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*Governance in the Pacific: politics and
policy in Tuvalu*

Tauaasa Taafaki and Janaline Oh

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South Pacific

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The views expressed in this working paper are those of the authors and not necessarily those of their respective affiliations.

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***G*overnance in the Pacific: politics and policy success in Tuvalu**

*p*reface

Between July and October 1995, the National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University conducted a pilot study of governance in Tuvalu in order to assess the value of further studies in the Pacific. The study analysed the political, social and cultural context in which policies are made and implemented in Tuvalu, and examined the conditions contributing to successful policy. An aid donor's concept of success may be quite different to that of a recipient government's, which may be different again to that of beneficiary villagers and townspeople. The Tuvalu pilot study takes three concepts of governance—the capacity of governments to carry out desired tasks, the role of democracy and popular involvement in policy and implementation, and state coordination with non-government actors such as the private sector and community-based organisations—as conceptual lenses through which to examine the conditions contributing to successful policy design and implementation. Each lens highlights particular aspects of planning and implementation and in combination they provide an overview of what makes a policy successful. Tauaasa Taafaki is responsible for the first section of the study, and Janaline Oh wrote the second section. We are grateful to the Australian Agency for International Development and the New Zealand Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade for funding this pilot project, and to the people of Tuvalu who spared the time to come to the workshop and be interviewed. We hope this pilot study will be only the first in a series of similar studies of governance in Pacific islands countries.

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Summary



Political and policy processes

Organisation

Tuvalu has a modified Westminster system of ministerial government, governed by a written constitution. The Queen of England is the Head of State, represented by a Tuvaluan Governor-General, appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is elected by a 12 member parliament, and advises the Governor-General on appointments to Cabinet and the Speakership.

Tuvalu has no organised political parties. Individual qualities and personal and community relationships are the main determinants in elections, reflecting Tuvalu's small size and close society. Island concerns dominate parliamentary debate. There are eight electoral districts in Tuvalu, of which four return one member and four return two. Since independence in 1978, parliament has operated on a majority of seven for the government and five in the opposition. Regionalism, particularly a balance between northern and southern islands, is important in Cabinet appointments and in the appointment of the Governor-General. Regionalism is not, however, apparent in policymaking once the government is formed.

The majority of Tuvaluans is now represented by government rather than opposition members, explaining some of the controversial decisions taken by the present government, such as changing the national flag, moves towards republicanism and the removal of the Governor-General in 1994.

Accountability

Tuvalu has legal provision for an Auditor-General's office and ministerial accountability to parliament. Draft legislation must also be referred to island communities between the first and second reading. The draft bills go to the island councils (local government authority) and the *maneapa* (traditional system of governance) where amendments can be proposed. The institutional mechanisms for accountability, however, are weak in Tuvalu. Parliament meets only two or three times a year for only five days at a time. Subsidiary legislation or regulations, which can be passed by ministers, must go to parliament only after its passage and significant time

lags. Island authorities have the legal powers to change legislation, but draft bills are written in legal English and are difficult for community leaders to understand. Radio Tuvalu, the only public media organisation in the country, is government owned and lacks investigative reporters. It is also subject to censorship. The Auditor-General's Office lacks qualified staff, ministers often fail to take their inquiries seriously and individual auditors are sometimes unable to report objectively without intimidation.

As well as its domestic accountability mechanisms, the Tuvalu government is accountable to aid donors. Tuvalu is heavily aid dependent and much administrative effort is expended in accounting for the effective disbursement of funds.

In contrast to formal mechanisms for accountability, informal means are very strong in Tuvalu, reflecting its small size. The *maneapa* system, the Tuvalu Christian Church and other pressure groups are well organised and able to articulate their concerns to government. Prior to any sitting, parliamentarians consult their *maneapa* to see if they want any issues raised. After each sitting, parliamentarians report back to the *maneapa*. Tuvaluan politicians are more directly accountable to their electorates than their counterparts in many other countries.

Reciprocity is another form of accountability. In return for voting someone into office, the electorate expects government contracts, appointments to statutory boards, or civil service jobs. While this may in some countries be seen as bordering on corruption, Tuvaluan politicians view it as a traditional obligation, and corruption is not widely seen as a problem.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy for the political leadership is derived from the ballot box, enhanced by education, civil service experience, personal achievements and traditional status. The most powerful source of legitimacy, however, is the ability to keep up traditional and community obligations. This includes participating in island projects and community activities, and contributing financially to the community fund (which is completely separate from local government monies). The traditional leadership, as represented in the *maneapa* system, has no legal status but exerts considerable authority and influence over policy decisions.

Administration

The Constitution of Tuvalu provides for a neutral and independent civil service, headed by a secretary to government and permanent secretaries to each ministry. The civil service provides policy advice and implements government decisions. In practice, civil servants are involved in political and policy decisions. Ministers often attempt to run their ministries as if they were the permanent secretary and intervene in policy implementation, especially where resources are distributed or beneficiaries chosen. Permanent secretaries sometimes find themselves acting as private secretaries, drafting

speeches for private functions, or writing Christmas cards on behalf of the minister. This practice has resulted in some permanent secretaries being labelled cronies of a particular government and hence being victimised under subsequent governments.

An important mechanism in the administrative system is the Development Coordinating Committee, consisting of all permanent secretaries and chaired by the Secretary to Government. The Secretary to Government is an *ex officio* member of Cabinet and provides a link between the civil service and the political leadership. The Development Coordinating Committee is responsible for screening government projects prior to submission to Cabinet and for formulating national development plans.

