pre-service training curriculum and capacities to embed these new ways into the routine training. This, in most cases, involves more than just adding another set of materials to the curriculum, but often requires a complete re-visit of the course portfolios and architecture to bring in improved adult learning competency based training approaches, and upskill trainers in the content and competencies. It also requires, in some cases, upgraded facilities and refresher in curriculum design for health professional training staff. Problems arise as usually these pre-service training facilities belong to departments of education or higher education, not health, and the funding for these is through the education portfolio.

Supporting and sustaining capacities is not just formal education, technical assistance and advice. It requires all parties to recognise and accept that there is a mutual

learning and trust relationship that must be built, and sustained to be effective. In the early days of a major capacity building programme in the health sector, two wise comments from senior PNG health colleagues remain with me:

1. When asked what term the national Department of Health wanted for the additional human resources provided through the AusAID-funded program, they said 'mates', as it signified a friendly relationship, where all parties were supportive of each other and looked out for them and their best interests. That one word was trying to define the change in approach desired by them in the way aid was delivered.
2. When a senior manager, developing lists of types of capacity development modes e.g. coaching, mentoring, said: 'You know Maxine, sometimes the advisor doing nothing will support capacity development.'

When I started listening to the prayers being delivered at the opening of meetings, I understood that they were often a way of providing voice to earthly concerns about how the meeting would progress, how the participants would treat and respect each other, and the desired outcomes. I often stop and think about what I am doing. Am I doing more harm than good unintentionally by the way I am engaging? Am I disempowering my colleagues, inadvertently, by my actions? I encourage the people I mentor to be humble and reflective on their practice, as unfettered enthusiasm can be the enemy of the good.

**Reflection 4:** More attention should be paid in development programmes using evidence based approaches for successful and sustained capacity strengthening. I regularly review capacity development literature for such evidence to inform my personal practices and what I advise others through my academic and mentoring roles.

## Conclusion

Small nations are often poorly served by global guidelines and programmes. Often there is limited, if any, accounting for population size, distances between populations, immense cultural and social diversity, and limited transportation/communications/professional services capacities. Too often the assumption is that nothing has or is being done about a problem, rather than sitting and listening to what has been tried, what happened last time, why do people think it did or didn't work. Mutual learning is not the entry point for many advisors and external agencies.

In reflecting upon my work as an advisor, teacher, researcher in PNG and the Pacific I see how many people with whom I worked have been my mentors and advisors, and have been kind to share their experiences and knowledge with me, when they see my receptiveness for that support. I continue to appreciate the complexities of what drives human and systems behaviours, and how these must be accounted for in designing and scaling up interventions, especially when resources are limited.

My hope for PNG and the Pacific is that more of us learn about these countries, cultures, and histories (including colonisation) to help us be more useful partners in regional and global development. That we listen to the

concerns of and value the ideas to address these posited by our Pacific and PNG colleagues. I hope that the trend in many development agencies to prioritise issues of domestic national interest as the foundation for support rather than

human rights and equity will be challenged. And that the issues of climate and other global changes and their effects upon our regional partners are taken seriously on the global stage.

## Urban transformations: From marginal to resilient Melanesian cities?

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It is hard to imagine that the city of Port Moresby, now the capital of PNG and nudging a million residents, was in 1970, just four years before independence, a usually dusty town of just 56,000 people. At that time, in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, it was impossible to think of either independence or capital cities; both had urban centres with populations barely more than 10,000. Few had really thought about urban development. Their colonial administrators saw Melanesian islands as places of plantations and villages; they themselves were going home eventually and the Melanesians who worked in town would surely return to their home villages. Except many Melanesians didn't and in the remaining years before independence the towns grew quickly and urbanisation gradually became a byword for social problems.

Even by the end of the 1960s, it was evident that problems existed and the South Pacific Commission, the only regional agency, observed:

During the past few years the South Pacific territories have undergone rapid and large-scale urbanization. A steady stream of migrants has been flowing from the rural areas into towns that are, for the most part, ill-equipped to absorb the newcomers, to house them and to provide them with the basic necessities of life (SPC 1970:1).

A vision of the times is well described by Hank Nelson, writing in 1972 about Port Moresby, who depicted a town of European suburbs, that might have been shipped in from Townsville, surrounded by a handful of villages like Hanuabada. These villages had made a transition from thatched huts to galvanised iron and fibro, in a town where 'perhaps fifty Papuans and New Guineans occupy middle class European styled houses' (1972:173). Beyond them were the squatter settlements—usually without legal status, water, electricity, sewerage or rubbish collection; their residents 'work in the town but the town gives them little in return' (op cit:173). Four decades after independence thus it continues to be for most, especially the 45 per cent or more of Port Moresby's residents who reside in informal settlements that are characterised by a lack of planning, poor infrastructure and few services (Mageto et al 2010). The SPC's clarion call is still to be taken up.

Urban challenges in Melanesia persist, but now on a much larger scale. Urban populations are steadily growing, driven by rural-to-urban migration and high fertility rates. Cities such as Honiara are likely to double in the next 15 years, and Port Vila and Port Moresby are not far behind—putting Melanesian cities' urban growth rates, Fiji excepted, at globally high levels. Now, as in the 70s, it is recognised that Pacific Island cities are ill-equipped to absorb the steady stream of migrants, house them and provide basic services: recognition but without significant action. Urban squatter settlements and service shortfalls continue to multiply in Melanesia, where population growth and rapid urbanisation are unrelieved by international migration. Inaction has led to persistent negative trends, far from any evolution towards meeting the global ideal of sustainable cities, encapsulated most recently in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 that aims to:

make cities safe and sustainable by ensuring access to safe and affordable housing, and by upgrading slum settlements. It also involves investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in a way that is both participatory and inclusive.

Urbanisation in Melanesia got off to a bad start in weakly managed cities where development ideologies, when they existed, were focussed elsewhere. To now embark on a more sustainable urban pathway, as suggested by SDG11, we need to understand where we have come from, where we are now, and how we might arrive at a better place.

## Early days: The genesis of the urban problem

From the earliest days of administrative centres, empathy for new migrants and for the poor has never been a feature of Melanesian government policy—urban safety nets rarely extended far, if they existed at all, and were constructed by the migrants themselves. In the face of systemic disadvantage, it was relatively easy to decry urban life and value rural living as *the Pacific way*. Indeed, Melanesian cities were so divided socially and geographically—a legacy of the era—that native workers were expected to depart the city at nightfall: classic apartheid cities. Circular migration was also the norm, and a symbol of impermanence; during the 60s in Honiara, about 60 per cent of the labourers worked in town for seven months or less, and another 15 per cent for six to 12 months with few staying on permanently (Tedder 1966:37). The transient working population was also evident in the early days of Port Vila, though greater availability of land and housing meant about half the population were long-term residents by the early 70s (Vienne and Vienne 1972).

Even during these early times, the disappointments of urbanisation had become more than apparent. Nigel Oram (1964), later author of the magisterial *Colonial Town to Melanesian City. Port Moresby 1884–1974*, had already pointed to service shortfalls and growing inequities, and to the need to actually think and plan for urban growth—one of the first indications that anybody was seriously reflecting on a more positive policy towards urbanisation than sending migrants back to villages. A decade later Oram (1976) was arguing that the simplest solution may be to offer urban land close to a water tap (or maybe more than one!) with publicly provided rubbish collection—a basic ‘site and service scheme’. He also argued for inclusive governance structures that would engage urban residents in managing their urban spaces and security given the limited reach of government. He recognised the need for land, not too far from work, which would require the approval of local landowners; this despite the lack of landowner agency in colonial times. Oram’s ideas made considerable sense, but were before their time.

By the start of the 1970s, more rapid urban growth was generating problems of land tenure, inadequate housing, insecurity and waste accumulation, with no evidence that urban policy was being well coordinated, or really developed in any coherent manner. At the independence of Melanesian states during the 70s, the excitement and optimism of the times generated hope for better development outcomes, but in the absence of improved planning, there was much concern over whether cities could be made to work at all within the Melanesian context. Even at this early stage of urban development, a key concern was youth unemployment, and its association with criminality (Bennett 1978:21; Bellam 1970:74, 86) with government threats to send young men back to their villages if they committed crimes.

With rising concerns about social tensions, academics began to critique the attitudes and practices of colonial administrators, and the inadequacy and poor fit of these

in the Melanesian context. Gerard Ward (1971, 1973) focussed on the continuing neglect of urban places and the links to rural areas, suggesting the need for greater urban integration with rural development. Ward also argued: ‘that migration and the rapid expansion of towns are essential for economic and social progress and that urbanisation should be facilitated and encouraged, rather than frowned on and discouraged.’ Marion Ward (1970) took this view one step further, arguing that cities were potentially the ‘crucibles of nationhood’: high hopes that still struggle to be achieved.

Ironically, John Conroy referred to Ward’s paper as ‘widely discussed and influential’ (1973:373): discussed definitely, but in terms of urban policies unfortunately not influential. Conroy, like other critics, saw rapid urbanisation as a development constraint, complaining that ‘over-urbanisation’ was dragging workers out of a highly productive rural sector. The influential Overseas Development Group (1973) took a rather similar view of the preferred precedence of rural policy, as much as anything to slow unmanageable urbanisation. But as elsewhere in the world, policy failed to stem the tide of rural–urban migration with the pull of the city strong with its perceived economic opportunities, better service provision, and access to modern lifestyles.

Recognition that solving urban problems would not be achieved through neglect was slow to emerge despite growing sympathy with the needs of urban migrants (Jackson 1976; Oram 1976), and the almost equally slow realisation that new nations required a committed core of skilled urban residents and a vibrant economic hub. Oram, with the benefit, and hindsight, of being a bureaucrat in Africa prior to coming to PNG, saw urbanisation more dispassionately (at least in the sense of a need for planning) but also as inevitable. He argued for more urban management and planning but his advice was largely ignored.

Colonial attitudes and imported governance structures had created anti-urban and exclusive policies, and these were taken up by their Melanesian successors, often to consolidate elite financial and political advantage, all well described in John Conroy’s (2015) retrospective. Thus, the powerful (and often corrupted) position of Commissioner of Lands was maintained in Honiara until recently (2014) allowing for high levels of elite discretionary power over land allocations. Since 1964 the Commissioner of Lands had exclusive rights to determine Honiara land use, allocate land titles and dispossess people (squatters) who failed to secure legal titles—a process that became strongly influenced by elite interests (Foukona and Allen 2017; Foukona 2017). The lack of accountability eventually led to an amendment of the Land and Titles Act to transfer the exclusive powers of the Land Commissioner to a Land Board with stronger accountability provisions, but still not free of elite influence.

Critical reflections on urban policy formation may well have been hampered by the predilection of most researchers in Melanesia, and there were many of them in the years before independence, to work in remote places, notably the highlands of PNG, leaving the tasks of deciphering urbanisation to those resident at the new University of PNG in



Port Moresby. Gerard Ward and Richard Jackson, both Professors of Geography, led the way; but it was Marilyn Strathern's *No Money On Our Skins* (1975), still the best book on urban life in Port Moresby, that drew attention to the ways in which urban migrants shaped their lives and livelihoods in the city, with a view to permanence; they were resilient enough to survive and thrive, mostly beyond formal institutions.

These historical writings provide important insights into early Melanesian cities, but lack nuance. Patchy service coverage and issues of urban exclusions are often highlighted, but some observations were coloured by colonial and outsider prejudices. Jackson (1976) and Michael Goddard (2005) pointed out that settlements were characterised as hotbeds of crime and unemployment, but in reality were often the homes of productive urban residents, no more unemployed or engaged in crime than any others. These observations gave rise to Goddard's (2005) descriptions of Port Moresby's *Unseen City* with settlements that had strong cultural and historical roots, and were self-organised with strong social networks and relationships, providing connectivity between urban and rural communities, and formal and informal institutions.

## Take two: Melanesian cities in the second decade of the 21st Century

With urban problems mounting and little action on the ground, urban development became a critical issue in the *Pacific 2010* series, again examining urban development challenges for the Pacific and calling for action to create a better future; the challenges remain familiar just as the call to action fell on deaf ears (Connell and Lea 1993). The key themes reprised earlier studies, once again calling for a more coordinated approach to urban management across national and local governments, as well as non-governmental organisations and commercial enterprises. Analysis not only focussed on urban infrastructure and governance deficits, but raised a central issue for sustainable development—the rise of growing inequality in Melanesian cities, a theme that the current SDGs highlight. The disjuncture between economic and social development contributed to urban malaise, making the now familiar argument that economic growth does not necessarily equate to distributional equity.

Rapid urban growth and the expansion of settlements persisted throughout Melanesia but without integrated planning—let alone empathy, respect and any sense of urban citizenship for the poor. In Port Moresby evictions, particularly on valuable land in the urban core, continued—in 1998 there were even proposals to reintroduce the *Vagrancy Act* similar to that during the colonial period (Goddard 2005). In Honiara evictions were rare but service neglect for most settlements remained a dominant, if unspoken, anti-urbanisation policy platform. Meanwhile across the region, the number of informal settlements grew and street food and goods markets proliferated, yet they occurred outside of formal planning regimes, technically illegal, and discouraged by government despite their major contribution to city life and economics. Just as significantly,

few studies existed of settlements and urban livelihoods, to provide an evidence base for planning.

The rise of the informal sector and urban poverty was marked by repressions of the poor and marginalised, in anti-urban policies, as they were regulated and forced out of prime urban areas. This occurred most dramatically by the bulldozing of settlements and the harassing of vendors, and by attempts to devolve solutions to the churches from the state, rather than by concerted attempts to devise welfare and employment policies that might reduce social problems (Koczberski et al 2001; Connell 2003). In Honiara, governments were bulldozing markets while simultaneously many studies recognised that they were key to employment and income generation, as well as important social spaces (Maebuta and Maebuta 2009; Russell 2009; Keen and Ride 2018; Kopel 2017). The political agency of vendors—about 90 per cent women—remains low and their policy exclusion high. Management and containment by neglect has been again, the dominant approach—in Honiara few markets are legal or have running water or sanitation. Food supply chains to the cities remain largely invisible and unseen by policy makers, creating future vulnerabilities.

The 'informal' cannot be neatly categorised as unstructured, illegal or even corrupt, just as urban formal structures are certainly not the opposite! In some circumstances, settlements, markets and micro-enterprises are self-organising, and more effective and efficient than their government run counterparts. Urban informality in the form of unsanctioned settlements and economic activities is not so much an urban transgression or pre-meditated breaking of laws, as it is often still described, but rather a survival strategy: an effort to re-create institutional arrangements in a way that facilitates greater opportunity, diversity and prosperity (Rubin 2018). At the *Solomon Islands Nation Urban Conference 2016*, informal settlements were referred to as 'affordable housing areas', without which housing would be beyond the reach of the average resident of Honiara. Solomon Islands Home Finance Limited, an organisation charged with supplying affordable homes in Honiara, sells new houses at prices more than 50 times the annual median income of Solomon Islanders so that 97 per cent are only able to be purchased by government for public servants (Keen et al 2017:70). Informality is essential, and integral to urban development.

There are only poorly articulated views on who has rights and responsibilities to the city, and colonial legacies of exclusion persist even under indigenous rule (Foukona 2015; Mecartney and Connell 2017). Few on the ground in cities seem interested in issues of rights, responsibilities, power and agency. Policy and practice remain mostly focussed on removing urban blights whether 'illegal' markets, settlements, betel nut spitting and drinking residents, or loitering youths. Prestigious urban locations especially are still the abodes of the affluent with those less wealthy pushed to the outskirts, evident in 2012 with the bulldozing of settler residences at Paga Point, Port Moresby, with minimal compensation and without resettlement options, to make way for a gated residential, tourism and casino precinct.

Reflections on continuities between past and present reveal a disturbing circularity of analysis of urban issues

over time with a failure to learn and progress. The glacial progress in meeting challenges means cities and their administrators are failing to deliver on Marion Ward's hope that cities would be the 'crucibles of nationhood', or for that matter, the drivers of development. If history teaches anything it is that urbanisation will persist, challenges will not melt away, and the legacies of colonial urban management structures are failing. Those critically assessing urban development processes also challenge us to take care in our assumptions about cities and ensure that policy is driven by evidence, not prejudice. What is required are processes to respond to urban residents' needs and to strengthen the links between urban and rural areas to support national development, rather than drive wedges between people, living places and sectors.

## Looking to the future

Many still feel the colonial past is defining and shaping the present in processes of urban land allocation that are not accountable and are often exclusive. Looking to the future and achieving anything like the ideals of the SDG11, will require greater inclusion of the people of Goddard's *Unseen City* in urban governance. Urban neglect or exclusion, the unspoken policy of the past and present has not worked; a new approach is needed that, in part, must recognise community-based social networks, governance and relationships and ensure they are involved and supported by wider urban management and planning initiatives.

Land access remains the overwhelming and persistent unresolved issue in Melanesian cities. There is an obvious need to mobilise customary land in the rapidly sprawling peri-urban areas. Mobilisation does not mean privatisation. Localised and culturally acceptable institutions need to evolve to mediate land access between state, landowner groups and buyers—or to navigate the often contentious issues of settlement upgrades. Some tentative first steps have been taken in Suva with state-supported alternative dispute resolutions processes, and NGO-community-government partnerships to share the burden of upgrades (Keen et al 2017:31-41). Presently however there is no mechanism through which such initiatives might be shared within the region.

Oram's vision for basic urban rights to 'site and service' have not materialised; most Melanesian cities continue to experience inadequate water, sanitation and waste collection services. Water providers, usually state-owned enterprises, have limited finances to invest without expanding their client base and reducing the high levels of illegal (unpaid for) access. A recent study of water and sanitation services in urban settlements found that across the region access to water and sanitation for settlements remains inadequate, with squatter settlements continuing to be largely excluded from reticulated water and sewerage services. Beyond Fiji, Melanesian cities had less than 65 per cent of their settlements with access to reticulated water (Schrecongost and Wong 2015). Other services are similarly inequitably distributed.

What remains lacking are urban champions—those with strategic vision, ideas of social justice and a motive to

advance urban agendas. With perhaps the exception of Suva, Melanesian local governments have neither the finances nor the capacity to manage their cities. Urban residents are poorly represented in national parliaments. The Solomon Islands has only six per cent of MPs representing 20 per cent (or more) of the countries' urban population. Constituency Development Funds and other government development programmes (as well as those of donors) continue to favour rural over urban development, although this has not slowed urbanisation. The labour force remains largely unorganised and citizen groups, if they exist, are fragmented. Urbanisation is yet to become a real driver of political, social or economic change; ironically for most urban residents the urban economy is dominated by the much maligned but very visible informal sector.

## Towards resilient cities?

Urbanisation in Melanesia was never welcomed. Squatters were best out of sight and out of mind and the poor were no more than tolerated and usually discouraged from remaining in towns, even forcibly evicted and moved on. Settlements remain excluded from government institutions and services, and their social safety nets and development contributions rarely recognised. Change in the city has been mostly related to population size rather than urban functionality. Too few politicians champion urban residents' needs, their livelihoods aspirations, and their welfare. In PNG especially, opposition to urbanisation has continued, from urban and national authorities and influential leaders in the guise of achieving order and cleanliness, reducing crime and unemployment, freeing land for business development and demonstrating that the state is not weak: neo-liberal and neo-colonial objectives from which it has proved difficult to withdraw. Moral panics and achieving 'moral order' take different forms. Policies that focus on decentralisation and regional development are ineffective things of the past, as countries exercise a more limited role in policy formation. Without more effective broadly based rural and regional development policies, rapid urbanisation is unlikely to change.

SDG11, which calls for sustainable settlements, has lofty goals but only ill-formed visions of how to actually achieve success. Melanesian cities could benefit from greater awareness of regional and global initiatives and successes. International initiatives such as *100 Resilient Cities* and the *Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network* emphasise that urban resilience must be coupled with transformational processes to bring issues of people, politics and power to the fore. Restoration and mimicry of Western urban forms, or 'building back better' after social or natural disasters won't always or ever be enough. Instead, the underlying social, political and institutional arrangements that have shaped the city from colonial to contemporary times will need critical examination and reform.

Current settlement patterns with inadequate drainage, waste management and communications need transformation, as do the governance systems that produced them. This means rethinking laws, regulations and practices affecting settlements, rules that determine access to services, and ultimately questioning who is politically represented and who

has rights and responsibilities in the city. There will also have to be more human and financial resources to achieve sustainable cities' objectives. It remains true—one more continuity with the past—that states lack national planning policies or strategies for managing present and future urban growth, and little capacity either in the public or private sector for this task: what amounts to an epitaph for urban policy and management.

After decades of independence, there is little indication that governments have come to terms with the permanence of towns and cities, the rights of urban residents, and the need to untangle land tenure issues and service access. Global evidence clearly shows that steadily increasing inequality is bad for almost everything—economic growth, social wellbeing, crime, stability and environmental health. It is time to reflect on old models and create new solutions and approaches to urbanisation in Melanesia. Pressures are mounting from social and demographic change to rising environmental pressures on the predominantly low-lying coastal cities of this region. In the words of one of the scholars of urban Melanesia: 'In conditions of rapid change, there is no safety in standing still' (Oram 1976:259). Policies and practices must both involve and integrate the wider context of urban service provision. They are long overdue for a sustainable urbanisation that involves and supports all national citizens.

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# Pacific urban villages and village cities: Understanding town and city ‘as it is’

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## Introduction

Concurrent with climate change and erratic economic growth, the future of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) will be increasingly determined by rapid urbanisation and how stakeholders involved in their management respond to a myriad of urban challenges. The upward trajectory in urban growth is most apparent in informal patterns of urban growth, especially the ongoing changes to what has historically been termed ‘native village’ types combined with the growth of what is argued as new forms of villages, such as squatter and informal settlements. While not always visible to outsiders and visitors to the Pacific, the fabric of all Pacific towns and cities includes a mix of physically embedded native villages, plus the encroachment and expansion of more recent squatter and informal settlements. While the line of physical demarcation may be blurred between these types as well as development occurring in formally planned areas, it is argued that village types are all united to varying degrees by kin-based place relationships, ethnic connections, land tenure based on custom, persistence of subsistence activities and dynamic rules of governance.

This paper explores Pacific towns and cities through the lens of ‘urban villages’ and ‘village cities’, arguing these concepts are essential constructs to better understand the systems and dynamics of Pacific urbanism. This paper examines what these constructs mean in relation to informality, including diverse settlement and village types that might be viewed as physically chaotic, messy, disordered and irregular, increasingly pervading the character and identity of the Pacific town and city.

## Evolution and application of the term village

When I first commenced work in Kiribati in early 1993 in the Ministry of Home Affairs under an AusAID Urban Institutional Strengthening Project, I was intrigued by the continued inquiry from I-Kiribati in understanding the nature of ones ‘home island’ and ‘home village’. It was common when meeting an I-Kiribati to be asked to which island and home village one belonged. As I continued working in Kiribati and then other PICs, including Fiji, Samoa and Papua New Guinea, it became clear this pre-occupation with understanding one’s identity via knowing their ‘home village’ was a recurring theme pervading the lives of indigenous Pacific Islanders. Connecting a person or group with an association to a territory and locality and the subsequent affiliation thereof to customs, kin and ethnic group under the overarching term ‘village’ was a seemingly essential entry point of communication. This connectivity to the village and its role in both shaping and producing norms, values, attitudes, and aspirations in the way Pacific

Islanders interact and participate in their economic, social, and political way of life—both positively and negatively—emerges as a defining socio-cultural theme across the Pacific region.

Since the late 1970s and 1980s, urbanisation in the Pacific has intensified in size and scale and has seen pronounced changes in:

- Demographic, population and spatial patterns;
- the physical structure of towns and cities, including impacts on native and or traditional villages as designated by colonialists;
- rising numbers of ‘new’ urban village types;
- pressures to mobilise the factors of production, namely, land, capital and labour, in new ‘non-formal’ ways;
- land conflicts including claims for compensation and recognition of former urban lands taken away from villagers and ethnic groups (as in Solomon’s, Kiribati and PNG);
- human behaviour, including social values, norms, attitudes, and expectations;
- community control systems diminishing and replaced by State rules and regulations; and
- lifestyle, family and societal changes (ADB 2012; Jones 2016; Keen and Barbara 2015).

As a rule, indigenous groups in the Pacific were located in scattered hamlets that were dispersed throughout their unique island geographies. In Polynesia, for example, ‘There is no word in the Polynesian language for village or town. They lived in small, single-storey, single-room homesteads which were scattered at random throughout the whole of their tribal territory’ (Cameron 1987:29). In larger islands such as those in Melanesia, localities were often occupied for short periods until groups moved to other areas to accommodate cultivation cycles. Settlements and their communities who were vulnerable to attack tended to cluster together. Historically, large concentrations of people did not exist, except in PNG where large clan-based groups of up to 1,000 people or more lived together. In this setting, the emergence of hamlets and towns based on groupings of villages interspersed with planned development driven by trading and service functions are shown to be a colonial creation generated by foreign cultures at varying periods throughout recent Pacific history (Jones 2016).

The colonial administrations of key Euro-American powers and their outposts, including the United Kingdom, America, Australia, Germany, France and New Zealand, were the catalysts who oversaw well laid-out Pacific service towns and hamlets. This included the demarcation of indigenous settlement areas into native villages, as well as formally laid out towns and administrative centres. The most far reaching influence of foreign power in the Pacific

was the British who held administrative jurisdiction at varying periods over the Cook Islands, Fiji, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (now Kiribati and Tuvalu respectively), Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and the now PNG. Based on Euro-American norms and values, the concepts of village, town, and city were to be impressed into island settings, transforming the traditional social, cultural and economic systems that had guided lifestyles and land development for thousands of years. Planning regulations such as those applied by the British restricted the number of supposedly ad-hoc houses that could be built on village plots, thus forcing the breakup of the large extended family units and their functional building arrangements. A major adverse implication of this autocratic process was that it truncated the all-important nexus between clans and ethnic groups living on their family lands and erased their flexibility and autonomy to meet the living needs of extended families (Macdonald 1982).

On the island of Arorae in Kiribati, for example, missionaries forced the indigenous hamlets to be abandoned and required islanders to move to centralised villages. The church was positioned as the centre of village life, including social and religious activities as well as physical development. Along with church buildings, some missionary pastors encouraged road building and construction of new houses with physical order imposed via setbacks from roads and neighbours (ibid). In a similar vein, a 'modern village' in the Kiribati island of Makin as laid out by the British circa 1931 was described as characterised by its siting, street alignment, and style and size of housing as prescribed by government regulations (Maude 1989). Top-down changes that realigned traditional housing forms and disregarded ties to indigenous social organisation and structure were typical across the Pacific.

From the 1960s, the urbanisation of PIC towns and cities accelerated in the era of independence, flourishing in the period of post-colonialism and into the new millennium. Colonial centers engulfed surrounding traditional villages as developed on customary lands, with many villages remaining today albeit overcrowded and exercising their traditional governance as adapted (Firth 2018). Clusters of villages grew into towns, and many towns grew into village cities. Villages and their communities were to become the foundation of centralised colonial control not only for larger Pacific towns and cities, but also for the establishment of provincial and district towns, island villages, and town councils. Town and city growth and expansion leapfrogged token enclaves of land set aside for native and traditional villages, thus creating a mosaic of native villages inter-mixed with planned settlements and unplanned squatter and informal settlements. All settlements were associated with a village name, as well as land tenure type, and ethnic or tribal association.

The result of the above is that the fabric of Pacific towns and cities can be viewed as a mix of:

- i. Permanent and semi-permanent villages comprising squatters, informal settlements, and native and or traditional villages, such as in South Tarawa, Apia, Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila and Suva; and
- ii. To a lesser degree, planned residential areas with housing of various standards and quality generated by regimes of formal order (and which also maybe known as villages).

Not surprisingly, recent literature assessing urbanisation and urban growth issues in the Pacific has recognised the emergence of myriad urban village forms under the guise of such terms as 'city villages' (Keen and Barbara 2015), 'rural village in the city', 'village in the city', 'native village', squatter and informal settlements, or simply urban village (ADB 2012; Jones 2012; Jones 2016; Mecartney 2014).

## Unpacking the notion of Pacific urban village

The form and structure of Pacific towns and cities are essentially a patchwork of varying types of settlements and their communities, with many settlements being manifestations of the 'original' native or traditional 'urban village'. Within the Pacific context, urban villages exist within all Pacific towns and cities, differing in number, size, and intensity according to local, national, and historical circumstances, including expressions of urbanisation. Building on earlier work (Jones 2016), this paper uses urban village as an overarching term encompassing native and traditional villages, as well as newer village-like settlements. The latter refers to squatter and informal settlements that contain communities anchored on varying combinations of kin-based place relationships, ethnic association, emphasis on subsistence activities, and land tenure based on adaptation to custom.

Nurturing and maintaining social relationships based on modifying and adapting local socio-cultural norms and values tied to a common and shared identity, both individually and within a group, are central to Pacific urban villages being understood as meaningful places. As Mecartney (2014:2) observed in her analysis of urban villages in Melanesia:

We are remiss on confining the term of these residential areas simply as 'settlements,' for they are communities with social networks, governance structures and a defined way of life.

In this context, urban villages include native and traditional villages as located and demarcated within town and city boundaries, including unplanned village-like settlements known as informal and squatter settlements.

The description of a native village as applied in the Pacific is aptly defined by Oram (1976) based on his first-hand experiences in PNG, namely, a settlement containing enclaves of indigenous landowners occupying their customary lands and segregated from Europeans either adjoining or set in a planned town of centralised population, functions and activities (Oram 1976). Central to recognising native villages as distinct from other settlement types has been their underlying customary land tenure, and ties based around commonality of ethnicity and governance. Applied governance was a selective mix of state control combined with local socio-cultural norms and practices. Services were of limited standard and housing remained low quality compared to European building standards of the expatriate population who lived in housing sited away from the native villages.



*Figure 1: Children in traditional dress in the Motu village of Hanuabada (meaning Great or Big Village). Hanuabada is one of the largest declared native villages within Port Moresby and the Pacific*



Source: Author.

From a colonial perspective, the delineation of native and traditional villages was essentially a matter of administrative convenience necessary to maintaining control of public order and health in the emerging ‘modern’ colonial towns. Depending on PIC context, they were called native villages as in Fiji, Kiribati, and PNG, while in Vanuatu and Samoa, for example, they may be termed traditional villages. In some PICs such as PNG, both may be used. Either way, they are villages anchored on customary land ownership and governance linked to a nomenclature often originating from the colonial era.

### **Emerging new forms of urban villages**

As the rate of urbanisation took hold in the post-colonial era, new village-like settlements containing indigenous residents became an increasingly visible feature of Pacific towns and cities. In search of better lifestyles and without the prejudices of the colonial system regulating their movements and actions, an increasing number of settlers moved to towns and lived in one of the varying forms of village-like settlements, including the native or traditional village. Squatter and informal settlements gradually increased in greater number and population size than settlements known as native or traditional villages. Access to land and housing, which had been rigidly controlled via formal bureaucratic systems in the colonial era, had become increasingly negotiable and fluid across all land types, including customary tenure. Issues of service and infrastructure provision in native villages, which had been constrained during the colonial era, was now being exacerbated by the influx of migrants and itinerant workers, many without kin connections.

