



**Institute of Education  
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# Sustainable Livelihood and Education in the Pacific: Tonga Pilot Report

By

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## Summary

This report presents findings from the pilot of the Sustainable Livelihood and Education in the Pacific (SLEP) project that was conducted between June 06 and February 07. This is an NZAid funded study and it was conducted in partnership with the Tonga Ministry of Education.

The Kakala Research Framework, Tongan research ethics and Tongan research tools of Talanoa and Nofo guided the study. The researchers for this project were all Tongans. This was an opportunity to pilot a new way of understanding hardship in Tonga and how education can alleviate this.

Findings from the study show that Tongan conceptualisation of education and sustainable livelihoods are broader, fluid and less structured than traditional understanding. Based on Tongan conceptualisations of education – *Ako* and sustainable livelihood – *mo'ui fakapotopoto* it has put forward several recommendations. Findings from the data show that *mo'ui fakapotopoto* is holistic and rooted in Tongan values. For Tongans sustainable livelihood is more about values and the appropriate behaviour than economics.

This report puts forward recommendations on educational strategies that may be used by Tonga to alleviate hardship. Central to these strategies are the conceptualisations of *Ako* and *Mo'ui fakapotopoto*. This report recommends – amongst others – that education be more than just formal education – which it includes informal and community education based on the holistic development concept of *Mo'ui fakapotopoto*. This report also suggests the review of the curriculum to reflect *Ako* and *Mo'ui fakapotopoto*, which essentially means the weaving of Tongan knowledge systems into the curriculum and that teaching and learning reflect the needs of Tongan students. This report also suggests significant investment in teacher education support strategies for Tonga – in terms of professional development, resource materials and employment conditions. It is evident from the study that the current status of education in Tonga is in crisis, and children who come from families who are in hardship will be the most affected. Immediate support strategies are urgently needed to aid education in Tonga.

Sustainable livelihood is about being able to manage existing resources, utilising context specific skills and trusted knowledge guided by Tongan core values. Children will not be able to live sustainable livelihoods in their own communities if the knowledge and skills they learn at school does not teach them how to manage, protect, create and develop existing resources within their communities.

Future investments in developing education in Tonga and in the effort to alleviate hardship should be founded on *Ako* and *mo'ui fakapotopoto*.

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## Glossary

IOE/USP	Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific
NZAID	New Zealand AID
SLEP	Sustainable Livelihood and Education in the Pacific
TMOE	Tonga Ministry of Education
EPF	Educational Policy Framework
TESP	Tonga Education Support Program
TCDU	Tonga Curriculum Development Unit
TIOE	Tonga Institute of Education
TNYC	Tonga National Youth Congress
PTA	Patents Teachers Association
TSC	Tonga School Certificate
SDP7	Strategic Development Plan 7
UBE	Universal Basic Education
TVET	Technical Vocational Education Training
Ako	Learn
‘Api Ako	School
Poto	Wisdom
‘Ilo	Knowledge
‘Ulungaanga	Behaviour
Kavenga	Financial/material obligations, responsibilities
Masiva he anga	Poor in attitude – lacking appropriate behaviour
Mo’ui fakapotopoto	Sustainable livelihood
Faka’apa’apa	Respect
Talanoa	To share stories
Nofo	Stay, to visit
Ngatu	Tapa cloth

# Introduction - TEU

## 1. Background

The Tonga Ministry of Education (TMOE) is currently embarking on various activities to improve the quality of educational services in the country. As such their current Educational Policy Framework (EPF) 2004-2019 developed by the Ministry and approved by Cabinet in 2004 has outlined strategic goals to achieve these objectives. One of these goals is to improve equitable access to and quality of universal basic education for all children in Tonga up to Year 8 (Form 2). The Ministry has also set itself the goal to improve the access to and quality of post-basic education and training to cater for the different abilities and needs of students<sup>5</sup>.

The Ministry as one of its major effort to achieve these goals is currently implementing the Tonga Education Support Program (TESP).

The Institute of Education (IOE) in 2005 was preparing the *Sustainable Livelihoods and Education in the Pacific* (SLEP) project to be funded by NZAid. Through consultation with NZAid it was agreed that Tonga would be one of the countries that this project would be offered to. Further to this, Dr Ana Taufē'ulungaki and Dr Seu'ula Johansson Fua at the Institute of Education – who also happened to be Tongans, designed the project. The project was designed specifically to allow Pacific people to examine possible roles that education could play in the alleviation of hardship and poverty. As such the research framework, research ethics and research tools had to be based on Pacific conceptualisations.

Through initial consultations with Kalala Unu from the Tonga Curriculum Development Unit (TCDU) and Liuaki Fusitu'a from the Tonga Institute of Education (TIOE), certain activities were identified for possible collaboration using the SLEP project. The TCDU were planning to gather information on skills, knowledge and attitudes to inform their planned review of the curriculum. The TIOE at the same time wanted research training for their students and staff. It was decided that IOE would work together with TIOE and CDU. As such the pilot served several requests; to trial the research approach; to identify educational policies and practices that would alleviate hardship and poverty; to gather data that would inform the upcoming review of the curriculum; and to provide research training for TIOE staff and students.

## 2. Purpose of this Report

This report is compiled to achieve three key objectives:

1. To report on the pilot of the SLEP project outlining key findings and recommended interventions for the alleviation of hardship through education in Tonga.

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<sup>5</sup> Tonga Strategic Plan, Ministry of Education 2004

2. To report on the strengths and weakness of the research approach and methodology that was used. This is included in the preliminary report.
3. To document the pilot in Tonga as a resource for other countries who will participate in the study.

This report is prepared for key partners in the pilot; TMOE (TCDU & TIOE); NZAID; and IOE/USP. This report will also be used as a resource material for other countries participating in the study.

This report will be later reformatted for wider publication.

The scope of this report is defined by the key research questions that had guided the study<sup>6</sup>. The main purpose of this report is to identify key strategies that can be used to guide educational policies and practices in the TMOE's work to alleviate hardship in Tonga.

### 3. Duration of the Study

In May of 2006, the TMOE agreed to an offer by the Institute to pilot the SLEP project in Tonga. In this agreement, the TMOE allocated the project to be overseen by the Deputy Director of Education for Schools, Tu'ifua Takapautolo.

The field work was conducted between the 20<sup>th</sup> June and the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

A preliminary report was prepared in November 2006.

The final report was submitted in February 2007.

### 4. Constraints and Limitations

One of the most obvious limitations of the pilot was the size of the SLEP team – particularly at regional level. Despite having two fellows from the Institute work on this project – completion of reports were delayed. The Institute has now included a third fellow to be part of the SLEP team at no extra cost to the project budget.

The data gathered were rich, authentic and in-depth that it required more time than had planned to have it analysed and prepared for writing. The transcription of the data took 2 months – which was not expected. This further delayed work on the report. Transcription of data needs to take place during the fieldwork to reduce post fieldwork.

Several key events in Tonga and in Fiji during this time that further delayed work on the project – including the royal funeral of the Prince and Princess Tu'ipelehake, the royal funeral of HM King Tupou IV, the November riot in Tonga and the coup in Fiji. These

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to study proposal: Appendix One

events consequently affected not only the work of the researchers but also delayed preparatory work on the data.

In 2006, the Institute of Education operated without a Director and as a consequence Seu'ula the principal field researcher for SLEP took on more managerial responsibilities and diverted some of her time away from the project. Despite the recruitment of Dr Manu, Seu'ula's added responsibilities and travelling assignments delayed completion of the reports. However, the Institute has now recruited a Director and Seu'ula will now be relieved of managerial responsibilities and devote needed time to this project. Further to this Sereana Tagivakatini, a current IOE fellow will also be part of the SLEP team at IOE.

## 5. Significance of this report

This report will be useful to the TMOE as a guide for the planned curriculum review. The report will also be useful for the TESP work as it presents the most recent data on education in Tonga. An added significance of this report is that Tongans conducted the study using Tongan research approach.