Societal actors

There are powerful non-government actors in Tuvalu who often involve themselves in policy. Societal actors include

- pastors of the *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu* (Tuvalu Christian Church), whose traditional authority derives from the first missionaries
- the *maneapa* system, which dominates island politics and influences electoral results
- friends of political leaders, who can include traditional healers, friends or relatives
- spouses of ministers, who are responsible for ceremonial functions and traditional gift giving
- the National Council of Women, which claims a membership of around 90 per cent of Tuvaluan women and is strongly represented in Funafuti
- the small private sector, represented by the Chamber of Commerce, which was involved in the preparation of the current national development plan.

External actors

A small open economy with a heavy dependence on foreign aid is also heavily influenced by external actors. The most important of these are bilateral aid donors, regional organisations, merchant shipowners and the International Transport Federation which employs over 400 Tuvaluans, and the Nauru Phosphate Corporation which employs around 300 Tuvaluans.

Official aid donors have considerable influence over policies in Tuvalu, reflecting the size of the economy. Donor choices of projects and rules of aid delivery have a disproportionate impact on the Tuvaluan economy and government policy. Capital projects can have significant consequences for future recurrent budgets and donor preferences for certain types of projects can make it difficult for the Tuvalu government to fund its own priorities.

Conditions for success in policy implementation

Programs are likely to succeed if they

- have broad community support
- have immediate and tangible benefits
- benefit a broader range of people than originally intended
- are consistent with traditional culture
- do not require significant changes in behaviour
- develop existing skills to a higher level
- develop better community or group relations
- motivate innovation
- use readily available materials.

Capacity

Improvements in non-government capacity can improve government capacity if they reduce reliance on government services or resources or create community organisations capable of carrying out some government functions. Projects that contribute to government and local capacity are seen as beneficial. Projects that minimise demands on existing capacity or enhance existing skills are more likely to succeed and where financial capacity is sufficient, technical expertise can be brought in to compensate for domestic skills deficits.

Democracy

The demand for popular participation in government policies and projects is affected by the government's relatively direct accountability to the people. It is also affected by traditional social structures, where important decisions are referred to the traditional leadership in a hierarchical system. As long as the objectives are broadly acceptable, there is little demand for community participation in setting objectives or planning of projects, but at the community level there is a strong demand for participation in the actual implementation of a project. Macroeconomic policy does not generate strong demands for popular participation and if the project addresses a basic need, demands for democracy may take a lower priority than completion of the project.

Coordination

Tuvalu has an active and well organised civil society. The church, the *maneapa* and women's organisations are able to mobilise significant community resources for their own projects and their support is seen as crucial for the success of other projects. These organisations are close to their communities and well placed to design implementation strategies for projects that take into account particular local conditions or customs. Coordination with influential societal actors is particularly important where behavioural change is required.

Conclusions

Tuvalu's particular conditions of governance lead to some conclusions

- its size has led to a very direct form of democracy, where even the Prime Minister is readily accessible and everyone is well informed of government activity
- the poor natural environment has led to a tradition of careful resource management
- its size and poor natural endowment make it heavily aid dependent, and magnify the impact of donor policies on Tuvalu government policies and the needs for the Tuvalu government to negotiate effectively with donor countries and institutions
- hierarchical social structures have led to considerable traditional authority being vested in the *maneapa* and the church
- conservative social structures make change-oriented policies difficult to implement without the support of an influential local organisation such as the Church, the *maneapa* or women's groups.

Political and policy processes

Political leadership

Organisation

The Constitution of Tuvalu provides for a modified Westminster government. The Head of State is the Queen in the United Kingdom who is represented by a Governor-General. The Prime Minister is elected by parliament. Cabinet ministers and the Speaker of parliament are appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister. There are five ministers including the Prime Minister in the Cabinet, and there are six ministries. The Constitution provides for the separation of powers between the legislature (parliament), the executive (Cabinet) and the judiciary.

Political leadership in Tuvalu is loosely organised. There are no formal political parties and voters are strongly influenced by family, personal and community relationships as well as candidates' education, achievements and personal conduct partly reflecting the small population and close Tuvaluan society. Individual island concerns predominate parliamentary debate rather than issues of national interest.

There are eight electoral districts in Tuvalu, four of which return two members each with the remaining districts returning one member each. Intense competition and rivalry among informal factions seeking to form a majority is common. Since independence in 1978, the government has comprised a majority of seven seats with the remaining five members forming the unofficial opposition. Caucusing often takes place among individual contenders prior to an election.

In selecting members of the government, the aspiring Prime Minister takes into consideration the four districts that return two members and tries to win the support of at least one of the two members. Two of the districts returning two members are from the north while the other two are from the south. In a 12-member parliament, the support of the eight members from the two-member districts automatically provides a majority as well as regional balance. Winning the support of only one of the two members still delivers a political advantage, but can cause disunity in the relevant constituency.

Tuvaluans are increasingly conscious of regional balance in the two most senior positions in the country—the Prime Minister and the Governor-General. All four of Tuvalu's Prime Ministers since independence have come from the southern islands. While the post of Prime Minister is mainly won through skilful political manoeuvres and the popularity of the individual, the same cannot be said for the Governor-General who is an appointee. It is crucial, therefore, that the Prime Minister and Cabinet take regional balance into account for the appointment of the Governor-General. Hence, of

the five Tuvaluan Governors-General only one came from the southern islands. In policymaking, the pressure for equal regional representation does not always surface clearly although the Prime Minister will seek balance by appointing ministers from the northern islands.