In the various definitions of the terms squatter and informal settlements in the Pacific, illegal occupation according to the formal system and tenure insecurity resulting from a lack of permission from the landowners are common denominators. The latter are pivotal parameters in differentiating someone who has squatted on state, private

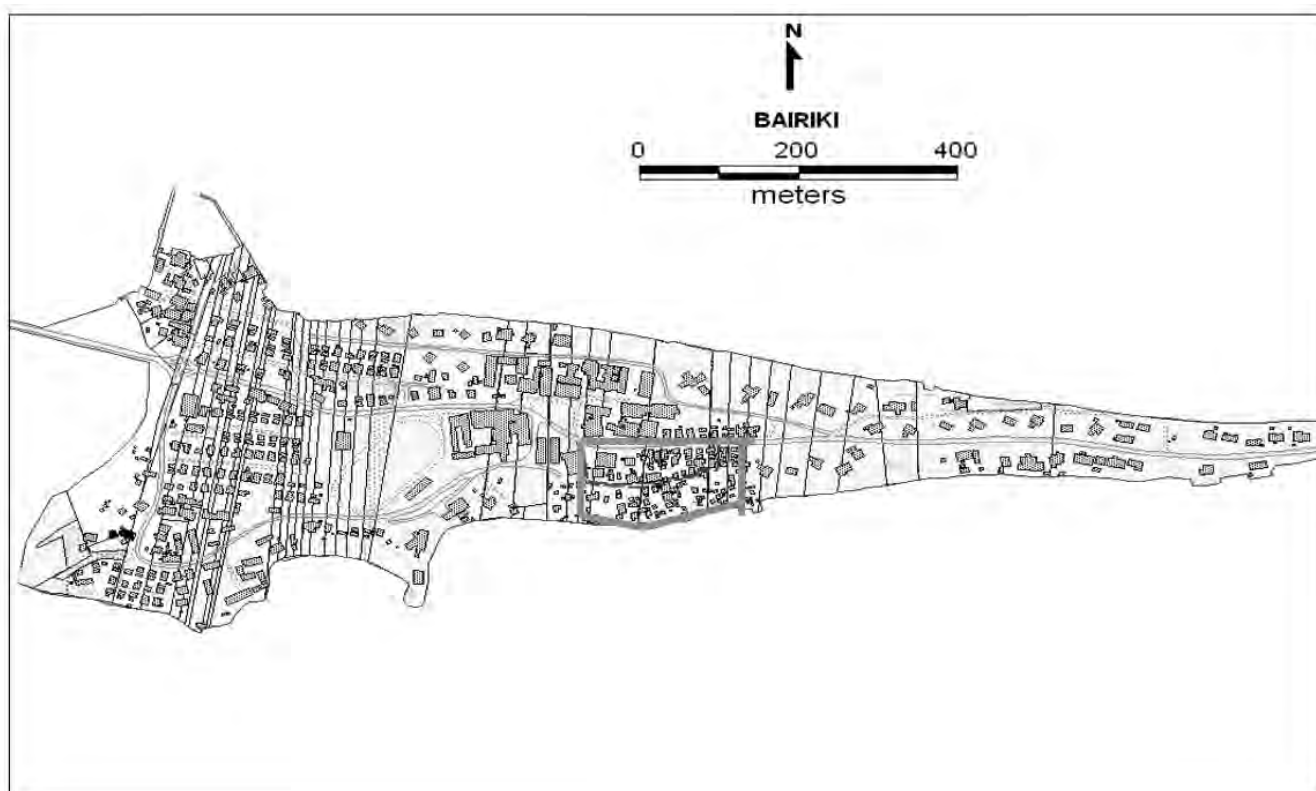
or customary land (a squatter) compared to someone living on customary land with the endorsement of the traditional owners (informal settler/settlement). Occupation agreements negotiated by settlers with landowners on customary lands, such as the native or traditional villages, fall under the term of informal settlements (Chand and Yala 2008). These terms are not mutually exclusive and local subtleties differentiate the use of the terms squatter and informal settlements in PIC urban contexts.

By 2015, Pacific urban villages were estimated to contain over a million residents, the largest numbers being in Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, and Suva, plus the smaller towns of Micronesia, such as South Tarawa (Jones 2016). The largest proportion of urban villages are found in Port Moresby, where more than 50 per cent of the population live in some type of village settlement. Village-like settlements have flourished not only within and adjoining native and traditional villages as controlled by customary landowners, but increasingly on state and freehold lands as urban populations rise. Importantly, lands being claimed for occupation are invariably those deemed by the formal planning system to be unsuitable and inappropriate for ‘planned’ urban development, such as river floodplains and hillsides. Village-like settlements develop and expand without adhering to the rules and regulations of the formal system, lacking formal implementation and enforcement. They retain a complex order that is not accepted by the formal planning system via its existing institutions and policies. Village-like settlements are acknowledged as having inadequate levels of basic services and infrastructure, such as sanitation, water, waste disposal, electricity, roads, and drainage (PRIF 2015).

In Pacific towns and cities, understanding the local nuanced usage of the term urban village depends on the administrative, legal, historical, social, and political contexts in which villages were created and have evolved and adapted. The term village, and especially the native or traditional village, has become embedded in mainstream use via deliberate colonial and post-colonial processes, procedures, language, and practice through village censuses, land records and village mapping. The British colonial government for example, designated localities with specific village names and created ‘village books’ as a basis for village censuses. This allowed village information to be recorded regarding land tenure, boundaries, usage and their relationship to clans and families. Across PICs, the word village became incorporated into colonial legislation and more recent laws to assist in better understanding and managing local practices, such as rights, interests, and ‘ownership’ of village lands as perceived and experienced by Europeans and now Pacific Islanders themselves. In this context, it is not surprising that the term village has become as a basic administrative unit in PICs, with Fiji and Vanuatu, for example, having some 1,175 and 2,149 declared villages respectively (Hassall and Tipu 2008).

Many PICs have recognised the unique circumstances of the native and traditional urban villages now ‘trapped’ in the morphology of expanding Pacific towns and cities. Laws and regulations have been enacted for their management—for

Figure 2: The native village of Bairiki (boundary highlighted) was set aside by the British colonial government in the 1950s as a small reserve to accommodate the indigenous land owners of the surrounding larger Bairiki village in South Tarawa, Kiribati. The customary lands were leased from landowners to the Government in the name of ensuring better land use allocation. Along with another small native village named Betio village in the adjoining islet of Betio, these two villages rate as the most overcrowded and neglected settlements in the Pacific.



Source: Author.

example the Mota Koita Assembly was created for the Mota Koita native villages as contained within the National Capital District of Port Moresby; the Village Fono Act 1900, created in Samoa; while in Fiji, the Fijian Affairs Board Act (Cap. 120); the iTaukei Affairs Act and other legislation controls the proclaimed iTaukei indigenous Fijian villages. In the greater Suva urban area, iTaukei declared native villages exist in Tamavua in Suva; Suvavou in Lami, and Kalabu in Nasinu (Hay and Southcombe 2016). Such legislation provides a means of ‘preserving’ indigenous culture, plus controlling urban development by applying different rules and standards to such villages (Phillips and Keen 2016).

In summary, the term village and its evolution as part of related terminology is a legacy of early explorers, missionaries, and the subsequent colonial era. The term continues to be used for political and administrative purposes and has become accepted language in PICs to reflect a range of settlement types both planned and unplanned that define the diversity of the Pacific urban fabric. Some researchers see the Pacific town and city as comprising the formal planned areas, villages, squatter settlements and informal settlements as different entities, notwithstanding their complex and overlapping systems of land tenure and governance arrangements, both formal and informal (Firth 2018). However, others argue that the emergence of

informal settlements in Pacific towns and cities share many features of the designated rural and native villages and that such overlap allows settlements to be seen as a continuum of village types (Jones 2016). In this setting, it is increasingly difficult in the Pacific to demarcate settlements into binary types as they contain an eclectic mix of indigenous land owners, from first to third generation, plus a range of newcomers. They may also contain informal settlers or squatters within their native (urban) village boundaries and vice versa, and therefore the historical meaning of urban or the native and traditional village becomes diffused (Hay and Southcombe 2016). Hence, the use of an overarching term such as urban village.

### The notion of village cities

At a larger Pacific town and city scale, formal settlements and an array of urban village types of sufficient size and number incorporating native villages, squatter and informal settlements have coalesced into what has been termed ‘village cities’ (Jones 2016). This distinctive form of Pacific urbanisation sees towns and cities characterised by an urban structure in which the traditional native village and new urban village forms embodied in squatter and informal settlements dominate the urban structure and its activities. In this setting, the formal production of urban order is only



one aspect of how Pacific town and city works and evolves given the reality that Pacific urban life operates as an assemblage of formal and informal practices and activities, the latter increasingly emphasised with the growth of village cities. The visibility of village cities and embedding of ‘village’ values are most visible in the towns and cities of Melanesia, though they also persist in Micronesia and Polynesia where kin, tradition, and other features of Pacific sociocultural orders remain strong across all aspects of urban life.

In this context, the village city can be identified by patterns of:

- i. Distinct underlying land tenure types, including tracts of customary lands;
- ii. discernible groupings of native and traditional villages physically embedded in wider form and structure;
- iii. a spatial distribution of settlers in a range of urban village types that exhibit strong affiliation to kin and ethnic-based relationships;
- iv. persistent yet flexible socio-cultural orders that define and shape the local ‘village world’ in which settlers operate in their urban villages and in the wider town and city; and
- v. the operation of traditional governance-based arrangements working alongside formal systems of government.

In the Greater Suva Metropolitan Area, Hay and Southcombe (2016) argue that parts of the greater Suva and Nasinu Council area reflect the phenomena of ‘village cities’ given large sections of the city are characterised by informal ‘urban village’ development. Many urban settlements are without services or basic infrastructure. Despite such deficits, the number of residents wishing to return to rural villages where they have ancestral connections remains low. For example, in the Valencina settlement near Lami, Suva, residents reported only 15 per cent of household members intending to return to the village compared to a five per cent settlement average across six urban settlements in Fiji (ibid). This further reaffirms the permanence of the urban village.

## Conclusion

Central to explaining and understanding the process of Pacific urbanisation is a deeper understanding of the transformation of communities and their attachment to place (villages) as they evolve and aggregate into the Euro–American mainstreamed constructs known as towns and cities. No matter the perspective from which the term village is viewed, such clusters of settlements and their nuanced characteristics play a central role in shaping both the Pacific way of life and the physical form of Pacific towns and cities. This includes their role in elevating rising tensions and violence over Pacific urban land as people’s kin connections with rural villages diminish and/or are severed (Firth 2018), and their place-based interrelatedness to traditional knowledge and custom including governance arrangements.<sup>1</sup>

The role and nature of the ever-changing urban village remains poorly understood in managing Pacific urbanisation. This has occurred despite the centrality of the

village to the Pacific way of life ‘as it was’, ‘as it is’ and ‘as it should be’ in the future. The multiplicity of physical and social expressions of urban villages and village cities present unique management and challenges for policy development at local, town, city, national and regional levels where political commitment to tackling urbanisation remains lacking. The processes by which villages work and operate from the ‘bottom up’ remain at odds with formal government planning rhetoric and the practice to which they aspire. As noted by many commentators, Pacific urban management struggles to gain momentum on both national and regional agendas (Connell 2017; Jones 2017; Keen and Carpenter 2017). There are many reasons for this, but clearly the complexity of confronting varied urban villages and concepts of village cities with their self-constructed forms of governance, complex land tenure arrangements, heterogenous populations and emergent resilience (Jones and Sanderson 2017) remain insurmountable for many institutions to address. Sadly, this includes the premier Pacific regional agency, namely, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

A major realignment of institutional norms and values is required to see the village ‘as it is’ and what this means in practice for supporting better lifestyles. This includes the need for development partners and governments to work with the unique autonomous processes by which such communities are formed and shaped. While this inertia continues, ‘A tale of new (Pacific) cities’ continues to emerge unabated in the region (Connell 2017:5–10). As a result, the need for leadership and a paradigm shift in how development agencies, politicians, practitioners, and researchers perceive and address the myriad needs of Pacific towns and cities, especially urban residents who live in some form of urban village and are often in hardship and poverty, continues to remain overdue.

## Note

- 1 See Bryant’s, 2018, work on indigenous Pacific approaches adapting to climate change, for example.

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## **(K) No (w) Boundaries: Returning through urban lands' seductions**

*Michelle Nayahamui Rooney, The Australian National University*

*I walk through that land.  
That lush green ground. I smell that moist earth.  
Ground covered leaves, fallen branches, trees. I heard them all softly crush beneath my soul, passed my skin.*

*My skin flirts with the sun's dancing light.  
Caressing, retreating under leaves. Jealous, the land lures the sun from me. Seeps  
through my skin, my clothes, my grey hair. A strange, exciting taste.  
My eyes wide open; blinded.*

*We pass one concrete block. A Boundary marker.  
Concealed in ground-covered leaves. Bright, the sun reveals this vast property. Happy,  
the sun's light leads us back along one line between cement blocks.  
Across that line we see red ground. Trees cut down.  
Surveying underway.*

*The land retreats.  
But not for long. Land is waiting for us. Did you see? Do you know boundaries? the  
land asked. Past that hidden concrete block? Near the house you dream to build.  
Across the other line between the boundary markers. Where the trees still stand, the  
sun still flirts. Dancing now, the land and leaves make way.  
Land and sun are one.*

*He is a son of that land. The land with no concrete blocks. Where the trees still stand.  
His forebears walked that land. Land and son are one. He knows boundaries. He  
points across the land to my dream. Put your house there. We will be neighbours.  
Land and son are one.  
No boundary.*

*I try to retreat now. Land's seduction knows no boundaries. That block. From a  
rounded body, my roots began. From the soil, through the cement, my sap flows.  
Branches, shoots, leaves. I am my fathers', my mothers' daughter. My brothers', my  
sisters' sister, My husband's wife.  
My sons', my daughter's mother.*

*The sea soars beneath. My eyes look up through the salty water.  
Sun's light calls me. My heart races to lands with no boundaries  
I draw these new roots back to me. I cradle them.  
From my rounded body they came.  
Roots of another tree. Implanted in me.*

*My blood. For months after.  
Comes to life, excited, driven, terrified—of land's seduction. Magically, land entered  
me, luring my new roots, my branches, my leaves away from me. Aroused. A sleeping  
sense. Until that day  
I walked through that land.*

*Father. His grave. His name inscribed on steel laid on a concrete slab. Laying under his  
house. His land. Lifeless. I see more graves. Others laying on the land.  
One grave. Many graves. My dream fades.  
Awake I see his land. Their land.  
It's not my land. No. Boundaries.*

*Mother's rounded body loves the spirited new roots. The branches and the leaves.  
Loves land, the sun, the neighbour on the concrete block. I cry a daughter's tears. A  
mother's fears. Through my trees I search. I dream. Fallen branches, ground covered  
leaves. Our house.  
It is not our land.*

*I walk on the land. My dreams in my blood, flow through my body, my skin, to my  
feet, through the concrete, into the ground. My roots, aching, search for a place in the  
land beneath the concrete block. My father's land. My mother's land. State's land. A  
son's land. Land's land.  
It's not our land.*

*We are roots, seeds, branches, leaves. Blown by the winds, over oceans.  
No boundaries. Seduced by lands.  
From rounded bodies we come. Roots of many trees.  
Looking up. Through the lands.  
Sun's light. Knows boundaries. Leads us home*

## Reflections on land and life

Urban land, transnational and translocal life, and return journeys are three intersecting and moving spaces. My heart, my mind, my dreams, and my lived reality sense and experience these spaces through particular meanings of borders, land and property, and social boundaries that define my belonging and owning as both bounded and unbounded. My mobility between these physical and conceptual spaces is also shaped and limited by how they are framed in legal, academic, policy and socio-political discourses, my limited financial capacity to be mobile, and life's day-to-day realities. In real life I am constantly reminded that I might be living in an unrealistic world. I agree! I must sustain a living. I must be a good mother and focus on the tasks of raising children. I must abide by the regulations and laws. I must be a good citizen and contribute to strong policies and budgets. These day-to-day exigencies are governed by hegemonic discourses that constitute the boundaries of what are allowable and acceptable policy spaces and intimate spaces of being and belonging. At the same time, I feel a magnetic pull towards these inexplicable spaces and I am unable to live any other way.

My poem reflects my research in urban spaces in PNG (Rooney 2017a), and my current multiple communities, homes, and localities in urban spaces. It holds multiple meanings, interpretations, and emotions. It began as a deeply emotional response in the months leading up to and after a return visit home to Port Moresby and Lorengau, Manus Island, Papua New Guinea in August 2017. It continues to unfold.

Through my research in a Port Moresby settlement, I have come to appreciate urban spaces in Papua New Guinea as creative organic spaces where human stories unfold amidst precarity, change, policymaking, scholarly writing and category making. How people navigate, negotiate and make ends meet seem to know no boundaries.

## Do you know boundaries? the land asked

Whenever my mind returns to Port Moresby I think of the cross cultural, legal plurality, interdisciplinary, learning journey I experienced. Like many people living in urban Papua New Guinea I lived a life that crossed these academic terms. Whilst engaging in various customary and social events, we also lived in rented or mortgaged houses as owners. My ownership and access to land and property was clearly defined by state land and legal property laws but my belonging with people was created, nurtured, sustained in the relationships we had with each other. Getting to know how land in urban settlements is transacted, I learnt other forms of urban Melanesian relationships to land and property. From my initial worldview of defining urban property ownership in terms of portions, allotments, bounded by markers and secured in fences, I learnt to see the local boundary markers—the drains, trees, a rusty car, a market stand, paths, fences. These local markers only known to the local eye demark areas between houses, groups of people, enclaves of families and ethnic groups. Both conceptualisations of defining land and property ownership and belonging coexist and overlay

each other. One man told me how he searched all over the land because he had heard it was state land. Finally, he discovered the cement markers that define the portions of state land. For over two decades, this ever-growing diverse community have resided on this land.

Land's seduction knows no boundaries. Regardless of fences or a drain, these boundaries between people, including the social and ethnic narrated boundaries, are porous. As new knowledge and changes occur on land it seems that there are both known and no boundaries to the way people experience these changes. The porous boundaries between claimants—customary landowners, the state, the residents of the settlement and the companies buying the portions—are not separate but are spaces where actors relate and coexist contemporaneously. People with money buy land from poorer people pushing the poor further into the fringes. At one edge of the expanding of settlement occupation is vast customary land—sacred yet seductive and inviting with visible signs of more people encroaching on it. At the other edge, the settlement retreats as the city moves into the space. Companies' graders excavate their portions delimiting their land's boundaries by stripping the land forming visible lines by the bare ground. Then the fences go up. They simultaneously delimit the settlement's boundaries by evicting settlement dwellers from their portion. Somewhere in those wavy hills, the cement boundary markers sit in the ground concealed; waiting allusively for whoever can make the strongest claim.

## Land and son are one

The land with no concrete blocks is not some far off land. Customary land is the very same land that lies under the concrete blocks. That customary land is narrated through the hegemonic discourses and ideologies of patrilineality in discursive treatments of land in PNG society. I think of the men in the settlement who negotiated the land with customary landowners and the state and how they did this for their families to have land. I think of the customary landowners who must have known their loss but conceded. I think of the man who listened to his wife's quiet dreams for a home of her own to retreat from the crowded Port Moresby home.

## From a rounded body, my roots began

I think about the women whose stories and influence stamp their mark on the land. There is the Motuan woman, a clan member of the customary landowners, whose name is uttered and written in the narratives of the settlement. Her name and her grave demarks boundaries in time and in space. There are the women who lead in the community as chairladies of churches, of community education institutions, as community leaders. This suggests a need to rethink the hegemonic assumptions of 'patrilineal ideologies' (Goddard 2018). There are the women who led their families into the settlement and founded roots in settlement land. From our conception our mothers' bodies carry us and together we begin the life's journeys over lands. In PNG history and society, stories abound about women and men and their mutually constructed relationships with land that suggest that more

nanced accounts of land needs to counter the hegemonic ‘patrilineal ideology’ of land that are reinforced in scholarship and policy (Goddard 2018; Haley 2002; Schwimmer 1973, Zimmer 1985).

### **The sea soars beneath. The land runs under my feet. My eyes look up through the salty water**

For many people living in urban areas in PNG, there are at least two places—the urban home and the home rooting. Nearly always, this way of planting and nurturing roots in different places serves a bigger purpose. It connects with other people, other relationships, who in turn have their multiple footings. For many of us living in diaspora the return journey necessitates traversing from or through urban spaces. These are where most airports or ports are located and where many of our family now reside. Urban spaces are the nodes in our multilocal lives, if not the beginnings and ends in themselves. In this way life’s options open up, are made larger; but negotiating and working through these multiple meanings and spaces we attach to ‘home’ makes these journeys central in our lives and immensely emotional (See Taylor and Lee 2017 for examples from the Pacific).

### **My roots, aching, search for a place in the land beneath the concrete block**

The question of land is important because it is an inalienable material part of people’s beings, identities and the source of life. But land is also important because it is alienated and inaccessible to a growing number of people. Urban land sits materially, symbolically, and legally in the middle ground between the old and the new, customs and laws, indigenous communities and newcomer migrants, old settlers and new settlers, residents and returning migrants. Studies tell us of the ways that Papua New Guineans living in urban areas engage in different ways that cut the boundaries between customary conceptualisations of land, property and ideologies of land (For examples of recent studies see McDonnell, Allen and Filer 2017; Rooney 2017b; Koczberski et al 2017; Stead 2016).

### **One grave. Many grave**

In that Port Moresby settlement, the Motuan woman’s grave rests surrounded by other members of her clan—members of the customary landowning clan. Bounding themselves and their living families to the land. Around the graves, the residents of the settlement live. Trees, drains, fences, paths, and other local markers define areas. Coexisting on this land are the cement markers defining the very same land as state land. Her name crosses the boundaries between the settlement, state and customary landowners and individual titles.

### **I walk through that land**

My own father’s grave is on state land in Lorengau, Manus Province. Six years after my fieldwork, I return to walk on state land owned by my parents for many years. Up until that day, I had never really thought of myself as having any

particular connection to land in PNG. I had owned property and indeed there is an emotional attachment to the home created in the property, but this new connection I felt was different. Understanding the basics of custom, I thought I knew my boundaries. My father was not an indigenous Manus man. His own ancestors left their Irish roots and travelled over the ocean. He travelled to PNG where he ended up on Manus, a teacher employed by the Australian Government. He fell in love with and married my mother. Together they laid a foundation. On Manus, they kept us safe in my mother’s Manus roots. To the world, they pointed out potential routes. As Margaret Jolly (2001) notes, finding roots depends on making routes and perhaps also we might add that finding routes also begin by making roots. As I walked on that land and in the months after, I sensed something I had not felt before. A magnetic pull. There is family, and there is love. But there is something seductive about that land.

My research makes me see Lorengau with new eyes as an urban space that will continue to teach us. Lorengau is the space where PNG’s story of urban land and property contemporaneously and cospatially coincides with the global unfolding human migration story. Detained then released into the township of Lorengau asylum seekers and refugees are another actor seeking to make a living in this urban space. This will be a process of continual transformation in urban lands and lands, of cultural loss, cultural change, cultural assimilation and cultural creativity. A process involving both beauty and trauma, love and tension.

### **Mother’s rounded body loves the spirited new roots**

In May 2018, it was reported that 36 children were born. Their mothers are Manus women or women on Manus, their fathers are refugees or asylum seekers (Rae 2018). The report foretells concerns about how these children will face difficulties given that their fathers are foreigners. I agree with this. The patrilineal ideology of land in PNG is very powerful and has material consequences for people’s access to land and their lives. At the same time, I think about how Papua New Guineans navigate urban land and I think about families. I know that as far as possible the Manus mothers and the families of these children will bound them in love. They will grow and occupy new spaces in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific, they will live and die within and beyond reinforcing, breaking, creating and breaking boundaries. They will yearn to return to the safety and peace that nurtured their spirits. As Manus Islander and poet, Kumalau Tawali (1970), writes in ‘The River Flows Back’:

*In my mother’s womb  
peace was mine  
but I said moping [morning]  
I greeted the light  
and came into the world  
saluting it with a cry.  
I paddled downstream  
[...]*

*One day I will reach the source again  
there at my beginnings  
another peace  
will welcome me.*

For these children born of refugees and asylum seekers, in and from Manus Island their mothers fearlessly embody and shape both their social safety and the so-called regional security narrated in border policies that brought their fathers to Manus.

### **We are roots, seeds, branches, leaves. Blown by the winds, over oceans**

I am being political by focussing on the intersection between the seductive powers of land and the intimate space of mothers' bodies rather than more visible and hegemonic scholarly narratives on border policies, migration, asylum seekers, bilateral aid, and land. In his essay, 'Our Sea of Islands' Epeli Hau'ofa (1994) compels us to smash the hegemonic discursive and literal boundaries that bound us Pacific Islanders in categories of underdevelopment, problematics, and need.

Do we need to rethink our questions? I have sometimes been asked: How do we reconcile land laws and customs in the Pacific? Is there a solution? My response is now something like: 'Is this even the right question?' Urban Pacific land is a space at the edge of these boundaries of hegemonic discourse that have so long defined how Papua New Guineans are portrayed. It is a space that also demands a creative approach to public policy making. I have used

this poem to explore these intersections between emotions, personal narratives, creative forms of knowledge with more conventional portrayals of knowledge and forms of discussing policy issues. Rather than viewing land tenure systems as irreconcilable we may reach better policy insights if we work towards 'the understanding that in most Melanesian indigenous societies there is the simultaneous existence of two diametrically opposed systems, yet in [their] attempts to make sense of the chaos this creates, [Papua New Guineans] often embrace aspects of both systems' (Winduo 2009: 6). The ways that Papua New Guineans are engaging in urban land and property are deeply telling of the ways indigenous Papua New Guineans produce and transfer knowledge. We need a more nuanced account of the ways that Papua New Guinean women and men deal with land. Urban land offers an opportunity to explore the endless imaginative ways to think about public policy in the Pacific.

*We are roots, seeds, branches, leaves. Blown by the  
winds, over oceans.  
No boundaries. Seduced by lands.  
From rounded bodies we come. Roots of many trees.  
Looking up. Through the lands.  
Sun's light. Knows boundaries. Leads us home*

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## Pacific population: Sustained growth and increasing pressure

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In the late 1960s the total population of the Pacific Island states was around four million—50 years later it is more than 10 million and continuing to increase at around two per cent per annum. If sustained, a growth rate of two per cent would double a population in 35 years, and—even if the rate were to decline sharply to zero—it could take up to 30 years before numbers stabilised because of population momentum. Although Melanesia accounts for around 75 per cent of all population increase in the Pacific region, as shown in Figure 1 (see next page), Pacific populations are increasing and most Pacific people are feeling the impact of sustained population growth. Localised population pressure—the inability of an environment to provide an adequate standard of living for the people it supports—is becoming increasingly evident, especially in urban areas. Population growth receives less attention from governments and donors than it should—with little being done to address the underlying causes.

In this paper I examine population growth in the Pacific and how localised population pressure is contributing to poverty and a widening gap between rich and poor. Various approaches taken by donors and country governments to population planning are also discussed, plus the impact of climate change and other contemporary challenges. I conclude with some thoughts about the way forward for the future sustainability of Pacific people and their environment.

### Underlying causes of population pressure in the Pacific

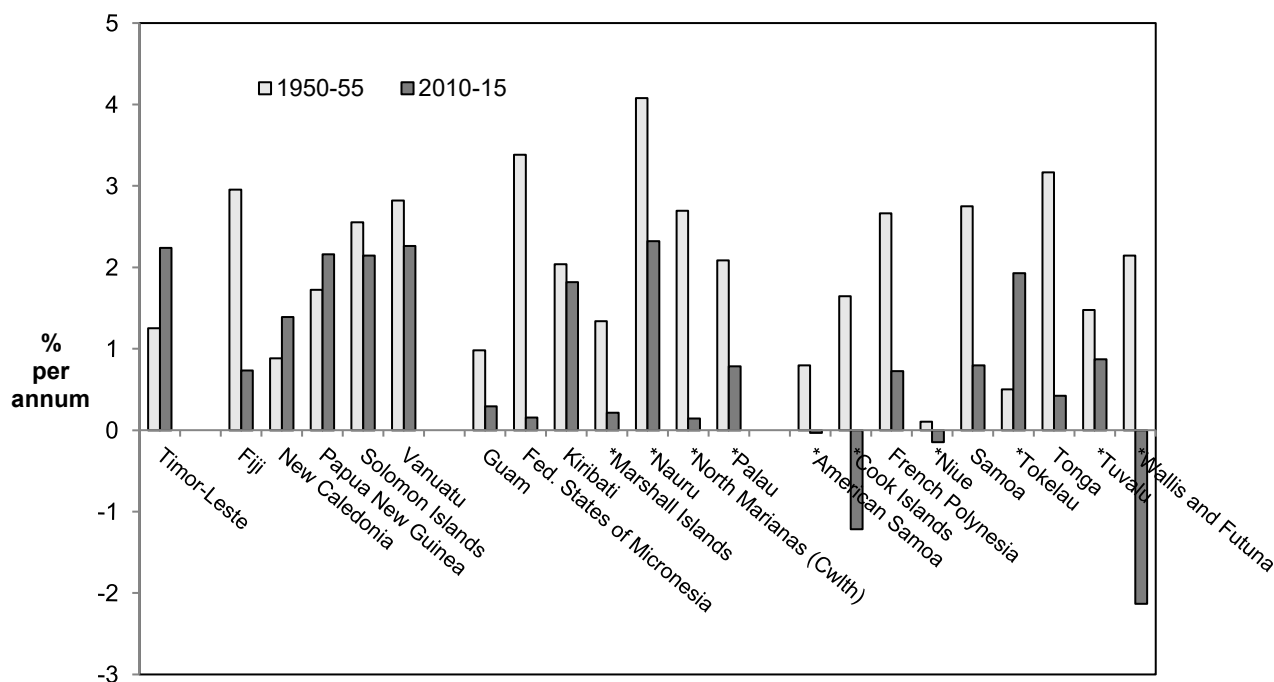
Although Pacific population densities tend to be low by world standards, localised population pressure is of increasing concern—especially in urban areas. The scarcity of alternatives to subsistence livelihoods in rural areas combined with increasing demand for cash are driving people to urban areas unable to provide adequate basic services or sufficient employment opportunities.

Population pressure from urbanisation is a relatively recent phenomenon in the Pacific. Prior to European contact, communities lived off available land and marine resources, and—where capacity was limited or reduced by events such as droughts—family size was likely to be controlled in various ways—including by infanticide and abortion (Cleland and Singh 1980). Polynesia and Micronesia first encountered Western civilisation in the 16th and 17th centuries—with some parts of PNG remaining undisturbed until the 1940s and 1950s. The initial impact of early contact was massive depopulation in much of the region—from conflict and exposure to common European diseases such as measles and influenza to which isolated populations had no resistance (McArthur 1968).

The model of development laid down during the colonial era is the underlying cause of contemporary localised population pressure. When Europeans arrived in the Pacific there were no urban centres—so the best harbours in each colony were developed as administrative and commercial centres to facilitate export of resources. The only island state that did not cede its sovereignty—Tonga—also adopted a colonial pattern of urban development to take advantage of perceived benefits. Like the great colonial primate cities of Asia described by McGee (1967)—the colonial towns of the Pacific became parasitic, sustaining themselves by drawing resources from their surrounds and outer islands. As most raw materials were exported there was little development of local industries and most wage employment was in bureaucracy and services. As population numbers recovered from initial European contact and began to increase—rural people started to migrate to urban areas in search of employment, access to better schooling and health facilities, and new consumer goods.

As the number of migrants began to absorb them they moved into informal settlements and low quality housing areas—exceed the capacity of urban areas to

Figure 1: Population increase in Pacific Island Countries



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, except where \* indicates data from Pacific Population Data Sheet, 2015, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea. [https://spccpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/digitalibrary-docs/files/f6/f68c2b69b946e38f82175e40416f2c55.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=WcM6ds5Pro6nZbw6ChXEnkXa3IOArpJDAyKjU%2Fwiwo%3D&se=2018-12-25T06%3A17%3A51Z&sp=r&rsc=public%2C%20max-age%3D864000%2C%20max-stale%3D86400&rsct=application%2Fpdf&rscd=inline%3B%20filename%3D%22Pacific\\_Islands\\_2016\\_Populations\\_poster.pdf%22](https://spccpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/digitalibrary-docs/files/f6/f68c2b69b946e38f82175e40416f2c55.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=WcM6ds5Pro6nZbw6ChXEnkXa3IOArpJDAyKjU%2Fwiwo%3D&se=2018-12-25T06%3A17%3A51Z&sp=r&rsc=public%2C%20max-age%3D864000%2C%20max-stale%3D86400&rsct=application%2Fpdf&rscd=inline%3B%20filename%3D%22Pacific_Islands_2016_Populations_poster.pdf%22)

often with little or no access to safe water, sanitation or electricity. Initially, traditional Pacific pride in the resilience of traditional social safety nets masked the impacts of population increase. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) initiative from 2005–2015 resulted in Pacific governments beginning to acknowledge some of their people were living below the poverty line—even though the term ‘hardship’ was preferred because it was stated that poverty was difficult to measure in subsistence societies (Asian Development Bank 2011:5). By then it was clear that substantial percentages of Pacific people were being marginalised by—rather than benefiting from—modernity and globalisation.

### Trends in fertility and mortality

Traditional Pacific cultures tend to favour families of four or more children. When improvements in health services in the post-World War II years improved child survival and maternal health, there was little interest in offsetting these gains with modern methods of family planning. The total fertility rate (TFR) of Solomon Islands peaked at 7.3 in the period 1971–76 (Solomon Islands 1989), while the TFR of Marshall Islands may have reached 8.4 in 1973 (Levy et al. 1988).

Eventually both governments and communities began to recognise the economic advantages of smaller families, and the fertility rate of Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands and other Pacific states gradually declined. By 1990 recent declines in fertility and mortality in most small island states of the Pacific led Pirie (1994:70) to conclude ‘that Pacific islands eventually will complete these transitions is now clear...and the rate of decline is likely to intensify rather than diminish’. More than 20 years later, the classic demographic transition model does not seem to describe the Pacific pattern. Most Pacific Island states still have total fertility rates above replacement level while life expectancy remains below that of more developed countries because of a persistence of infectious and life-style related diseases.