This report will be useful for NZAid in deciding future investment in Tonga education, as it would also be useful for other donors involved in TESP and other aid programs in Tonga. The report will also help Pacific governments and agencies working towards the alleviation of poverty and hardship in the Pacific.

This report will be the first to document the research processes of the Kakala framework, Tongan research ethics and also the Talanoa and Nofo as it operates in the research field.

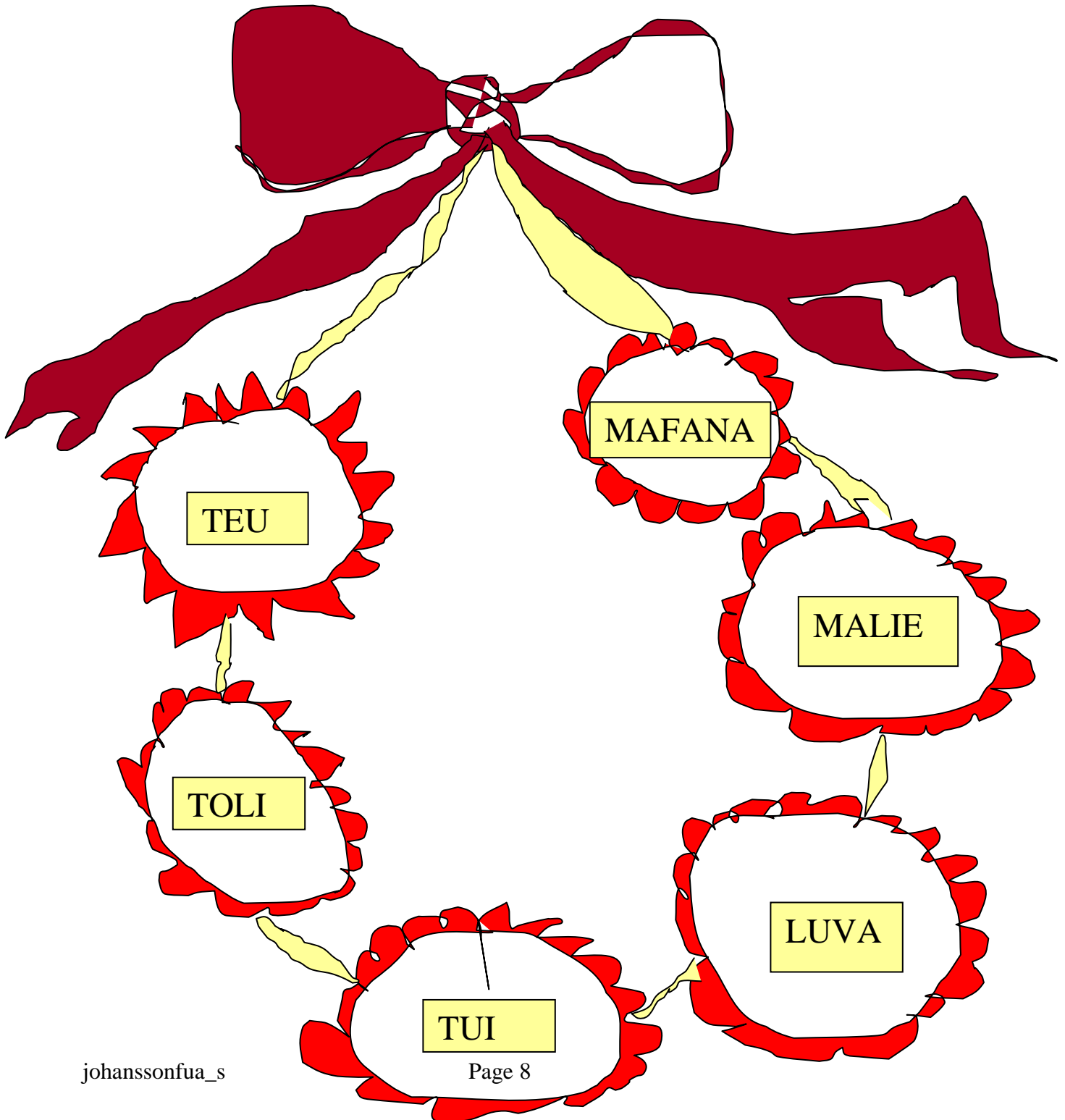
This report is also of significance as it builds on earlier works done by various agencies on poverty and hardship in the Pacific. This report will be the first of 9 to document Pacific people's beliefs about education and hardship and their strategies to alleviate hardship in their context.

Although this report is based on study pilot in Tonga – it can be generalized to other Pacific Island countries interested in the role of education in the alleviation of hardship and poverty.

## Methodology – Toli

To gather the needed data for this study, the Kakala Framework was used as guide. Figure 1 illustrates the Kakala and key components of the study. As the Kakala Framework guided the study, it has also served as the guide for the organisation of this report.

Figure 1: The Kakala Research Framework





A report was compiled in November 2006 to describe the methodology, account of the work done and analysis of the data. A copy of this report is attached as Appendix Two.

For a detailed description of the research framework, research ethics, research tools and how these were conceptualised please refer to the study proposal attached as Appendix One.

A revised log frame and a budget are attached in the list of Appendices as Appendix Three and Four. There amendments are made to the original budget to adjust the cost of regional meetings. As the original budget was set in 2006, flight schedules and prices have increased and these are reflected in the costing for the first regional meeting. The adjustments to the subsequent regional meetings are based on the costing for the first regional meeting.

Although in the preliminary report requests have been made to adjust funds for the field work – later work on the financial report has shown this would not be necessary. Therefore, the original budget submitted in June 2006 is only adjusted to increase funds allocated for regional meetings. This is now reflected in the revised budget. Not other amendments have been made.

The financial report for the Tonga pilot is also attached as Appendix Five.

# Results and Discussion - Tui

## 1. Conceptualisations

Before this study began it was necessary to ask ‘how are ‘education’, ‘hardship’ and ‘sustainable livelihoods’ conceptualised in Tonga? As an individual, family and social cultural group.

The following conceptualisations are based on the data gathered from the Talanoa and Nofo at individual, family and social cultural group level.

### 1.1 Education

Education is translated as *Ako*. Tongans conceptualisation of ‘education’ or *Ako* is based on the idea of *poto* or wisdom. Parents wish for their children to have an education so that they may have *poto*. To become *poto* a child must gain knowledge or ‘*ilo* and skills or *poto*’ *i ngaue*. Gaining knowledge and skills are not enough to achieve *poto* – a child must also learn to use those sets of knowledge and skills in such a way that is worthwhile and useful for themselves, their family and for the community. Certain ‘*Ulungaanga* or cultural behaviours are used to guide and judge the application of these knowledge and skills. A person that has achieved *poto* in the Tongan context is not only knowledgeable and skilful but most importantly has the desired Tongan ‘*Ulungaanga*.

The purpose then of education for Tongans is for their children to gain knowledge and skills that would enable them to lead worthwhile and useful lives in accordance with Tongan cultural behaviour.

The data strongly reflects the belief that without culturally appropriate behaviour a person may have all the knowledge and skills but is not considered to have *poto* or wisdom. Throughout the data Queen Salote College is repeatedly being identified as a preference for sending young girls to so that they may learn appropriate ‘*Ulungaanga*. This finding is important in that it contradicts the assumption and old belief that parents’ first preference for their children’s secondary school education is Tonga High School – known for its academic scholarship but has always been criticized for its lack of support for students’ ‘*Ulungaanga*. The data reflected the strong belief amongst parents that appropriate behaviour is more important than knowledge and skills.

The data from the household has also shown the belief that the home is the first school or ‘*api Ako*. This means that parents strongly believe that children should be taught appropriate ‘*Ulungaanga* at home. Although there is some divergence in the data – but generally most parents believe that the teacher and the school should also reinforce culturally appropriate ‘*Ulungaanga*.