If the government is loosely organised, the opposition is merely disorganised. In June 1994 the Governor-General, appointed by a previous government, was removed by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. The opposition was so absorbed in this issue that its members were ineffective in their parliamentary duties. The opposition walked out in protest during the 1994 Budget session, thereby denying their electorates representation. The Budget is the main instrument through which government policies are transmitted and in the absence of opposition members the 1995 Budget was passed in a record time of 15 minutes.

The current opposition is comprised of a former Prime Minister, two former Cabinet ministers and two other members. One of the former Cabinet ministers is from the same constituency as the present Prime Minister and this has weakened the opposition's political tactics. Two opposition members are from the same island and the remaining two hail from single-seat constituencies. The majority of the population is thus represented by government members. This enabled some of the government's controversial decisions such as the changing of the country's flag, the move for republicanism and the removal of the Governor-General in 1994.

Accountability

Accountability mechanisms are found in the Constitution, government procedures and many laws. For example, the Constitution and Tuvalu Parliamentary Rules of Procedure require that certain policies be presented to parliament.

Formal mechanisms for accountability, however, are generally weak or inconsistently applied. Radio Tuvalu is government owned and is the only public media organisation in the country. Despite numerous training courses, Radio Tuvalu still lacks the capacity to conduct in-depth investigative reporting and adverse reporting on government is ruthlessly censored.

Ministers can pass subsidiary legislation, which does not have to be presented to parliament until the session following its passage. As a result, an opposition member cannot raise queries on subsidiary laws until two parliamentary sessions after the law has been presented.

Ministers and parliament are accountable to the electorate and all proposed legislation has to be referred to the islands after the first reading in parliament. Draft bills are tabled for discussion at the Island Council and the *maneapa* who can propose amendments. Most of these bills, however, are not only written in English but also in

legal language. Community leaders therefore often find it difficult to understand the proposed legislation. The acceptance of proposed bills by island communities, as is usually the case, should never be construed as total approval.

As well as being accountable to parliament and the electorate, government is financially answerable to the Office of the Auditor-General. To ensure that parliament has direct access to the reports of the Auditor-General, they are submitted directly to the Speaker's Office. The audit office has provided a mechanism for financial accountability by reporting misuse of public funds. There are, however, major problems with the audit reports. First, a shortage of qualified staff in the audit office affects the quality of the audit work. Second, there is a tendency for ministers and senior bureaucrats not to take audit queries seriously. Third, auditors are often unable to report objectively without fear of intimidation. In a small society such as Tuvalu where the importance of personal relationships is magnified, maintaining professional independence can be very difficult.

Except for its extraordinarily prompt passage in 1994, the Budget is usually actively scrutinised in parliament. Parliamentarians speak broadly about the economy and put forward their views on where Tuvalu's economy is heading. The opposition uses the occasion to criticise the government's policies, even if they are similar to the opposition's recommendations.

The government is also accountable to aid donors. Tuvalu depends heavily on donor assistance for capital formation. Aid requirements are complex and baffling for small administrations like Tuvalu and this is compounded by the fact that different donors have different rules and the civil service lacks the capacity to meet donor requirements. Accountability to the donor community is crucial as it can affect the level of future assistance.

The smallness of Tuvaluan society provides an informal mechanism for accountability. The *maneapa* system, the Church and other influential pressure groups such as the National Council of Women and the Chamber of Commerce do not hesitate to raise issues of concern to parliamentarians and the government. Prior to any sitting, parliamentarians are obliged to visit their constituencies and ask traditional leaders if there are any issues that need to be raised in parliament.

The Tuvalu tradition of reciprocity can provide an effective measure of accountability. It is important for the political survival of leaders to provide employment opportunities for their constituents. This may take the form of contracts for government projects, appointments to the board of statutory bodies, or in some cases, influencing appointments to the civil service. In some countries, these actions may be considered as bordering on corruption. Tuvalu politicians, however, view these actions as a form of accountability to their electorate. It is a facet of Tuvaluan reciprocity, a custom that

is still very strongly practised, and corruption is not seen as a significant problem in Tuvalu.

Legitimacy

The political leadership derives its legitimacy primarily from the ballot box. There are, however, several other factors contributing to legitimacy such as personal status, education, experience in the civil service and, most importantly, the ability to meet community obligations.

Experience in the civil service has helped candidates to upgrade their community status and to bolster their success in elections. Of the 31 politicians that have served in parliament, only two have not been civil servants. Those who were civil servants usually held very senior positions—eight were permanent secretaries and the others were mostly division heads.

Education is another important source of legitimacy. All of Tuvalu's past and present politicians either completed education overseas or attended training programs in overseas institutions.

The most powerful source of legitimacy, however, is the ability to keep up with island commitments and obligations. This involves participating in island projects and community activities, and contributing financially to the community fund. Parliamentarians are installed by the electorate and the job is therefore seen as belonging to the people. The electorate requires traditional obligations to be met before anyone can put their name forward for election. Although the *maneapa* has no legal standing under Tuvalu law, traditional leaders exercise great influence on policy decisions including whom their elected representative should side with in the formation of a government. In this way, Tuvaluan politicians are much more accountable to, and representative of, the people.

The administration

The public service is headed by the Secretary to Government and seven permanent secretaries—six ministries and the Tuvalu embassy located in Fiji. A public service is provided for in the Constitution which specifies certain senior positions. Constitutionally, the civil service is neutral and independent, with an implementation and advisory role. In practice, however, civil servants are involved in policy and political decisions, and in this sense form part of the informal political leadership.