Some of the reasons for this different demographic pattern can be found in the nature of Pacific modernity. Relocation to urban areas, both in-country and on the Pacific Rim<sup>1</sup>—whether permanently or temporarily—does not reduce fertility as much as rural-to-urban migration elsewhere in the world. Cleland and Singh (1980) observed that high levels of emigration from Western Samoa—now Samoa—and Cook Islands were actually a way of avoiding fertility control.

Since early sociologists theorised that there is a continuum from rural to urban lifestyles, it has generally been



assumed that migrants to urban areas will adopt urban values, including smaller families. The adoption of urban values seems much weaker in the Pacific, however, where migrants are likely to be simultaneously ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ in culture and attitude (Hooper 2000) and take much longer—if at all—to transition to urban life. Migrants to Pacific urban centres are likely to live as village communities, observe traditional village culture and social obligations, grow as much of their own food as the available land permits and retain strong links with their place of origin. Settlements on the urban fringes of Honiara and Port Moresby have traditional leaders who perform traditional chiefly duties—such as dispute resolution (RAMSI 2013). Even islanders who reside overseas for much of their lives are likely to be taken back to their home village to be buried.

The persistence of traditional values and semi-subsistent lifestyles in urban areas, low participation in paid work and migration to countries on the Pacific Rim all contribute to higher than replacement fertility in Pacific urban areas (McMurray 2003). Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) for Marshall Islands and Solomon Islands in 2007 found that—although urban families were having an average of 1.1 and 1.4 fewer children respectively—fertility was still higher than replacement level in both rural and urban areas. The 2007 DHS for Kiribati found that urban fertility was actually higher than rural fertility (Rallu 2010). With nearly half the Kiribati population now living in the capital Tarawa—and most rural-to-urban migrants are in child bearing ages—rural populations are ageing and, on some atolls, shrinking.

Bertram and Watters (1985) recognised that the economies of Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau depend on ‘MIRAB’—migration, remittances, aid—that is, development assistance—and bureaucracy, that is, tertiary sector employment. Other Pacific states—including Kiribati and Tuvalu—receive substantial income from seafarers contracted to work on overseas shipping lines (Borovnik 2005)—or send seasonal workers to the Pacific Rim. Although travel for employment does not seem to weaken family connections—all but the very poorest migrants are likely to continue to send remittances to families in their home countries throughout their lives. In 2004, 87 per cent of surveyed Fijian households and 98 per cent of surveyed Tongan households with at least one migrant received remittances (The World Bank 2006). As some children are needed at home to work the family land—migration and circulation help to support higher than replacement fertility—with three or four children still the preferred family size in most of the Pacific region.

### Population planning initiatives

The promotion of family planning and other strategies to limit population growth in the Pacific began in the 1960s. Early strategies to slow population growth were usually promoted by international agencies such as The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)—rather than national governments. Although most Pacific Island states had population policies of some sort by the 1990s (House

1994)—substantial cultural obstacles to population planning remained. Early efforts to promote family planning were often perceived as undermining morality—or attempts by foreigners to weaken a nation. For example, these attitudes led Solomon Islands to adopt a pro-natalist policy in the 1980s, despite its very high fertility rate at that time (McMurray 1989).

Because the international agencies were primarily concerned with family planning—these agencies developed country strategies under the auspices of health ministries. While this may appear logical, it fostered a narrow view of population planning and was not generally recognised as an important concern for all ministries. The UN subsequently adopted a more balanced approach to population planning, establishing special UNFPA Country Support Teams to help countries develop comprehensive population strategies—to address social services, employment and planning for future prosperity as well as fertility (House 1994). As late as 2000, however, when this author invited Pacific planners to attend a population policy workshop—some assumed a mistake had been made and passed on their invitations to health officials.

Resistance to population planning per se also still occasionally surfaces. For example, the Kiribati Protestant Church supported and encouraged the use of family planning during the 1970s—yet the church was reluctant to renew support when a new population policy was developed in 2008. The rationale for this lack of support for a population policy was that—since the 1970s—Catholic congregations had increased more than Protestant congregations because the Kiribati Catholic Church had continued to oppose family planning (McMurray 2006).

### Contemporary challenges

The colonial dominance from a single urban centre continues to be a feature of most Pacific Island states—especially those with many outlying islands (Connell and Lea 2002). Capital investment and development of facilities are concentrated in these centres—while outer islands remain underdeveloped. A radial pattern of roads and domestic shipping routes facilitates movement of resources to the main centres, yet rarely connects one outlying area to another. Recent surveys in the Solomon Islands revealed that—outside the two largest provinces—more people used boat transport than motor vehicle transport, simply because there were not enough connecting roads and the few that do exist are generally poorly maintained (RAMSI 2013).

Pacific urban development continues to be underfunded because low percentages of the labour force in wage employment means a small tax base. In Melanesia and Micronesia urbanisation is increasingly associated with ‘unemployment, crime, poverty, environmental degradation, traffic congestion, heightened inequality, the rise of the informal sector (and repressions of it), pressures on education, housing, health and other services such as water and garbage disposal’ (Connell 2017:5). Facilities and living conditions tend to be better in Polynesian towns—generally quite small—yet in almost every Pacific urban area there are more school leavers than new job opportunities and a ‘youth bulge’—comprising unemployed

youth with little prospect of urban employment, and no aspirations for village life and rural work (Connell 2017:6).

The informal housing constructed by expanding rural-to-urban migrant communities often spills onto flood-prone areas and marginal public lands. Settlers are often vulnerable, while also likely to pollute and damage environmentally fragile lands (Jones 2017). Regarded by authorities as illegal—settlements receive few services. For example, settlements only 10 minutes driving from the Honiara town centre obtain drinking water from polluted and/or distant streams and wells; have no electricity, sanitation or provision for garbage disposal; and have no safe pathways to access homes perched on steep hillsides (Solomon Islands 2017). Although substantial recent investment has transformed parts of PNG's capital—Port Moresby—and citizens with good incomes can now enjoy modern city lifestyles complete with luxury hotels and shopping malls—extreme poverty and crime persist in settlements on the city fringes.

Population pressure is also exacerbated by changing sea levels. Kiribati, Tuvalu and Marshall Islands have only a few hectares of land higher than two metres above sea level—even small increases in average sea levels therefore have major implications. Projected sea level rises of a metre by 2100 would mean the entire populations of these and other atoll nations would have to be resettled in other countries. Even island states, such as Solomon Islands, with substantial uplands, face losing some of their most habitable lands. Some communities in Kiribati have already been obliged to relocate because of incursions of the sea. At the time of writing, Kiribati and Tuvalu were exploring options to purchase land in other countries—and/or attempting to negotiate resettlement options with countries on the Pacific Rim. Population relocation brings many challenges of adaptation—to different climates, lifestyles and economies—while islanders typically have strong cultural ties to traditional lands and may therefore be reluctant to move.

Increasing climate instability is also bringing more frequent and severe extreme weather events (King 2017). In recent years the Pacific has experienced more frequent and severe cyclones—and El Nino events causing protracted droughts. Added to these climate events, proximity to the Pacific Ring of Fire,<sup>2</sup> has always left PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu especially vulnerable to earthquakes, landslides and tsunamis. Destruction of resources by these events—with already under-resourced governments—can result in immediate population pressure. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine how severe this could become as populations increase—especially if countries on the Pacific Rim continue to restrict quotas of permanent migrants.

## The way forward

Increases in wage employment and productive capacity are generally assumed to lead to reductions in subsistence lifestyles and slower population growth—because this has happened in the most developed countries. In the Pacific, however, the pattern of development that evolved in colonial times is preventing slower population growth. Concentration of modern economic activity in one or two towns in each

island state continues to attract large inflows of rural-to-urban migrants—with many unable to achieve their productive potential because of insufficient wage employment to absorb them into a workforce. As rural-to-urban migrants without wage employment do not contribute much to the taxation system—urban development is underfunded, urban infrastructures are inadequate and there is increasing localised population pressure.

Decentralisation of employment opportunities is clearly needed, however it is extremely difficult to decentralise any business when banking facilities outside main centres are scarce and/or minimal, grid electricity may not be available, communications are poor and the local community has little purchasing power. In addition, limited transport infrastructure means moving goods from outlying to central areas can be very costly. In this context, not only is there little incentive for urban-based businesses to decentralise, but any enterprises set up by rural residents are likely to fail. The paucity of essential services in rural areas also inhibits the extent to which quality health facilities and schools can be established.

Informants in Western Province, Solomon Islands, reported that without banking facilities:

- The policeman, teacher and health worker were absent a few days each month when travelling to collect their pay;
- women at the market were likely to be robbed because they were known to be carrying cash;
- people who run out of cash couldn't keep their cell phones topped up with credit; and
- owners of small canteens had little choice but to sell groceries on account.

The informants also pointed out that the only automated teller machine (ATM) in the nearest town was only serviced once a week and usually empty a few days later—because a few 'white men' often withdrew large amounts of cash. Some of these and other constraints on economic activity can be observed on most outer islands throughout the Pacific.

Improving and expanding phone and internet communications, expanding banking services, including online banking, and increasing rural electrification are critical to support decentralisation and expansion of rural enterprises. At the same time, it is essential to improve the quality of education—especially technical and vocational education—and to make education widely available so more rural and urban residents are equipped with marketable skills and capacity to start their own enterprises.

These recommendations are not new, and have been made many times before—yet governments and donors still seem content to accept a centralised model of development in the Pacific while failing to recognise that this type of development is supporting a looming population crisis. The context of sustained population increase needs to be recognised—and assumptions that population increase is merely a symptom of low prevalence of family planning need to stop. It is time to recognise the true nature of the association of Pacific population growth and Pacific economic structures. Until Pacific economies become less centralised, economic growth will continue to benefit only

a small minority—and localised population pressure will become an increasing concern.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Pacific Rim refers to the geographic area surrounding the Pacific Ocean covering the islands of the Pacific Ocean, the western shores of North and South America, and the shores of Australia and eastern Asia.
- <sup>2</sup> The Pacific Ring of Fire is a large (40,000 km) horseshoe shape in the basin of the Pacific Ocean where many earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur, associated with a series of oceanic trenches, volcanic arcs, volcanic belts and plate movements.

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# Creating disability inclusive classrooms in Kiribati

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## Introduction

Global inclusive education reforms alongside aid initiatives are providing the necessary momentum to encourage the Government of Kiribati to implement its inclusive education policy. Kiribati's Inclusive Education Policy, endorsed on 17 March 2015, aims for all school aged I-Kiribati children to have full access to relevant quality education, where possible in their local community school. In response to increasing numbers of students with disability in mainstream schools in Kiribati, among a number of initiatives, a one-year full-time Certificate III Teacher Assistant course was established in 2018 at Kiribati Teachers' College. This is the first course of its kind for Kiribati and surrounding island nations.

Jack represents the story of one student who transitioned from the Kiribati School and Centre for Children with Special Needs in 2016 and commenced year 10 at a mainstream senior secondary school. Jack is totally blind and was assigned a retired teacher to support him in his participation at school. His assistant helped him by reading information from the board, reading text books, writing assignments and navigating his school campus. At this time Jack was only one of a handful of students with disability in Kiribati in a mainstream school. Jack's need for an assistant prompted the establishment of a formal Certificate III Teacher Assistant course in Kiribati. The goal of this course is to establish a network of trained assistants with the necessary skills and a rights-based approach in the mainstream inclusion of children with disability in their local community schools throughout Kiribati.

## About Kiribati

Kiribati is made up of 32 low-lying atolls and the raised phosphate island of Banaba spread across the equator in the Pacific Ocean; 21 of its islands are inhabited. Most of Kiribati's wide-spread atolls are less than two meters above sea level and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Kiribati faces significant challenges due to its remote location, sensitivity to climate change and limited opportunities for independent economic growth (DFAT 2018). Kiribati's population is estimated at 114,000 with South Tarawa containing half of Kiribati's citizens (ibid). According to the 2013 census, 13 per cent of Kiribati's population has a disability (Government of Kiribati 2013). This national census marked the first time that disability data was collected nationwide, using the Washington City Group set of six questions on disability.

As the largest aid donor, Australia is working with the Government of Kiribati to support the Ministry of Education's objective to build a better educated and healthier population for all, with a specific focus on improving access

to and participation in mainstream education for children with disability. The Australian Aid commitment to people with disability is acknowledged through *Development for All 2015–2020; A Strategy for Strengthening Disability-Inclusive Development in Australia's Aid Program*. In compliance with this strategy and through Australian Aid funding, the Kiribati Education Improvement Program provides targeted support towards the implementation of the Ministry of Education's Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016–2019, with its long-term goal of improving education quality, providing more equitable access to education and ensuring a well-managed education system.

## International inclusive education trends

The inclusive education approach documented in the Kiribati Inclusive Education Policy is congruent with international agreements and trends towards mainstreaming children with disability into their local schools. This approach encourages children with and without disability to study with their brothers and sisters and other community members in their neighbourhood schools.

Inclusive education rose in prominence in the 1970s as an approach to accept and educate all children in the one setting (Allan and Slee 2008; Forlin et al 2013). It is recognised as an approach that values the human rights of all students, is responsive to all learning needs and aims for barrier-free participation in mainstream schools (Booth and Ainscow 2002; Forlin et al 2013; Loreman et al 2010; Stubbs 2002; UNESCO 1994). Despite this approach seeking to respond to the educational inclusion of all students (Booth and Ainscow 2002) exclusion is frequently legitimised when the challenge for inclusion is perceived to be beyond a school's capacity (Ballard 1995). As such, students with disability are at continued risk of exclusion in contexts with limited resources and an absence of strategies for disability inclusion (Allan and Slee 2008). Consequently, despite the presence of aspirational inclusionary policies (Rieser 2008, 2012; UNESCO 2008; UNESCO/UNICEF 2007) and philosophical positions on inclusive education (Allan and Slee 2008; Oliver 2009; Shakespeare and Watson 1997), the operationalisation of disability inclusion can remain a challenge, especially in resource-poor contexts (Rieser 2012).

Consistent with disability and education data in Kiribati, there is a global increase in the numbers of students with disability in mainstream schools (ibid; WHO and World Bank 2011). Alongside this, there is increasing evidence demonstrating improved educational success for children with disability in mainstream settings in contrast to segregated special education schools (Fletcher-Campbell 2000). This is reinforced by research indicating inclusive pedagogical approaches are beneficial for all learners (Katz and

Mirenda 2002). This philosophical stance for the mainstream inclusion of children with disability is therefore consistent with international trends and one that should be encouraged within developing Pacific Island nations such as Kiribati.

## History of education for children with disability in Kiribati

Historically, many children with disability in Kiribati have been denied access to education up until the establishment of the Red Cross Special School, now known as the Kiribati School and Centre for Children with Special Needs (KSCCSN). This is the only specialised school for children with disability in Kiribati and educates approximately 225 of Kiribati's children with disability. Given its location in Kiribati's capital of South Tarawa, KSCCSN is restricted to educating children in the capital along with children who relocate from outer islands to live with family in order to attend this school.

KSCCSN was established in 1992 as a volunteer, parent-run school. For its first 25 years of operation, it did not report to the Ministry of Education due to its NGO status. In the past two years, KSCCSN has transitioned under the authority of the Ministry, improving its eligibility for access to educational resources, training and funding. Over the years KSCCSN has increased its student numbers from 25 in 1992, to 100 in 2010 and 225 in 2018; the vast majority of its students were formerly not in school.

According to Te Toa Matao, Kiribati's only Disabled Peoples Organisation, the rights of people with disability have historically not been taken seriously. Te Toa Matao members reflect that this is largely due to parents being over-protective and concerned about stigma and discrimination against their children. As a result, children with disability, especially from outer island communities, have been kept at home rather than attending school due to concerns over abuse and rejection.

Teewata Aromata, president of Te Toa Matao, says that children with disability have historically been perceived by community members as 'useless and a waste of time'. This perception, perpetuated by numerous reports of negative and discriminatory comments from school leaders and other community members, has reinforced the conviction by parents to restrict access to education for their children with disability. This concern was more significant for girls, because they face even greater discrimination, being perceived as unable to perform daily tasks and facing greater vulnerability in their community.

Many of Te Toa Matao's older members cite stories of exclusion, not only from education, but from broader opportunities for employment and social inclusion. One female member, who acquired a physical disability in the 1970s, moved from her outer island to South Tarawa for secondary school following successful results in primary school. Despite passing the entrance test, the principal of her secondary school stated that she was not welcome, and she returned to her outer island. Despite missing out on a secondary education, she passed the Kiribati Teachers' College entrance test, however was verbally informed that

she did not pass and was unable to pursue this opportunity. She then started volunteer teaching in a pre-school on her outer island but when the government reviewed the role of pre-school teachers in order to introduce payment for this position, she was told that her services were no longer required. This is one of many examples of exclusion from education and employment opportunities for people with disability in Kiribati.

Te Toa Matao is a member of the Pacific Disability Forum and receives support in its advocacy efforts towards acceptance and inclusion of its members. Te Toa Matao has a mission to foster the inclusion of children with disability in Kiribati's mainstream schools with an aim to see all of Kiribati's children with disability in a barrier-free, inclusive education system at all levels.

## Inclusive education initiatives in Kiribati

The Australian aid-funded Kiribati Education Improvement Program is working with KSCCSN and the Ministry of Education to support the transition of children with disability into mainstream schools. To support this initiative, in 2018, the first intake of teacher assistants started training for work in six model inclusion primary, junior and senior secondary schools in South Tarawa. These new teacher assistants are due to graduate at the end of 2018, in time for the new school year in 2019.

Te Toa Matao's commitment to inclusive education includes ongoing advocacy for children with disability to attend their local schools in Tarawa along with Kiribati's outer islands. They have developed a play, depicting Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with a song on inclusive education. Their outreach activities occur in churches, *maneabas* and schools. Te Toa Matao's president, Teewata Aromata stated that their work has 'opened the eyes of community members' with parent comments including 'thank you for coming, before you came I thought my daughter would be left out for ever, now I know she can be included'. Te Toa Matao's inclusive education messages sit alongside Biblical messages on inclusion and a rights-based approach congruent with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified on 27 September 2013, and the Kiribati Inclusive Education Policy.

The Kiribati Education Improvement Program supports Te Toa Matao activities, and works closely with KSCCSN. Program staff have been involved in supporting students, such as Jack, in their transition into mainstream schools. In 2017, a further two students with disability joined Jack at his school, and in 2018 a further nine transitioned from KSCCSN into a number of mainstream schools. In 2019, 18 students are preparing to transition into the newly established six model inclusion schools.

## The establishment of the Certificate III teacher assistant programme

Kiribati Teachers' College was identified as the most feasible training partner for this course due to its status as

the nation's predominant teacher training institute. The Kiribati Education Improvement Program approached the college in 2017 with a proposal to support the design of a teacher assistant programme working with students with disability in mainstream schools. A number of existing Diploma of Teaching subjects on child development, literacy, physical education and inclusive education were identified as core components of the programme. In addition, specific subjects such as alternative formatting have been incorporated into the course so that all teacher assistants have a common skill set. The inclusion of existing core teaching subjects has been a critical component towards the programme's long-term sustainability. In addition, a local college lecturer and experts from KSCCSN have received additional capacity development in disability-specific content to support their delivery of relevant subjects in future years.

Teacher assistants are expected to leave the programme with competent and confident skills in alternative formatting, disability inclusive teaching strategies, activity differentiation, basic sign language skills and building a good rapport with teachers, students and the community. All teacher assistant students must complete a teaching portfolio to be assessed at the end of their programme. Teaching experience is also a significant component of their studies, with all students devoting each Wednesday to class observation and practical work in mainstream primary schools.

## Lessons learned

New courses tend to bring interest and energy along with challenges. Diploma of Teaching classmates and lecturers have viewed this new course and its inaugural student cohort with enthusiasm, creating a welcoming and encouraging environment for all. The teacher assistant students have been able to share ideas for disability inclusion with their classmates and have prompted a philosophy of inclusion through campus activities such as a demonstration of disability-inclusive sports as a lunchtime activity.

The selection of the first intake of teacher assistant students occurred outside of the standard selection processes due to the confirmation of the course late in 2017. The selection process has been improved for the 2019 intake with the teacher assistant students required to meet the same academic and English language entry requirements as the Advanced Diploma of Teaching students.

Students from the current cohort have requested that the course be held over two years instead of one. However, similar courses internationally run 6-12 months so the course is therefore proposed to remain as a one-year programme with a focus on a rigorous student selection process.

## Conclusion

The Kiribati Ministry of Education and the Kiribati Education Improvement Program will continue to work together to identify effective solutions to support the increasing numbers of children with disability seeking to

enter Kiribati's mainstream schools. In contrast to historical stories of exclusion, it is anticipated that through initiatives such as the formal training of teacher assistants, students will be better supported to enter mainstream schools through the combined efforts of Te Toa Matoa, the Ministry of Education, the Kiribati Education Improvement Program and KSCCSN.

Jack is looking forward to becoming one of the first beneficiaries of Kiribati's inaugural pool of qualified teacher assistants in 2019, when he will enter his final year of senior secondary school. A second intake of teacher assistants is currently being recruited to commence their studies in 2019. Once the teacher assistants are established in the model inclusion schools in south Tarawa, further model inclusion schools will then be established on Kiribati's outer islands where teacher assistants will be posted.

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# Hardship and poverty in the Pacific: An update

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## Economic overview

Although Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are often perceived to be isolated from the economic situation of the rest of the world as a consequence of their island geography, in reality today they are as fully integrated into the global economy as any other nation. The economies of PICs are very open with the value of their trade in goods and services being very high relative to their Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Almost all PICs, with the principal exception of Papua New Guinea with its major resource exports, suffer from persistent balance of trade deficits. These amount in some cases to the equivalent of over 70 per cent of GDP.

The smaller PICs, which are indeed often amongst the most geographically-isolated and with the scarcest of resource endowments, are generally highly dependent on external sources of income such as foreign aid, family and migrant-worker remittances, fishing licence fees, earnings on sovereign wealth or trust fund investments, and receipts from tourism. These revenues are often the drivers of domestic growth and enable their overall balance of payments to be managed. All these growth drivers and revenue sources are directly linked to the performance of the global economy. Even those countries with agricultural and forestry exports, such as Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, as well as those highly dependent on fishing licence fees (notably Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu) are susceptible to global economic conditions and adverse movements in their terms of trade. In addition, most PICs are still highly dependent on imported fossil fuels as their main source of energy and many have an increasing dependency on imported food. This leaves them vulnerable to the impact of global economic shocks. Changes in aid policies by development partners can also have significant impacts on national budgets, domestic investment and ultimately on household incomes. The frequency and intensity of natural disasters and the adverse impacts of climate change add to these vulnerabilities.

The global financial and economic crisis of a decade ago, and its still lingering impacts, highlighted the vulnerability of Pacific countries and their households and families to external shocks. The crisis also highlighted the many ways in which Pacific Island economies are integrated into the global economy. The vulnerabilities of small island states and the adverse global economic conditions that have impacted their economies have contributed low rates of both economic growth and domestic employment creation. These economic conditions have, in turn led to increasing levels of hardship and poverty.

## Poverty and hardship in the Pacific

Hardship and relative poverty certainly exist in the Pacific. This is not the 'dollar-a-day' extreme poverty of the old Millennium Development Goals (MDG1) or the US\$1.25 per

day or the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG1); but nevertheless, many families struggle to meet their basic needs, and particularly to meet the cash costs of the increasingly urbanised and monetised life-styles of the Pacific Islands.

Prior to the introduction of the MDGs poverty had only been of material concern to the governments of Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Estimates of poverty had been made in these two countries in the mid-1990s, but there were no published estimates for other PICs. With the MDGs emphasising the need to assess and understand the concept of poverty the leaders of the PICs were called to recognise and learn about poverty, or 'hardship' as many preferred to call it. For many Pacific Island governments, it was difficult to accept that hardship or poverty existed within the traditional caring and sharing cultures of the Pacific.

The first comprehensive assessment of hardship and poverty across the Pacific region as a whole, was not undertaken until 2004. Although the data available for analysis at that time was not as rigorous as it has become more recently, it was estimated that the national incidence of basic-needs poverty ranged from about 20 per cent in the Cook Islands to around 50 per cent in Kiribati. It was also found, surprisingly for many, that Pacific societies appeared to be rather less equal than those of Asia, having higher Gini coefficients of inequality, but it was also noted that poverty in the Pacific was rarely absolute or extreme (Abbott and Pollard 2004).

More recent evidence produced by a growing number of Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES) across the region have acted as a wake-up call that hardship and poverty are a reality for many families. Also, the focus on poverty reduction, first as the principal goal in the MDGs, and reinforced now in Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, has rightly brought hardship and poverty firmly into the policy arena of many PIC governments.

It is recognised however that Pacific poverty is rather different, and less extreme than the 'dollar-a-day' absolute poverty of the MDGs and SDGs. In the Pacific, poverty is viewed from the perspective of hardship and lack of economic opportunity and/or social exclusion. While the incidence of extreme poverty—living under US\$1.90/day 2015 prices—remains relatively low (World Bank 2018)—generally less than five per cent of the population in most countries, excluding PNG—approximately one in four people across the PICs are estimated to be living below their respective national Basic-Needs Poverty Lines (BNPL). Children are particularly vulnerable and are often over represented among the poor (UNDP 2014). In some countries, households headed by women are also estimated to be more vulnerable to poverty; in others this is not so significant.<sup>1</sup>

The calculation of the national BNPL not only takes into account the amount needed to guarantee a minimum food-energy intake<sup>2</sup> (both purchased and own produce) but also considers other essential expenditure such as housing,



transport, communications, education, clothing and utilities. According to this measure, some two million people in the Pacific live in basic-needs hardship or poverty. Although detailed estimates are not yet available, preliminary research<sup>3</sup> suggests that many more people are experiencing multi-dimensional poverty through a lack of access to basic services and economic opportunities, especially in the rural areas and outer islands of the PICs.

The 2014 UNDP report on vulnerability and exclusion in the Pacific presented a picture of a changing social and regional economic landscape. Pacific economies are shifting from traditional systems built on the exchange of locally grown or home-made products and handcrafts, to market-led cash-based economic systems; young people are migrating from their villages to find jobs in cities and abroad, often leaving women, the very old and the very young behind; traditional family and social protection systems are weakening; climate change and rural labour shortages are threatening subsistence and domestic agricultural production, inshore fisheries and traditional livelihoods.

Recent natural disasters including cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions have had serious adverse impacts on food security, and have led to decreases in savings and greater difficulties in meeting daily expenditure. This has led to increasing levels of vulnerability. Weakening traditional systems and a lack of comprehensive social protection mechanisms mean that many communities struggle to recover from shocks. All these impacts have contributed to the rising level of hardship and poverty, increasing rural-urban migration, increases in the number of school drop outs and rising levels of crime, drug and alcohol abuse. Changes in the rates of incidence of basic-needs poverty between the most recently available data-points are illustrated in Figure 1.

Poverty reduction through pro-growth measures and job creation is necessary but not enough. Small population size often exacerbated by out-migration, remoteness and natural disasters hinder the region's ability to generate and sustain economic growth in the long run. Promoting 'decent work' and social protection policy interventions however can assist in enhancing resilience and safeguard workers from some of the negative impacts of climate change, economic restructuring and resource constraints.

With the low rates of economic growth, rising youth unemployment, poor education, rising inequality, an increase in urban squatter settlements, and islands impacted by natural disasters and climate change, life is likely to be getting more difficult for many people. The poor living conditions evident in the likes of Betio on Tarawa, Ebeye and Jenrok village in the Marshall Islands, those living over the borrow pits in Funafuti in Tuvalu, and in the informal settlements of Nuku'alofa, Honiara, Port Moresby and Suva, also illustrate that urban living conditions can be very poor across the region. The continued prevalence of TB, frequent outbreaks of dengue and poor sanitation and water quality in many of these urban areas also attest to worsening livelihoods in many areas (Chand and Yala 2008).

The increasing incidence of crime, alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence and instances of civil disorder are

also indicators of deteriorating socio-economic conditions for many. Some might argue that the increasing levels of hardship sit rather oddly against the very high levels of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which many would see as a consequence of increasing wealth. But for many Pacific Islanders the problems arise from the continuing cultural commitment to feasting and size compounded by the changing structure of island life. Urbanisation takes families away from their traditional plantations or fishing areas, rural out-migration (including the impact of temporary migrant worker schemes) reduce the capacity to grow local foods for own consumption or to supply the urban markets, and increasingly the high costs of transportation of locally grown food crops from the 'farm-gate' to the urban markets. The consequence is that urban populations are forced (or choose) to turn to imports of cheaper, lower nutritional-value foods that are frequently high in calories, fat and carbohydrates. Changing diets coupled with more sedentary life styles and a lack of awareness, often arising from living in a congested urban environment, are significant contributing factors to the high levels of obesity and NCDs.

Figure 1 Basic needs poverty incidence

Country	Previous	Survey date	Most recent	Survey date
Cook Islands	28.4	2006	*	*
Federated States of Micronesia	29.9	2007	41.0	2013
Fiji Islands	35.2	2008/09	34.0	2013
Kiribati	21.8	2006	*	*
Marshall Islands	52.7	2002	36.6	2011
Nauru	*	*	24.0	2013
Niue	13.0	2002	36.6	2011
Palau	24.9	2006	16.9	2014
Papua New Guinea	37.5	1996	39.9	2009/10
Samoa	26.9	2008	18.8	2013
Solomon Islands	22.7	2005.06	12.7	2013
Tonga	22.5	2009	24.3	2016
Tuvalu	21.2	2004/05	26.3	2010
* No data available				

Source: National Poverty Reports from Household Income and Expenditure Surveys; RMI 2002 based on partial HIES, 2011 based on census income estimates.

Changing expenditure patterns may also be contributing to these dietary choices. Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, mobile phone coverage now extends to almost all the islands in the region. As a consequence, expenditure on mobile phone top-up has become one of the fastest growing, and now most significant items of household expenditure. What is not yet quite so clear is what items of expenditure, including more nutritious local foods, have been foregone to enable this significant increase in communications expenditure.

## Inequality and poverty

Inequality appears to be increasing in the region and differences between urban and rural areas are becoming

more pronounced as economic development becomes more concentrated in the urban centres. Inequality is usually measured by the Gini coefficient where a coefficient of between 0.3 and 0.4 is deemed to be a 'reasonable' level of inequality, the range within which most OECD countries fall. In general, developing countries tend to experience levels at the higher end of the range, reflecting the greater likelihood of genuine hardship and poverty amongst their populations and the extremes of wealth for a few. Based on available HIES data, several PICs have recorded Gini coefficients at the upper end or even above this 'acceptable' range over the last decade, including the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa and Solomon Islands, see Figure 2. In some countries the increase in the Gini coefficient may be associated with increasing levels of poverty incidence. In others it may be the result of economic growth being lower for rural households, particularly those relying on subsistence livelihoods, compared to households in the urban centres where economic activity is often concentrated.

The changing demographics in the Pacific region are leading to an increased percentage of elderly in national populations and an increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases which in serious cases is leading to a growing number of people living with disability. In 2015 it was estimated that there were around 600,000 persons aged 60 years and above in PICs. By 2050, it is estimated that this will have increased to around two million. With aging populations there is a risk of increased poverty at individual and household level, and rising health expenditure for both families and governments.

### **Children and the elderly**

The consequences of poverty and inequality can be very significant for children. It is generally acknowledged that children are especially vulnerable because of their dependency on adults for care and protection, and for food; deprivation and lost opportunities in childhood can have detrimental effects that may persist throughout their lives. Even short periods of poor nutrition or food deprivation can impact a child's long-term development. If a child does not receive adequate nutrition, stunting may result and intellectual development may be impaired; poorly nourished children are more vulnerable to disease; they tend to perform worse in school; and ultimately are less likely to be productive adults.

Child poverty therefore threatens not only the individual child, but perpetuates a cycle of poverty across generations, which in turn undermines the growth potential and development of the nation. While an adult may fall into poverty temporarily, falling into poverty in childhood can last a lifetime as a child rarely gets a second chance at a good education or a healthy start in life. The incidence of child poverty and vulnerability risk to falling below the national basic-needs poverty lines is strikingly high as is illustrated in Figure 3.