The data has also shown parents’ commitment to education. In several cases, parents shared that they would always take care of educational *kavenga* (financial

responsibilities/ obligations) before religious and community *kavenga*. In some cases parents also shared their commitment to helping their children with their homework and reinforcing what has been learned in the classroom. In one case, a father who is a farmer and had left school at form 3 said that he would always listen to the school program broadcast through the radio. At the end of the day when his daughter would come home he would ask her what had been covered during the broadcasted school program. In another village, the parents did not complete primary school so they would call neighbouring children to come play with their children and thereby help the children do their homework.

In almost every case parents share their commitment to the education of their children by ensuring that their educational *kavenga* are met. There is a strong belief that if they do carry out the educational *kavenga* that their children will do well in school. The belief in fulfilling financial obligations for their children's education is believed to have the same benefits and blessings as when they fulfil religious obligations to the church. It is this kind of belief that led most children to think that a person who attains *mo'ui fakapotopoto* or sustainable livelihood is someone who fulfils all of his or her obligations. This idea coincides with parents' beliefs and views about the role of schools in educating their children to be able to meet their obligations. It seems therefore from the children's perspectives that their concept of *mo'ui fakapotopoto* is that exemplified in their parents' work, which is the ability to serve and help out with individual or family responsibilities such as their children's education.

However, despite the belief that education is important and that meeting educational *kavenga* is a sacrifice worth giving there is a counter belief to this. In cases of obvious hardship, there is an underlying sense of distrust in the education system. This distrust is based on the belief that the current formal education is accessible to only a few gifted students. Parents whose children are often labelled as being 'weak' and not being 'academic' do not trust that the education system has a place for their children. As such the data has shown cases where parents teach their children livelihood skills (fishing, weaving etc) in preparation for when their children finally get pushed out of formal education. For these parents – they believe that by teaching their children these skills they would at least have something to fall back on if they are not successful at school. In one case a father of 5 children, he shared that his two sons are 'poor' at school so he is making sure that they learn how to fish and plant crops as he already knows that his sons will not be successful at school. The eldest son is at junior high school while his youngest son is still at primary school. So although his two sons are still young, the father is already of the belief that his sons will not be successful at school and will most likely leave school without any formal certification.

The data also showed that most parents accept that children have different talents and strengths. As such the data showed a diversity of talents, skills and ambitions that parents and children shared. These talents included music, art, performance, craft, mechanical engineering and others more traditional skills like weaving, fishing and farming. This reflects a belief that education while often confined to formal education, there is still a

strong belief that *Ako* also occurs outside of this arena. The skills identified in the data are mostly absent from the formal school curriculum.

## 1.2 Hardship and Poverty

Data gathered from individual and family level showed that families felt hardship when there are more than one obligation being requested at any one time – thereby exhausting resources and savings. Hardship is often seen as temporary but manageable. People tend to be optimistic that hardship is manageable through one-way or another. Hardship is particularly felt when parents could not meet educational obligations or *kavenga*. Data showed that parents felt particularly more worried about educational *kavenga* than any other obligations.

Data collected from household showed several strategies that they use to over come their hardship. Crucial to this is the importance of maintaining relationships both local and overseas. In several cases, uncles, aunts and relatives help pay for school fees and board. The study also showed strategies used to allocate resources wisely in preparation for future obligations. The study has also identified people who were resourceful in appropriating their resources in such ways that they were able to meet obligations with minimal cash.

Where poverty is generally seen as lacking basic human needs, as shelter, food and water was limited. There were incidents of children being sent to school without breakfast and lunch. But this was not because there was no food – it was the children and the parents were not organized enough to prepare food but wanted to take lunch money. Where poverty does occur is in attitude or *'Ulungaanga – masiva he anga*. This theme persists throughout the data and became more obvious as the study moved to the urban areas. Field researchers would talk of disrespectful behaviour that showed more relaxed behaviour about relational taboos. This form of poverty was strongly evident in all sets of the data and not only the participants of the study but also the field researchers recognized it as the key finding of this study.

## 1.3 Sustainable Livelihood

Sustainable livelihood is conceptualised as *mo'ui fakapotopoto* – a life that is worthwhile and is able to use existing and limited resources wisely. *Mo'ui fakapotopoto* encompasses spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual capabilities. *Mo'ui fakapotopoto* does not necessarily equate formal qualifications but rather adheres to set cultural competence criteria that are in line with core Tongan values. The data showed ample cases where people lived lives described as *mo'ui fakapotopoto*. These people were multi talented with a range of skills, wide understanding of their environment and strong belief in maintaining relationships and fulfilling cultural obligations.

To live a life that is sustainable within the Tongan context a person must display *mo'ui fakapotopoto*. The following are key principles to achieving *mo'ui fakapotopoto*;

1. There is a strong belief that a livelihood can be earned in Tonga. Such a livelihood can be sustainable as well as enriching socially and economically.

2. Talents are more often than not learnt at home from parents or relatives. Home environment is also very supportive in fostering livelihood skills and talents.
3. People who live sustainable livelihoods in Tonga have diversity of skills and talents. Such people are always working, always in search of new ideas, always creating and always looking for ways to improve livelihood.
4. People who have *mo'ui fakapotopoto* are always eager to share their skills, knowledge and talents with others – particularly with young people who like them were not successful at school. A case in point is a carver who is planning on setting up a carving school for high school dropouts. Such people are also eager to employ and train unskilled youngsters in their own business.
5. People who have *mo'ui fakapotopoto* are firm believers in traditional knowledge and skills. Farmers who have earned more than sustainable livelihood firmly follow traditional Tongan weather patterns and planting knowledge.
6. People who have *mo'ui fakapotopoto* live lives that are guided by core Tongan values of respect, reciprocity, loyalty and love.
7. *Mo'ui fakapotopoto* also includes an often deep spiritual life and a strong belief in God. *Mo'ui fakapotopoto* when practiced is often defined by a person fulfilling religious obligations.
8. *Mo'ui fakapotopoto* also means that people who lead these lives do not shy away from cultural obligations to their families, church, community and country. They are able to meet obligations within their means.
9. People with *mo'ui fakapotopoto* are firm believers in education – in spite of their own failure in school. They believe that education is still important to promote given talents and enhance marketing and communication skills for small businesses.
10. People with *mo'ui fakapotopoto* do not believe in borrowing money and taking a loan. In several cases – small businesses are set up with very limited resources but they have flourished through the owners' strategic manoeuvring of resources. A typical example is a planter who plants tomatoes specifically to pay for his workers. The rest of his crops are for marketing and to generate income – but the tomatoes are to generate money to pay for his workers. Another case is a farmer who takes two piglets from every newborn stock and put it aside to be sold when he needs money to pay for his children's school fees. The same farmer also takes one piglet and sells every month to pay for the food to feed the rest of the pigs.
11. People who lead sustainable livelihoods are also keen on maintaining traditional skills – as in weaving and pattern making. However, the same people are finding new ways of using these traditional skills.

To live a life that is sustainable in Tonga a person must be creative and strategic in using their skills and knowledge to earn a livelihood. Such a person must also – more importantly – be able to have the appropriate attitude to exist within the social environment of Tonga. Sustainability depends on the attitude of the person – in the case of Tonga – the right *'Ulungaanga* enables *mo'ui fakapotopoto*. Culture is the crucial principle to enabling sustainable processes.

## 2. Expected role of the Education system in the reduction of hardship

Data gathered from the Talanoa and Nofo at individual, family and group level showed that people living in hardship expect the education system to provide an education that is much closer to their way of life than had been assumed. One of the key themes that emerged out of the data showed the importance of attitude or *'Ulungaanga* to ensuring a livelihood that is sustainable.