Both politicians and bureaucrats are involved in the formulation and adoption of policies in Tuvalu. Most ministers are former senior civil servants and sometimes try to run ministries as if they were still civil servants. This can stifle civil servants' proposals

and create artificial vacuums especially where the public service has changed since the minister was a civil servant.

Financial regulations nominate the secretary to a ministry as the ministry's chief accounting officer, responsible for the preparation of budget estimates, control of expenditure and any other financial responsibilities. When required, the secretary must appear in person before the Public Accounts Committee. In practice, the secretary's authority may be over-ridden by the minister—even when funds are low or non-existent or when external funding may be found. Even when ministers are clearly responsible for unsound expenditure decisions, they are rarely blamed because the secretary is ultimately responsible under the financial regulations. As it is the civil servants who appear before the Public Accounts Committee, they must look for ways to repair the situation.

Responsibility for the implementation of policies rests with the public service. Ministers, however, often intervene especially in the distribution of resources or in the choice of intended beneficiaries. Confidence and trust between civil servants and ministers is important due to the smallness of the bureaucracy. A permanent secretary has to be skilful in handling his or her minister, especially in making the minister understand and accept established structures, means and approaches.

There is often confusion over the role of the secretary as the administrative head of the ministry, with ministers sometimes using their secretaries as private secretaries or political speech writers. Secretaries often find themselves organising Christmas greeting cards for supporters or drafting speeches for private functions. The extent to which this occurs depends on the individual in question, and on specific circumstances. Confusion over the secretary's role, however, has resulted in them being identified with a particular government and therefore subject to political victimisation when a new government comes into power.

An important mechanism for administrative coordination is the Development Coordinating Committee comprised of all secretaries and permanently chaired by the Secretary to Government. Since independence, the Development Coordinating Committee has been concerned with the approval of government projects and specifically the formulation of national development plans. Its primary purpose is to ensure that government policy reflects the political will of Cabinet and parliament while improving service delivery and implementation of these policies. The recent pressure to review the Development Coordinating Committee's role came from two sources. Some ministers saw the Committee as threatening to take over matters that ought to be decided by the minister or Cabinet. This led to an increasing reluctance on the part of ministers to release their secretaries for Committee meetings. Second, the government has recently adopted a National Development Strategy, locally known as *Te Kakéega*, for the period 1995 to 1998. Development Coordinating Committee members

felt it necessary to redefine the Committee's role so that it could meet the challenges agreed to and presented in *Te Kakéga*. Most importantly, the Development Coordinating Committee reaffirmed its role to assist and advise Cabinet on national programs, strategies and priorities, consistent with Cabinet's own objectives.

Societal actors

Political leadership in Tuvalu can also include some informal, but powerful, players. The pastors of the *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu* (Tuvalu Christian Church) play a very influential role in the political scene. Just under 90 per cent of the Tuvaluan population are members of *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu* and pastors often use this to exert political influence on public policies. Politicians also use the power of Church numbers for political advantage.

The pastors' influence is derived from the chiefs giving up their all-knowing and sacred position and bestowing it on the missionaries who first came to the islands. Many Tuvaluans believed that submission to the wishes of missionaries would enhance their spiritual endowment in the afterlife, a belief that is manifested in the high level of personal contributions and tithes the Tuvalu Christian Church and its pastors receive from its members.

Traditional leaders also play an important role in the informal political leadership. Traditional leaders include the *aliki* (chiefs), *toeaina* (elders) and the *maneapa* system. The *maneapa* system exercises a powerful role in the political lives of Tuvaluans. It dominates political and policy processes at the island level and has considerable influence over how formal leadership behaves and acts. No formal leader can survive for long without the support and assistance of the *maneapa* system. Similarly, the chiefs are only as effective as the support and assistance rendered to them by the island elders.

Informal political actors include 'friends' of formal leaders. While many of these people have no official position or status they can be very powerful in the political and policy processes. They include traditional massage therapists, witch doctors, friends or relatives. It is not uncommon for policy issues to be discussed among politicians and their friends, or for certain decisions to be seriously affected by a friend's advice.

Another important actor, and one that is often neglected, is the spouse of a political leader, especially of a Cabinet minister. A minister's spouse, as his or her constant companion in a traditionally intimate and small community, plays an important part in the political life and decision-making of the formal leadership. The spouse is heavily involved in ceremonial functions, always at the forefront of traditional entertainment and hospitality activities. They must be seen as generous, donating gifts and welcoming people especially those from the minister's constituency. Personality is an important

factor by which Tuvaluans judge whether or not people should be elected to the formal leadership and an essential personal quality for the spouse is magnanimity. Once leaders have been elected, their spouse's involvement in traditional activities and personal relations with the community is an important determinant in whether the leaders are returned in the next election.

A powerful component of Tuvalu society is women's organisations and the elaborate networks they have established for themselves. The National Council of Women claims a membership of around 90 per cent of Tuvaluan women and has a strong and regionally balanced representation in Funafuti. The government is aware of the importance of women and has pledged in *Te Kakéega* to ensure that women are able to participate fully in all facets of the development process.

In 1989, the Tuvalu parliament had its first (and to date, only) woman member, who was appointed a Cabinet minister. In 1993, she retained her seat after the general election but chose to serve from the backbench. Other influential women can be found in official committees of non-government organisations such as the Tuvalu Red Cross, the National Council of Women and the Tuvalu Family Health Association.