Evidence from the HIES conducted in seven of the nine PICs indicate that the elderly were also proportionately

over-represented amongst the population in poverty or who were highly vulnerable to falling into hardship and poverty. Only in Samoa and Tonga were the elderly under-represented in these groups. In Kiribati 39 per cent of the elderly were estimated to be living in the poor and highly vulnerable groups, while in Tuvalu the proportion reached 40.4 per cent; Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), 39.3 per cent and Palau, 38.6 per cent followed closely.<sup>4</sup>

### **Gender**

Women are also more vulnerable to falling into poverty and hardship when cultural and social barriers to gender equality exist. Data from both census and HIES indicate that, in general, women have lower labour force participation rates in PICs than men. Thus, women have fewer opportunities for employment and income generating activities. Where they are in employment women tend to work mostly in the informal sectors, including subsistence agriculture, handcrafts and in local markets. In these types of informal employment, women are not generally protected by labour laws and are excluded from participating in social insurance schemes.

As a consequence, female-headed households in the Pacific tend to have a higher risk of falling below their national BNPL. The data from national HIES indicate that whilst this is true in general, the relationship between female-headed households and their poverty and hardship status is not always explicit or strong. That is, in many PICs the gender of the household head does not appear to be a primary characteristic of poor households. Other characteristics of households, including age, education, employment and marital status of the household head and other household members, are often more strongly indicative of likely hardship and poverty status than gender alone. In addition, the household location (rural or urban) and the number of children in the household also appear to be major influences on hardship and poverty status. The increasing number of absent males working on short-term overseas employment contracts adds to the complicating factors influencing the hardship and poverty of households.

However, according to available hardship and poverty indicators, female-headed households in the Cook Islands, FSM, Kiribati, Niue, Palau and the Solomon Islands appear to be more disadvantaged than male-headed households. In comparison, there appears to be no clear gender dimension to poverty in the household data from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga and Vanuatu. However, this does not dismiss the gender dimension. While at the per capita income, expenditure level there may be approximate gender parity; other manifestations of hardship in terms of female employment, education and opportunity need to be considered.

Further, female-headed households are frequently concentrated in the per capita household expenditure deciles that lie just above the BNPL. This means that they are highly vulnerable to falling into poverty in the event of any form of shock, such as death or disability in the family, or the impact of a natural disaster on their livelihood. As Pacific populations age the number of widows far exceeds

Figure 2 Gini coefficients (household level)

	Even earlier		Earlier		Latest	
	Household gini	Reference year (earliest)	Household gini	Reference year (earlier)	Household gini	Reference year (latest)
Cook Islands	*	*	0.38	2205/06	*	*
Fiji Islands	0.38	2003	0.41	2009	0.36	2013
Federated States of Micronesia	0.47	1998	0.27	2005	0.40	2013
Kiribati	*	*	0.39	2006	*	*
Nauru	*	*	0.67	2006	0.37	2013/14
Niue	*	*	0.34	*	*	
Palau	*	*	0.25	2005/06	0.26	2014
Papua New Guinea	0.51	1996	*	*	0.42	2009
Samoa	0.43	2002	0.47	2008	0.56	2013/14
Solomon Islands	*	*	0.39	2006	0.37	2013
Tonga	0.23	2001	0.24	2009	*	*
Tuvalu	*	*	0.24	2004/05	0.34	2010
Vanuatu	*	*	0.41	2005	0.31	2010

\* Data not available

Source: UNDP National Poverty Reports various dates; East Asia and Pacific Country Briefs World Bank April 2018.

Figure 3: Classification of children (0–14 years) by poverty and vulnerability status

	Children living in poverty (%)		Children vulnerable to falling into poverty (%)				Non-poor children (%)
	Very poor	Poor	Very vulnerable	Vulnerable	Potentially vulnerable	Total	
Federal States of Micronesia (2005)	11	33	9	13	16	38	29
Kiribati (2006)	55	22	13	12	19	43	35
Palau (2006)	0	30	8	21	15	44	26
Samoa (2008)	7	33	11	15	18	43	24
Solomon Islands (2006)	7	18	8	13	18	39	43
Tonga (2009)	4	29	13	14	17	44	28
Tuvalu (2010)	3	26	9	17	16	42	31
Vanuatu (2010)	3	13	8	13	20	41	46

Note: Very poor (extreme poverty): Households/persons whose per capita adult equivalent (pcae) weekly expenditure is below the FPL.  
 Poor (basic needs poverty): Households/persons whose pcae weekly expenditure is below the BNPL, i.e. the very poor and the poor.  
 Very vulnerable: Households/persons whose pcae is above the BNPL but less than 20% above the BNPL.  
 Vulnerable: Households/persons whose pcae is between 20% and 50% above the BNPL.  
 Potentially vulnerable: Households/persons whose pcae expenditure is between 50% and 100% above the BNPL.  
 Non-poor: Households/persons whose pcae expenditure was equal to or more than 100% above the BNPL.

Source: UNICEF Pacific based on data from Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES), in the *State of Human Development in the Pacific: A Report on Vulnerability and Exclusion in a Time of Rapid Change*. United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre, 2014.

that of widowers, and widow-headed households do tend to be concentrated in the poorest deciles. In addition, teenage mothers are acknowledged to be especially vulnerable and, in some societies, they face active discrimination and exclusion.

## Where to from here

Despite the, some might say substantial, and increasing amounts of development assistance and budget support being provided by development partners there are few examples of hardship and poverty being significantly reduced in the PICs. Structural and institutional rigidities continue to exist and although many governments promise reform, in practice there are still many impediments to private sector investment and improved public sector performance. The low rankings of PICs in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, the PIC private sector assessments and the resulting lack of economic and social growth attest to this.<sup>5</sup>

Faced with the uncertainties in the global economy and the vulnerabilities of disasters and climate change, there is an urgent need for PIC governments to adopt a more holistic framework for growth and development. This framework can be depicted in the form of a 'growth tree' (Duncan and Pollard 2002). Starting at the roots of this growth tree, there can be no effective investment in economic, social, and sustainable development without civil order. When civil order is in place, society can then start to put in place formal and informal contractual arrangements as well as other rules and regulations that help to build confidence and encourage investment both at the individual and corporate levels. In turn, these rules of society support the demand for and application of good governance, and good governance helps society to apply better policy and to build relevant institutions.

With good governance, better policy and institutions in place, private markets and the delivery of public services can develop. Effective private markets and a performance-oriented public service are, in turn, fundamental requirements for viable private sector and sustainable social and economic investment including development projects that help reduce poverty.

Firm roots help build a solid trunk and this in turn produces the branches to yield rich seed and fruit—which when ripened can be cast to the earth to produce new growth. From the roots to the trunk of the tree are matters for the State. Above this are matters of the private economy and the delivery of public welfare. This suggests that a performing economy and improving welfare delivery very much depend on the quality and stability of the state.

The relationships within the growth tree are not static and the various components all depend on each other.

The nature of growth and development is a cyclical one. Preferably these cycles are virtuous, but they can depict dormancy or even decay. The quality of the fruit depends on the health of the tree with the latter depending on the quality of its environment, soil, spacing, and watering. All economies, as with plants, are vulnerable to external shocks as the global economic crises attest.

But it is not just a fall in overall demand that threatens economies. Excessive demand for an economy's natural resources—and an exclusive demand for fledgling good governance, preventing competitive markets and inclusive institutions from developing—can also curtail equitable growth and development leading to poverty reduction. This threat is most evident in the small, narrow economies of the Pacific.

While subsistence-based livelihoods, the international demand for primary resource extraction and international aid have helped lessen the impact of external shocks and economic crises in the PICs, the same small and narrow economies and their developing institutions and markets have been much more vulnerable to excessive aid and excessive resource demand. Too much of a good thing can be a curse; that is, either a 'resource curse' or an 'aid curse', both potentially giving rise to the incidence of 'Dutch disease' (Birdsall 2005; Chavet and Collier 2004; Collier and Dollar 1999; Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Easterly 2002; Moss et al 2006).

Pacific governments, their development partners and Pacific societies all need to pay more careful attention to the basic framework, the approach and the essential policies and institutions for growth and development. There are many Pacific and international lessons to be learnt from past experience, and little need to try to reinvent theory, and ignore experience. Even the smallest, most distant and resource poor economies can perform better when more attention is paid to the proven approach to growth.

Pacific Islands, however small and remote, can develop successfully, provided a conventional approach to development is adopted; that is to build institutions and strengthen governance, to ensure quality education and basic health services, to encourage sustainable private sector employment creation and to take advantage of each country's comparative advantage. Any discussion of alternative, less-conventional approaches, such as recently put forward by the World Bank<sup>6</sup> might excuse the region's leadership from taking the tough decisions on governance, rules and regulations and the environment for growth that are more difficult for the electorate to understand.

Without the necessary reforms it is likely that economic growth rates will remain low and many of the PICs will continue to be vulnerable to all forms of external shocks. Hardship and poverty will continue, and, with the increasing numbers of elderly suffering from the complications of non-communicable diseases, poverty could increase further. This suggests that governments will need to give more attention to the provision of social protection for the most vulnerable.

The demand for governments to consider introducing a social protection floor is therefore likely to increase in tandem. Social protection transfers including social insurance, various types of direct cash transfers, cash for work, and/or other social protection interventions are a set of measures that can provide relatively cost-effective options to assist in alleviating poverty directly. Such measures can also support higher rates of school attendance amongst low income households. Direct social protection transfers can

also enable families to engage in small-scale productive activities and provide an economic stimulus by increasing consumption and demand. This could be particularly significant in the outer islands and rural areas where many economies need a boost. However, the economy has to be able to grow for the public purse to be able to afford such social protection.

## Notes

- 1 Poverty is measured at the household level and therefore it is not generally possible to disaggregate poverty on an intra-household basis. Thus, if the average per capita expenditure of a household falls below the basic-needs poverty line, then all members of that household are deemed to be equally poor. Similarly, if a household has an average per capita expenditure above the poverty line, then none of the members of that household are considered to be poor. Culture, demographics and many other factors affect the actual distribution of wealth and access to food and resources within each household (e.g. between males and females and between the elderly and children). However, such detail is not available from broad-based HIES. Little analysis has therefore been undertaken at this intra-household level in the region. Anecdotal evidence from various surveys including demographic and health surveys and surveys of gender-based violence, suggest that there may be intra-household differences in levels of poverty with women and children often being the victims (UNDP 2014:12).
- 2 Benchmarked at an average lifetime consumption of between 2100 and 2200 calories per day per adult as recommended by FAO/WHO; see [www.who.int/nutrition/publications/nutrientrequirements/9251052123/en/](http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/nutrientrequirements/9251052123/en/).
- 3 Consensual Deprivation Method tested in Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu HIES.
- 4 National Poverty Reports, various years, UNDP and National Statistics Office web sites.
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# Development and change: Reflections on tourism in the South Pacific

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## Introduction

The South Pacific<sup>1</sup> has long conjured up romantic images of lush, tropical beauty in the minds of many outsiders. From the days of the early colonial explorations to the present, the Pacific region has to some extent, maintained its image as an ideal travel destination. Understanding this island allure, tourism was introduced to a number of South Pacific countries as an alternative source of foreign exchange earnings to traditional sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, and a good generator of employment opportunities (Latimer 1985). The low resource base, limited land resources, and geographical isolation of many of the small island states in the region made large-scale industrial development difficult, creating the pathway for encouraging tourism as a viable development tool (Hall and Page 1996). It was able to expand significantly after the advent of commercial air travel in the 1950s, with an international airport in Nadi leading the surge in tourism to Fiji in particular (Donnelly, Quanchi and Kerr 1994). During the following decades a number of former colonies gained independence, and tourism was widely promoted as a means to realising national aspirations and sustaining economic ambitions (Britton 1982; Movono, Harrison and Pratt 2015).

In this paper we consider how tourism has been shaped in the South Pacific between 1984, when *Development Bulletin* was first published, and the present time, 2018, when this journal celebrates its 80th issue. Reflecting on the literature from the past four decades suggests that if tourism is to be an effective driver of development in the interests of the people and environments of the South Pacific then appropriate regional frameworks must be developed to ensure that governments commit to strategic initiatives for its sustainable development. In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals it is important that social, economic

and environmental aspects of tourism development are all considered.

## Tourism in the South Pacific: Changes over time

Political commitment along with advances in aviation led to the rise in tourism's prominence in the Pacific in the late 1970s and 1980s, particularly in the larger and more accessible island states (Rao 2002). Tourism was quickly coined as the 'backbone of economies' and, in Fiji's case, as a 'new kind of sugar'; tourism replaced the sugar industry as the largest foreign exchange earner in this country by 1984 (Prasad 2014). Even countries that were initially reluctant to pursue tourism due to concerns about negative socio-cultural impacts, came to embrace this industry. In Samoa, for example, it was the devastating impacts of two major cyclones and taro blight on the agricultural system in the early 1990s that led to pursuit of tourism growth (Twining-Ward and Twining-Ward 1998).

In 1984, Fiji was the region's top destination, with French Polynesia and New Caledonia claiming strong second and third positions. By 2017 Fiji still led the way followed by French Polynesia, but with Cook Islands and Samoa close behind (Figure 1, next page). Interestingly, in the period between 1984 and 2017 the two French territories have shown growth rates much lower than the other major tourist destination in the Pacific (Table 1, below), with Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji all achieving over 250 per cent growth, while growth was over 500 per cent in the Cook Islands and 700 per cent in Niue. While Papua New Guinea currently gets over 50,000 arrivals, which would seem significant, they are not included here as a major tourist destination as less than 20 per cent of their arrivals are holiday-related (Voigt-Graf 2015).

Table 1: Growth in visitor arrivals in major tourist destinations in the Pacific (1984 to 2017) re resident population

	Visitor arrivals		Total growth %	Population 2016/2017 <sup>3</sup>	Arrivals/Population ratio
	1984 <sup>1</sup>	2017 <sup>2</sup>			
<b>Fiji</b>	235,116	842,884	258.5	884,887	1.0
<b>French Polynesia</b>	120,209	198,956	65.5	275,918	0.7
<b>New Caledonia</b>	92,000	120,697	31.2	276,255	0.4
<b>Samoa</b>	40,430	155,098	283.6	197,611	0.8
<b>Vanuatu</b>	31,183	109,170	250.1	272,459	0.4
<b>Cook Islands</b>	25,587	161,362	530.6	11,700	13.8
<b>Niue</b>	1,150	9,805	752.6	1,618	6.1
<b>Tonga</b>	13,713	62,434	355.3	100,651	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>559,388</b>	<b>1,660,406</b>	<b>196.8</b>	<b>2,021,099</b>	<b>0.8</b>

Sources: 1. Milne 1990:16; Aldrich and Connell 1992:151 for New Caledonia; author estimate for French Polynesia;

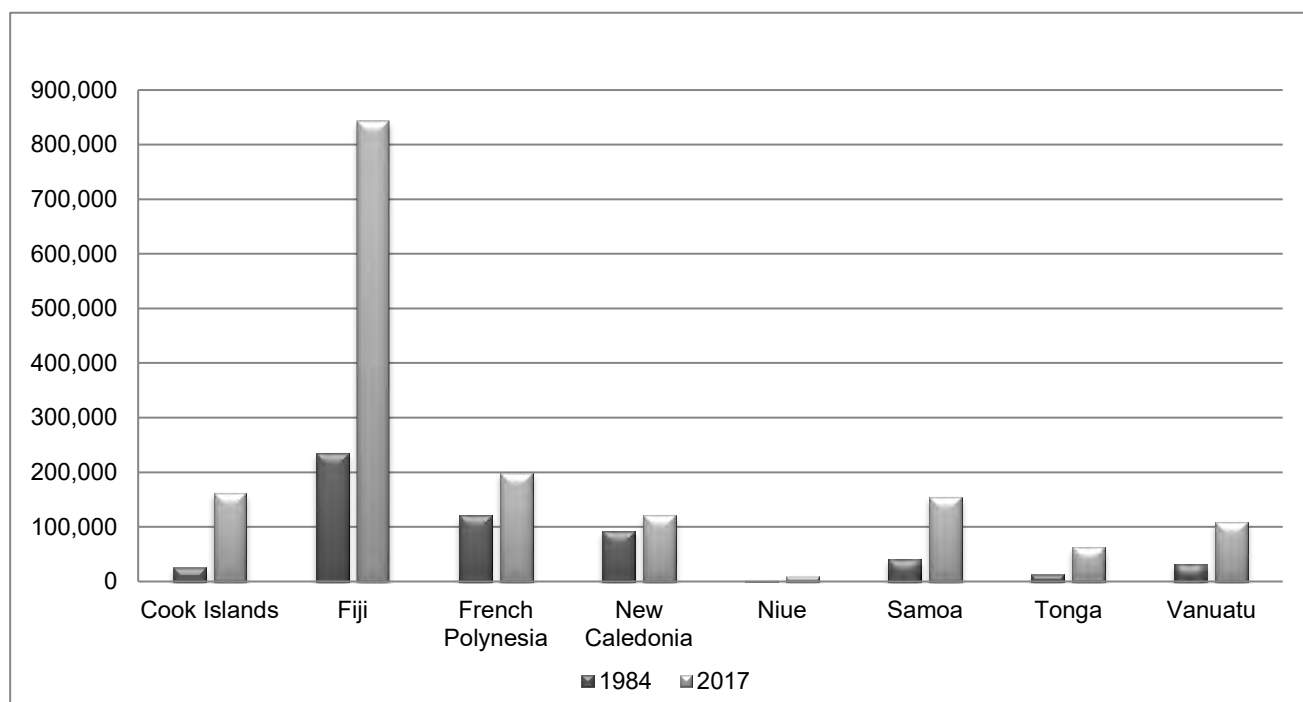
2. SPTO 2018; Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2018;

3. National statistic departments; UN Population Division estimates for Niue and New Caledonia; 2016 values for Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga.

By 2017, tourism earnings were significant, providing being between 10 and 70 per cent of GDP in eight South Pacific Island states, which are listed in Table 2. Note that this includes the Solomon Islands as, even though it only received 25,709 visitors in 2017 (SPTO 2018:3), they made a significant contribution to the country's GDP. All of the remaining destinations, including New Caledonia (which are featured in Figure 1 and Table 1) recorded shares of less than 10 per cent of GDP each (SPTO 2018:45). In addition, as a service sector highly dependent

on catering to the whims of tourists, tourism employs relatively high numbers of people. In the Cook Islands and Niue, for example, tourism provides one in every three jobs. While significant, such figures actually underestimate the overall impact of tourism because there are indirect impacts on GDP and on job creation as well both through associated industries such as construction and retailing, whose growth is also partly attributed to tourism, for example, through construction of resorts and guest shopping habits.

Figure 1: Visitor arrivals in major tourist destinations in the Pacific, 1984 and 2017



Sources: Compiled from: Milne 1990; Aldrich and Connell 1992; SPTO 2018; Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2018. Table 1: Growth in visitor arrivals in major tourist destinations in the Pacific (1984 to 2017) re resident population.

Table 2: Tourism earnings as a share of GDP, and share of employment in tourism, in major destinations in the South Pacific

	Tourism as a share of GDP %	Employment %
<b>Cook Islands</b>	69.1	34.4
<b>Vanuatu</b>	46.1	26.0
<b>Niue</b>	41.0	32.3
<b>Fiji</b>	40.3	13.9
<b>Samoa</b>	20.4	9.0
<b>Tonga</b>	18.2	19.1
<b>French Polynesia</b>	11.8	8.3
<b>Solomon Islands</b>	10.2	3.1

Source: SPTO 2018:45.

The figures seen here reflect the importance of tourism to the economic development of these countries yet concurrently, demonstrate their dependence on this somewhat fickle industry. Over the years there have been concerns about potential long-term effects of civil crises, especially three coup d'état in Fiji over 20 years (Harrison and Pratt 2010), as well as unrest in other countries including the Solomon Islands and Tonga. Global financial downturns and health scares have also deterred people from undertaking long haul trips to the South Pacific for vacations. Undoubtedly the greatest concern, which is already starting to impact these countries, is around environmental shocks and natural disasters. Climate change is leading to the increasing frequency and severity of events such as cyclones. For example, when Tropical Cyclone Winston hit Fiji in February 2016 it was the most severe cyclone ever recorded in the southern hemisphere, reaching Category 5. Winston significantly impacted on 40 per cent of the population and caused widespread damage to homes,

businesses, infrastructure and crops, leading to the closure over many months of a number of tourism enterprises (OCHA 2016). Despite this, and the chequered political history of Fiji, tourism numbers show continued growth. For example, there were 754,835 arrivals in 2015, and this jumped to 792,320 in 2016, the year that Winston struck, and in 2017 this grew again to 842,884 visitors (SPTO 2018:3). The tourism industry in most South Pacific countries has, thus, proven to be relatively resilient.

### **Consistent concerns regarding tourism from the 1980s-2000s**

Few would question that tourism has been an important economic sector for a number of South Pacific countries in recent decades. Nevertheless, tourism scholars from the 1980s through to the present time have consistently raised a number of concerns about tourism growth in the region, leading them to question the validity of development approaches being used. Key concerns will be discussed below.

Region-wide, tourism development is regarded as following a predominantly modernisation-driven approach, largely mimicking external developmental philosophies. This is generally characterised by high levels of foreign investment and ownership, limited local participation and inadequate stimulation of local industries (Hall and Page 1996; Movono, Harrison and Pratt 2015).<sup>2</sup> The high external ownership further limits the earning potential of Pacific Island states that have to contend with the high repatriation of profits and high rates of expatriate involvement in managerial roles (Prasad 2014). The current situation is the result of previous and ongoing patterns and principles of development that were identified back in the 1980s by Steven Britton (1982). Britton (1982; see also Britton and Clarke 1987) was a particularly influential scholar, using a political economy lens to show how tourism was exploiting the resources and labour power of countries such as Fiji. He was backed up in many ways by authors such as Bastin (1984) and Milne (1990) whose work showed that despite job creation and the earning of export revenues, the sector extracted a lot more from the Pacific than it gave back.

During this period Rajotte and Crocombe (1980) made an important contribution to discussions of the relative value of tourism by reflecting the voices of Pacific peoples on the issue in their book *Pacific Tourism, As Islanders See It*, revealing both positive and negative views about the impacts of this industry. Kanemasu (2015) has since argued that much of the discontent and ambivalence shown by Fijians towards tourism over recent decades, can be associated with fundamental inequities in the sharing of benefits from this industry. Samy (1980:67) referred to host communities only receiving 'crumbs from the master's table', with the Pacific tourism industry paying some of the lowest wage rates in the world. Certainly research shows that despite growth in tourism revenues, the poor are not benefiting: '...indigenous Fijian participation in the tourism sector is predominantly as employees or as recipients of lease monies, and rarely as those directly involved in

tourism planning and development, therefore limiting the pro-poor potential of the sector in Fiji' (Scheyvens and Russell 2012:417). Longstanding tourism academic in the region, David Harrison (2014) thus laments that employing a modernisation approach to development has ensnared Pacific Island states, limiting their potential to derive more benefits from tourism.

Furthermore, assertions made about tourism's potential to strengthen economic linkages still remain largely unverified with continuing high rates of importation of many hotel requirements, from furniture and fixtures to daily food and beverage items (see Berno 2006, on the need to bridge the tourism and agriculture industries). It is mainly the high-end, small capacity 'boutique' resorts that make a feature of their establishments the extensive use of local products and services, including utilising a lot of local produce on their menus (Scheyvens and Russell 2012).

Environmental and socio-cultural impacts of tourism are another cause of concern from the perspectives of local people. The tourism industry has high demands on fresh water and energy sources, and places enormous pressure on waste management systems. Due to the coastal location of many tourism properties, vulnerable coastal ecosystems are often degraded in the process of resort construction (McElroy 2003). Issues of negative socio-cultural impacts have also been raised regularly over the years. For example, Bolabola (1984) in her study of Fijian villages, lamented the commodification of specific Fijian carvings, which in her view, led to diminishing cultural value, further questioning the rationality of tourism as a driver of positive change. Scholars have raised a number of associated areas of concern from disruption of cultural practices and disrespect of traditions through to sexual exploitation of tourism sector workers (Britton 1982; Hall 1996; Pratt 2013; Movono, Harrison and Pratt 2015; Movono and Becken 2017; Sadaraka 2017).

The right hand column in Table 1 gives some indication of how the socio-cultural and environmental impacts will most likely vary from country to country, as this shows the ratio of visitor arrivals to the resident population. In Fiji, there are as many visitors in a year as there are residents, but in the Cook Islands, there are almost 14 times as many visitor arrivals than local residents. This impact is intensified when we recognise that the main island of Rarotonga 'hosts' the majority of these visitors. The impacts on the natural environment are clear: for example, a 2015 news report claimed that 'The golden egg is cracked', referring to sewage from tourist establishments and agriculture polluting Rarotonga's Muri lagoon, a major tourist drawcard (TV One News 2015). Sel Napa, a Member of Parliament, has called for the government to slow down tourist arrivals on Rarotonga, because of impacts on the environment and the strain on the island's infrastructure. She noted that the Asian Development Bank had warned the country that, to cope with high tourist numbers, substantial improvements were needed in the sewage system, along with waste management and recycling, power, roads and fresh water (Radio New Zealand 2017). Interestingly, we might be starting to witness a wave of anti-tourism/over tourism sentiment as evidenced in some European destinations such



as Barcelona in recent summers, along with other popular global destinations such as Bali, Indonesia and Maya Bay in Thailand (the latter made popular via the filming of the movie, *The Beach*) (Milano et al 2018). Some in the industry have claimed that the friendliness and traditional hospitality (*aroha*) towards tourists is declining, largely because they are dealing with the negative impacts of tourism while not getting a fair share of the benefits of tourism (Cook Islands News 2016).

Note that tourism-related studies have mainly been confined to those countries with higher levels of arrivals, especially Fiji, Vanuatu and the Cook Islands, thus much work remains to be done in drawing accurate perspectives about tourism across the South Pacific. Less accessible places with underdeveloped tourism infrastructure, such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, are going to struggle to attract and retain tourists. It is important that we are realistic about the possibilities of tourism, recognising that it is unlikely to be an economic saviour in every context. Even where it could bring economic gains, this needs to be carefully weighed against the likely environmental and socio-cultural impacts.

## Discussion and ways forward

Undoubtedly, tourism is considered to have had an immense role in nation building and development in the region. It continues to provide vital export and tax revenue, to create formal sector jobs as well as opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises to thrive. The revenue raised by this industry has enabled a number of governments to feel confident in planning to meet the development needs of their people, while the jobs created have helped many thousands of Pacific peoples to improve their quality of life, advance their children's education, and so forth. Nevertheless the concerns that remain are significant. The steady increase in tourist arrivals to the region, although minute in global terms, is having lasting impacts on people and their culture in specific destinations, and putting pressure on island environments with limited resources and infrastructure to deal with rapid growth. Thus a more sustainable way of developing tourism across the region must be found in future.

Setting a regional agenda on sustainable tourism development requires an integrated approach that will inspire commitment and stimulate collective action in meeting the challenges of sustainable tourism development in a more focussed manner. This is a task which this paper proposes must be thoroughly discussed at all levels, from the community level through to the Pacific Islands Leaders Forum. In particular, more spaces should be created where tourism stakeholders, from Pacific governments, non-governmental organisations, industry and academia meet to have meaningful conversations that focus on sustainable tourism. To have wide-ranging and enduring influence, the vision, goals and strategies agreed upon should be formalised through an intergovernmental convention signed by nation states, obligating current and future governments to support tourism for sustainable development in the region. Government commitment is vital in ensuring that sustainable tourism development is achieved in a structured, collective and

strategic manner regardless of changes in political custodianship. This is important to note because the political landscape of some South Pacific countries has been relatively volatile.

The South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) could potentially be the lead agency in establishing suitable spaces for consultation on a regional convention for sustainable tourism. While it was established as the Pacific tourism marketing body, it now also shoulders other tasks including the immense responsibility of promoting sustainable tourism development. However there are real challenges to SPTO strengthening regional cooperation around sustainable tourism because '...it represents competing destinations that are predominantly looking to secure visitation from the same source markets and they tend to be poorly differentiated with sun, sand, and sea as key themes in almost all cases' (Cheer et al 2018:5). Where SPTO could potentially add value through a regional convention for sustainable tourism is in enhancing the overall brand of Pacific tourism destinations, in a market where consumers are increasingly concerned about impacts on the environment and sustainable development. To do so convincingly, SPTO would also need to monitor whether governments and industry players were complying with the convention.

A Pacific framework for sustainable tourism development could be the catalyst for enhancing inter-governmental cooperation on issues ranging from transport to conservation, by enticing commitment in pursuing a fairer and just tourism sector. Regional cooperation and binding agreements may foster long-term political will and commitment in initialising the required legal and policy changes to encourage greater involvement of local entities in tourism ownership and management. Tourism policies in the region have to date left tourism development and its sustainability to the discretion of ever changing governments in the context of intense competition from the private sector. Therefore, having a regional convention on tourism outlining a shared strategy could pave the way for the development of a tourism industry that inherently supports conservation of Pacific Island resources and the economic well-being of its people.

Regional organisations, governments, development agencies and tourism businesses alike should take inspiration from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) when seeking to devise policies and actions to enable more sustainable forms of tourism development. While there is not the space here to fully articulate the possibilities within the 17 goals and numerous targets associated with the SDGs, the following give some idea of directions that could be taken. Engaging with SDG 2 'End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture' could lead to hotels, resorts and cruise ships seeking more contracts with local suppliers of food products. Shortening the supply chain would save food miles (contributing to SDG 13 on combatting climate change) as well as enhancing local development prospects (SDG 1 on eliminating poverty). Attention to SDG 8 which promotes 'decent work for all' and 17 (partnerships for sustainable development) could be used to motivate trade unions and hoteliers to work together to offer better

employment conditions and more safe and secure jobs to those working in this sector. In addition, SDG 8 could guide initiatives to support small and medium-sized tourism entrepreneurs, through business mentorship and access to credit, leading to more local ownership of tourism. In light of the concerns about over tourism expressed earlier, it would be good to see private and public-sector agencies exploring the relevance of SDG 14 'Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development' (Scheyvens 2018).

In line with the remit of the SDGs, balancing social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development is critical if tourism is to be an effective driver of development in the interests of the peoples, cultures and environments of the South Pacific. We have argued here that widespread consultation should inform the development of a regional convention to ensure that governments and industry players commit to strategic initiatives for the sustainable development of tourism.

## Notes

- 1 Northern Pacific tourism destinations such as Palau, FSM and Hawai'i will not be considered in this paper.
- 2 There are exceptions, however. For example, Cook Islands and Samoa have higher rates of local ownership of tourism enterprises, or joint ventures, than do other South Pacific countries. Some of these enterprises are small to medium-sized, such as the Samoan beach fale, but they are nevertheless important, locally-controlled businesses which offer great value to families and communities.

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# ‘Activating’ the powers of law in the South Pacific

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## Introduction

There is a global trend of increasing expectations and demands on law to bring about social change. In the two main areas I have researched for the past ten years—the regulation and protection of intellectual property and traditional knowledge in the Pacific Islands (Forsyth and Farran 2015), and overcoming sorcery accusation related violence in Melanesia (Forsyth and Eves 2015)—legal solutions have been at the forefront of debates and proposed actions. Legal solutions are also very much part of proposed approaches to many significant development issues facing the region, such as gender based violence, urbanisation and resource exploitation, leading to an explosion of pieces of legislation in recent years. As an established scholar of Pacific islands legal systems, I have spent over a decade critiquing what I have termed the ‘mythscape’ surrounding state law in the region, and articulating reasons to look beyond state law in crafting new regulatory responses to development challenges. These reasons include the limited reach of the state, the relative foreignness of the common law system for the populations concerned, and the richness of customary and other non-state legal systems. However, when critiquing the over-reliance on the law as a development tool, it is important not to swing too far in the opposite direction and neglect the role of the state legal system. Today more than ever, state law is seldom unimportant or irrelevant, and often has a range of unexpected effects even in the most geographically remote locations. Rather than either assuming that state law is a silver bullet for development or dismissing it as largely irrelevant, what is instead required is an analytical framework that provide insights into the actual role(s) of state law in the South Pacific today, and its relationship with other legal and normative orders.

The current theoretical and policy frameworks around law and development are frequently grounded in a positivist framework that start from assumed positions about the nature of state law. It is therefore hardly surprising that there a regular findings is a huge gap between the law on the books and the law in practice. This gap is often explained by identifying the factors that cause the law in practice to fall short of the idealised model of how it ought to perform based on what is in the books. Such analysis is often visualised through a modernisation framework, based on underlying assumptions about the inevitability and benefit of embracing the rule of law or as the World Bank has recently termed it, the transition to a fully modern legal system that is largely seen to replicate those established in the global North (World Bank 2017).