### 2.1 Attitude - *'Ulungaanga*

The data from the individual case studies, the households the development groups and also the students' survey consistently displayed the significance of *'Ulungaanga* in the pursuit of a sustainable livelihood. The data showed that respect or *faka'apa'apa* continues to be the most central attitude that Tongans aspire to. The data also showed that some aspects of *faka'apapa'apa* are eroding – particularly with the sacred taboo between brothers and sisters.

However, more importantly for this study is the role that people in hardship expect the education system to play in teaching their children the right attitude. In the mind of a Tongan parent, education is not just about learning skills and knowledge it is firstly about knowing how to behave appropriately.

#### *i. Teachers and Principals*

The data consistently showed parents, individuals and development groups' complain about teachers' lack of professionalism. In every village studied (except for 'Atata<sup>7</sup>) there were cases of parents complaining about teachers being late to school, of teachers' failure to prepare lessons well, of teachers missing classes, of teachers' verbal abuse and physical abuse of students.

Although some parents accept that their children will be physically punished at school as part of discipline – parents also know that there is a limit to how a teacher should discipline a child. The data showed cases of young primary school children who run away from school because of fear of being physically punished.

In one village, a mother shared how her two daughters were consistently running away from school. Her 6 year old daughter always has a hard time getting to school on time – when she arrives late she would be physically punished by the school principal. As a result the 6 year old – when running late – would go and hide in the bush instead of going to school. Her older sister in class 3 found out about this and decided to follow her younger sister so that she would take care of her. It was not until a month later that a letter was sent from the school notifying the parent that her two daughters have been

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<sup>7</sup> At 'Atata, which is about 6 miles away from Nuku'alofa, the primary school is situated in the middle of the only town in the island. The teachers live inside the school compound and thus rarely found or spotted to be late to school. Perhaps that is why in isolated places like 'Atata, the teachers are never late since the school starts whenever the teachers arrive.

missing from school for over 20 days. This happened in a village school where the school is located in the middle of the village and every household within walking distance.

In another village a parent shared how one teacher would turn up to class still drunk from the previous nights' drinking session. He then asked the class to keep quiet all day while he slept in the classroom. In the same village several parents' complaint of how school would start at 9am and there is only one teacher present at the time. Teachers are also known to leave the school before the school finishes for the day. The field researchers working in this village testified to seeing the school assembly being conducted by one teacher and no other teacher had arrived at the school.

Parents also complain of how teachers would 'label' their children as either being 'smart' or being 'slow'. In one case, a parent complaint of how her child was sent home by the teacher with instructions for the parents to take their child to the special education school (Ofa Tui mo e 'Amanaki). The child never went to the special education school and left school all together before he was 10 years old. The data showed many other incidents of teachers 'labelling' of children – that parents and the child soon also believe that they are either cut out to be successful at school or school is not for them.

The data showed that parents have a strong belief that the role of a teacher is much like that of Jesus – should lead by example. Parents expect teachers to lead by example – in being punctual, in preparing their lessons and in caring for their children. Based on the data it was evident that parents – amongst everything else – expect the teachers to have the right attitude for their job. The right attitude in this case is the appropriate *'Ulungaanga* for being a Tongan – all that personifies *mo'ui fakapotopoto*.

#### ii. *Students*

There is a strong belief that home is the first school for every child and with Tongans – according to the data gathered – it is also at the home that the child learns to behave appropriately.

Most of the students who participated in the survey (80.9%) said they have learned values or *'ulungaanga* from their parents. About half of the surveyed students said that their mothers are the ones whom they have learned their most important value from. This 'most important' value turned out to be *faka'apa'apa* (respect) for half of the surveyed students (50.9%), far more than *'ofa* (love), *mo'ui fakaongoongo* (obedience), *faitotonu* (justice) or *fevahevahe'aki* (sharing).

However, through more careful analysis of the remaining data it also showed that there is a growing concern from parents that the school should also support the training of *'Ulungaanga*. The data showed that in the past parents expected teachers to just teach their children the skills and knowledge while they and the church teach their children how to behave appropriately.

Parents, individuals and development groups expressed through the study that schools should now reinforce the appropriate *'Ulungaanga* that should be taught to every child.

This increased expectation for the schools to be involved in the training of children's behaviours coincides with parents increasing expectations for teachers to behave more professionally.

This expectation again agrees with the result of the students' survey when asked how they view their teachers' behaviours and what they considered to be essential characters of a good teacher. It turns out that teachers influence students in the way that they prepare lessons, teach and equally important is the way in which teachers behave and relate to students. This includes the way teachers show love, patience and compassionate to the students, or even in the way they smile, how patience they are, or what they wear to school; these all add up in how teachers act as role models to their observed students.

From the data – a child's behaviour remains to be the most important aspect of any child's learning. But what “culturally appropriate” behaviours are, who is to be responsible for its teaching, and how best to educate children in such behaviours are questions yet to be fully understood. Such questions dig into re-assessing the difference in values being taught at the schools and each school's mission towards what is often referred to as a more “holistic” education.

Surprisingly though, one-half of the students chose *respect* (50.9%), much more than *love* (18.8%) and *justice* (5.5%) as their core values. The predictability of this result, particularly with *respect* being the overwhelming choice for the students, appears to come out of the kind of language the students are being taught daily at home, school, church and at every other social arena. For that reason, it is expected that *respect* appears to be the students' most important value.

## 2.2 Curriculum

When the study was offered to Tonga's Ministry of Education – it was assigned to the Curriculum Development Unit to aid in their preparatory work for the planned review of the curriculum. This reflected the Ministry of Education's effort to address hardship through review of the curriculum to ensure greater access to attainment.

In consultation with the CDU the study also asked people living or have lived in hardship to share their expectations about what knowledge, skills and attitude they would want to be included in the education system.

A detailed technical report on the knowledge and skills gathered has been prepared for the CDU to aid in the review of the curriculum. Refer to Appendix Seven.

### *i. Knowledge*

Participants in the study were more than pleased to share their knowledge of environment, of weather patterns, of planting seasons and fishing techniques amongst a huge amount of other valuable knowledge that were collected. As the method included observation through *Nofo* – the information gathered is detailed and has been well documented.



Most evident from the data were traditional Tongan knowledge that are still in use. The people that participated in this study were selected based on their livelihood skills and as such, the knowledge reflected wisdoms about the ocean with fishing techniques, reading the moon phases and also the weather patterns. Similarly with a large number of people still working in the agricultural sector there was an extensive compilation of knowledge gathered in relation to times of planting different crops, harvesting, natural fertilization, natural compose and beliefs about usage of the land.

It should also be noted that here that some of these knowledge are disappearing and that people are not always willing to share some of these knowledge. For instance, in fishing, a method called *fakamamaha* is rarely used these days. In this method, dried banana leaves are used to act as a kind of seine that traps the fish as the tide goes out. Participants in the study were therefore keen to share this information for the purpose of educating young Tongans. Participants shared their knowledge with the hope that it be included in the curriculum and that it may benefit future Tongans.

The study also gathered knowledge about women's work on weaving, making *ngatu* (tapa) and other forms of handicraft. Again, it reflected a strong belief in maintaining traditional *ngatu* designs and ensuring authentic materials are used. Also noted in the data were knowledge and beliefs about women's traditional role and their area of work. To a large extend most women working at village level were still involved in the production of traditional materials like mats and *ngatu*.

The data gathered also included knowledge of traditional Tongan music, art and performing art. The students' survey showed great interests in sports (43.1%), music (30.9%), Tongan folk dances (11.0%) and arts and paintings (7.8%).

Some participants also showed the importance of planting traditional Tongan plants such as the *Heilala*, *Siale Tonga* and other plants used for costumes in Tongan performances. Most of the mothers said that they grow these plants so that they can make costumes and garlands for their children when they perform dances in school and church activities. This again reflected a concern with preserving traditional Tongan knowledge amidst changing times.