The Chamber of Commerce is becoming increasingly influential. With an aim to develop the private sector, there is evidence of closer consultations between the government and the private sector. For example, when the government was preparing *Te Kakéega*, the Chamber of Commerce and individual representatives from the private sector were heavily involved.

External actors

The most important external actors in Tuvalu are foreign governments and donor organisations. The foreign governments most important to Tuvalu are Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Taiwan (which Tuvalu recognises). Donor organisations include the Asian Development Bank, European Union, United Nations Development Programme, World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund and various South Pacific regional organisations such as the Forum Secretariat, Forum Fisheries Agency, the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program and the South Pacific Commission.

Over 400 Tuvaluans are employed in overseas merchant ships and the policies of the shipowners and the International Transport Federation have a significant impact in Tuvalu. Similarly, the policies of the Nauru Phosphate Corporation, which employs 300 Tuvaluans, can affect government policies.

Official aid donors wield considerable influence over political and development policies in Tuvalu. Donors have their own agenda and rules for aid delivery, including the choice of sector and project, and implementation, finance and administration.

Meanwhile, recipient countries have their own individual requirements. Tuvalu has its unique circumstances and needs, and donor policies have often resulted in inappropriate equipment and infrastructure. For example, fisheries boats were externally provided but grossly under-utilised because of institutional confusion over their appropriateness, management and use.

Donor fashions, for certain sectors for instance, also pose difficulties in Tuvalu's development aspirations. The Tuvalu government has found it exceedingly difficult to justify projects outside the ambit of donor preferences. Tuvalu has a balance of nearly US\$1 million under the United Nations Development Programme country programs that could be usefully employed in projects. The donor cannot assist, however, because the current fashion of 'sustainable human resource development' confines it to the provision of technical assistance. As a result, the Tuvalu government cannot use the funds, for example, to improve primary school classrooms.

One of the greatest preoccupations of senior bureaucrats in Tuvalu is to service the needs of visiting aid officials. There is no substitute for face-to-face dialogue with donors. The increasingly frequent visits of aid officials aggravated by absences of Tuvalu officials, however, requires more efficient management of donors by the Tuvalu government.

Conditions for successful policy implementation

There is a considerable body of literature on the reasons for developing country policy failures (World Bank 1993; Grindle and Thomas 1991). There is less information on how things work and what makes for successful policy, although recent work has examined governance issues behind national economic policy reform efforts (Bates and Krueger 1993; Williamson 1993).

Success and failure are concepts influenced by politics, ideology and culture. The success of a project can be measured in several ways depending on the assessor's values, priorities, position and role in the project (Cleaves 1980). While use of quantitative measures such as economic internal rates of return or changes in social indicators are informative, the perceptions of beneficiaries are also important and can determine a project's sustainability. Beneficiaries' perceptions are also important in the design and implementation of subsequent projects. If beneficiaries do not perceive a project as successful, they are unlikely to facilitate, and may actively oppose, the implementation of a similar project, or one initiated by the same source.

Three types of governance

Lamour (1995) identified three aspects of governance, some or all of which are assumed to be lacking in developing countries. This paper examines each of these theories of governance against local perceptions of success in projects and policies in Tuvalu. The models can be thought of as lenses through which to view the information from the workshop and interviews held in Tuvalu, with each lens highlighting a different aspect of governance. Each of the lenses—capacity, democracy and coordination—gives an incomplete picture and must be used with the others to provide a full picture.

The conditions identified by participants at the workshop as contributing to the success of projects (Box 1) can be couched in the language of governance theory. Community capacity is enhanced by projects that have immediate and tangible benefits, develop existing skills and motivate innovation, while use of readily available materials places only moderate demands on existing capacity. Democracy requires broad community support for projects, implying consultation and community participation in their planning and implementation. Projects that benefit more people than originally targeted can be said to enhance the equitable distribution of benefits inherent in the ideals of democracy. Finally, projects that involve and link local-level institutions improve coordination between and among state and non-state actors.

Success relating to consistency with traditional culture and changes in behaviour fit less easily into governance theory. They take us beyond a static analysis of the existing political and social environment to an examination of how that environment can be changed.

Box 1 What makes a project successful?

The Funafuti workshop participants identified a list of conditions that contributed to the successful implementation of policies and programs

- broad community support
- immediate and tangible benefits
- benefiting a broader range of people than originally intended
- consistent with traditional culture
- requiring insignificant changes in behaviour
- developing existing skills to a higher level
- developing better community or group relations
- motivating innovation
- using readily available materials.

Capacity

Governments of developing countries are often assumed to lack the ability to formulate and implement policy due to limited financial resources, shortages of skilled personnel and a lack of technical equipment and expertise. It also refers to perceived weaknesses in government capacity to implement programs or enforce policies, especially outside the national capital. Decentralisation policies, pursued in many developing countries, can be seen to strengthen and broaden government capacity by devolving resources and control over policy implementation to locally based authorities. This is likely if formal (legal) or informal (traditional) governing authorities are strong at a local level, and where there are communication difficulties between the centre and outlying regions (Migdal 1988). Conversely, decentralisation can be seen to weaken capacity by creating local bureaucracies that compete with central agencies for funding and control. Grindle (1980) notes that decentralisation can work for central governments if control over the boundaries of policy objectives and structures are retained at the centre.