A more useful way to approach the issue is to take a step back and first to seek to understand what state law actually ‘is’ in the context of the South Pacific. As Davies argues, ‘Posing the ‘what is’ question in a critical and open-ended way permits taken-for-granted definitions to be openly tested and revised and highlights the politics

of theoretical delimitations’ (Davies 2017). Even for something as apparently obviously ‘law’ as legislation, assumptions about its nature in the Pacific context can obscure the roles it actually plays, meaning its achievements or non-intended consequences may be overlooked.

The contribution of this paper is to propose two keys ideas for developing a new framework for understanding the role of state law in the region. It takes one particular form of law—legislation—as its focus. The World Development Report on Governance and the Law 2017 defines positive law such as legislation as ‘laws that are officially on the books of a given state’ and as ‘essentially words on paper’ (World Bank). This paper goes beyond such a definition, and its first key idea is to start to understand ‘what is’ legislation by asking what it does in practice. This leads to an identification categories of different types of powers potentially possessed by legislation that are particularly relevant in the Pacific islands context.<sup>1</sup> The second key idea is the new concept of ‘activation’, which is explained as meaning that all the different powers inherent in legislation are dormant until they are brought alive (or ‘activated’). In the Pacific context this occurs most often through relational processes.

## The different powers of law

Legislation is often seen by citizens and policy-makers as possessing only one power, described below as the instrumental power of law. This is the power of legislation to have impact through enforcement by officials or state institutions. For example, in reflecting on the impact of the Solomon Islands’ *Family Protection Act 2014*, Magistrate Emma Garo, the 2018 Women of Courage Award recipient, reflected that the Act was failing to achieve its lofty goals. She noted:

At the Central Magistrate’s Court here in Honiara for example, so far this year there has been an average of 2 protection order applications per month, there has been an average of 2 criminal cases filed per month which include Family Protection Act domestic violence offences, there has been an average of 7 Police Safety Notices per month filed in the court, and to date no orders made by authorised justices have been filed in court...The figures appear to suggest that the Act, three years since its introduction, is failing to have the impact that it set out to achieve (Garo 2018).

While Magistrate Garo may indeed be correct that the Act is failing to have its intended impact, it is important not just to consider the Act in terms of its instrumental power, but also in terms of many other different powers that it may possess. This part therefore identifies five different potential powers of legislation. This list must be qualified in two ways. First, the identification of these powers is separate from the issue of where law gets its power *from*, which may

include the monopoly on force, consent through acceptance of legitimacy by the population, and its congruence with the morality of the people. Second, the enumeration of the different powers is intended only as a heuristic device, and in reality the powers may be deeply entangled.

As just mentioned, the most commonly appreciated power possessed by legislation is what can be termed its **instrumental power**. This involves the written articulation by the state of rules that individuals and other legal entities are required to conform with, backed up by the threat of legal sanctions, and ultimately the state's monopoly on the use of force. It could be broken down further into a coercive power and a directive power, but for present purposes it covers all instances where people behave in certain ways due to their understanding (implicit or explicit, and accurate or not) about the content of the law and the consequences of non-compliance. The instrumental power of law is the most visible of the powers and has the most focus in the development of legislation, often to the exclusion of the other powers discussed below. When a legal gap analysis is done, for instance, it is this highly positivist approach that is most usually adopted to determine what new laws are needed to fill the gap in the words on paper. The instrumental power may be exercised in practice in a fair, arbitrary or prejudicial manner.

This instrumental power also includes what is sometimes termed the shadow of the law (Mnoonkin and Kornhauser 1979). This is the notion that individuals are aware of the provisions of the law, and seek to make their activities consistent with the legal framework in order to comply with it (as opposed to because they are generally in agreement with its substance). In the South Pacific and elsewhere, the practical effect or impact of the shadow of the instrumental power of law is greatly affected by the extent of knowledge of the law, the quality of expert opinion available, and the consistency and transparency in administration of the law.

In contrast, the most commonly overlooked power of legislation enumerated here is the **hybridising power of law**. This is the impact of legislation on other regulatory regimes or normative frameworks, such as customary law regimes or industry codes of conduct or religious legal orders. An example may be if the leaders of a particular community in the region decided to change their custom from allowing forced marriage of girls to prohibiting it, based on their desire to act in congruence with state legal principles. State legislation can have varied types and extents of influence on other legal orders, such as undermining, supporting, influencing or replacing. The hybridising power of law can be conceptualised as the difference between the operation and power of the non-state regulatory regime alone, and the operation and power of the non-state regulatory regime *combined with* the operation and power of the legislation. This difference may be non-existent, or it may be positive or negative. State law may augment the operation and power of the non-state regulatory regime or undercut the latter. Of course, measuring such a difference in practice is complicated, and is likely to differ over time and space. The hybridising power of law is conceptually

distinct from the potential of state law to strengthen or alter any of its four powers through integrating other norms or customs into legislation, through the process Bohannan calls a 'double institutionalisation of norms' (Bohannan 1967). This is because such a process is focussed on the power of state law, rather than the impact of the state law on another regulatory regime. The hybridising power of law is frequently overlooked in legal planning in the region, although the existence of non-state regulatory orders is increasingly acknowledged in both policy and academic circles.

Another important power can be termed (following Robert Cover 1982), the **narrative power of law**. This is the multiple ways in which law is incorporated into official and non-official stories about how we ought to behave and why. This power of law often draws its force from the moral association or dissonance between an individual's, community's or an institution's sense of morality, and the content of the legislation as understood by that individual, community or institution. Often it only bears a very tangential relationship to the actual 'words on the paper'. This power of law is closely connected with emotions and often an individual and community's sense of self-identity and moral worth. The narrative power of law can take on many forms in different contexts and, especially in contexts such as the South Pacific where legal literacy is low, can be only very loosely related to the actual 'words on paper'. For example, during research into traditional knowledge regulation in the region, it became apparent that the enacting traditional knowledge legislation was seen by many as being about resisting misappropriation by the global North and validating the importance of Pacific ways of knowing and doing. The draft legislation became entwined in these resistance and identity scripts in ways that made it difficult for critiques based on their instrumental effect to gain purchase. Having reflected upon this subsequently, I realise that it was because both the narrative power and the instrumental power of law were being called upon in ways that did not acknowledge their different roles.

A further power is the **jurisdictional power of the law**. This is the claiming of authority and legitimacy to regulate a particular space through the enactment of legislation. As such it really involves two assertions of power: first, that something is the subject of legal regulation and second, about who gets to regulate it. This jurisdictional power may be exercised by a state, a province or other sub-state actor such as a town council, or at the other end of the scale, by an international regime, such as occurred with the creation of the International Criminal Court. This type of power is not concerned with the contents of the legislation per se, and is often part of state-building and boundary-marking by different levels of government or jurisdictional assertion or justification by international actors. As such, it is often highly contested and political, particularly when it involves the state or international actors moving into new subject areas such as the family domain or religious practices, or into areas that have previously been regulated by other legal orders, such as may occur during processes of decentralisation or internationalisation.

The final power identified here is the **signalling power of law**. This is the use of legislation to convey messages about new standards of behaviour/expectations from the state to society. It is sometimes also called the power of law to 'name and frame'. These signals may also be sent to (and intended for) an international audience, such as much of what Hilary Charlesworth has termed the 'regulatory rituals' around states implementation of human rights treaties (Charlesworth et al 2015). An example of this signaling power are framework agreements that seem to be just symbolic with no specificity or teeth at first, but which serve a signaling role and may pave the way for the instrumental powers to be developed. The signaling power of law comes from the mere enactment of the legislation, rather than from its content or instrumental power, although like all the other powers, it can be stronger if there is congruence between a number of different powers and depending upon how the signal is activated as discussed below.

### Activating the powers of law

The second key insight of this paper is that each of the powers of law need to be 'activated' in various ways in order to have effect or to come alive. In other words, it is not just through the enactment of legislation or even its implementation that the various powers of legislation can be realised or fully realised. In the Pacific context, where there is an oral legal tradition, activation usually requires a relational process, involving the formation of relationships and social practices around the legislation to give it voice, power and agency. Activation therefore occurs primarily through people orally interpreting, re-enacting and performing legislation through a variety of networks (professional, church, family, community etc), rather than solely through written communications or directives.

This argument draws upon the insight of one of Melanesia's leading anthropologists, David Gegeo-Watson who argues that in Melanesia 'all knowledge is subjective knowledge...there can be no detachment of the knower from the known as in mainstream Anglo-European epistemology' (Gegao 2001). Similarly, law also needs to be activated through webs of relationality in order to have meaning and impact within particular communities, bringing it into individuals' and communities' normative consciousness through an almost personalised connection. One of the best examples of this is the way in which many of the Constitutions were drafted in the region, which in at least Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu involved consultations in almost every village. This is certainly connected to the frequent reference to these constitutions as '*mama loa*' and it is common today to meet common villagers who will announce that they actually wrote the constitution.

The concept of activation is broader than enactment, gazettal, implementation, enforcement, or even information sharing or awareness raising, which are typically used in a positivist understanding of how the instrumental power of statute has effect. Each of these may activate some of the powers of law, but do not cover the full scope of what constitutes activation. For instance, it is possible that

particular conscious practices of *non-enforcement* of legislative provisions by officials are a way of activating law, as the law is given life through its engagement with official practice, becoming a regulating force even if as a purely negative one. As will be shown below, there are times when the *repeal* of legislation may in fact activate its powers. In contrast, legislation that simply sits as 'words on paper' and completely ignored could not be said to be activated even if has been officially promulgated.

The activating of the five different powers of law may occur in different ways and will also vary across time and space. The narrative power and the hybridising power include activation to an extent within their very definition, whilst the paths to activate the other powers may be less obvious. The extent of activation will depend on the context, individuals and networks of relationships involved, as well as the particular content of a particular piece of legislation.

The activation part of the legislative process is often overlooked or hurried in the Pacific islands region (and elsewhere), risking wasting the time and energy spent on the drafting and enactment of legislation. For all legislation there is the possibility of a lack of activation of one or more powers (and therefore a lack of impact of the legislation through that power), and the risk that powers are activated in ways that are unintended and unwanted by the creators of the legislation. These problems can be addressed by considering closely the actual activation pathways (and existing networks and modes of communication) that are likely to be the most conducive to the drafters' initial policy objectives, as well as those that are likely to spring independently into life and activate it in undesirable ways, which may need to be countered.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail exactly how this can occur for each of the potential powers. Instead, I will briefly illustrate some examples of activation that I have encountered in the course of conducting research into sorcery accusation related violence in PNG over the past three years. In 2013 the PNG government announced that it was repealing the Sorcery Act 1971 and replacing it with a new provision in the Crimes Act of intentional homicide upon accusation of sorcery. The Sorcery Act had provided a number of offences for pretending or holding oneself out to practice sorcery to cause harm, and provided a partial excuse in very limited circumstances for people who harmed a person on the grounds that they were a sorcerer. In reality, the Act had hardly ever been used and was not widely known. The practical effect of its repeal, however, was to give the Act a significance and power it did not previously possess.

The print and social media attention surrounding the repeal activated the instrumental power of the Act in a wide variety of ways, as it brought knowledge of the Act into broader public discourse. A general lack of awareness about what 'repeal' means however, meant that the public were often not aware that the Act had been repealed rather than enacted. Some campaigners against sorcery accusation related violence therefore incorporated reference to the Sorcery Act in their outreach and awareness about the problems of sorcery accusation related violence. For

instance, a report of a training and awareness campaign run by the (volunteer) Aiyel Vallery Sorcery Working Committee (16 October 2017) notes as a ‘point emphasised in the awareness’: ‘We have heard of the law on sorcery in the Sorcery Act now. We (magistrates) will use this law now in sorcery cases.... Now that we have heard of the law, no one has to play hero around here, we will take you to the police or we will call the police to get you.’ This is an example of law being activated through networks going from the national level down to this on the ground networks of activists who go out and talk about the law to communities, thus making it an actual force in their lives.

The narrative power of the Sorcery Act has also been active since its repeal, with a wide variety of stories circulating about what the law means about the government’s relationship with sorcerers. A number of our interviewees have either stated or told us they have heard others stating that the repeal of the Act is an indication that the state is on the side of the sorcerers, and expressing concern about how they would be protected from the powers of sorcerers now.

The hybridising power of law is apparent in an interview with a survivor of sorcery accusation related violence who sought to explain why her community had supported her following the accusation (when more often those who have been accused are out-casted). She stated: ‘Yeah plenty in other communities are still believing in it, like if a person dies in the community this thing starts, they start suspecting each other of sorcery. But now the Bishop told them about the law so now they are afraid.’ This is an example where the authority of the Bishop is combining with the power of the law to have real impact on individuals’ behaviour.

The official announcements about the repeal of the Act by government officials activated the signalling power of the law, as it responded directly to the international community that had actively demanded such changes to be made. According to some interviewees, it also signalled to sorcerers that they were now free to do their ‘dirty work’ without fear of prosecution by the government. However, very few justice officials or community leaders we have interviewed have made the connection between the repeal of the Sorcery Act and the state’s desire to overcome sorcery accusation related violence, indicating that the activation of the signalling power in this respect is sorely missing.

The jurisdictional power of the legislation was also apparent in some interviews with police officers, particularly those who understood that they could no longer use the Sorcery Act to deal with the concerns about people engaging in sorcery that were brought to them. Many officers seemed to feel they have been abandoned by the state by its jurisdictional removal from regulating the practicing of sorcery, and are uneasy that they are being left in a situation where they have no way of responding to community concerns about use of black magic. There was also a longing expressed by a number of police officers for this difficult jurisdictional situation to be resolved—for the state to ‘send the law’ to clarify what it is the police are

meant to do with such cases. Legislation in this sense is perceived as a form of almost parental obligation by the state.

In sum, many of the potential powers of the Sorcery Act 1971 as legislation were activated by the publicity around the announcements of its repeal. The activation occurred largely through oral discourse about the Act within webs of relationships, and statements and performances of officials and leaders in relation to their understanding about the Act. It is these statements and performances that really brought the legislation to life, even at the moment of it being officially killed.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that in order to utilise legislation in an effective way in the pluralistic context of the South Pacific, it is necessary first of all to understand what legislation actually is in such a context. This involves unsettling assumptions about what Fitzpatrick (1984) has termed the ‘holistic, unitary conceptions of law’. One way to do this is to analyse the different types of powers that legislation potentially has, and an incomplete list of five powers were suggested, many of which overlap with each other in practice. The second necessary step is to understand that in a countries with strong oral legal traditions, it is necessary for law to be activated through oral retelling and performance of the law in order for it to have meaning and effect. One part of this is people needing to have knowledge of the law, but it goes beyond this to being integrated into individual’s own social practices. Often this step has not occurred in an active and directed way by those drafting and passing or repealing legislation, meaning that the potential of the legislation to fulfil policy directions has been missed.

## Notes

1. It should be acknowledged that the idea of articulating different powers of law per se is not new, and indeed the World Bank does conduct such an exercise in the 2017 report just referenced. The ways in which this exercise is done here is however quite different to the World Bank’s approach.

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# Aiding the Pacific: The changing nature of Australian foreign aid to the region

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## Introduction

Australia is the largest provider of foreign aid to the Pacific islands—a region that receives among the highest levels of aid per capita in the world. Since the turn of the century, Australia's foreign aid program as a whole has undergone significant change. Volumes of official development assistance (ODA), which had stagnated for decades under both Labor and Coalition governments, increased significantly under the Howard government and the Rudd government. These increases came to a halt under the Gillard government, and were subsequently reversed by the Coalition cutting the aid program by almost one third.

At the same time, the strategic focus of Australian aid shifted. The Coalition under Howard prioritised improved governance in recipient countries. The Rudd and Gillard governments (2007–13) focussed on poverty alleviation through spending on health and education. The Coalition has since prioritised aid for economic sectors—including aid for trade and innovation. In doing so, the Coalition has also highlighted the national interest objectives of Australian aid (Wood et al 2016).

Changes to Australia's aid program have been detailed in blog posts and in the media. Peer reviewed papers on the subject are, however, rare. Papers that do exist tend to focus foremost on theory—for example, Corbett and Dinnen (2016)—or on the implications of domestic political context (Corbett 2017). Empirical analysis on changes in Australia's aid program is particularly lacking in the academic literature.

Importantly, there are also almost no articles focusing on recent changes in Australian aid to the Pacific—Dornan and Pryke (2017) an exception, despite their analysis being on all foreign aid to the region, not just Australian aid. Dornan and Pryke aim to address this gap in the academic literature by seeking to explore how Australian aid to the Pacific has changed over time, drawing on quantitative data relating to both the official aid program and private charity provided to the region by Australian non-government organisations (NGOs). Their paper describes changes to Australian aid to the Pacific, drawing on a range of sources. Dornan and Pryke specifically detail changes to the amounts of Australian aid to the Pacific over time—country allocations, sectoral spending, and spending on cross cutting issues such as gender and climate change mitigation (ibid).

## Data and methods

To provide a full picture of Australian aid to the Pacific, we have combined data from a number of sources, including some never before used in academic study. Specifically, data produced by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) was accessed to compile long time series of historical trends in Australian aid (DFAT 2018a; DFAT

2018b). We then used data from the new Lowy Pacific Aid Map to compare the relative influence of Australian ODA with that of other donors to the Pacific (Lowy Institute 2018). We combine Lowy and OECD data to look at the sectoral focus of Australian aid (OECD DAC 2018). Finally, we examine new data from the ACFID State of the Sector Report on the work of Australian NGOs in the Pacific (ACFID 2018).

Combined, these datasets provide a unique overview of Australian aid. Not only do the data enable us to identify continuity and change in Australian ODA, they also enable us to identify the Australian government's sectoral focus in its aid work in the Pacific, and to contrast Australia's priorities with those of other donors. In addition, the ACFID data enable us to contrast the priorities of the Australian government with those of Australian non-governmental organisations that conduct aid work in the Pacific.

Of course, the data have limitations. Although information on aid flows can reveal much, foremost of these limitations is that aspects of donor performance cannot be elucidated through monetary measures alone. Donor knowledge of the region, for example, is not readily inferred from aid flows—nor do aid flows reveal much about how a donor behaves as a partner when interacting with aid recipient countries (Wood et al 2017). To fully capture the changing nature of Australian aid to the Pacific, other approaches—including more qualitative work—will be needed (see for example Dornan 2017). Nevertheless, aid flow data help in identifying patterns and overarching change and can reveal donor strengths and weaknesses (Knack et al. 2011).

A series of charts (Figures 1–5) depicts key findings from the data to provide an easily interpreted visual overview of trends and changes in Australian aid giving. Under each chart the source data is identified.

## Findings

Foreign aid from Australia is dominated by official development assistance (ODA). Despite cuts to the Australian government's aid program, private donations by Australians to NGOs for development work still only amount to about 20 per cent of total foreign aid from Australia (ACFID 2018; Development Policy Centre 2018).

Australia's official development assistance has undergone considerable change since the turn of the century. Australian ODA almost doubled between 2000 and 2010—due to increases in foreign aid provided by the Howard government and the Rudd government's commitment to providing aid equivalent to 0.5 per cent of Australia's Gross National Income by 2015.

Cuts to Australian aid that followed the so-called 'scale-up' were similarly dramatic. Increases in foreign aid under

the Rudd government stalled under the Gillard government—and were subsequently reversed by the Coalition. The Abbott government made the largest cuts in history to Australia’s foreign aid program—reducing it by almost one-third—and abandoned future growth in aid forecast in the budget forward estimates (see Figure 1). Ongoing debate since then between Labor and the Coalition on the appropriate size of the aid program has made partisan what has historically been a non-partisan issue. Foreign aid was previously reduced by both Coalition (Fraser, Howard) and Labor (Hawke) governments only to later be increased.

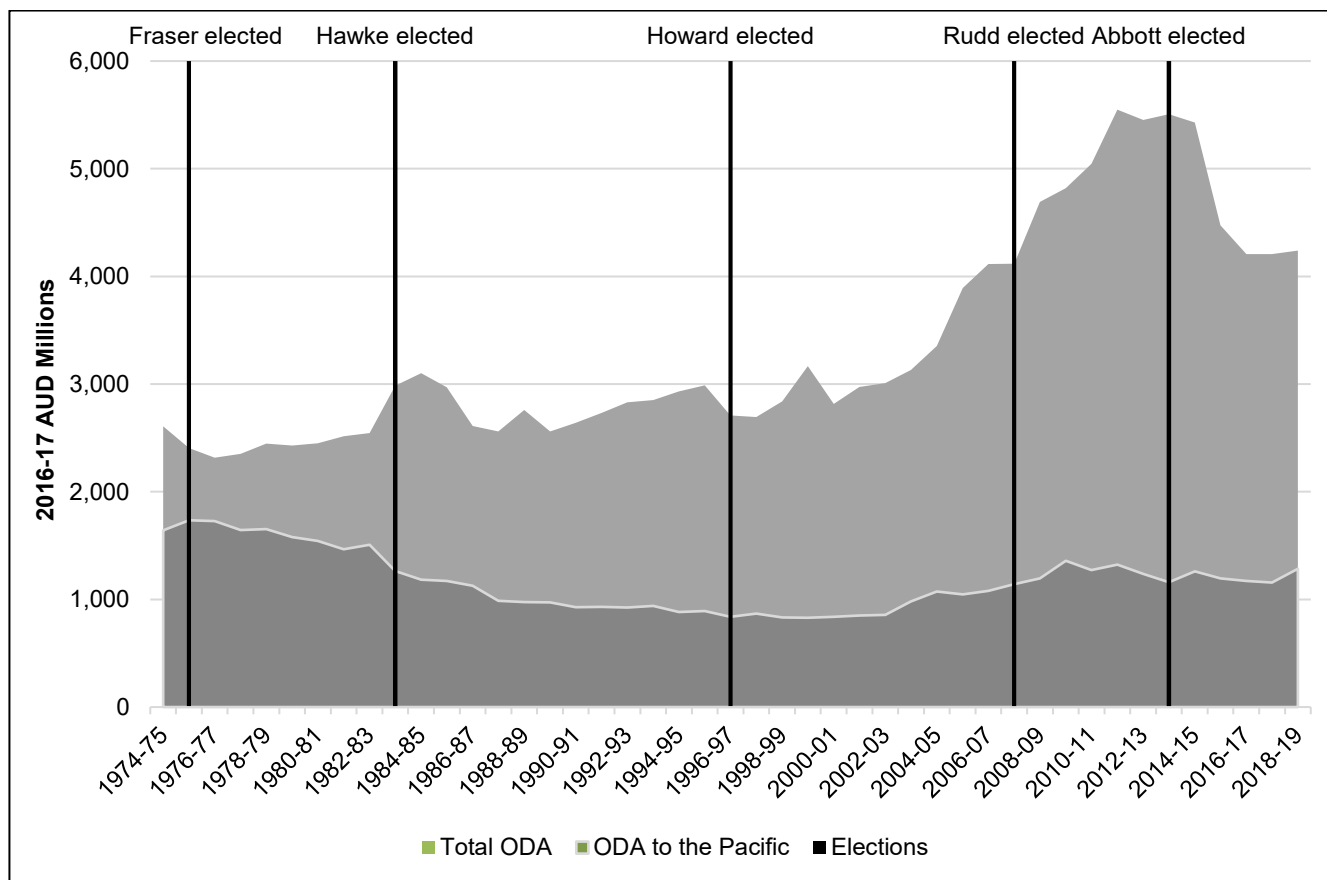
What is striking about the change in aid volumes presented in Figure 1 is the extent to which Australian government aid to the Pacific has remained stable in spite of the changes discussed. Total aid provided by Australia to the Pacific—including Papua New Guinea—has changed little today compared to 2007 when the Rudd Labor government was elected. As a generalisation, the scale up in foreign aid overseen by the Rudd government was focussed on regions other than the Pacific—with aid rising dramatically to Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean—the same regions that suffered large cuts to foreign aid under the Coalition government elected in 2013. Foreign aid to the Pacific has therefore remained

relatively stable—though stagnant aid volumes have led to a gradual decline in aid to the Pacific when adjusting for inflation.

Looking back, it is evident aid to the Pacific increased modestly under the Howard government post-RAMSI (the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands—led and largely funded by Australia), having steadily declined in inflation-adjusted terms—not nominal terms—since the election of the Hawke government in 1983.

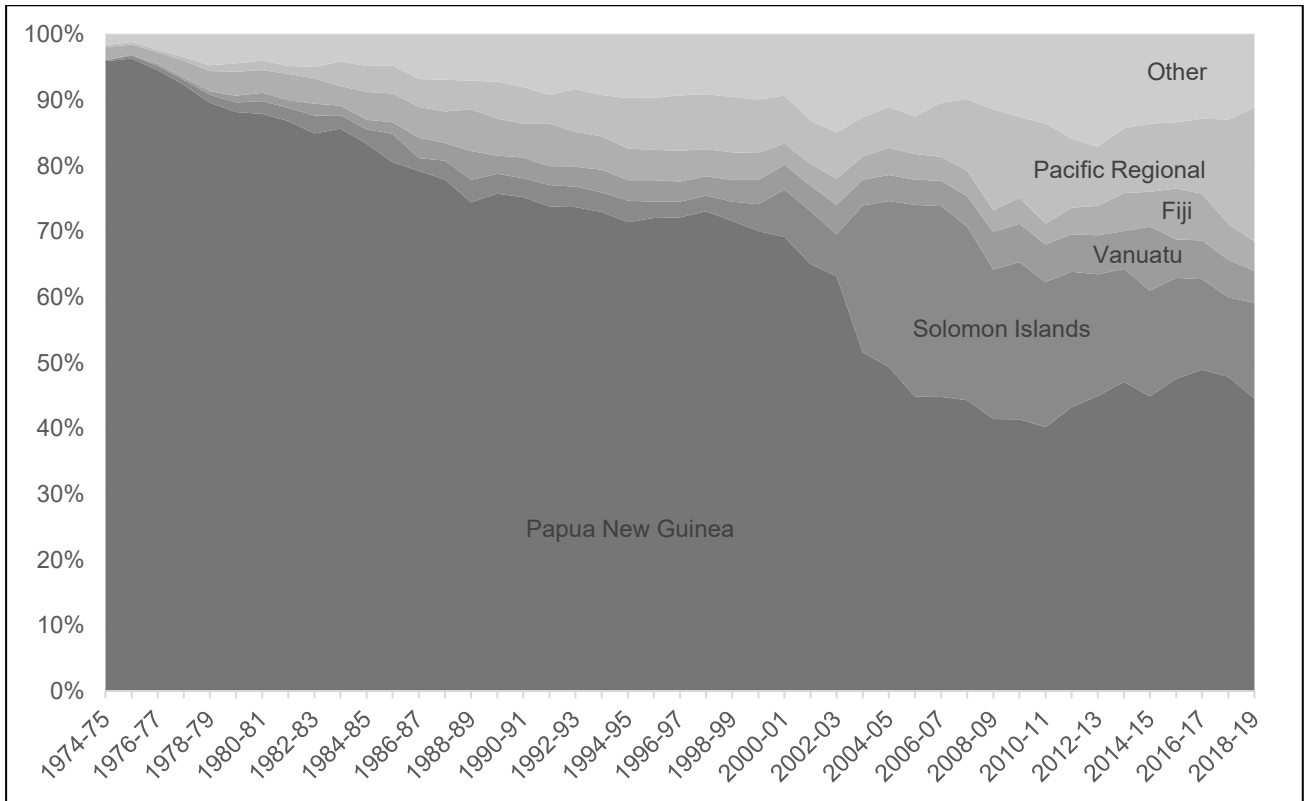
While total aid volumes to the Pacific—including PNG—have remained relatively stable over time, the same does not apply to how that funding is allocated. Indeed, there has been a dramatic change in the allocation of Australian aid since 2000 (see Figure 2). Aid to PNG—the largest recipient of Australian foreign aid—has gradually declined since independence—a decline agreed between the Australian and PNG governments, based upon a shared understanding that PNG government services would increasingly be funded by PNG taxpayer revenue. The share of Australian aid to PNG declined more significantly between 2001 and 2009 as Australian aid to Solomon Islands increased. Aid to smaller Pacific Island countries—including Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu—also increased over that period, as did funding for regional programs.

Figure 1: Australian ODA to the Pacific compared to total ODA (constant 2018–19)



Source: DFAT 2018a, 2018b.

Figure 2: Percentage of Australian aid to the Pacific to selected Pacific countries over time

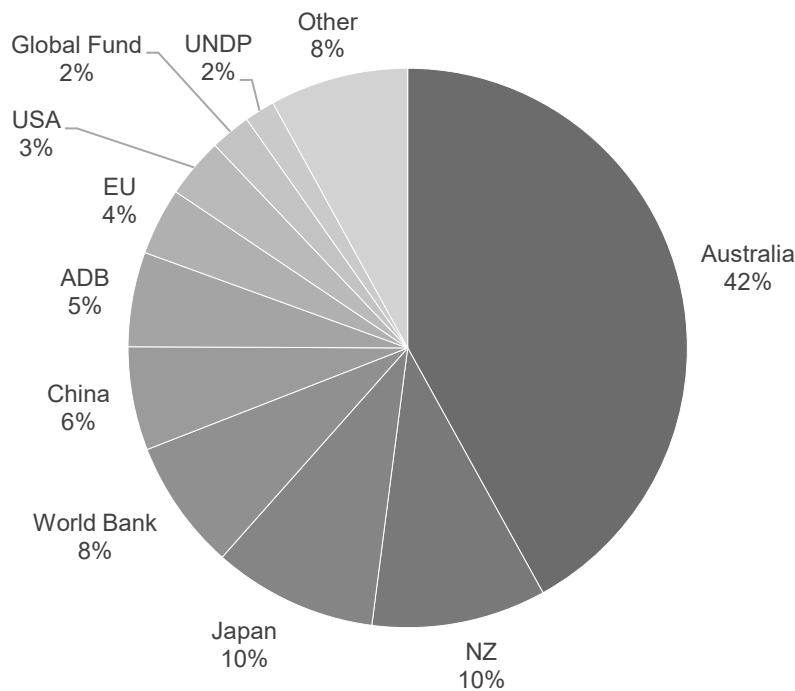


Source: DFAT 2018a, 2018b.

Notwithstanding the decline in Australian aid to PNG, Australia remains PNG’s most important donor—providing over 65 per cent of total aid to the country. More broadly, Australia is still the largest donor in the Pacific—shown in Figure 3—based on 2016 data from the Lowy Institute.

Australia provides over 40 per cent of ODA to the Pacific, providing more than four times as much ODA as the next largest donor. Despite talk of the rise of China as a donor—Australia provided seven times more aid to the Pacific than China in 2016 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Australian aid to the Pacific as percentage of all donors 2016

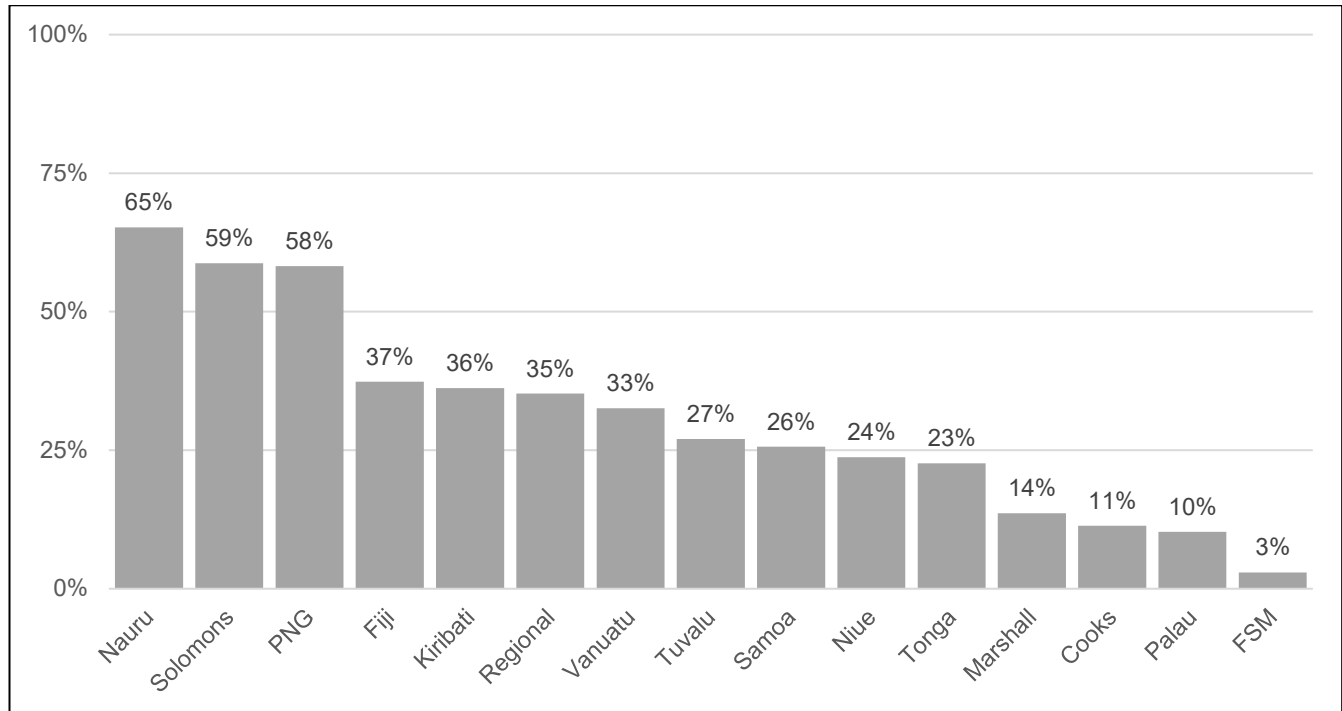


Data source: Lowy Institute 2018.