One of the more interesting data collected was the use of Tongan medicine. In several cases, people living in hardship asked that schools teach children about use of Tongan medicine and herbs<sup>8</sup>. One mother explained that because they lived far from the hospital and that they did not always money to buy medicine, it would help if schools taught children simple remedies by using traditional medicinal plants such as *Nonu*<sup>9</sup> and other known plants. In most homes visited during the study there were medicinal plants such as *Nonu* and others that were planted in their garden.

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<sup>8</sup> Currently the school curriculum does not specifically address this concern. That is may be why none of the students in the survey chose traditional Tongan medicine as the "most useful" skill in their lives.

<sup>9</sup> *Nonu*, a Tongan name for the species *morinda citrifolia*, (or Indian Mulberry), it has been used by Polynesian cultures for the holistic treatment of a variety of internal and external ailments.

The data also gathered knowledge on personal health and hygiene and the importance of promoting this in schools. The data gathered from the Nofo clearly indicated the importance of reinforcing health and hygiene behavior in schools. Field researchers would observe children eating with dirty hands and diets that were not always healthy and nutritious. In some villages, availability of water was still a problem and this consequently would add to problems of hygiene and general health. The data also collected views from people working with youth groups. One of the more pressing needs for this group is to address reproductive health issues and life skills in the formal curriculum.

In the last couple of years Tonga like other Pacific island states prone to natural disasters experienced tsunami warnings, heavy earthquakes and increasingly more disastrous cyclones and hurricanes. People who participated in the study showed their concern with these natural disasters and the need to re look at Tongan knowledge of weather patterns. Tongans believe that there are signs – in the way animals behave, the way the plants bear fruit and others – that forecast impending weather patterns including natural disasters. Within this knowledge system, there is also survival knowledge for when cyclone strikes, earthquakes and famine occur.

Through individual case studies the study also collected knowledge about financing and managing resources from a uniquely Tongan perspective. This was one of the more interesting findings of the study as it related to how people living in hardship managed their resources and finances. Through individual case studies the study recorded how people living in hardship budget their resources, spend their money and also how they saved their resources/funds.

One of the key features of the knowledge collected is Tongan people's closeness to nature and dependency on the land and the ocean. From women's weaving work, to men's plantation and fishing to performing art, to medicine and natural disaster it all reflected a concern with preserving the environment. In several cases parents would ask that schools encourage the replanting of medicinal plants, flowers for garlands, plants for weaving and ngatu and trees for landscaping amongst crops and vegetables for food. This pattern was most evident amongst people living in the rural areas and in the outer island studied.

When the study moved to more urban setting the knowledge collected also shifted. The type of knowledge that people living in hardship wanted to be taught in school reflected a shift away from the land and the ocean. People living in urban settings shared knowledge about mechanical engineering, woodwork, cooking, sewing, building, electrician, customer service and hairdressing, flower arrangements, jewellery making, costume design, handicraft amongst others. The type of knowledge shared from urban settings became more technical and tend to move further away from the land. This was to be expected as households in urban settings lived further away from their plantations and for most of them did not have access to land where they could plant.

The nature of the data collected also showed how people were blending traditional knowledge with new imported knowledge. This was evident in making *ngatu* with the new addition of paper to harden the *ngatu* instead of using two layers of *ngatu*. And while some may argue against or for the inclusion of foreign materials in the production of traditional material wealth it reflects cultural adaptation and change in Tongan knowledge system.

Overall, parents still believed that it was important to teach in the schools traditional Tongan knowledge systems that could be used to live a life that is sustainable. This is supported greatly by the students' response in which 86.1% of them said that the traditional, customary and social knowledge are *very useful* and almost 94% of them said this knowledge are useful *most of the time*.

#### ii. *Skills*

The skills gathered from the study closely followed the knowledge systems already described above as well as the livelihood of people who participated in the study. The data showed parents concern with teaching their children practical and applicable skills that their children could use at home. Parents were quiet clear in their expectations that the schools be able to teach their children skills that would enable their children to live a sustainable livelihood. The data showed that requested skills – such as fishing, weaving, and hairdressing – were skills that are currently being taught by parents or people outside of the formal education system. Parents believe that these skills are useful – particularly for children who are not successful in the current education system – and that livelihoods can be earned through these skills. Individual case studies illustrated people who left school early and have learned to use such skills as fishing, agriculture and woodwork to earn a living.

Some of the skills that were identified from the data included various fishing techniques to be used for reef fishing as well as for deep ocean fishing. Fishing skills also included construction of traditional fishing equipments and mending fishing nets amongst various fishing skills. Amongst these skills, were also skills used to find octopus, seashells and other sea creatures that are considered Tongan delicacy. Some of our field researchers were fortunate enough to learn first hand some of these skills when their households took them fishing.

The data collected included an extensive collection of agricultural skills that related to planting, maintenance and harvesting of crops and vegetables. There were several suggestions for schools to teach children how to grow simple vegetable gardens. The collection of skills also included livestock. One of our field researchers was very excited when he learned to milk a cow while he was out in the field. Another field researcher shared her excitement when she fed pigs and chickens while out in the field. As our field researchers were on site to observe and learn first hand some of these skills – they were able to record these skills in detail.

The data also recorded skills in weaving and the production of *ngatu*. Several of the field researchers came out of the Nofu and Talanoa with first hand experience of weaving and

certain skills in the production of *ngatu*. In learning these new skills the field researchers also learned new Tongan words in relation to these skills.

As the study moved to the urban areas we were able to record more technical skills in relation to engineering, woodwork, carpentry, sewing and other skills. The data from the urban areas also showed parents request for schools to teach communication, marketing and customer service skills. This reflects a more business orientation and tailoring of skills for production and sales – a move away from rural skills that focused more on daily subsistence and familial obligations.

Through conversations with members of the Tonga National Youth Congress (TNYC) it was understood that they offer several training programs in life skills, gender equity, agricultural skills and micro-enterprising. Such programs include the Young Tongan Farmers program where unemployed youths are taught agricultural skills and entrepreneurial skills. The TNYC work strongly suggest the need to not only teach skills in agriculture, fisheries and others but more importantly to train young people to be able to set up small businesses, create employment for themselves and to contribute to the national economy. Members of the TNYC believe that these skills should be included in the formal curriculum as while they do offer these programs they are run on ad hoc basis depending on funds and project availability. In Talanoa with the TNYC it was shared that a school has requested that their micro-enterprising program be offered in their school for their students.

The data also showed a concern with teaching of art, music and performing arts. Although some elements of these skills are offered in current curriculum, participants believe that these skills are limited. An example of this is the teaching of music, which is absent from primary school, and at high school level there is only the brass band instrument. One participant, a music composer suggests teaching children how to play other instruments, such as guitar, piano and the traditional Tongan nose flute. He believes that these instruments can help in entertaining tourists and encourage the performance of island songs.

Similarly other skills were collected pertaining to sports and arts. Although these skills are taught in schools, the data showed that more could still be done to enhance these skills. Individual case studies showed people who have earned livelihoods through sports and arts in spite of the education system's lack of offerings in these fields.

Through people's life experiences shared during this study we gathered skills on how people manage their resources and funds. This proves to be a key skill that needs to be taught in schools. In one case, the field researcher asked a father how he managed his funds. This father answered that 'budgeting' was for people who earned a regular paycheque – how could he budget 10 cents? This father then took the field researcher to his plantation and showed the field researcher almost ten different types of crops, vegetables and fruits. The father told the field researcher that certain rows of crops and vegetables were for everyday subsistence, another section of crops were for cultural obligations for the church and for the village and the final section of the plantation were

for his children's educational expenses. When this father needed money he would harvest certain crops depending on what it was needed for. Later the same day when they returned to the house, the father showed the field researcher a room full of mats, *ngatu* and other material wealth made by his wife. He told the field researcher that this was his savings account. When he needed extra funds he would take a mat or *ngatu* and sell it. The selling price for a mat in Tonga starts at \$500 pa'anga while a 50-foot *ngatu* can start at \$2,000 pa'anga each.