Devolution of project implementation to the local level appears to have been important in two successful projects. The nutrition project targeted island community leaders for special awareness workshops and encouraged them to organise programs for their own communities. The project also used island-based civil servants to provide continuing support for the project in the islands. Tuvaluan respondents credited these measures with a greater acceptance of vegetables in island diets. The Council of Women's handicraft centre is a non-government project, but one that could provide lessons for government projects at a community level. The Council has devolved control of the island handicraft centres to the respective island councils while retaining control over the policy functions of audit, price-setting and management of orders. The

devolution of day-to-day management to the island women, supported by technical assistance from the capital, appears to have led to improved quality and regularity of service. Given the transportation difficulties between islands in Tuvalu (there is only one boat providing a regular inter-island service), devolution of management to island-based authorities is essential to the successful functioning of any program.

The Tuvalu government is examining issues of decentralisation in its review of local government. The People's Congress for Local Government Reforms, held in March 1995 as part of a nationwide consultative process, recommended significant devolution of control over island administration and resources to local authorities (Ministry of Home Affairs 1995). Devolution could improve the local capacity to implement development programs and could also lead to a rationalisation of overall government capacity if accompanied by a reduction of administrative staff and resources in the capital. That is, human and financial resources are transferred from, rather than added to, the government.

The enhancement of local financial, technical and human capacity was considered essential for a program's success by participants in the workshop. Every individual listed income generation—or at least tangible benefit—as a necessary component of a successful project. At the project level, the women's handicraft centre was considered to be successful largely because it generated income—thus increasing individual financial capacity—and because it enhanced skills. Development of local, non-government capacity does not necessarily improve government capacity, particularly if it involves diversion of government resources.

The proposition that programs that limit demands on existing capacity will be more likely to succeed than those requiring high levels of funding, technical expertise or sophisticated equipment (Hogwood and Gunn 1984) was supported by responses to community-level projects. The women's handicraft centre built up from existing traditional skills, whereas one of the criticisms of the national nutrition project was its perceived focus on exotic vegetables that required unfamiliar technology.

At a national level, the Tuvalu Trust Fund has contributed to the government's financial capacity by enabling it to undertake higher public expenditures in its recurrent budget. The high level of specialised skills required for its management, however, does not seem to have adversely affected local perceptions of its success. A lack of local expertise in international investment has been overcome through buying the expertise of professional Fund managers, suggesting that local technical capacity constraints will not impede success if financial capacity is sufficient and expertise can be brought in.

Democracy

References to democracy in the context of governance often apply western models of political organisation, including multiparty elections and the institutions and structures associated with those forms of organisation (Healey, Ketley and Robinson 1993). Tuvalu inherited political structures and institutions from the British colonial administration and has the formal structures of universal suffrage, an elected legislature and a separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary. Democracy can also, however, refer to popular participation in decision-making at a local level, in particular the involvement of communities in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs that directly affect their interests. This meaning of democracy underlies participatory appraisals and bottom-up or grassroots development.

Participation in projects was seen as important in the implementation stage of projects, but less important at the planning stage. In the three projects examined, there was some confusion over how and by whom they were initiated, and the two government projects—the water supply project and the nutrition project—appear to have had their objectives set externally. None of the respondents suggested that the objectives should have been set locally. It would therefore appear that as long as a project's objectives are broadly acceptable, participation in the details of planning is not considered a priority.

At the implementation stage, however, there seemed to be a demand for popular participation. One of the criticisms of the water supply project was that beneficiaries were not able to choose different designs for tanks, and therefore had to have above-ground tanks despite the shortage of space in Funafuti. Another was that larger households were not able to obtain bigger tanks in accord with their needs. Conversely, a large measure of success of the nutrition project was attributed to the careful explanation of the project's objectives to island community leaders and close consultation during its implementation strategy.

Demands for direct participation are modified by the need addressed by the project. Despite the criticisms of the water supply project, it had met a pressing need and this outweighed the perceived shortcomings in its implementation. Tuvalu has no natural freshwater sources and even relatively short periods without rain can lead to water shortages. In contrast, the nutrition project with objectives not perceived as pressing, seemed to be less well accepted despite an arguably greater degree of community consultation.

Democracy is also a significant motivation for the decentralisation of decision-making and administrative functions. The People's Congress for Local Government

Reform recommended the devolution of significant decisions about island development, particularly community-level projects, to the Island Council (Ministry of Home Affairs 1995). Government officials interviewed in Tuvalu saw value in encouraging a perception of the Island Council as a body owned by the community rather than as an arm of the central government. Central government officials believe that an increasing sense of ownership of the Council would improve local willingness to participate in Council programs and its effectiveness in identifying, designing and implementing local projects. Island-based delegates to the People's Congress expressed a wish for greater control over local affairs (Ministry of Home Affairs 1995)

Demands for participation appear less pressing at the level of macroeconomic policy. While Tuvaluans are aware of the existence and purpose of the Tuvalu Trust Fund, few have information about its workings or management. Information and decision-making are confined to a select group within the government, the Trust Fund Board and the Trust Fund Advisory Committee. Despite the lack of information and participation in Trust Fund management, many are satisfied that the Fund has improved the welfare of Tuvaluans through additions to the government's budget. A general level of confidence in those responsible for managing the Fund is sufficient for most Tuvaluans, who have not sought more direct oversight of the Fund.

Coordination

The private sector and non-government community organisations have an increasingly prominent and influential role in shaping and implementing government policy in developing and industrial countries. Basic services and aid programs are being delivered to communities in developing countries through non-government organisations, the private sector, and religious and community groups. Programs will be more likely to succeed if they harness non-government resources in their delivery (Cleaves 1980). Non-state actors may be more effective in delivering programs at a community level, and efficient resource use can be improved if state financial, technical and human resources are coordinated with non-state community networks to deliver programs.