Australia was also the largest donor to Nauru, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Samoa, and Tonga in 2016. It provides over half of all foreign aid received by PNG, Nauru, Solomon Islands, as can be seen in Figure 4.

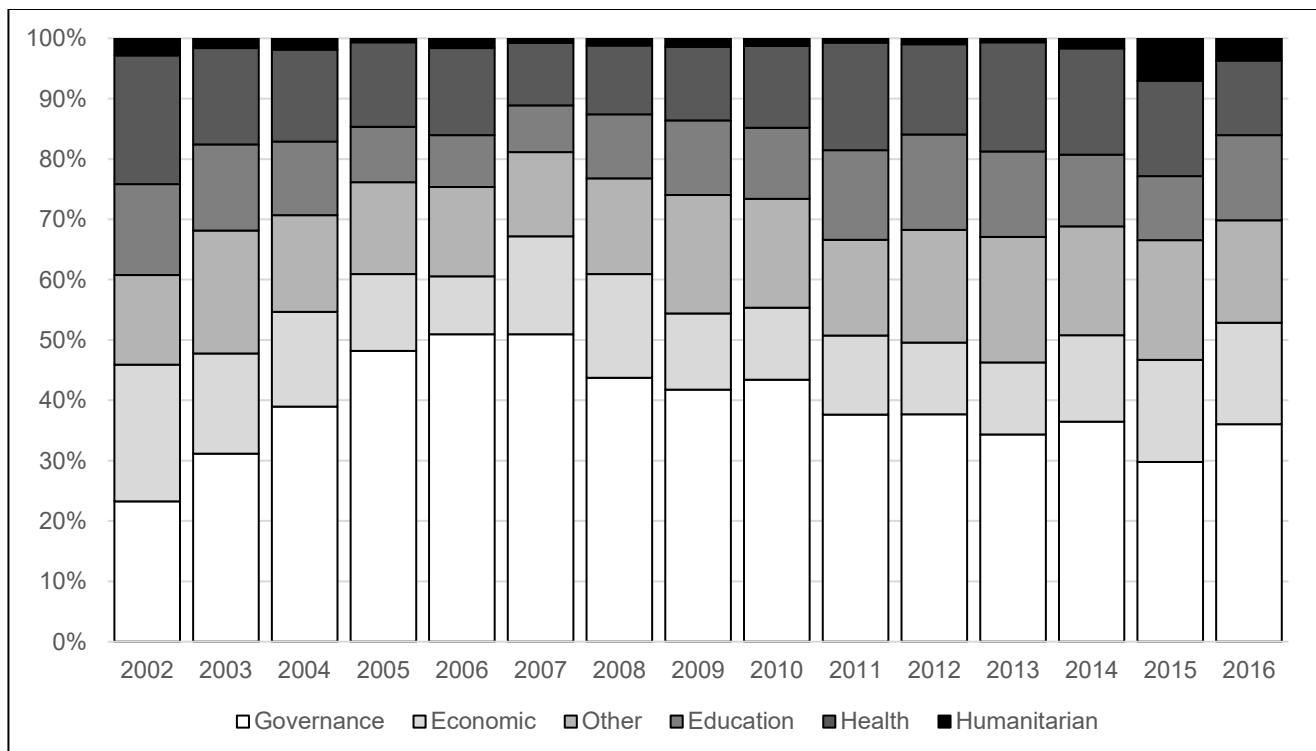
Australia's importance to the region is also true when other, less concessional, Other Official Flows (OOF) of finance are considered, though China's share of total OOF is higher than that of ODA.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 4: Australian aid as percentage of all donors, 2016, by country



Data source: Lowy Institute 2018

Figure 5: Australian aid expenditure by sector in the Pacific over time



Source: OECD 2018.

Australia’s sectoral aid focus in the Pacific for the period 2002–16 is shown in Figure 5—with governance the single largest sector. Governance grew in emphasis under the Howard government (1996–2007)—and fell under the Rudd government (2007–10 and 2013)—as spending on health and education increased. However, the change was minimal. A focus on governance was continued by the Abbott and Turnbull governments (2013–18)—the most substantive change since 2013 being an increased focus on economic development, largely at the expense of spending devoted to the health sector.

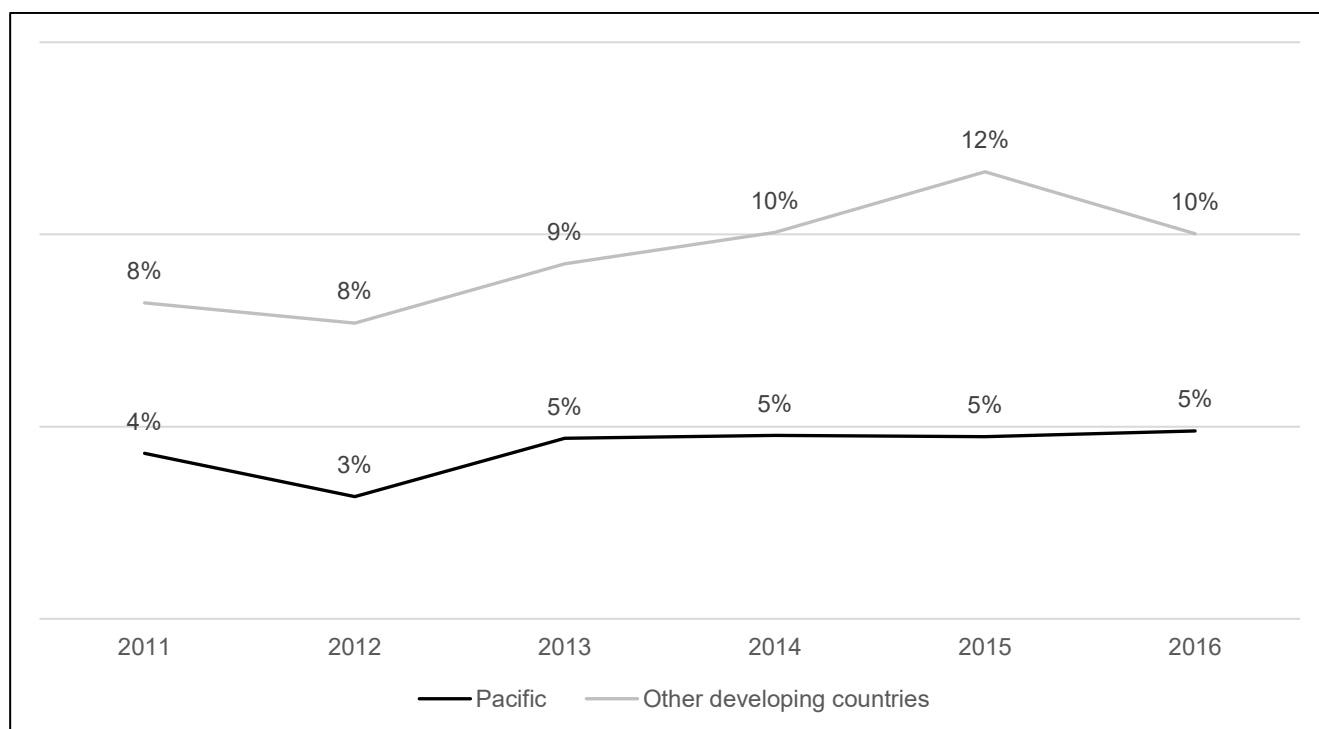
Australia’s focus on governance has been the subject of critique from some commentators (for example, Hayward-Jones 2008). However, given that the bulk of Australia’s aid is given to PNG, the most poorly governed state in the region (World Bank 2016), in our view this is not wholly unreasonable. Table 1 compares Australia’s sectoral focus to that of the five other largest bilateral donors to the Pacific. As can be seen, Australia’s focus on governance is not dramatically different from that of New Zealand, although it does differ from the other donors.

Table 1: Sectoral spend, top five bilateral donors in the Pacific, 2016

Sector	Australia	New Zealand	United States	China	Japan
Economic development	17%	35%	9%	18%	47%
Education	14%	9%	22%	17%	7%
Governance	36%	29%	13%	9%	4%
Health	12%	9%	16%	3%	30%
Humanitarian	4%	9%	39%	17%	3%
Other	17%	10%	2%	36%	9%

Data source: Lowy Institute 2018 and OECD 2018

Figure 6: Percentage of Australian aid spent on scholarships in the Pacific, 2011–16



Data source: OECD 2018.

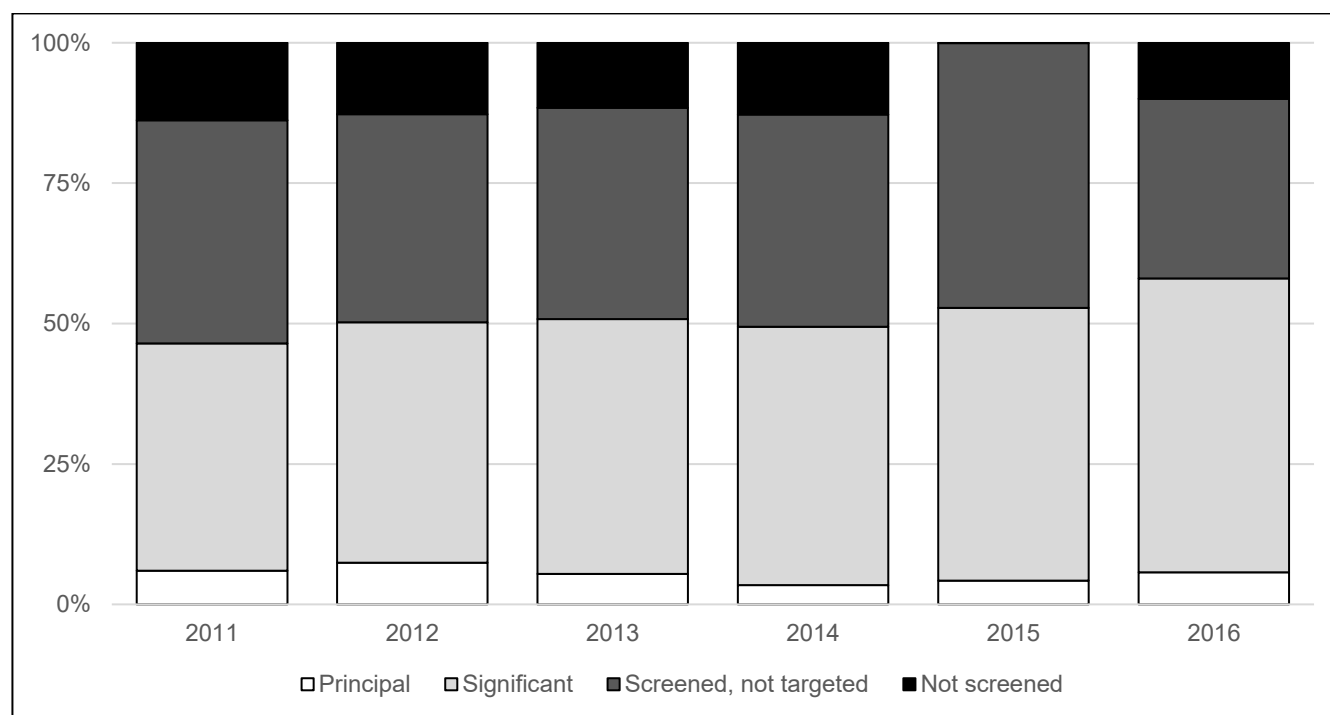
Another controversial area of sectoral spending is donor spending on tertiary scholarships, funding students from developing countries to study in donor countries (Spratt and Wood 2018). By OECD donor standards, Australia’s focus on global scholarships is fairly intensive—yet less in the Pacific. Figure 6 shows the average percentage of Australian aid to the Pacific given as scholarships from 2011 to 2016 was four per cent—compared to 10 per cent of Australian aid spent on scholarships to the rest of the world.

An aspect of Australian aid that received considerable political attention—particularly under the Turnbull government (2015–18)—is gender and the empowerment of women. Figure 7 shows the percentage of all Australian aid allocated to projects in the Pacific with a gender focus. The

OECD treats gender as a crosscutting issue—not a sector—against which all projects should be assessed. OECD donors identify projects with a gender focus as the principal—that is, main—or significant—that is, not the main, but still important—objective. The increase in the proportion of projects with a principal or significant gender focus has, intriguingly, only been modest in the Pacific—despite recent political rhetoric.

Aid funding for climate adaptation under the Turnbull government was also a focus of political attention, especially in the Pacific. As in the case of gender, adaptation is considered a crosscutting issue by the OECD, with donors reporting projects where adaptation is considered the principal or a significant objective.

Figure 7: Australia’s self-reported gender focus in the Pacific, 2011–16



Data source: OECD 2018.

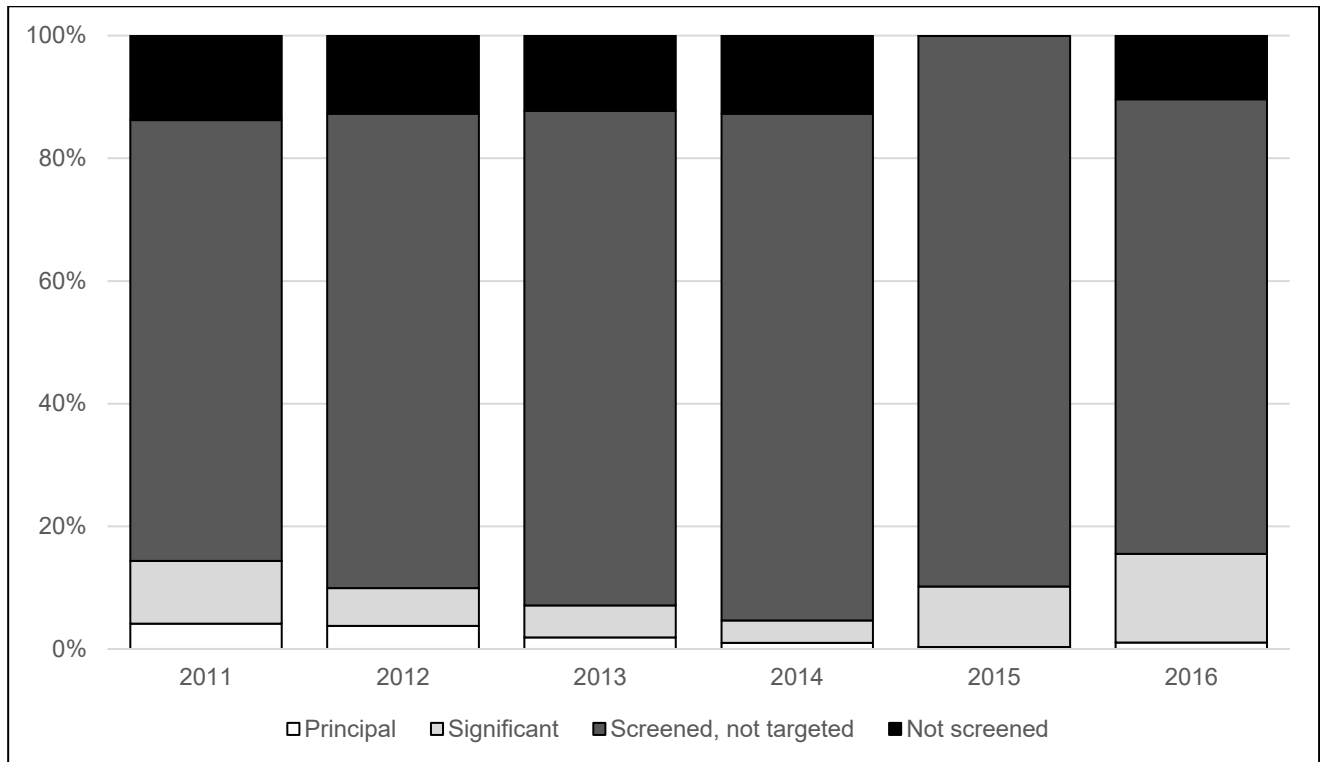
The provision of aid for adaptation as a percentage of all Australian aid to the Pacific is presented in Figure 8. The decline of Australian aid for adaptation from 2010–14 is evident in the chart, and can be explained by both the end of the ‘fast start’ period (2010–12), in which the Rudd government joined other OECD countries in committing funds for climate change (Australia’s ‘fast start’ commitments were continued through to 2012–13, given the July–June financial year), and by the election of the Coalition government in 2013. The decline is especially evident in the case of ‘principal’ adaptation finance—a more reliable figure, given the demonstrated tendency for donors to over-report in the ‘significant’ category (AdaptationWatch 2015; Weiler et al 2018). The amount of Australian aid that is provided ‘principally’ for adaptation in a region vulnerable to climate change is surprisingly low. Aid that is ‘significantly’ for adaptation rises post-2014, largely as a result of the funding commitments made by the Turnbull government in the

context of the COP (Conference of the Parties) 21 discussions in Paris at the 2015 Climate Conference.

While Australian ODA to the Pacific is significant—Australian NGOs also play an important role in the region. Historically, reliable NGO data have been unavailable. Recent data gathering efforts by the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) have, however, significantly improved access to NGO data.<sup>2</sup>

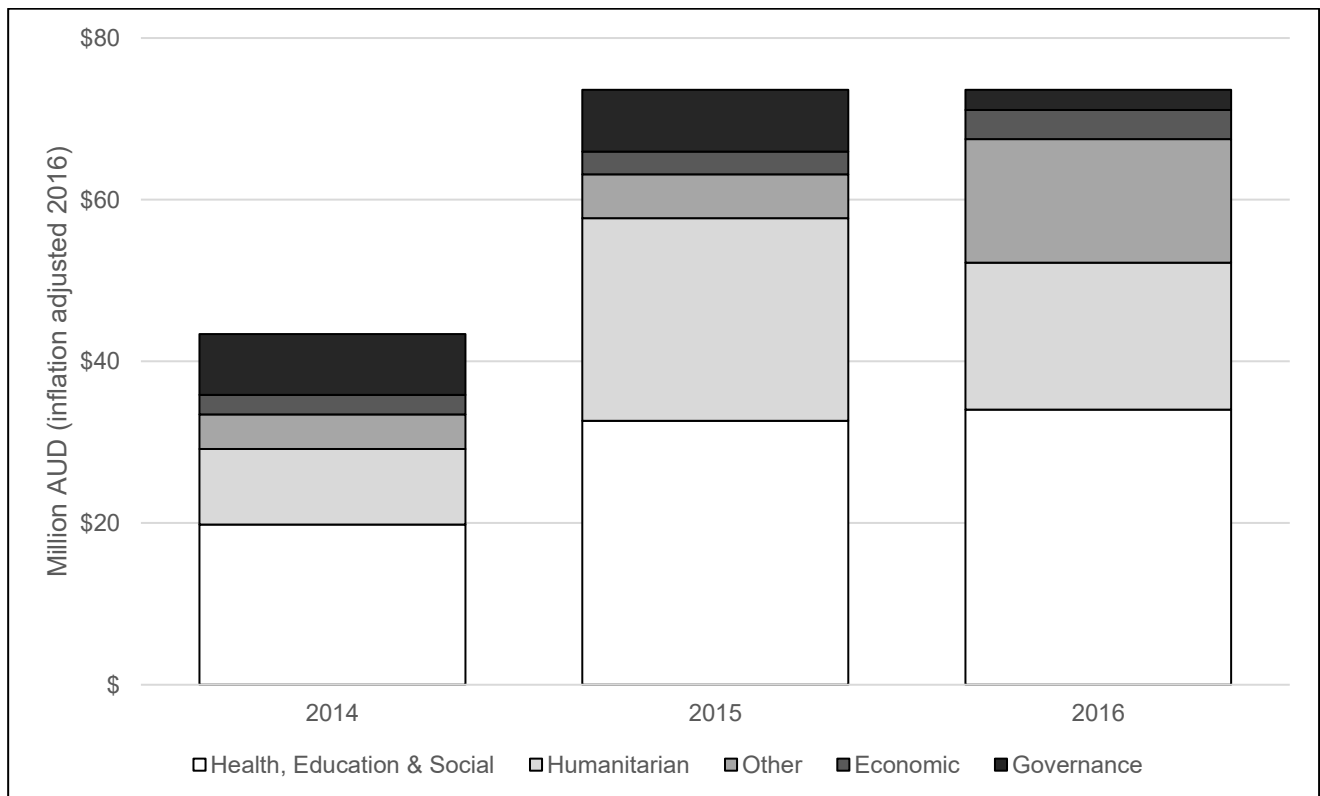
Funding for Australian NGOs comes from a range of sources—including DFAT. In 2016 Australian NGOs spent about AUD134 million in the Pacific, with funds from all sources included (ACFID 2018). Just over half—about AUD74 million—of Australian NGO funding spent in the Pacific, came from public donations. Based on ACFID data, Figure 9 shows the amount of aid from public donations spent by Australian NGOs in the Pacific across from 2014–16—and the sectors where the Australian NGOs worked.

Figure 8: Australia's self-reported climate change adaptation focus in the Pacific, 2011–16



Data source: OECD 2018

Figure 9: ACFID member spending in the Pacific 2014–16 by sector



Data source: Based on data associated with ACFID 2018.

The focus is on donations, as—unlike funding from other sources—NGOs' expenditure of donations is typically not tied to specific types of work—resulting in expenditure of funds from this source most likely to reflect individual NGOs' priorities. Due to ACFID categorising sectors differently to the sectors used in ODA reporting—comparisons are not exact—although categories are close enough to allow for differences to be identified. The 'social' sector referred to in Figure 9 mostly comprises work on health and education.

The large increase in spending from 2014 to 2015 shown in Figure 9, was maintained in 2016—mainly due to funding of social and humanitarian sectors. The increase to humanitarian aid in 2015 was due to Cyclone Pam and floods in Solomon Islands—and the increase in social spending was a by-product of two large NGOs increasing their work in this sector.

The most obvious sectoral difference between NGOs and Australian ODA is that NGOs focus much less of their efforts on governance and economic development—spending instead on the social sectors and humanitarian work. Australian NGOs also focus less on the Pacific than the Australian government—with the work undertaken by Australian NGOs in the Pacific having significantly different development aims.

## Conclusion

There has been a surprising level of continuity in Australian aid to the Pacific. Although Australia's global aid volumes shifted dramatically, ODA from Australia to the Pacific today is little changed from when Rudd was elected, when adjusting for inflation. It is just 5 per cent lower than at its peak. While the Pacific did not benefit from the 'scale up' in aid initiated by the Rudd government, it also did not suffer subsequent cuts to aid imposed by the Coalition government.

Look more closely at the data, however, and it is evident that there have been changes to Australian aid in the region. Country allocations have shifted, with a steady decline in PNG's share of Australian aid, growth in ODA to Solomon Islands (linked to the RAMSI intervention), and increases in the share of aid provided to smaller Pacific Island countries and to regional initiatives. There has been some shift in emphasis and on sectoral allocations. The focus on governance has declined since 2007, though it remains the largest sector for Australian ODA to the region. The most substantive change since the Coalition came into power has been an increased emphasis on economic development, an emphasis that to some extent has come at the expense of aid relating to health. Unlike government aid, Australian NGOs are heavily focussed on health and education in their Pacific work.

Australian aid in the region that is reported as relevant to gender has not increased as much as might have been anticipated given the Foreign Minister's emphasis on supporting women and girls. Aid for climate adaptation declined when the Coalition gained government, but has increased modestly since.

There have also been other changes to Australian aid in the region that are not measured well using quantitative data. The move by the aid program towards greater use of facilities (large multi-sector contracts managed by the private sector) is an obvious example. Another is the abolition of AusAID and its integration into DFAT. The impact of the integration is beyond the scope of this paper. Other research suggests that the integration resulted in a loss of skilled staff with knowledge of the aid program (which could explain the focus on facilities), lower levels of transparency, and reduced aid effectiveness (Wood et al 2016).

Australia is clearly an important source of aid to the Pacific. It is the largest donor to the region by far, and the largest donor to eight of 14 independent Pacific Island states. It provides seven times more aid to the Pacific than China. The importance of Australian aid is unlikely to change significantly in the future, notwithstanding commentary to the contrary. It is in all of our interests, in the Pacific and in Australia, to ensure that this aid is spent effectively.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For example, when both ODA and Other Official Flows to PNG are measured, China provides approximately 20 per cent of the total, compared to less than 10 per cent of total ODA.
- <sup>2</sup> ACFID data are limited in that they only cover ACFID members. However, the bulk of Australian NGO aid flows through ACFID members, and most of Australia's largest NGOs are ACFID members (ACFID 2018).

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# Reflection on China's aid in the Pacific: Impacts, challenges and prospects

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China's rise in the Pacific has become prominent in the last decade. Debates on China in the region have intensified and cover a growing number of issues—such as China's diplomacy, aid, and even interest in seabed mining. China's activities have also frequently hit news headlines in Australia, New Zealand and Pacific island countries (PICs).

This 80th edition of the Development Bulletin provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on China's aid in the Pacific. As a researcher, I was puzzled by the lack of development in PICs despite their endowment of marine resources and large inflows of foreign aid. Since 2006 I also witnessed the rapid growth of China's engagement with PICs, leading me to reflect on the impact and subsequent challenges of growing Chinese aid in the region.

## Impact

Foreign aid is a significant tool of China's diplomacy in the Pacific—the rapid growth of Chinese aid clear evidence of China's rise in the region. Although PICs are far from the top of Beijing's agenda, the sheer scale of Chinese aid and the small sizes of PIC economies increase the impact of Chinese aid in these countries. With Chinese aid to the Pacific increasing dramatically since 2006, substantial aid pledges have been made. In April 2006, China's Premier Wen Jiabao inaugurated the China–Pacific Economic Development and Cooperation Forum in Fiji and announced that China would provide US\$468.7 million (RMB3 billion)<sup>1</sup> in concessional loans to the region over the next three years—marking the beginning of large inflows of Chinese concessional loans.

In November 2013, China committed US\$1 billion in concessional loans to PICs and US\$1 billion in commercial loans for infrastructure development. In November 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Fiji—the first time in history a Chinese resident visited the region. President Xi Jinping elevated the China–PICs relationship to a strategic partnership of mutual respect and common development and pledged to offer 2000 scholarships and 5000 training slots for Pacific candidates to attend Chinese universities and training facilities. In addition, China provides annual aid grants to eight diplomatic partners in the region—including Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Cook Islands, and Niue.

The annual interest rate of Chinese concessional loans is two to three per cent. The loans are raised from the market by the China Export–Import Bank (Exim Bank) with a repayment period of 15 to 20 years, including a grace period of five to seven years. Concessional loans have become increasingly popular with the Chinese government for two main reasons. Firstly, China only covers the interest difference between concessional and commercial loan rates and recipient countries are required to pay back the debt. Secondly—by requiring loan projects be conducted by

Chinese contractors with at least 50 per cent of equipment and project materials purchased from China—Chinese concessional loans play a significant role in supporting Chinese companies—typically Chinese State-owned Enterprises (SOEs) competing in overseas markets.

Compared with aid from traditional donors—with rigid requirements and lengthy approval processes—Chinese aid is easier to obtain and is delivered quickly. One main condition for PICs to receive Chinese aid is that recipient PICs need to officially recognise Beijing as the representative of China and officially sever ties with Taiwan—regarded by China as a renegade province. The Chinese government considers foreign aid and its bilateral relations with recipient countries a significant part of its global image. Chinese contractors working on aid projects therefore often become mired in politics.

China's readiness to provide infrastructure support has considerable appeal to PIC governments. Poor infrastructure has severely constrained economic and social development across the region. For example, only 23 per cent of road networks in the Pacific are sealed and only 39 per cent of national roads in PNG are in good condition (ADB 2011; PNG government 2015). There are enormous demands for infrastructure improvement in the Pacific with wide supply gaps. While traditional donors hesitate to pour money into large scale infrastructure projects in the Pacific island countries, SOEs backed by Chinese banks and ultimately the Chinese government, quickly fill this gap and are welcomed by Pacific governments.

In 2015, Siosua Utoikamanu, the former Tongan Minister of Finance, revealed that after the central business district in Nuku'alofa—the capital of Tonga—was burnt down during the riot in November 2006—the Tongan government approached traditional donors and failed to secure assistance to rebuild the area. In stark contrast, the China Exim bank approved a concessional loan to Tonga—worth US\$68.7 million (RMB440 million)—to rebuild the business district.

Chinese aid, if well utilised, could play a significant role in improving infrastructure facilities such as roads and seaports in Pacific countries to unlock economic potential. Aid is also important in the health and agriculture sectors, such as malaria control. The anti-malaria drug artemisinin—*qinghaosu*—first discovered and extracted by Chinese medical experts in the 1970s from sweet wormwood (*Artemisia annua*)<sup>2</sup>—has been widely used in the treatment of malaria, saving millions of lives worldwide. Since January 2016, Australia has been conducting a three-year trilateral aid project with China, aiming to strengthen PNG's capacity in malaria diagnosis and research.

Potential for cooperation on agriculture with China has resulted in Chinese agricultural experts establishing demonstration farms in eight PICs—such as PNG, Fiji, and Tonga. China's experience in agricultural development—especially

small-scale farming—could be useful to Pacific states. Since 2014, for example, Chinese agricultural experts led by Professor Lin Zhanxi, who developed *juncao* technology—literally translated as ‘fungus grass’—have been teaching Fijian farmers to grow mushrooms from chopped grass instead of relying on logs or sawdust. As PICs struggle to achieve the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals—China’s expertise in health and agriculture could be of benefit.

Chinese aid programs also offer opportunities for PICs to learn more about China. Some officials and scholars in the Pacific are interested in China’s economic development model—with growing numbers of young Pacific islanders having studied in China under Chinese government scholarships. Table 1 shows a total of 1080 students from PNG, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu and FSM were awarded Chinese government scholarships and received tertiary education in China by 2016. A larger number of Pacific islanders—including many government officials—attended short-term technical training in China. These two types of education programs—exposing Pacific islanders to a variety of aspects of China—inevitably affect perceptions of China. As many of these Pacific islanders are future decision makers in PICs, their experience in China could have an impact on future PIC–China relations.

*Table<sup>3</sup> 1: PIC students awarded with Chinese government scholarships 2015–16*

PIC	Number 2015–2016	Total number by 2016
PNG	35 (2016)	300
Fiji	12 (2016)	157
Samoa	28 (2016)	200
Tonga	28 (2016)	178
Vanuatu	23 (2016)	95
FSM	18 (2015)	150
Total	144	1080

Source: Compiled by author with raw data from the website of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Fiji is an example of China’s growing impact on the Pacific region. Australia and New Zealand imposed strict sanctions on the Voreqe ‘Frank’ Bainimarama regime after the 2006 Fijian military coup d’état, enabling China to seize the opportunity to forge a closer relationship with the Fijian government—by providing political and economic assistance to Fiji—with the proviso of non-interference in Fiji’s internal affairs.

During the period of December 2006 to October 2014—while Australian and New Zealand sanctions were imposed on Fiji—Prime Minister Bainimarama visited China five times. Amid diplomatic protests from Australia and New Zealand, China’s then Vice President Xi Jinping visited Fiji in February 2009—and assured Fijian leaders that China respected the development path chosen by Fiji. The Lowy Institute estimated China was the largest donor to Fiji between 2006 and 2013—providing US\$333 million in aid

(Brant 2015). In return, the Fijian government reaffirmed support for China on domestic and global issues such as China’s controversial ‘Belt and Road’ initiative—seeking to economically link Europe to China through countries across Eurasia, the Indian Ocean, and parts of Africa and Oceania. The Fijian government closed the Fijian trade office in Taipei and supported China in chasing corrupt Chinese officials and criminal suspects hiding in Fiji. The example in Fiji sends a clear signal from China that the Chinese government will not compromise its position on regional issues and aid recipients will be expected to support China against Taiwan and in any dispute.