Through the life experiences shared by participants in this study it also showed how they survive on what may seem meagre resources. Although participants did not see these as skills, but through analysis of the data it became obvious that one of the livelihood skills prominent amongst people living in hardship is their ability to maintain relationships. This was particularly obvious with families who were living in hardship. With one family, (with 11 children) the father had no land – but they were able to survive by planting on the sister's land. The same family was also being helped by another sister of the father who was paying for some of the children's school fees. In another case of a single mother with 5 children, her family through remittance money was helping her. Throughout the different sites studied, there were cases of families who are being able to meet daily needs and obligations through the kindness of their relatives either in Tonga or overseas. However, what is most interesting about these families who are obviously living in hardship is that they themselves reciprocate to others. These families continue to observe their obligations to families, community and to their respective churches. These families also continue to practice the traditional sharing of food on Sunday lunch; a practice that is disappearing in urban settings.

Overall, the study has collected a rich diversity of skills that young people can use to earn a living. These skills range from agricultural, fisheries, handicraft, and carpentry, technical, resource management and maintaining relationships. However, there is a strong need for these mainly production skills to be channelled through micro-enterprising set up so that at the end of the day young people are able to earn a living.

But what also needs to be addressed is a way in which a revised and more practical curriculum can attract the students' interests and whose learned skills and knowledge appeal as future livelihoods. So far this is not the case. Academic subjects such as English, Mathematics and Science were found to be the most liked and what the students considered to be the “most useful”.

Almost all vocational subjects did not fare better; in fact they received the lowest preferences among students. Most students indicated that their preferences were based on what subject(s) they believe would be the *most useful* in their lives. This, however, does not mean that the students simply do not like these vocational subjects; it may simply mean that they are not aware of alternative career paths.

The questionnaire also asked what students believe to be the “most useful” traditional or technical skills. Students chose *engineering*, *agriculture* and *music* to be the most useful. Interestingly, a relatively low number of students from the outer islands chose fishing,

and even a much lower figure for students from Tongatapu. In a similar way, girls surprisingly were not too interested in *weaving* and *tapa-making* as most of them preferred to pick *sewing, knitting, cooking, and housekeeping* work.

## 2.3 Kavenga Ako – Financing Education

One of the major findings from this study is how parents finance their children's education. Government owned primary education<sup>10</sup> in Tonga is free while secondary school education charge fees. As a general rule, government owned secondary schools have lower school fees but demand higher grades to enrol. Privately owned schools<sup>11</sup> – most of which are owned by major churches in Tonga tend to be more expensive and are not as demanding on their grades for enrolment.

### *i. School fees*

Most of the students were living with either one or both parents (83.2%). Family incomes are earned mainly through parents working either for the Government as civil servants or for a private company. Remittance from relatives overseas as a major income accounts for a one-quarter of the surveyed students. Their relatives living in Tonga or overseas are paying for students' school fees. Generally, parents felt that school fees were necessary expenses and were not expecting the education system to reduce the fees.

The data showed that parents believe schools are necessary expenses and it is an important expense that they try to meet. In several cases, parents shared that their children's school fees were more important than their church and community obligations.

In some cases parents would work hard through the year to sell their produce so that they could pay their children's full fees early in the academic year. However, there were enough reported cases to confirm that school fees are often shared amongst relatives and the community.

At the beginning of every year there are development groups such as village men's kava drinking clubs who offer scholarships for disadvantaged children in their villages. These village scholarship ranges from fees paid scholarships, to all expenses paid (including uniform and stationary) scholarships. At the beginning of every year mothers are also known to be selling their material wealth such as mats and *ngatu* to pay for their children's school fees, uniform and stationeries.

Most students agreed that their families at home do support them *all the time* in meeting educational needs. This result correlates with the findings from the individual family's data. Close to half of the sampled students said that at least someone at home would help with their study such as their daily homework. Over half of the students were given opportunities or ample time and space at home to do their study or homework.

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<sup>10</sup> Government schools' proportion of the total number of primary schools – 98% (Tonga SDP8, 2006)

<sup>11</sup> Non-government school's proportion of the total high school enrolment – 67% (Tonga SDP8, 2006)

### *ii. Extra school 'kavenga'*

Unlike parents' beliefs about school fees, parents did not always welcome extra school expenses and obligations. This was particularly so for parents whose children attend the free local primary school offered by the government. Despite the 'free education' promoted by the government, the extra school expenses can still be taxing on parents – and more so for people living in hardship. In every village, there were reported cases of parents who are asking that the Ministry of Education reduce extra school expenses demanded of their children. These extra school expenses are however, often decided by the local Parents' Teachers Association, in response to what they see lacking in the school.

In one village, each household (with children attending the local primary school) was asked to contribute \$100 pa'anga at the beginning of every year. This money would go towards payment of school equipment and infrastructural developments on the school grounds. However, the \$100 pa'anga contribution was only for the beginning of the year. Throughout the year, parents were requested to prepare food to welcome guests to the school, to welcome student teachers and to feed teachers when they offer classes outside of normal class times. In the same village, a parent shared how her neighbour's daughter refused to go to school without her allocated plate of food requested by the teacher. This 9-year-old girl cried and begged her parents to prepare a plate of food for her take to school so that she would fulfil her obligation to feed their visiting student teacher. The parents told their daughter that they did not have any money to buy decent food to prepare for her teacher. The daughter cried and told the parents that she would rather stay out of the school than go as she will be physically punished if she turns up without the plate of food. The parents had to go to the neighbor's shop and ask for corn beef on credit so that they may prepare food for the teacher.

Children were also asked to collect various other items throughout the academic year including toilet paper, chart paper, pencils, mats and rims of A4 paper for photocopying homework and student assignments. There are also fundraising activities throughout the year to build libraries, fence, toilets and other infrastructures and maintenance of existing buildings. One parent complaint, that since the PTA has installed a new photocopier machine, teachers are photocopying everything and are not using the machine responsibly.

Generally, parents are willing to pay extra expenses for the education of their children – however; they also feel that more often than not most of these extra expenses are just too taxing on them.

### *iii. Transport to school*

One of the biggest daily school expenses for parents is the cost of school transportation. Although the government has built primary schools in almost every village, parents still continue to send their children to primary schools in town or urban areas. Most students (36.4%) in the Form 2 level group go to school in their own family vehicles. But a similar comparison between Tongatapu, and the outer island showed a market difference of

45.6% to 15.2% respectively. This suggests economical and geographical differences between those who reside in Tongatapu and those in the smaller outer islands.

There is a general belief by parents in rural areas that primary schools in the urban area tend to have better teachers and provide higher quality education. During this study – through the Nofo and Talanoa experience – our field researchers were able to gather sufficient information that confirmed these beliefs. The data by all account justify this belief that rural schools offer lower quality education than urban schools. As such then, parents try to send their children to urban schools. In one case, a parent tells of how her eight-year-old son travels to school. In days where they can afford to pay for his 50 cents bus fare the child takes the bus to school and back. However, on days where they could not afford the bus fare, the child would hitch a ride with others travelling from the same village and find his way home after school. To travel from this village to Nuku'alofa would take at least 45 minutes through other villages and bush allotments.

For secondary school students – cost of travelling to school is the most incurred expenses for them. Majority of secondary schools are located in Nuku'alofa requiring the transportation of a lot of students from the rural areas to town on a daily basis. Through this study we collected enough data to illustrate that for most people living in hardship the cost of travelling is all that they could afford for that day. Most of these young students go to school with just enough money to pay for bus fare and have to forgo lunch until they return home in the evening. For these students travelling from the rural areas, they would have to wake as early as 5am to catch a seat on the bus before 7am so that they can arrive at school by 8am. These students do not get home until around 5pm in the evening. School days can be very long days for students travelling from the rural areas.

## **2.4 Push out/ Drop Out**

The collected data also showed several issues that reveal reasons for students dropping out of school or being pushed out of school.