Tuvalu has a strong history of social organisation through traditional chiefs, missions and, more recently, women's groups (Macdonald 1982; Taafaki 1983). All of these groups are well organised and the Tuvalu Christian Church and National Council of Women both have headquarters in Funafuti and extensive and effective networks in the outer islands. The National Council of Women's handicraft centres were believed to be successful because the Council was able to mobilise community support for the project far more effectively than could the government. The nutrition project also sought to increase the effectiveness of its programs by integrating them into non-governmental community programs.

Other respondents observed that people were likely to donate materials and labour to a community project, but would expect to be paid for contributions to a government project: 'People have a limited amount of time to give to these sorts of projects and they don't want to be wasting their time by giving it to the government' (interview respondent).

The Tuvalu Christian Church and the *maneapa* were both seen to be highly effective in mobilising community resources. They were also seen to be effective at blocking policies or projects inconsistent with their interests or priorities. This suggests that collaboration with influential non-government organisations can be a determining factor in the success of policies and projects affecting those organisations' interests and members.

The decentralisation policies currently under consideration by the government of Tuvalu have implications for coordination. On the one hand, they seek to vest some formal authority in the traditionally, but not legally, recognised *maneapa*. On the other hand, they could result in the creation of several local government positions that duplicate functions now undertaken by community groups—particularly women's and youth groups. To the extent that local governments are able to coopt community resources in support of their objectives, coordination could be enhanced.

Beyond the community level, coordination is less important. The Tuvalu Trust Fund involves only government officials. Fund revenues apply to the government budget rather than individuals or the private sector (in contrast to Nauru, which has a separate Trust Fund that pays directly to landowners). People do not see the lack of coordination with non-government actors as a negative aspect of Fund management.

Changing behaviour

Many projects require changes to beneficiaries' behaviour in order to sustain the projects. The analysis of projects within the governance framework of capacity, democracy and coordination is static. Government policy is not, however, static and change is an important aspect of development policies. A project or policy was perceived to have a better chance of success if it was consistent with traditional culture and did not require significant changes in behaviour. This is consistent with social psychological theories of changes to traditional behaviour and attitudes (Doob 1971; Box 2).

The nutrition project sought to change a significant part of traditional behaviour by encouraging people to grow and eat more vegetables, and came up against considerable cultural resistance. Fresh vegetables are not a significant feature of the traditional diet and sale of surplus produce contradicted traditional customs of sharing.

The extent to which the project succeeded in changing behaviour along these lines was subject to considerable disagreement among respondents. All agreed, however, that community-based and designed awareness programs were critical to changes in behaviour. The programs used traditionally based motivational activities such as gardening and cooking competitions to overcome traditional resistance to new types of behaviour. The strong influence of traditional governing structures, notably the *maneapa* and the Tuvalu Christian Church, suggests that programs requiring behavioural change will be enhanced if the support of these groups can be enlisted. Similarly, women's groups appear to be influential in achieving change in community attitudes and behaviour.

Box 2 Changing behaviour

People are more likely to accept a proposed change

- when it does not conflict with traditional beliefs and values
- when it appears to have advantages that can be demonstrated now or in the future
- when it is introduced to people considered important and competent and who have consulted them adequately
- when it is in accord with the modal personality traits of their society or with a goal they are seeking
- when it makes demands whose components they have already learned or feel confident they can learn (Doob 1971).

The local government review process is examining ways of enlisting the support of traditional leaders in government programs. The People's Congress proposed measures to give the *maneapa* legal status commensurate with their substantial traditional authority. Tuvalu has previously made attempts to marry traditional governing structures with those inherited from the colonial administration. In 1986, a constitutional review required that every parliamentary bill must go to the islands for consideration. The same review vested in the *maneapa* the formal authority to elect the chair of the Island Council or local government authority. There have been calls to formalise the links between traditional and modern structures of government in order to improve local participation (and hence democracy) and to enhance the government's capacity to deliver services and programs to villages (Paeniu 1995).

The interaction between traditional and introduced governing structures is complex. Traditional forms of government have sometimes captured introduced institutions, and what is now regarded as traditional may have emerged during the period of mission influence or colonial rule. Tuvalu has a history of adapting introduced ideas to culturally acceptable forms and in the process changing traditional behaviour. Paeniu

(1995) cites the example of traditional punishment for drinking alcohol in Nukulaelae, which has changed from harsh corporal punishment to exclusion from community activities.

Conclusions

This paper identifies local conditions for success and supports some of the propositions put forward in governance theory relating to capacity, democracy and coordination. The conclusions on conditions for the successful design and implementation of policies and projects must, however, be seen in the context of the political, social and cultural environment where policies are made. Tuvalu is a small country (geographically and by population) and thus has particular characteristics that may not be generalised to other developing countries. The government is directly accountable to the people, both in the sense of scrutiny and sanction (Moore 1993). The smallness of the population and the consequent accessibility of public officials has led to a high degree of scrutiny of government actions, even though the formal institutions associated with public accountability in western democracies—free media and parliamentary oversight of the executive—seem to be weak. The continuing strong traditional authority of the *maneapa* and the church also gives them considerable powers of sanction over government actions—particularly through the electoral process—with the result that members of parliament will refer all matters of importance to the traditional leadership for consideration prior to committing themselves to decisions.