## Challenges

### Increasing PIC Debt

As China increases aid to the Pacific region, the downsides of this aid are becoming more visible. The first and most debated issue is the indebtedness of PICs to China through Chinese concessional loans. Substantial attention has been given to this issue by Pacific-based officials, scholars and media—concerned that many PICs already in financial distress, will be unable to grapple with repaying Chinese loans. As reported in *The Economist*: Vanuatu’s external debt stands at about one third of its GDP with half owed to China; Tonga’s external debt amounts to two thirds of its GDP with about half owed to China; and Samoa’s external debt accounts for 50 per cent of its GDP with about 40 per cent owed to China (*The Economist* 2018).

The grace period for Chinese concessional loans borrowed by Tonga to rebuild the central business district expired in 2013, and the Tongan government was unable to make the repayment. Brokered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Tonga was granted another five years for the repayment. Unless there are other interventions or arrangements, Tonga will need to pay back the principal loan plus interest in 2018–2019—at an even higher scale than in 2013.

Given the severe debt risk, why do PICs seek concessional loans from China in the first place? As discussed, the relatively easy process to obtain Chinese loans and China’s willingness to fund major infrastructure projects are attractive to PICs. Some officials in the Pacific hold the misperception that these loans can be changed to grants and ‘forgiven’—an incorrect assumption which could in part account for PICs continuing to borrow from China. Chinese loans are seldom changed when compared with the write-off of interest-free loans. In 2013, the Tongan government tried and failed to have their loans ‘forgiven’ by China—being granted another five-year grace period of repayment instead.

Chinese donors conduct feasibility studies before approving concessional loans for a recipient country. Some of the key selection criteria for a feasibility study include:

- Whether the recipient country has a good diplomatic relationship with China;
- If the project is needed for economic and social development in-country and will receive attention from the government;
- Whether the recipient country has a stable political and economic environment;

- If the recipient country has the capacity to repay the principal and interest of loans and maintain a good reputation for repayment; and
- Whether a project is technically viable and will not have severe environmental impacts.

Some factors, however, may compromise these selection criteria. Firstly, political interest could outweigh economic considerations in China's diplomacy. For example, when the People's Republic of China competes with the Republic of China—Taiwan<sup>2</sup>—in the Pacific, it is highly likely the two sides will offer lucrative loans to PICs focusing more on diplomatic recognition and less on economic considerations. Secondly, thanks to close relations with officials and politicians in recipient countries, some Chinese SOEs are keen to lobby recipient governments for new aid projects because—once both countries agree upon a given project—the SOE will typically win the contract to carry it out. Corruption, the recipient government's eagerness to obtain Chinese funding, and lobby efforts of Chinese SOEs—may compromise a loan approval process.

Thirdly, in the bid for concessional loan projects, some Chinese contractors offer lowest prices to win the contract then ask the recipient government for a substantial increase of the budget once the contract is won—leading to huge cost increases. These fraudulent practices are openly condemned by the Chinese government, yet further demonstrate the principal dilemma in delivery of Chinese aid—that the Chinese government hopes to deliver sound aid in terms of quality and cost that benefit China's long-term political and economic interests—while Chinese companies focus more on commercial interest, sometimes at the expense of business ethics. Driven by commercial interests, Chinese contractors also want to finish projects as soon as possible—compromising project quality to move on to other projects.

To date, it is still unclear what will happen when recipient countries are unable to repay Chinese concessional loans. Although China usually will not turn concessional loans into interest-free loans or grants—PICs can at least request postponement of total repayment for a few years. As PICs are important in China's diplomatic tug of war with Taiwan—there might be some flexibility for Chinese officials and Pacific counterparts to sit down and find a solution to the debt issue.

### Lack of transparency

A second downside of Chinese aid is lack of transparency. China does not release information on its annual aid spending, let alone a breakdown of aid delivered by country and sector. The Chinese government has only issued two white papers on aid—one for 1950–2009 and a second for 2010–2012. The two white papers reveal China provides about four per cent of its aid budget to the Pacific—there are, however, a lot of unknowns. For example, China signs annual agreements on economic and technical cooperation with the eight PICs that have diplomatic relations with Beijing—and provides aid grants but the amounts are not released. Another information gap is that most of the information released by China is about aid commitment to PICs rather than actual disbursement. Despite a number of

infrastructure projects funded across the region with concessional loans—little is known regarding how much of these loan commitments have actually materialised. Lack of transparency can lead to a growing number of speculations about Chinese aid—such as China's motivations and impact.

Some sources available to collect data on Chinese aid include the Department of Foreign Aid under China's Ministry of Commerce—which releases news reports on Chinese aid. The *Finance Yearbook of China*, released by China's Ministry of Finance includes some data on China's aid budget. The Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Offices throughout Chinese embassies in the Pacific provide news reports on Chinese aid in-country. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chinese embassies similarly release news reports on bilateral relations between China and PICs—sometimes with useful information on aid. The Lowy Institute's Chinese aid map in the Pacific is also a useful reference—although it is incomplete, not including, for example, Chinese interest-free loans. Such sources can assist in piecing together a jigsaw puzzle of Chinese aid expenditure in the region.

Chinese aid in the Pacific also faces other challenges as well, such as inadequate coordination between China and other Pacific donors—whether traditional or emerging—and China seldom attending aid roundtable meetings. Chinese aid adopts a government to government approach—devoting little attention to other Pacific stakeholders such as civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). China's engagement with PICs is also based on bilateralism and therefore Chinese support for regional organisations is negligible compared with its bilateral aid. These challenges have substantially limited the impact of Chinese aid in the Pacific.

### Prospects for the future of Chinese aid in the Pacific

Three developments in recent years will have significant impact on Chinese aid delivery in the Pacific. First, China demonstrated more readiness for aid coordination and cooperation with traditional donors. For example, China has been conducting trilateral aid cooperation with Australia on malaria control in PNG and with New Zealand on water supply in the Cook Islands. Initial feedback on these pilot projects is positive and encouraging. Increasing aid coordination is a first step in the right direction between China and traditional donors—to increase mutual understanding and build trust—paving the way for future cooperation. The pilot projects can be better understood as a result of political commitment from both sides, however over optimism should be avoided as these trilateral partnerships are still in their infancy—and political mistrust between China and traditional donors is deep-rooted. The impact of trilateral cooperation on aid effectiveness compared to bilateral aid needs to be further evaluated.

Second, in March 2018, China established an international development cooperation agency, in an effort to restructure its previous aid system which involved 33

government agencies. China's new aid agency will operate under the supervision of Yang Jiechi—former Minister of Foreign Affairs and incumbent director of the Office of Foreign Affairs of China's Communist Party—and Wang Yi, current Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Councillor. This new aid agency is tasked with strengthening Chinese aid planning and monitoring in Chinese foreign aid programs in the future—which could impact on aid implementation in the Pacific.

Third, the diplomatic wrestling between China and Taiwan has been revitalised since 2016. Former diplomatic allies of Taiwan—such as Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe, Panama, Dominican Republic, and Burkina Faso—have switched allegiance to Beijing. In the Pacific region, six

states recognise Taiwan and eight recognise Beijing. The Pacific region could become a focus of the diplomatic competition between Taiwan and Beijing—an important factor when Chinese officials make decisions on aid expenditure.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> One US dollar bought approximately 6.4 Chinese RMB in June 2018, the rate used in this paper.
- <sup>2</sup> Dr Tu won the Nobel Prize in 1970 for discovering artemisinin (<https://opecjresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/142822/1/1b-2015-14-zhang-online.pdf>).

# Development trajectories and possibilities in the Pacifics

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## Introduction

When discussing development issues, it is common to speak of the Pacific as if the region were a singular undifferentiated entity. The practice can be seen in the speeches of politicians (for example, Bishop 2017; Peters 2018) as well as in the work of influential academics (for example, Hughes 2003; Reilly 2000).<sup>1</sup> Referring to ‘the Pacific’ is an understandable shorthand, but doing so brings the risk of obscuring important variation between countries—variation that matters for development. Talking of ‘the Pacific’ conceals different needs, conflates differing rates of progress, homogenises different development challenges, and runs the risk of encouraging one size fits all approaches to development assistance.

This paper shows how everything from data quality, to economic development, to human development varies substantially between the countries as do development challenges. The differences in development progress and challenges have significant ramifications for what countries such as Australia and New Zealand could and should be doing to assist their Pacific Island neighbours. Rather than focusing on the Pacific, we should think of ‘the Pacifics’—different groups of countries with different strengths and challenges, each requiring different types of assistance.

Because this paper is written by a New Zealander, for an Australian journal, and aimed at policy makers in Australia and New Zealand, in the name of parsimony I exclude New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Fortuna, as well as the countries of the northern Pacific. For reasons of data availability, I also do not cover Niue,

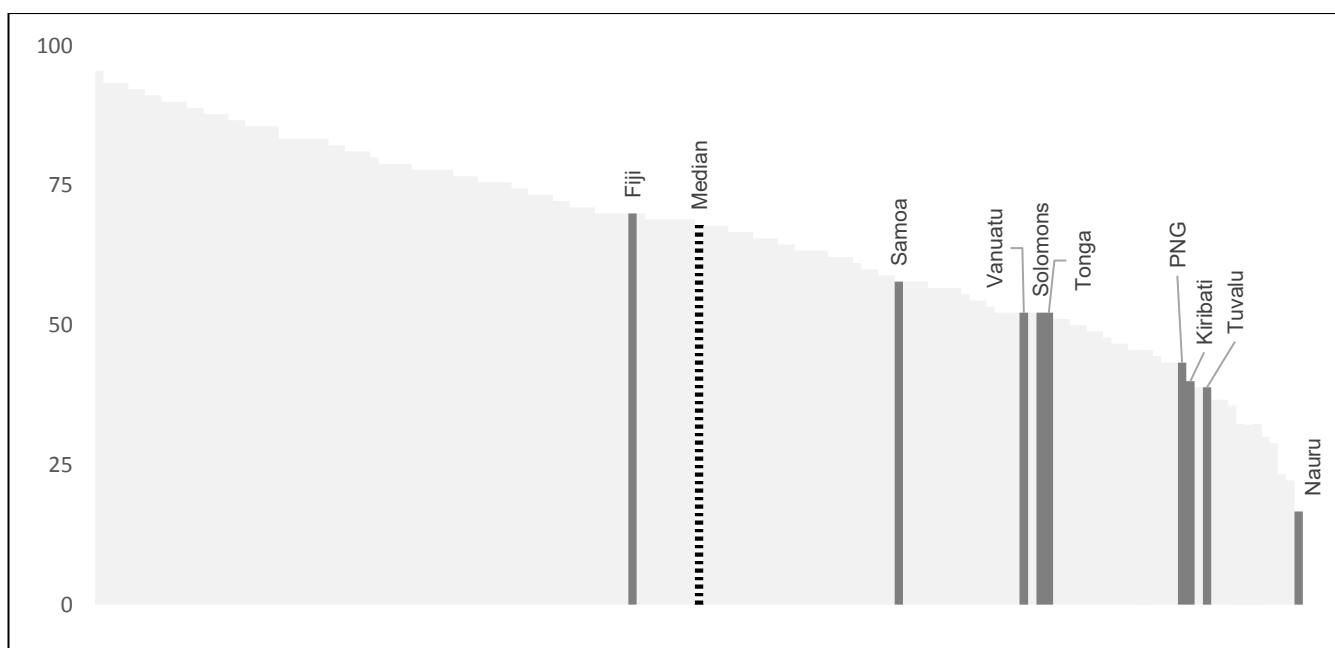
Tokelau and Cook Islands. However, were I to include these regions, my conclusions about diversity, and the importance of recognising it, would not change; diversity would be greater still if these parts of the Pacific were considered.

## Variation

In all areas, from the most mundane—data quality—to the most important—human development—variation between the Pacific Island countries is striking.

The quality of development-related data may seem a dry place to start a paper. But data quality matters in two important ways for this discussion. First, this paper draws on data to emphasise the differences between different Pacific Island countries. The quality of development-related data is poor for some Pacific Island countries as can be seen in Figure 1, which draws on the World Bank’s Statistical Capacity Indicators dataset. The y-axis plots a measure of the capacity of government bodies tasked with compiling official statistics. (In theory, the measure can run from 0 to 100). All developing countries covered by the dataset are shown in the chart. Countries are ordered from the highest capacity on the left to the lowest capacity on the right. Those Pacific Island countries discussed in this paper are labelled. As can be seen, only one Pacific country performs better than the median developing country. There is considerable variety in the rest of the Pacific countries. However, all fall in the lower half of developing countries with respect to statistical capacity.

Figure 1—Statistical capacity in developing countries



Source: Data come from 2017. All data used in this paper, and details on their sources, can be downloaded from: <https://goo.gl/5JH34r>.

Data are not so poor quality as to invalidate the conclusion that there is much diversity in levels of development across the Pacific. However, data are poor enough in instances that readers should be forewarned of the issue. Data are particularly problematic in some countries for measures of human development. Censuses and Demographic Health Surveys are poor quality in some Pacific countries and this makes it hard to accurately gauge levels of human development. I will return to this point.

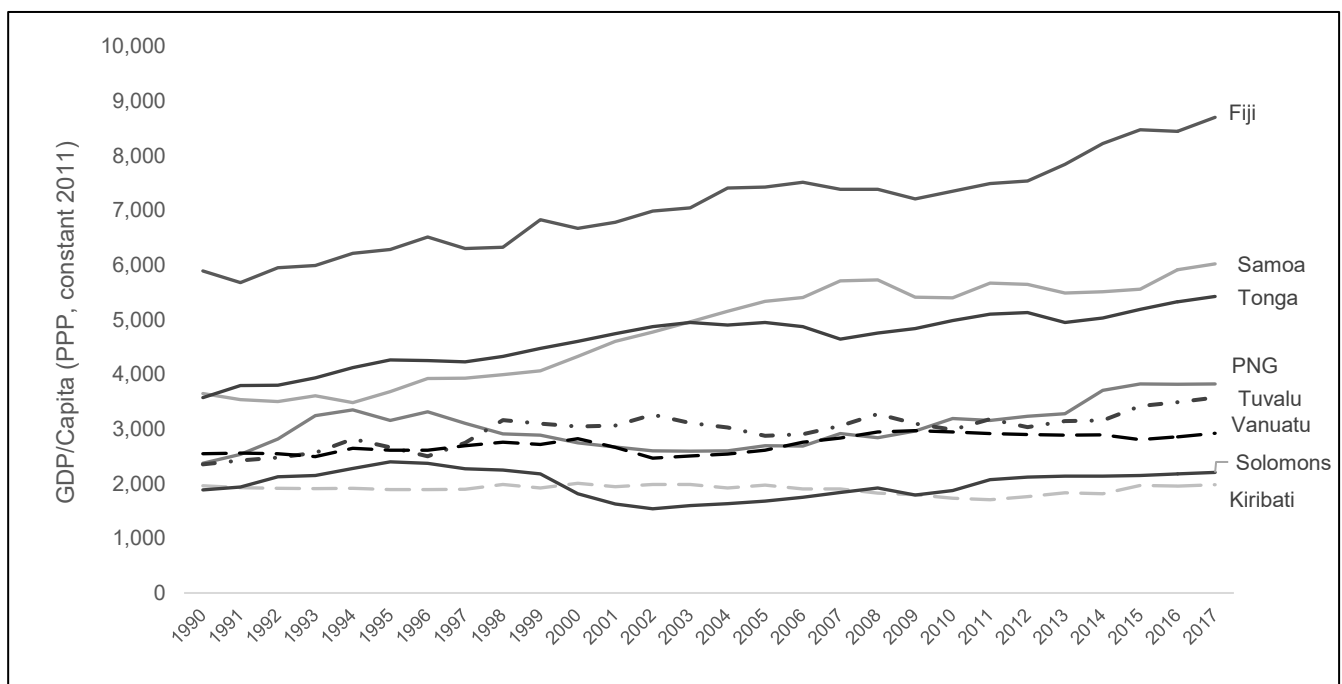
Second, the Sustainable Development Goals—17 goals, 169 targets and over 200 indicators (Dunning 2016)—will prove very hard to report against for those Pacific Island countries with low statistical capacity. While countries do not need to report against all indicators to meaningfully engage with the Goals, and while in some instances progress can be inferred from proxy measures, many Pacific Island countries struggled to engage with the Millennium Development Goals (Wood and Naidu 2006), which were much less data intensive. If progress against the Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific is to be meaningfully discussed in coming years, some countries in the region will need to improve their

data gathering analysis capacity significantly. This is a technical area where aid donors will need to assist.

## Economic development

Figure 2 plots economic development (measured as GDP per capita, adjusted for inflation and purchasing power parity) over the years since 1990, for a select group of Pacific Island countries. The chart is limited to the specific countries focussed on in this paper. Nauru, which has a GDP per capita that is nominally very high, has also been excluded in the name of a clear chart. Few would argue that GDP per capita is a wholly satisfactory measure of human welfare. However, higher GDP per capita is associated, on average, particularly in developing countries, with better health outcomes and higher levels of happiness (Preston 1975; Stevenson and Wolfers 2013). As a proxy for development in a more holistic sense, GDP per capita is a useful start.<sup>2</sup> GDP per capita also has the advantage of probably being more accurately estimated than many other development statistics in the Pacific. There are also longer time series of GDP per capita data, enabling better comparisons over time.

Figure 2—Economic development over time, selected Pacific Island countries.



Source: Data are from the World Bank World Development Indicators. Detailed information can be found from the URL under Figure 1.

At the top of the chart is Fiji, which started the period more affluent than its neighbours, and which has experienced broadly consistent economic growth over the years since. Samoa and Tonga are less affluent than Fiji, but still comparatively affluent, and have economies that have grown across most of the period. On the other hand, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Tuvalu, Vanuatu and particularly Solomon Islands and Kiribati are poorer, and their economies have grown little since 1990. PNG's economy has grown more rapidly than the others since the turn of the millennium, but much of this growth is thanks to extractive industries and has contributed little to the average person living in PNG. As the chart shows, the variation between the wealthiest and

poorest of these countries is substantial. In 2017 Fiji's GDP per capita was 4.4 times higher than that of Kiribati.

## Human development

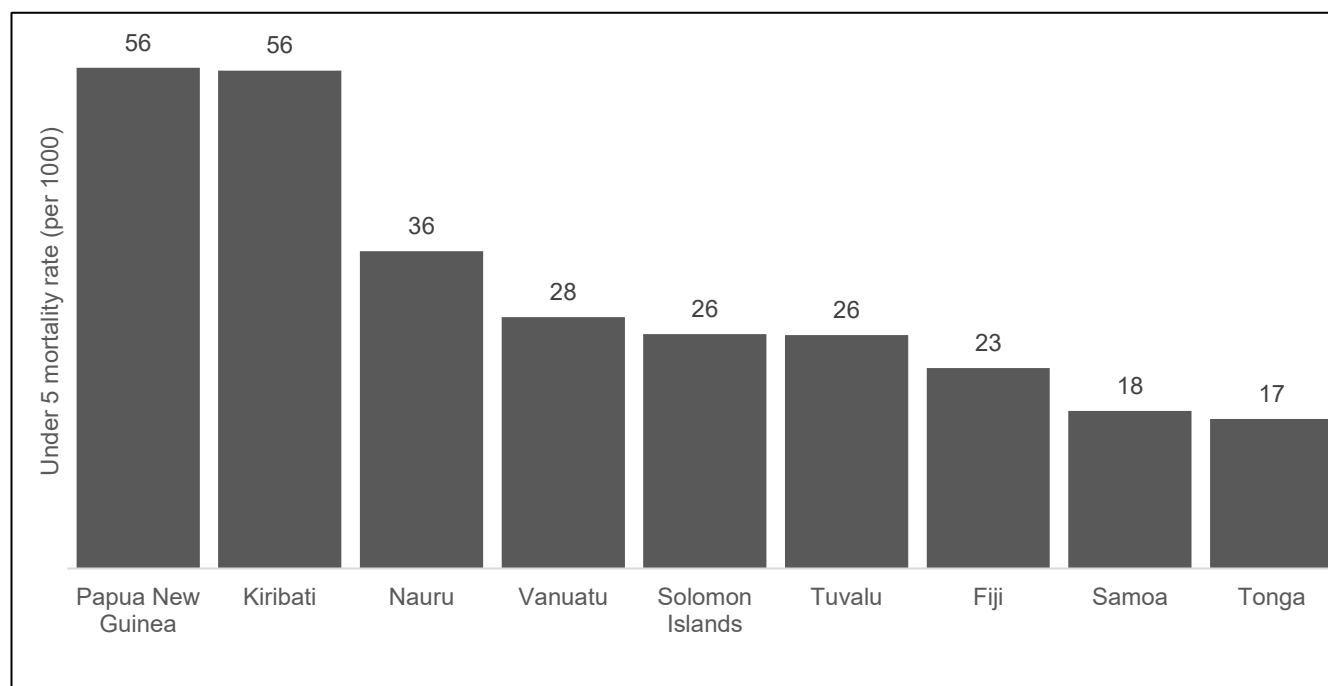
Figure 3 shows under-five mortality (per 1000) for those countries included in Figure 1. Under-five mortality is not the only measure of human development that could have been presented here. But it serves to illustrate the central argument of this article. Once again there is substantial variation between different countries in the Pacific. Under-five mortality is 3.5 times worse in PNG than it is in Tonga. Similar variation exists in other human development

measures such as literacy and life expectancy. (This can be seen in the dataset which can be downloaded from the URL under Figure 1.) There are significant quality issues with under-five mortality data for some Pacific countries. This is the case for other similar human development indicators such as life expectancy.<sup>3</sup> While in countries such as Fiji under-five mortality is probably accurately recorded, in many of the countries covered in the chart under-five mortality is probably understated. If data quality were better, variation between the best performing countries and the worst performing countries would probably be higher.

## Development challenges across the Pacifics

It is not only development outcomes that vary across the Pacific. Other attributes vary dramatically. PNG, for example, has a population of 8,200,000, a land area of 452,860 km squared, and is within an hour's direct flight of Cairns in Australia; Tuvalu on the other hand has a population of 11,000, a land area of 30 km<sup>2</sup>, and can only be reached from major Australian cities if one is willing to travel via Fiji, and often stretch travel over two days. Table 1 shows population and land area for the countries covered in the previous figures.

Figure 3—Under-five mortality, selected Pacific Island countries



Source: Data are estimates for 2015. Data can be downloaded from the URL provided under Figure 1.

Table 1: Population and Land area

Country	Population	Land area (sq. km)
Papua New Guinea	8,251,162	452,860
Fiji	905,502	18,270
Solomon Islands	611,343	27,990
Vanuatu	276,244	12,190
Samoa	196,440	2,830
Kiribati	116,398	810
Tonga	108,020	720
Nauru	13,649	20
Tuvalu	11,192	30

Source: Population and land area figures come from the World Development Indicators and are also included in the data uploaded with this article. Data are from 2017

Quality of governance also varies substantially between Pacific Island countries. Figure 4 is based on the World Bank Governance Indicators. Each country's score is an average of its score for 'Government Effectiveness' and 'Control of

Corruption'. In theory scores can range between about 2.5 and -2.5, although in practice the range is somewhat less. For example, in 2016, on the Government Effectiveness measure, Denmark scored 1.88, South Sudan scored -2.26.

For the smaller Pacific Island countries, size, and the associated issues of small domestic markets and government revenue bases is an impediment to development. Economic specialisation cannot occur and governments struggle to raise revenue. These problems are compounded in countries such as Kiribati where internal travel is also difficult. For many smaller Pacific Island countries isolation compounds these problems, as they suffer through being distant from potential markets (The World Bank 2014: 4).

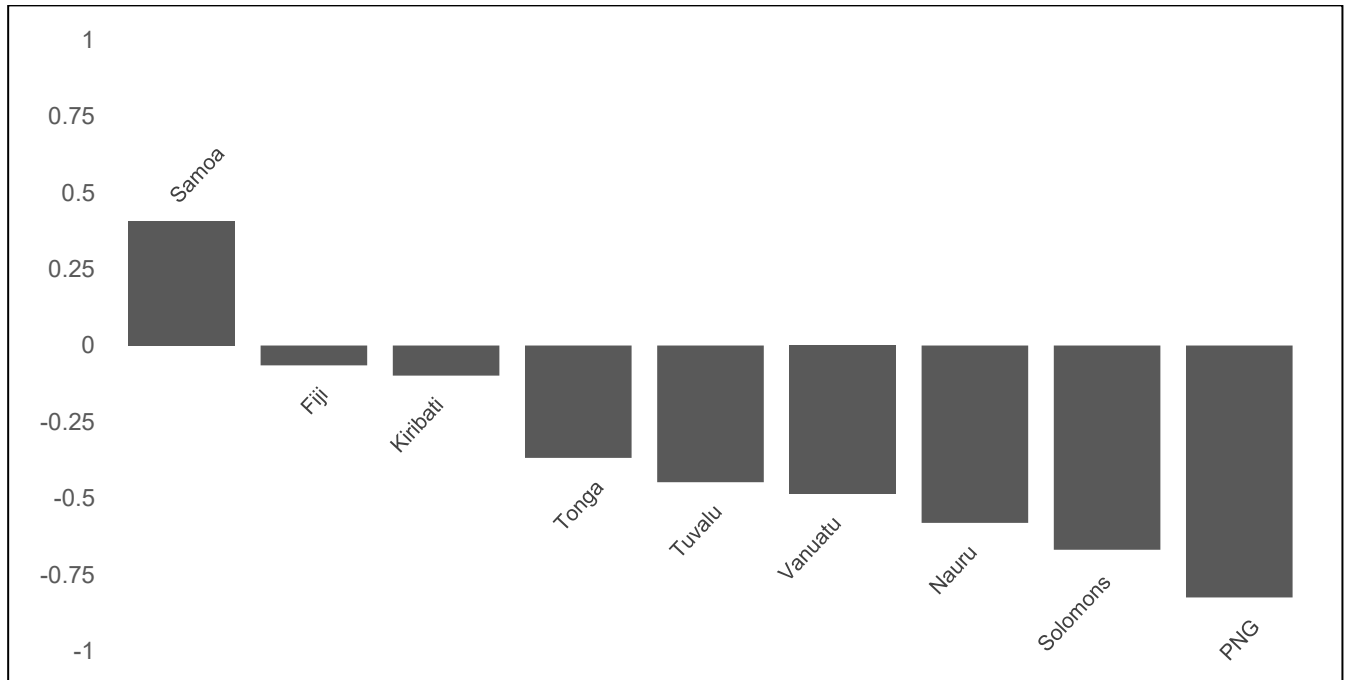
Other Pacific Island countries such as Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG are less constrained by geography, but are heavily constrained by their governance. There is a considerably body of research that links poor governance to poor development outcomes. Governance issues impede economic development (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Rigobon and Rodrik 2005), and human development outcomes such as health (Rajkumar and Swaroop 2008) and surveyed well-being (Helliwell and Huang 2008).



Significantly, the worst performing Pacific countries in terms of development outcomes are either small and isolated (Kiribati, for example) and/or poorly governed (Solomon Islands, and PNG, for example). In general, the better performing countries in terms of development have close ties to wealthier states and/or serve as successful tourist destinations (for example, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji).

There are coming development challenges, such as climate change, that are likely to have effects across the Pacific. At present, however, the causes of the varied development across the Pacific fall into two very different categories: geography and governance. These different causes, as well as other differences such as in the populations of Pacific Island countries, have clear ramifications for development policy.

Figure 4: Government effectiveness and control of corruption (World Bank)



Source: Data for 2016. Data and details on their source can be downloaded from the URL under Figure 1.

### Development assistance across the Pacifics

In the case of the specific issue of climate change there is one, simple, universal means through which countries such as Australia and New Zealand can help all of the countries in the Pacific. This is to advocate forcefully for reduced global carbon dioxide emissions and stick with those international commitments they have already made. For the other challenges of development approaches should vary on a country by country basis, although they can be fit within two broad groups.

For the smaller countries that are constrained by their size, and often their remoteness, at times there will be important benefits to be had from helping the countries ensure they obtain sustainable benefits from their marine resources. However, the most important contribution countries such as Australia and New Zealand can make to development progress in these countries will come in the form of promoting labour mobility, either through allowing permanent migration or, less ideally, through temporary migration schemes or, much less ideally, through training programmes that enable people to take advantage of global labour markets. World Bank research has shown that the benefits to Pacific Island countries of even comparatively modest increases in labour mobility promoted by countries such as Australia and New Zealand would be substantial

(Curtain et al. 2016). Such benefits can be realised by all Pacific Island countries. However, for larger countries such as PNG, while individual migrants and their families will gain, it is not likely that migration flows will ever be high enough to have a major national impact. On the other hand, in small countries such as Kiribati, which has very limited labour mobility at present, and Tonga, which already benefits from higher levels of migration, the countries as a whole can benefit from migration and associated remittances.

Migration is not a substitute for aid. Even with increased migration, countries such as Kiribati will need aid to help with the provision of health and education services but sustained ongoing economic development for people of these countries will best be facilitated by increased mobility.

The circumstances of larger countries, however, are different. Migration may help individual families in countries such as Solomon Islands and PNG, but migrant flows will never be large enough as a share of total populations to contribute meaningfully to largescale development in these countries as a whole.<sup>4</sup> By the same token, however, the countries are large enough to have other options, ranging from horticultural exports to tourism. Yet, this potential is severely hampered by the quality of governance. Poor government maintenance of infrastructure as well as dysfunctional government departments impede economic

development, while similar governance issues prevent ordinary citizens from being able to access adequate health and education services. Broad-based sustainable development is highly unlikely in countries such as Solomon Islands and PNG until the functioning of government improves. The importance of governance is not unknown to the Australian and New Zealand aid programmes. According to DFAT reporting 35 per cent of Australian aid to the Pacific in the 2016/17 financial year was devoted to improving governance and similar work.<sup>5</sup> The challenge for aid donors is that it often proves very hard to use aid to improve governance, which is primarily a product of countries' domestic political economies (Wood forthcoming).

This is not to say that aid cannot help in countries such as PNG and Solomon Islands. However, in these governance-challenged states the role of aid is complicated. Aid investments in infrastructure can assist with economic development, but history has shown that, when governance is an issue, recipient country governments are unlikely to maintain large infrastructure projects after completion (Dornan 2016). Because of this, as donors weigh-up the costs and benefits of such investments, they either need to plan for short term benefits or plan to fund maintenance themselves. Donors can also help promote human development through funding education and health facilities. As aid-funded reductions in malaria in Solomon Islands have shown (Burkot and Gilbert 2017), such work can deliver significant welfare gains. However, in poorly governed states supporting health and education services is not easy. Either a dysfunctional government has to be used to deliver services, or potentially costly parallel systems have to be set up as alternatives. Donors can also use aid to try and help improve governance itself. Yet, governance is, as I have already noted, not easy to improve through aid. It may be the case that the best donors can hope for is to help hold key institutions together with governance aid, and through that provide the space for domestically driven reform to emerge over coming decades.

Beyond aid, in poorly governed Pacific states such as PNG and Solomon Islands, countries such as Australia and New Zealand can help by ensuring that they are not contributing to problems through their own actions (Australia's relations with PNG and Nauru serve as partial examples of this), and that private sector firms from wealthier countries are similarly not adding to the stock of problems to be found (see, for example, Chandler 2018).

## Conclusion

No country in the Pacific is perfectly governed, but the difference between a country like PNG and a country like Kiribati is that improved governance is the only pathway to development for PNG. In Kiribati, on the other hand, better governance may bring some development dividends, but the most effective pathway to development will ultimately involve higher levels of migration, an option not available to PNG. Samoa, on the other hand, which has already benefitted from migration, but which also benefits from tourism and other ongoing ties with New Zealand, also benefits from better governance than PNG—Samoa is an

easier country to spend aid in. However, it is also a country that does not need nearly as much. Such is the diversity of the Pacific.

The Pacific is a region on a map, but within it are many different Pacifics. Decades of difference in development between different countries have made that clear. The task for politicians, academics and development practitioners is to make sure that they understand these differences, and that they deal with each country as its own unique entity.