### *i. Special Needs Education*

Current practices in Tonga separate children with special needs from the main stream. The study recorded one case where the parents were asked by the primary school teacher to remove their child from the main stream primary school and to have the child enrolled at the special needs school. This was not welcomed by the parents – who believed that their child did not belong in the special needs school and with a more understanding teacher their child will be able to do fine in school. The parents had sent their child to two other primary schools before they finally decided to just leave their child at home.

Although this is one incident, it is likely that there are similar cases in other parts of the country. Since February 2007, the Ministry of Education has opened its very first integrated special education classroom – thereby piloting the integration of special education children into mainstream classrooms.

### *ii. Unregistered school children*



The study uncovered four different cases of children who have not been attending school for the last couple of years. In one village alone there were two families who with 6 and 3 children each who are not enrolled in any formal education. These families upon further investigation were not living in hardship. In case number one with the 6 children, they were living with their grandparents while their parents were overseas working. The children were sent from the United States to live with their grandparents. As the grandparents grew older the older children were asked to stay behind at home to help take care of the grandparents. Within a year or so the rest of the children left school as well. With the second case, the three children are living with their single mother. According to villagers the children have money from their deceased father but the mother is spending the money on her boyfriend. All three children have been out of school for the last couple of years. These children range in age from early primary school age to junior high school. The legal age for compulsory education in Tonga is 14 years old. Interestingly enough both of these families live right next door to the town officer and district town officers. Although town officers are responsible for reporting such cases, they have not made any formal report to the Ministry of Education.

Two other cases of unschooled children were recorded in urban settings. Again we find the same situation where a whole set of siblings is not attending school. This particular family has been preparing to migrate to the United States for the last two years and have put off educating the children until they migrate.

Throughout the study, data have been received with individual cases of young people who have left school for various reasons including staying behind to help take care of elderly relatives.

### *iii. Parental support for drop out*

There were recorded cases of parents who support their children's decision to leave school. These cases tend to concern young people at secondary school level. One parent shared that two of his daughters have asked him that they leave school after they had unsuccessfully sat the Tonga School Certificate. This parent was thankful that his daughters were honest enough to speak to him that they wanted to leave school. For this parent, it was more important for him that his children remained at home on their island rather than continue higher education and leave the island. Although this was a one off case, it is likely that similar cases may be found if the study had continued to the outer islands of Tonga.

Although not always clearly stated by parents in the Talanoa and Nofo, careful analysis of the data suggests that when parents do not trust the education system to provide their children with a worthwhile education, they are more accepting when their children decide to leave school. Most often in such cases, parents already suspect that their child may not be successful in school, so in the process of taking them to school, they also teach their children, other skills that would enable them to earn a livelihood for themselves. So in some way, parents indirectly support their teenagers when they decide to leave school.

### *iv. Financing education*

There were also reported cases of students who leave school due to financial hardship and parents could not longer support their education. It is likely that without such support networks provided by relatives and community scholarship there would be more cases of students leaving school due to financial reasons. Although the data did not record a significant number of students leaving school due to financial hardship as the data concentrated on homes with children who are at primary school level –the few cases observed suggests that such cases are more common than it appears.

*v. Corporal punishment*

One of the most evident reasons for children's truancy at primary school level is due to the physical punishment that they receive from school. While most parents agree that their children do need to be disciplined there are parents who believe that teachers in their anger and frustrations physically or verbally abuse the children. The students' survey reveals that over one-fifth of the Form 2 students believe that the use of physical or verbal abuse is not the best way to manage the classroom.

Similarly there were also enough reported cases of primary school aged children who do not go to school because of fear of being physically punished. Some of our field researchers had opportunities to talk with primary school aged children and most of these children reported that what they hate most about school is being physically punished.

### 3. Current educational policies & practices to reduce hardship and create sustainable livelihoods

A feature of education in Tonga in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the desire to improve education, in every aspect but mainly to meet the demands of the new century, and the objectives of the national Strategic Development Plan 7 (2001-2004). This resulted in a broad consultative process undertaken by the Ministry in 2002-2004. Restructuring for higher sustainable economic growth, ensuring financial stability, and investing in people are the key themes of SDP7, which places specific emphasis on the role of the education sector in promoting the country's growth.

An Educational Policy Framework (EPF) 2004-2019 was developed by the Ministry and approved by Cabinet in May 2004. The 3 Goals of the EPF has been further developed as the Ministry's Strategic goals, which focus on "transition" and "capacity building" required for Tonga to achieve its long-term objectives. A five-year Tonga Education Support Program (TESP) represents the first phase of the implementation of the EPF.

#### **3.1 Strategic Plan**

The Ministry's current strategic plan outlines the following key goals:

1. To improve equitable access to and quality of universal basic education for all children in Tonga up to Year 8
2. To improve the access to and quality of post-basic education and training to cater for the different abilities and needs of students
3. To improve the administration of education and training so that the quality of educational performance is enhanced

In 2005 the TMOE aligned its vision and mission to reflect the demands and objectives of the SDP7. The vision articulates that people of Tonga will achieve excellence in an education that is unique to this country and that Tonga will become a learning society. It is of the belief that education is the most valuable asset a person can possess and that well-informed and educated people is fundamental to Tongan society's well being. The vision is also of the belief that people should be encourage to think for themselves and to contribute to their society. This vision believes that education should help Tongans find the right balance between the needs of the individual, the transmission of Tongan culture, and meeting the needs of the Tongan society

To achieve this vision the TMOE has set out a mission to provide and sustain relevant and quality education for the development of Tonga and her people.

#### **3.2 TESP**

TESP is fully consistent with the Government's strategic approach to aligning the education sector with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and emphasizing education's critical role in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty. TESP focuses on improving the quality of schooling (primary and secondary education), the equitable delivery of services and resources (improve education outcomes), and strengthen public expenditure management (especially with a view to more equitable resource allocation),

policymaking, and monitoring and evaluation within the TMOE. While the institutional responsibility for implementing the EPF program rests with TMOE, its success will be contingent upon considerable support from other government agencies (especially Ministry of Finance) and also the numerous providers of education in the non-government sector.

TESP is results focused and it has three major components. The first goal focuses on Universal Basic Education (UBE) that addresses the following; Curriculum Reform; Strengthen Literacy Outcomes; Assessment for Better Learning; Improve the Quality of Teaching; and School Grants Program.

The second goal of TESP focuses on the improvement of education management and it plans to address the following; Strengthen policy, planning, monitoring and evaluation (including EMIS); Policy Dialogue; Strengthen Management; Capacity Building; Transition to SWAp; and ICT.

The third goal is to improve teacher supply and conditions of service.

To reduce hardship and create sustainable development in Tongan schools, issues of equity and access (physical and attainment) have been taken into consideration, by TESP.

### **3.3 Key Issues**

The key social issues in Tongan education are the overall difficulties faced by schools with respect to adequate maintenance, provision of supplies and other educational inputs, leading to what are perceived by communities as gradually deteriorating educational outcomes, lower quality of education in remote, outer islands, important differences in performance at secondary level between government and non-government schools and unusual gender issues.

Government schools overwhelmingly provide primary education, but funding has been inadequate to allow the schools to maintain facilities, adequately implement curriculum or provided sufficient materials. This has led to a disproportionate burden placed on the schools themselves and, in particular, the communities in which the schools are located. Local PTAs are very active in almost every region of the country. PTAs provide unusually large inputs of labour, materials and funding to enable primary schools to operate at even basic levels. An important goal of TESP will be to reduce the direct burden on the community, while at the same time maintaining the admirable level of community commitment to and engagement in promoting good educational outcomes.

However, over 70% of the Form 2 surveyed students were satisfied with the condition of their classrooms. The majority of the students (64.5%) were equally satisfied with sports equipment available at their school. However, only about half of the students were satisfied with the technical or scientific equipment or resources that they are accessible to at their schools. With the school compound, over half of the students were satisfied with its current state and only a third thought similarly of their school restroom.