Tuvalu has a relatively harsh environment compared to other Pacific islands, with poor soils and no natural freshwater sources, and this has contributed to a strong tradition of saving and frugal resource management (Samuelu 1983). Tuvaluans have many traditional means of preserving food (Koch 1984) and the traditional leadership on each island controls a community fund, to which all income-earning members of the community contribute a proportion of their earnings. This has led to a strong sense of community among Tuvaluans, which manifests itself in their willingness to donate time, labour and materials to community or church projects. Tuvalu has a conservative and hierarchical form of social organisation, strong traditional social controls and a respect for elders (Taafaki 1983). This has probably been strengthened by Tuvalu's relative ethnic and linguistic homogeneity (Macdonald 1982). Tuvaluans strongly defer to their traditional leaders, whose support for any given project appears critical to its success.

Large aid shares and the relative poverty of resources also magnifies the impact of the activities of external actors in Tuvalu, particularly aid donors. With per capita aid flows of over US\$400 in 1993 (Asian Development Bank 1995), Tuvalu is one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world. Even relatively small projects, such as the

donation of a boat, can have a significant effect on the national recurrent budget. Donor policies and actions are thus relatively more important in Tuvalu than in developing countries with a broader revenue base and greater capacity to absorb the recurrent costs associated with capital projects. This also means that Tuvalu's few senior civil servants spend a disproportionate amount of their time managing donors, including meetings with officials and consultants and undertaking the administrative work required to account for project funds.

Within this political, social and cultural context, the lenses provided by the governance models—capacity, democracy and coordination—serve to highlight specific elements which contribute to the success of policies and projects.

Government capacity in Tuvalu is constrained by the number of skilled staff available and by finance. Although the number of civil servants is large in proportion to the population—employing around 60 per cent of those in the formal sector (South Pacific Economic and Social Database 1994)—it is small in absolute numbers. The absence of a few individuals on training courses or at international meetings, especially at senior levels, can have a disproportionately disruptive effect on ministries. The decentralisation policies currently under consideration by the Tuvalu government may strengthen capacity by rationalising resources if they are transferred from the capital rather than added as parallel bureaucracies in the outer islands. Government capacity has also been enhanced by the Tuvalu Trust Fund, which has provided financial resources for the recurrent budget that could not otherwise have been raised.

The other aspect of the capacity model—that policies that limit their demands on existing capacity will be more likely to succeed—is not borne out by the experience of the Tuvalu Trust Fund, which shows that technical expertise can be bought. It seems therefore that as long as there are sufficient financial means and the required expertise is internationally available, technical capacity does not pose significant constraints to success.

The development of local and community capacity, as distinct from government capacity, is an important factor contributing to the success of local-level projects. Improved local capacity can increase government capacity if it reduces reliance on government services. Given the significant distance between islands and the existence of only one regular inter-island shipping service, enhancement of local government and community capacity in support of government programs is essential to the success of any on-going program. Development of local non-government capacity may also detract from government capacity, however, if it involves a diversion of government resources.

Strong informal mechanisms for accountability and the influence of non-government actors in the policy process—the Tuvalu Christian Church and the

traditional leadership—has led to a direct form of democracy in Tuvalu. The community, represented by the traditional leadership, plays a significant role in policy formulation at a political level. Perhaps as a reflection of this deference to the hierarchy, there does not seem to be a significant demand for popular participation in the planning and design of programs, as long as the objectives are broadly acceptable. This is shown in the willingness to leave the management of the Tuvalu Trust Fund to experts in government and in the Trust Fund.

In contrast, there is a strong demand for popular participation in the implementation of projects, particularly at the community level. Even this, however, seemed to be modified by the magnitude of the need for the project. A project considered critical to meet basic needs might therefore be acceptable even with a level of consultation that would be unacceptable for other projects. Similarly, such projects may be accepted even with some implementation flaws if they were nonetheless perceived to provide sufficient direct benefits to the people.

Civil society, defined as organised interests in society outside the state (Williams and Young 1994), is well developed and influential in Tuvalu. The *maneapa* and the Church exercise a traditional authority that is still widely recognised and the National Council of Women is increasing its involvement in the political sphere as well. The private sector remains small but the Chamber of Commerce is increasingly consulted on matters of policy affecting business. In this context, coordination between government and non-government actors becomes important for the success of projects. The acquiescence of these influential groups is essential for the survival of any policy, let alone the success for its implementation. By the same token, the likelihood of success of any program would seem to be considerably enhanced with the active support and participation of the *maneapa*, Church or women's groups.

Coordination with important non-government actors also affects the acceptability of behaviour changes. Some government programs rely heavily on changing behaviour, notably health and nutrition awareness. Tuvalu has a conservative society, which accepts change slowly. Change appears to be considerably facilitated, however, where it has the endorsement of the *maneapa*, the Church or the women's groups. From the point of view of a government seeking to implement a change-oriented program, these groups would seem well placed to assist in designing a successful implementation strategy and in delivering it to the people.

This study confirms the usefulness of examining governance in Tuvalu through the lenses of capacity, democracy and coordination in the context of a particular political and cultural environment. The study raises several questions, however. In particular, it is not clear to what extent the political context is determined by particular factors including the size of the population, the country's natural resource endowment, the physical size of the islands, religion, culture, language and history. Some of the

governance issues identified, and the elements contributing to successful policy formulation and implementation, may be peculiar to Tuvalu. Others will be common to other countries in the region, to other small island developing countries, or to other countries with parliamentary systems. The relative importance of each of these factors could be explored in a wider comparative study of island countries in the Pacific.

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