## Notes

- 1 To be fair to Hughes and Reilly, both do distinguish to varying degrees between different countries in their papers. However, this is accompanied by very broad claims, particularly the headline claims.
- 2 GDP per capita is far from the only economic statistic that we should be interested in. Inequality, for example, is of crucial interest. Unfortunately, publicly available inequality data are scarce in the Pacific and come from often unreliable Household Income and Expenditure Surveys. In the online data linked to above I have made the inequality data that I have available. Once again inequality ranges considerably across Pacific countries. Perhaps unsurprisingly it is highest in PNG.
- 3 For an excellent discussion of variation in the quality of health data in the Pacific see Linhart et al. 2014.
- 4 Arguably this could be possible in Solomon Islands, as migration has played a non-trivial role in contributing to development in Fiji. However, levels of migration from Fiji have been very high, and this has been the case as a result of particular historical circumstances. It is hard to conceive of a process that might allow for similarly high levels of migration from Solomon Islands.
- 5 Data from: <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/2016-17-std-time-series-table-3-investment-priorities-by-region-of-benefit.xlsx>

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# 'Hybridity' in peacebuilding and development interventions

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## Hybridity—a well-travelled concept

'Hybridity' has become a prominent notion in the analysis of international peacekeeping and development. It has been used primarily as a lens to view and highlight the myriad interactions between diverse actors, institutions and normative systems in the contexts of specific interventions. Its analytical value in these settings has attracted both supporters and critics. Evaluating its merits and limitations across a range of different peacebuilding and development contexts is the subject of a new book published by ANU Press, *Hybridity on the Ground in Peacebuilding and Development: Critical Conversations* (Wallis, Kent, Forsyth, Dinnen and Bose 2018).

As a concept, hybridity has a long and varied pedigree. Used originally in the biological and zoological sciences to refer to the product resulting from the mixing of different elements, it was appropriated controversially in Victorian times by proponents of pseudoscientific theories of race. Since then the concept has appeared in different guises across a number of social sciences, including in explorations of identity, culture and aspects of political and economic development, particularly in postcolonial societies. Hybridity was deployed in postcolonial studies to highlight processes of interchange between colonial powers and colonised or subaltern subjects. Homi Bhabha, a leading postcolonial theorist, used the concept to challenge hegemonic depictions of colonial domination and emphasise agency and resistance on the part of subaltern subjects (Bhabha 1994). Other scholars in the postcolonial tradition have used the concept to examine how new transcultural forms emerged in the 'contact zone' between different social worlds created by colonialism (Ashcroft et al 2002).

One source of limitation in most postcolonial explorations of processes of transculturation was that they generally view hybridity as a condition confined to colonised subjects, with little effort to extend analysis to the hybrid responses of colonisers and their own institutions resulting from colonial encounters. An important exception to this neglect has been demonstrated in several fascinating studies of the hybrid character of health interventions in colonial settings, including in the Pacific, that document the complex and nuanced manner in which such interventions were mediated by culture and dynamic historical circumstances. As Stuart writes in her analysis of health work in the colonial South Pacific, hybridity:

has the potential to encompass and express the dynamism and multi-layered complexity of interactions and processes across a diverse region. It highlights juxtapositions and the way in which apparently-fixed entities actually comprise contradictory elements, and therefore contain an inherent tension and potential to re-form in unexpected ways (Stuart 2006:59).

As a way of denoting the processes and outcomes of interactions between different social and political orders in colonial and postcolonial settings, hybridity is a notion that has informed various fields of scholarship and policy engagement, even where the term itself is absent or another used. For example, the sub-field of 'legal pluralism' was developed by legal scholars and anthropologists to study encounters between different socio-legal orders resulting from historical processes of colonialism and globalisation (Merry 1988). The resulting hybrid legal forms remain significant sources of everyday social regulation and dispute resolution in many parts of the postcolonial world, including among Australia's Pacific island neighbours where the bulk of its aid engagement is directed, as well as among its own indigenous communities. The concept has also attracted interest among international relations scholars and those working in international development, particularly in respect of interventions in conflict affected areas and so-called 'fragile' states.

Introducing a hybridity lens to the field of conflict management challenges older Weberian ideals around the centrality of the state as the dominant and natural container for social, economic and political order. In de-centring the state, the concept draws attention to the significant role of informal institutions and non-state actors in many parts of the global south. In these contexts, the state is often only one institutional actor and source of authority and legitimacy among many others. Drawing on their fieldwork in conflict-affected parts of the Melanesian Pacific, as well as Timor-Leste, Boege et al coined the term 'hybrid political orders' to denote the messy and entangled configuration of institutions and value systems that provide the basis for social and political order in many postcolonial countries, reflecting the accumulated legacies of particular histories of colonialism and globalisation. In these 'hybrid political orders', they contend that:

diverse and competing authority structures, sets of rules, logics of order, and claims to power co-exist, overlap, interact, and intertwine, combining elements of introduced Western models of governance and elements stemming from local indigenous traditions of governance and politics. With further influences exerted by the forces of globalisation and associated societal fragmentation...In this environment 'the state' has no privileged monopolistic position as the only agency providing security, welfare and representation; it has to share authority, legitimacy, and capacity with other institutions (Boege, Brown & Clements 2009:17).

Although 'hybrid political order' is a relatively new term, observers of domestic politics in countries like Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have often remarked on a distinct style of 'Melanesian politics' or political culture that combines elements of 'modern' and

'traditional' forms of leadership (May 1982). Some have sought to shed light on the distributive aspects of contemporary patrimonial politics in terms of the enduring networks of social and material obligations that provide the basis of Melanesian sociality (Morgan 2005). The expression 'bigman politics', sometimes used to characterise political behaviour in these countries, conveys this sense of 'hybrid political order'.

### Hybridity as critique of Liberal Peace

A hybrid lens on the diffuse and socially embedded nature of political power and authority in postcolonial societies has resonated with aspects of the larger critique of post-Cold War liberal peace interventionism and its distinctly mixed results in many parts of the global south (Richmond 2011). In critiquing the externally-driven, top-down, and often highly technical orientation of these interventions and their blindness to the complex social and political realities of local settings, some critics have proposed the notion of 'hybrid peace' to capture the interactive aspects of such interventions as they play out in practice (Mac Ginty 2010). Rather than the neat and formulaic conception of peacebuilding found in many international policy prescriptions and assessments, applying a hybridity lens to these interventions helps to reveal the 'intertwined relationship between the global and the local, the formal and the informal and the liberal and the illiberal' in the actual practice on international peacebuilding on the ground (Björkdahl and Höglund 2013:293).

In highlighting dynamic interchanges across social and institutional spaces, the concept of hybridity can also challenge the deficit orientation of much of the policy and academic discourse around peacebuilding and development interventions with its characteristic emphasis on institutional dysfunction and collapse. This orientation, manifested most directly in labels such as 'fragility' or 'failure' applied to intervened states, often views local social or cultural practices, such as those associated with kinship, as obstacles to be overcome in the pursuit of linear trajectories of modernisation and economic growth (Brigg 2009). By contrast, a hybrid lens can draw attention to the strengths of these practices, as well as opening up alternative conceptions of 'development'. Instead of viewing the former as relics of a bygone past and a hindrance to individual and societal progress, it can raise the "positive potential of hybridity, generative processes, innovative adaptation and ingenuity" (Boege et al. 2008:16). In terms of development practice, this is also an argument for 'working with the grain' rather than ignoring or working against it.

As with postcolonial studies, hybridity as a lens on peacebuilding and development has helped shift our focus to the interface and exchanges between diverse actors and institutions in postcolonial contexts. This serves to underline the inherently dynamic, contested and uncertain character of peacebuilding and development processes. In highlighting the critical role of local agency in mediating these interventions and shaping their outcomes, hybridity also helps to question some of the more Eurocentric and linear assumptions underlying liberal interventionism. As Mac Ginty notes,

[r]ather than conceiving of a neat transmission chain, whereby ideas and practices are passed down from international and national elites, it is more accurate to conceive of a series of linkages transmitting ideas and practices in all directions (2012:5).

### Critiquing hybridity

The deployment of hybridity in critiquing liberal peace has, in turn, attracted its own sustained critique. One important strand of this highlights the paradoxical ways in which the concept of hybridity, in seeking to overcome binaries between categories, often simply ends up reinscribing them. Examples of these unhelpful binaries abound in both academic and policy discourses around interventions: 'global' versus 'local'; 'liberal' versus 'illiberal'; 'modern' versus 'traditional'; 'state' versus 'non-state'; 'formal' versus 'informal' and so on. While deeply ingrained in how we view and make sense of the world, these binaries inevitably oversimplify and homogenise more complex and dynamic realities.

By focusing on interfaces and interchanges, the hybrid lens directly confronts the problem of binaries. However, there has often been a tendency to homogenise broad categories such as the 'local', the 'global' or the 'international'. Viewing them as homogenous and discrete obscures the fluidity and diversity within each of these categories, as well as the overlap and intersections between them. As part of the so-called 'local turn' in peacebuilding scholarship (Leonardsson & Rudd 2015), the hybridity lens has helped move beyond the focus of mainstream international relations literature on the actions of elite actors and institutions. Instead it has drawn attention to the actions of those operating at the most local levels, including the role of village and 'traditional' leaders in places like Timor-Leste and the Pacific island countries. In these places, most people continue to live in rural communities and 'local' norms and practices, as adapted, continue to have a significant influence on everyday life. However, while generally welcoming a broadening of focus beyond elite level actors in peacebuilding interventions, critics have pointed to what they see as a tendency to romanticise local actors and practices, such as chiefs and 'traditional' forms of conflict resolution (Richmond 2011), downplaying power differentials based on gender, age, ethnic or other significant divisions.

Other binaries commonly found in this area, such as 'modern' vs 'traditional', prove similarly ephemeral under any kind of scrutiny. Anthropologists have long documented the inherently dynamic and adaptive qualities of local social forms and norms in their encounters with external forces and influences. Given the historical influences of colonialism and globalisation, 'local' actors are themselves the products of earlier processes of hybridisation. In this sense, the continuous interaction that characterises all forms of human and societal exchange renders everything 'hybrid'. Thus, while nuanced analyses seek to do justice to these complexities, contemporary usages of the term 'hybridity'—as accentuated by the limitations of our own vocabularies—often serve to inadvertently reinscribe the very binaries they are trying to unpack.

Another set of criticisms relate to the frameworks used to discuss hybridity in peacebuilding and development interventions. A common distinction is made between ‘descriptive’ and ‘prescriptive’ usages of hybridity. The former is primarily about illustrating ‘the mixing and melding of institutions, practices, rituals, and concepts generated through the interactions of coexisting, competing or complementary structures and norms’ in specific contexts (Millar 2014). It describes how hybridity comes about and what it looks like in different formulations or settings, as, for example, in the cases of ‘hybrid political orders’ (Boege et al 2009), ‘hybrid identities’ (Anthias 2001) and ‘hybrid economies’ (Altman 2009). Prescriptive accounts, on the other hand, look at how hybridity can be intentionally or purposefully designed into peacebuilding and development interventions in order to advance their goals and objectives. This might include, for example, the promotion of ‘hybrid courts’ that combine aspects of state courts administering state law with more locally-specific approaches to dispute resolution that draw on community or customary norms. Such courts, which represent a practical vehicle for engaging with legal pluralism, are, in fact, quite common in postcolonial societies where tribal forms and multiple normative orders persist, including in the south-west Pacific (Evans, Goddard & Paterson 2011). The appeal of prescriptive usages of hybridity has increased in development policy circles in recent times. This is evident in the rhetorical shift away from the former insistence on following ‘best international practice’ in processes of institutional transfer and development practice in favour of more flexible, problem-solving approaches (Andrews 2103). The World Bank, for example, has called for the adoption of ‘best fit’ approaches that might include drawing on what, in effect, would be hybrid, “combinations of state, private sector, faith based, traditional, and community structures for service delivery” (World Bank 2011:106).

Much of the criticism of prescriptive approaches relates to how hybrid institutions and practices can serve to mask significant underlying power differentials and dynamics that influences their operations. For example, there have been recurring criticisms of hybrid courts, such as PNG’s Village Courts, for ostensibly reinforcing the disadvantaged position of the most vulnerable local groups, notably women. These criticisms have, in turn, been contested on grounds that such outcomes often reflect the failure of state authorities to provide adequate oversight and regulation rather than being intrinsic to the hybrid character of such courts. Hybrid courts like PNG’s Village Courts have, in fact, proven to be remarkably adaptable and open to engagement and reform, as demonstrated, for example, by the significant increase in the number of women magistrates in recent years.

Others have warned that prescriptive hybridity can give license to intrusive forms of international intervention, including those that serve contentious political, economic, or, even, military agendas. Those looking for historical precedents need look no further than the system of indirect rule developed by the British as a key instrument of colonial domination. With limited resources to control widely

dispersed subject populations, the British, initially in their African possessions, sought to enlist the authority of traditional leaders and chiefs to advance and sustain the colonial order. A more contemporary example lies in the post 9/11 military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. These included attempts by occupying forces to deploy anthropologists and other ‘cultural experts’ to help navigate complex local social settings as part of their counter-insurgency strategies, igniting passionate debate about the ethics of such engagements (Forte 2007).

## Conclusions

The editors of the recently published *Hybridity on the Ground in Peacebuilding and Development* advocate a critical approach to hybridity that moves beyond the tendency to dismiss all forms of prescriptive hybridity as inherently problematic. There is nothing intrinsically good or bad about hybridity *per se*, with processes of hybridisation being universal and ongoing. Rather the key question to ask is who, or what, stands to benefit—or lose—from a particular invocation or application of the hybridity concept, or from a particular hybrid process or arrangement? A prescriptive approach which is sensitised to the underlying power dynamics, can potentially assist those seeking to solve a particular problem or bring about positive change or reform. While understandably cautious, this potential is increasingly acknowledged by many donors, civil society organisations and policy-makers. It is also important to see that purposeful hybridity is not exclusively the preserve of donors and other international actors. Throughout the Pacific island countries there are many examples of experimentation with hybrid forms of governance occurring at the most local levels, as well as other forms of problem-solving relying on hybrid arrangements (Allen et al 2013).

The deliberate attempt to overcome persistent and unhelpful binaries through hybridity’s focus on interactions and interchanges between different actors is a major source of the concept’s appeal, although the extent to which it succeeds in doing so remains open to question. Its emphasis on the role of local agency in mediating and shaping the outcomes of international peacebuilding and development interventions is another attraction. It also appears to lend itself to a more accurate and context-specific exploration of the interplay between social and institutional forms in ‘hybrid political orders’ and the messy and often unpredictable realities of international interventions and postcolonial state formation. That said, if the concept is used without sufficient attention to the power dynamics and conflictual elements in the specific context in question, it can ultimately serve to reproduce existing patterns of hierarchy, domination and prevailing relations of power.

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# When storytelling overcomes the myths of development

*Philippa Smales, RDI Network*

In her keynote address at the recent Rethinking Development Symposium<sup>1</sup> in Perth, Sisonke Msimang, Director of the Centre for Stories, detailed the importance of how we use stories and myths and even shared with us a few of her own. The point that stayed with me is most powerfully from what she shared was a critique of how we—as actors in the development sector—revere the ‘foundational myths’ of development, over and above the power of everyday stories of change.

If we can get beyond these and other entrenched myths that influence both our theory and programming in international development, we can prevent not only a simplistic telling of development narratives but also the perpetuation of poor practice. In her remarks, Sisonke suggested that to achieve this, we can start by shifting away from the large-scale, progress narratives and focus instead on the everyday stories of change. These smaller stories can supplement, interact with or even tear down the foundational myths.

Myths and storytelling are particularly powerful in the Pacific, and Sisonke’s words reminded me of another inspirational woman, that of Arieta Tegeilolo Talanoa Tora Rika—founder of Talanoa, an online platform for Pacific storytelling. Arieta is herself a writer and storyteller, and encourages the use of stories to empower people, to educate, and give people a voice.

Sisonke highlighted three foundational international development myths which I will endeavour to explain and unpack below using smaller stories and evidence of change in the Pacific.

## Myth number one

The first myth is that people in developing countries need development ‘betterment’, but is that the case? I look to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which, unlike the preceding Millennium Development Goals, apply to all countries. Development—and sustainability—is still needed everywhere. The United States is ranked in the top five for leaving people behind in terms of lack of access to family planning and for the lack of opportunity for women in public leadership (Kharas 2018). Australia was recently shamed as performing worst in the world for climate action under SDG 13, due to the fact that the SDG Index is now taking into account the ‘spillover’ effects that countries have on other nations’ ability to meet the SDGs (Thwaites 2018). Australia has negative spillover due to the carbon dioxide emissions embodied in fossil fuel exports, but internally we also rank the worst due to our emissions from how we generate our electricity and in the goods we consume—despite this Australia is still not taking deliberate action to address these issues (ibid).

On the other side of the coin there are things that ‘developing’ countries do much better than Australia. There are many stories of Pacific people who are championing the

fight against climate change and for more renewable energy. On the Talanoa website you can read of Meredani Koco, a teacher in a small Fijian community who heard of a regional environmental summit and decided to make the trip to be able to get up on the podium and tell her story (Talanoa 2017). From her, Fijian officials and others at the summit learnt first hand of the devastating impacts of climate change on Vunisavisavi. Since then the community have been utilising solar power and initiating small actions to assist in continuing the fight for the existence of their community.

Australia has a poor track record when it comes to renewable energy compared to some of our closest neighbours in the Pacific. With access to electricity being low and the cost being very high in the Solomon Islands, you would think they would resort to cheap high-energy sources (the argument for continued coal use in Australia). However, the Solomon Islands has 63 per cent for renewable energy share of total final energy consumption for 2017, compared to the 9.5 per cent for Australia according to the UN ESCAP country data sheets (ESCAP 2018). Tokelau, a small Pacific territory administered by New Zealand, has had over 100 per cent renewable energy since 2012, leading the rest of the world (ibid).

Tuvalu made a commitment under the *Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership*—which is aimed to a ‘new wave of climate leadership’ and to highlight the impact of climate change in the Pacific Ocean—to implement power generation of 100 per cent renewable energy (between 2013 and 2020). Part of the unfolding of this plan was the replacement of the mainly diesel power generators with solar on the eight main islands. Inspired by this commitment Motufoua Secondary School put in a proposal to a global sustainability competition for a bio-digester at the school and also to have a stand-alone solar system—which it won this year, meaning the school can have a steady source of renewable electricity (Fiji Sun 2018).

Every country still has some ‘developing’ to do, and we can learn from and assist each other in different ways. The SDGs are also known as the Global Goals—a universal call to action with the ethical imperative to leave no one behind. Some countries may lack the financial resources, or technology, or know-how required, they may also be experiencing humanitarian or man-made crisis which affects their ability to develop, and in those cases, they are unable to do it on their own and Australia has an imperative to assist. Countries in the Pacific are then using that assistance effectively and in innovative ways, especially when it comes to being sustainable in the long term.

## Myth number two

The second myth is that, in development, mistakes are at worst neutral (there are advantageous mistakes, which make



things better; neutral mistakes, which make no difference; and harmful mistakes, which make things worse). When dealing with problems that are deviant and complex, as development work is, circumstances will change and outcomes cannot always be predicted. Unfortunately, some mistakes will have worse consequences than others, and when dealing with situations of power inequality and vulnerability we cannot assume that mistakes are harmless.

The development sector is understandably nervous about admitting mistakes or faults, with some laudable exceptions such as Engineers Without Borders (EWB) failure reports (which EWB Canada has been publishing every year since 2002, and EWB Australia published a brief report on its website in 2015). In the humanitarian sector, the *Humanitarian & Disaster Management Capacity Development in the Pacific: Research Report* gave an honest assessment, including that unclear National Disaster Management Plans and the different needs assessment tools deployed by different NGOs—amongst other problems—led to assistance being sent to the wrong area (Centre for Humanitarian Leadership 2017:25).

There are also often mistakes made by inexperienced international development researchers and evaluators. Some of these have come to light during the Ethical Practice workshops run by RDI Network when participants are encouraged to share with each other examples of situations where inexperience or unclear policy lead to mistakes. Sometimes these could be neutral or just embarrassing, such as consent forms that are incorrectly translated. Others have the potential to be harmful, such as publishing quotes that are not anonymous as they have enough details (age, village, etc) that those in that community could potentially figure out who it is. If, for instance, those quotes were from women interviewed about witchcraft accusations in PNG, then such mistakes could be deadly.

Those of us in the development sector may carry good intentions, but this must extend to being willing to admit to and learn from each other's mistakes—we should not pretend we are perfect. We will ultimately benefit from telling more truthful and realistic stories, which deal with complexity and share with the intention of not repeating errors and bad judgement calls.

### Myth number three

The third and final myth we too often perpetuate is that programmes are developed to respond to local needs and problems. While this may be the stated aim, we cannot pretend it is always the reality. While NGOs or local authorities may have accurately assessed the need, too often they are unable to find the support for the appropriate solution and are forced to tweak their needs to match donor interests. Mission alignment has become an art form in itself in the realm of proposal writing. Due to the political hostility to the term climate change, for example, NGOs may play the language game and talk in their proposals about 'extreme weather' or 'changing weather patterns', and they have programmes focussed on adaption, rather than mitigation.

The 2014 *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development* design document outlines the rationale and strategy for the programme. It has a section on lessons learned from previous programmes and admits that 'the constant competition for funding and donor interest, has tended to drive women's organisations and groups into siloed and single-issue action (DFAT 2014:5). However, in the Design documents' guidance of country plan development, the advice for identifying activities does include considering the 'evidence of building on lessons learned, including learning from past mistakes', linking us back to the second myth above (ibid:106).

Frequently, the local need or problem can be difficult to accurately determine—we know that communities and social structures are complicated, and what people express as a need will depend on who you talk to, and how. It may even depend on who you are and who you represent. Is the problem the distance to the water source, the safety of the trip, the amount of water available, the animals accessing it, or what is going into it from upstream? All programmes need to be evidence-based, but the gathering of that evidence and stories needs careful considerations. We need to ensure we are constantly reflecting on how we are determining local needs, how these might be changing over time, and approaching programming with context-specific responses.

There is starting to be more of a focus now on human-centred design and participatory action research to ensure that development is responsive to needs. Human-centred design involves people in all steps, or at the centre of the development of solutions to problems. It is more common with NGOs who work in engineering and infrastructure. Participatory action research is not like other research methodologies that see people and communities as subjects to be studied and researched—they are not passive, but an integral part of development. The process emphasises local knowledge and understanding of the context, and builds the capacity of people to organise, to speak, to tell their stories, to determine their needs, and to determine what development frameworks will benefit or work for them and their situation.

Storytelling can also be an important form of evidence in evaluations, to show that programmes have been developed to, and are responding to, local needs and problems. Qualitative methods of monitoring and evaluation such as key informant interviews, focus groups, and most significant change, all involve encouraging and listening to stories to understand and show evidence of change.

Development is difficult, deviant, and complex work. All countries and communities are continuing to develop in different areas, be it in terms of sustainability or health outcomes. Mistakes can be made, but they are most harmful when they are not shared and we do not learn from them. Finally, we can continue to improve at ensuring that programmes and projects respond to local needs and incorporate the experience and knowledge of the local people. It is through the regular practice of storytelling that we truly build an understanding of development, with a multiplicity of shared experience allowing us space to understand, adapt, and improve our practice.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> For more information on the *Rethinking Development Symposium* see the RDI Network website and the report back from Kearrin Sims at <https://rdinetwork.org.au/news/pedagogy-in-practice-how-we-teach-and-learn-in-development-studies/>.

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## The 1991 review of the University of the South Pacific

*R Gerard Ward, Emeritus Professor, The Australian National University*

The University of the South Pacific (USP), founded in 1968, was unique in the world. The only comparable university was the University of the West Indies—also established to serve a variety of separated island states. The 12 countries then served by USP covered far greater land and sea areas than the entire West Indies. The University of the South Pacific's region of 328 inhabited islands has a land area of 62,496 square kilometres, spread over 13,550,000 square kilometres of ocean. These facts alone create unique issues for USP, its staff, students and management. In early 1991, for example, return air tickets between Suva and countries served by USP ranged between F300 and F1500 (AUD195–970). International telephone costs were about F1.60 (AUD1) per minute—so internal communications between staff and extension students could be costly—only diminishing with the development of the internet developed in later years.

Countries or island territories served by USP—such as Kiribati and Tuvalu—had limited upper secondary education and students needed pre-degree services from the university. The USP therefore had to provide foundation year pre-degree courses for students from a number of countries from the outset—although by 1991 USP decided to cease teaching pre-degree courses on its Suva campus after 1992. The 1.5 million people of USP's region speak 235 languages. Although English is the *lingua franca* for higher levels of education in most countries served by USP—levels of English comprehension between countries and amongst students remained problematic. A lack of tertiary education facilities in many Pacific Island countries (PICs) led to USP providing extension education from its early years. In 1991, these issues were major considerations for the review of USP—conducted after its first 23 years of operation.

The USP tried to ensure the quality of teaching and student results matched those of other universities in the Commonwealth—achieved in part by scholars from British, Australian and New Zealand universities serving as external examiners, and reviewers of specific departments or units. The review reports provided sound guidance to USP and reports made available to the 1991 Review Committee were of considerable assistance.

The review of USP in 1991 was established and funded by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC), London—with the three members of the Review Committee appointed by the CFTC—Professor Ungku Aziz, Chairman, (former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaysia), Dr Te'o I Fairbairn, (Economist, University of Newcastle, Australia) and Professor R Gerard Ward, (Director, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra). On 25 February 1991 the team began work in Suva and completed the review in Canberra early April 1991. During the review period the team was based on the USP Laucala Bay campus in Suva, with non-academic support provided by USP. One or more members of the review team visited six countries with USP students, and the entire team visited the Faculty of Agriculture campus at Alafua, Samoa. After interviewing over 170 people, members of the review team completed the *Report on the Review of the University of the South Pacific* at the Research School of Pacific Studies, ANU, Canberra, and promptly submitted the report to USP for consideration (Aziz et al. 1991).

Many features of USP made it unusual amongst universities in the broad Commonwealth of Nations—with students from a dozen countries and many more cultural groups. Many languages—or dialects—were spoken as mother tongues, but students had usually been educated at secondary school level in a different language—English. In the early years of USP, relatively few members of the academic staff were Pacific Island nationals. The proportion of Pacific Island staff grew rapidly once USP students began to graduate, with some joining USP staff. At

the time of the 1991 review, 47 per cent of USP academic staff members were from Fiji, 13 per cent from other Pacific Island countries and 40 per cent from countries outside the Pacific Islands—mainly New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom (Aziz et al. 1991). In 1991 the largest single group of academic staff were Fiji Indians—27.7 per cent—and the review considered that USP should seek to achieve ‘a harmonious balance of all the peoples of the region in the University... among the staff...[and] students’ (ibid:34).

Although USP serves many Pacific countries, and ‘is commonly regarded as a regional organization, it has no such legal status. It was established under Fijian law’ (Aziz et al. 1991:36). USP staff members who were not permanent residents of Fiji or—in the case of the Alafua agricultural campus of Samoa—did not enjoy benefits of those employed by other recognised regional organisations. The Review Committee considered such advantages would help recruitment and continued employment of valued staff. The review report therefore recommended that Council should ‘examine the legal status of the University, with the view to having it formally recognised as a regional institution’—recognition that would also benefit extension centres in countries other than Fiji (Aziz et al. 1991:37). Effective housing policies for staff would also assist these aims (ibid).

USP had two campuses at the time of the 1991 review—the main campus at Laucala in Suva, Fiji—on the former site of the Royal New Zealand Air Force flying boat base—and the School of Agriculture at Alafua campus in Apia, Samoa. Discussions were held at that time about establishing an Institute of Rural Development in Tonga and moving the Institute of Marine Resources to Honiara, Solomon Islands. The Review Committee heard opinions from people in other member countries of USP to establish general campuses in their countries—views not fully supported by the Review Committee.

The Review Committee did, however, believe USP’s extension service needed to be strengthened, with more senior staff and cooperation with existing on-campus schools. Each member country should have extension centres, and be required to conduct foundation courses—with dormitory facilities for students from distant islands in some centres. Teaching in foundation courses should emphasise English reading literacy, numeracy and the development of learning techniques. Teachers should use the high frequency radio available throughout the region and each centre should also provide broader intellectual stimulation for the wider community in their country. A Pacific law unit at Emalus campus in Port Vila, Vanuatu, did not provide ‘a qualification for people who would practise law’ but gave awarded diplomas for ‘basic knowledge law to public and private sector employees who must deal with legal issues in the course of their duties’. The Review Committee thought this education model could be adopted for other fields of study.

The Review Committee argued that USP’s extension service should be strengthened—given the title of School of Extension Education—and equipped with more senior staff. In-country centres should have better physical accommodation, equipment and library resources, including a

common set of reference materials relevant to the extension courses offered. Assistance to buy relevant books and other teaching materials should be provided to students at extension centres—a crucial need as a number of countries lacked bookshops. Extension centres should also conduct summer schools, with Suva-based staff expected to assist. The extension centres in member countries should become more important parts of USP than at the time of the 1991 review.

Scope for USP’s expertise being available for development studies for governments should also be encouraged—and could include facilitating use of the expertise of university staff in development aid activities of regional countries. Other recommendations included the upgrading of Pacific Island studies with a School of Pacific Island Studies established to specialise in teaching and research of many neglected areas of South Pacific life. The USP library should be declared by all member countries to be a deposit library for any books published in the region. Libraries in extension centres outside Fiji also needed strengthening for use by external students.

The Review Committee found relatively low research output by academic staff. Some staff argued this low output was due to high teaching loads, but the committee report noted:

sufficient examples of [academic] people...with high course loads...perform very well in research and publication to suggest that this is not the main cause of low research output’ (Aziz et al. 1991:30–31).

Some staff exaggerated their teaching load, to possibly justify their lack of research publications. A senior lecturer in a USP survey conducted in 1990, ‘described by his head of department as “hard-working”’, claimed 672 lecture contact hours, 336 tutorial hours and 246 laboratory/workshop hours, or 90 hours of formal classroom contact per week in the second semester of 1990! This did not include the 33 hours per week listed for marking, coordinating and other teaching related activities. This would have left only six hours per day, seven days per week, for eating, sleeping and all other activity. (ibid:29).

The Review Committee also suggested that USP needed to give more emphasis to research results and publications in its reports to Council and member countries, and generally provide more encouragement and financial and other support to research activity. Greater involvement in research obviously required additional funds—member countries and major donors such as Australia, New Zealand, and United Kingdom would need to contribute.

Although aspects of student life were not strictly within the Review Committee’s brief, the committee investigated issues ‘which appear to have a direct bearing on the academic success of University students’ (Aziz et al. 1991:75). The review recommended more student contact with the Vice-Chancellor and senior administrators, and strengthening the student ‘Counselling Service’. All students should have advisory tutors, not necessarily be one of their current lecturers. The review also recommended USP consider adding a ‘multi-purpose indoor complex for social and recreational use and seek...funding for this’—although

students were active in sporting activities, and there were already a number of sports facilities (Aziz et al.1991:78).

For members of the Review Committee, with our different backgrounds, the experience of working as a group on this study was satisfying. To be able to visit so many island countries for a common purpose was enlightening and educational. We were able to complete the study on time, indicating good teamwork and leadership by the Chairman—for whom the Pacific Islands were a new region. The review team had humorous moments, one example relating to cuisine. Before the committee met, Professor Ungku Aziz sought advice on the Pacific region from the author's wife—Dr Marion Ward—then working on an urban development consultancy in Malaya. As Professor Aziz was a gourmet, one of the many questions he asked was about the food in the Pacific Islands. Dr Ward was correct to be cautious in her response to this, but Professor Aziz's interest meant the Review Committee ate at good restaurants when they could be found. Fairbairn and Ward learnt Professor Aziz often judged a restaurant's quality by the flavour of its *crème brûlée*—one of us since adopting this policy!

In 2018—50 years since USP was established—USP has developed much more since 1991. In 2016 USP had a total of 25,581 students, and was predicted to have a total staff of 1,682 staff by 2018—446 academics, and 242 professional staff. These staff worked on the main Laucala Bay campus, at the Alafua Agricultural campus, Samoa, the Emalus law campus in Vanuatu and centres in the other nine member countries. In 2017, a new campus was opened in the Marshall Islands, one is under construction in the Solomon Islands, and major renovations have been completed in the Cook Islands centre, with more to occur in centres in Tonga and Tuvalu. The current time is therefore one of considerable development, with extension of fibre-optic cable links to centres in the Marshall Islands and Tonga, and the expectation of such links to Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue, Nauru and Kiribati to greatly improve student access to on-line learning.

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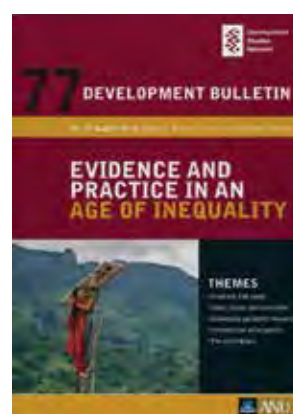
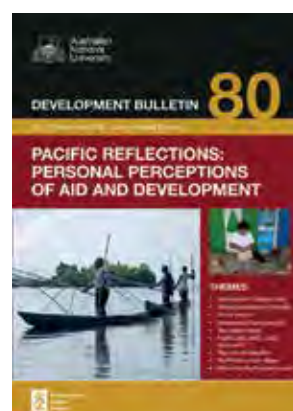
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