In view of the resources inside the classroom, over half of the students (57.8%) said that in *each day* there were enough desks and chairs for everyone. Almost half of the students similarly agreed in terms of the amount of subject materials available in the classroom. While a surprising 65% of the students were very satisfied with resources available at their school library, this appears to be not true (according to comments from their teachers). Quite often, the students are at the library as part of an English lesson while other subjects do not usually require them to work in the library. However, most of these resources are aids from PTA and ex-students associations and village development groups rather than from government and educational authorities.

Equity of access is reasonably good across the various regions of Tonga with respect to primary school. Access to primary school is close to 100% for both boys and girls. Inequities in education are most apparent in Tonga at the secondary level due to the varied quality of education provided by government and non-government schools. There is a widespread perception within the country that the quality of education provided in non-government secondary schools is lower than that provided in the state schools, despite the higher fees charged. Equity concerns also emerge when looking closely at accessibility of lower-income families to secondary education suggests that the existing system of education finance at the secondary level is regressive, with students receiving the bigger subsidy coming from more affluent households and lower income families on average being under-represented in government secondary schools.

At the secondary level the situation is reversed, with non-government (almost exclusively church) schools providing access to almost three-quarters of secondary students. While all secondary schools suffer from problems with maintenance and educational inputs, these problems are significantly serious in non-government schools and the most pressing need is for resources to bring those schools up to the standard of the government schools.

It is obvious that equity and quality issues result largely from weaknesses in the Government's public expenditure management and policies. Government expenditures on education in Tonga have been in the range of about 3.5-4.5% of GDP since the late 1990s – a reasonable range by international standards. However, expenditures on education, as a percent of total national budget, have declined from almost 18% in 1999/00 to just over 14% in 2004/05. While the overall education budget dropped (in real terms) during the last four years, expenditure on established staff increased by over 15%, placing severe pressure on other expenditure items. This has resulted in a severe squeeze on the resources available for operations and maintenance (less than 1% of the recurrent budget has been allocated to maintenance in recent years) as well as learning-relating inputs. This means that burden for materials, basic maintenance and related inputs have fallen increasingly on parent and community groups such as PTAs. Support for learning-related inputs has eroded significantly and there is virtually no allocation at the primary level and minimum allocation at the secondary level.

As a result of the findings mentioned previously, the Ministry of Education undertook this broad consultative process, which resulted in the Education Policy Framework, and

started by TESP. It is anticipated that TESP will help reduce or alleviate hardship and create sustainable livelihoods in Tongan schools.

#### 4. How can educational policies & practices most effectively target hardship?

Tonga has over time seen a steady and strong development of its education sector. Tonga is proud of its high literacy rate and high participation in education amongst other indicators that reflect a strong commitment to education. However, in more recent years there has been a growing concern with issues of access, equity and the overall improvement of quality education in the country.

##### **4.1 Overview of Tonga Education Sector**

Tonga continues to report a 99% literacy rate for 15-24 year olds, a net enrolment ratio in primary education of 97.8% and a net enrolment ratio for secondary schools of 72% (2004). The government continues to provide 89% of the primary school education while non-government educational authorities continue to provide 76% of high school education. The dropout rates for government schools recorded 2.3% while non-government schools recorded 7.9% for 2004. Although there is 106% primary school completion rate there are a 19.8% of class 6 students who repeat this level – Ministry of Education claims that numeracy and literacy problems were the main reasons.

The key education indicators provided in Table 1<sup>12</sup> reflects current status of Tonga Education. While there is a reported high literacy rate, there continues to be a worrying number of repeaters at the end of primary school and while there is a recorded low dropout rate, the primary data we have gathered suggests otherwise. We suspect that there is a growing number of neither children who are neither registered nor attending primary school. Table 1 also shows that the ratio of pupils to teachers at primary school level in 2004 is 20.3 while secondary school level is at 14.4. While this appears encouraging there remain a higher number of untrained teachers at non-government schools while there are a 99% of qualified teachers at government schools. Further to this, there is an increasingly larger number of classes in urban schools versus small numbers in island schools and rising numbers of composite and multi-classes in rural and island schools, all of which impact on quality. This is one reason for improving teacher and leaning resources in schools and particularly so for rural and island schools. Since, the government's redundancy program in July 2006, there has been a significant increase in the number of students per teacher. In one primary school, there are over 500 students to 13 teachers – within this school, there are only two teachers for 100 students in Class One.

Based on these statistics several issues are evident when reflecting on the current status of Tonga education; issues of access for primary school aged children (physical access and access to attainment); issue of equity between government and non-government schools; and the quality of education (teachers, curriculum, assessment etc).

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<sup>12</sup> Refer to Appendices

## 4.2 Access, Equity and Quality of Education

### *i. Access & Equity*

Despite near universal access to primary education there continues to be discrepancy in access to quality infrastructures, resources and teachers. Urban areas of Tongatapu continue to provide better quality infrastructures, resources and teachers as compared to rural areas on Tongatapu and the outer islands of Vava'u, Ha'apai, Niuafu'ou, Niuatoputapu and 'Eua. There is a belief from parents that the quality of primary education provided in Nuku'alofa is better than what is being provided in their local village school. It is highly likely that this trend – in the provision of primary school - is also evident in the outer islands of Vava'u and Ha'apai. The distribution of quality resources and teachers amongst all primary schools still remains a key constraint in achieving physical access, access to attainment, equity and consequently quality education.

Although over 70% of secondary schools are offered by non-government authorities, there continues to be strong discrepancy in access (physical and attainment) and consequently equity between non-government and government secondary schools. The recent increase in salary for government teachers together with the government redundancy program has added to the discrepancy in services provided by both government and non-government schools. These decisions have further limited non-government schools' access to quality teachers, resources and professional support.

Physical access to secondary school continues to be a challenge particularly for rural areas and children from families in hardship. Data gathered repeatedly showed that families in hardship find it a financial struggle to find bus fares to send their children for secondary school education in Nuku'alofa. Parents who could not afford to pay for bus fares to send their children to Nuku'alofa usually end up sending their children to close-by non-government secondary schools. However, as is often the case non-government secondary schools – and more so for rural non-government secondary schools – have limited access to quality teachers, resources and professional support.

There is limited physical access to TVET and technical courses – most of these institutes are on Tongatapu and are all in Nuku'alofa. The strong mechanical and electrical emphasis on the curriculum of these colleges continues to favour the enrolment of boys over girls. In a country where most traditional skills are still gender specific it is imperative that the TVET curriculum is extended to cover traditional skills that would attract boys and girls – such skills as craft work, catering, agriculture, fishing and others.

Nevertheless, the key constraints in terms of access which consequently affect equity and quality education are; equitable provision of quality teachers, resources and professional support to government and non-government schools; government policies that directly impact government schools without due consideration for non-government schools; differences in salary scales for government and non-government schools; limited support in the development of quality education for rural schools; and relevancy of the curriculum for all Tongans to be able to live sustainable livelihoods within existing communities.



## *ii. Quality of Education*

### Role of a teacher:

There is a belief that being a teacher is not a duty – but rather that it is an obligation, a moral responsibility. Being a teacher in the Tongan context means that the teacher has the desirable attitudes of ‘*fevahevahe’aki*’ (sharing), *fuakavenga* (fulfilling obligations), *lototō* (humility), *taliangi* (compliance) and *kataki* (patience).

Current practices in the classroom reflect an increasingly ‘technical’ definition of a teacher. This is shown through examples, of teachers being late to school, lack of ability to deal appropriately with classroom management and discipline and lack of what parents perceive to be the appropriate attitude of a teacher. One parent described this situation well when she told our field researcher, that when she becomes a teacher that she provides the same warmth and love in the classroom as the parents do at home. That when the child leaves home in the morning with all the love and warmth of home, the teacher reinforces and builds on this at school. This example suggests that the teacher is more than just a person imparting knowledge, that the teacher also demonstrates values, behaviours and ways of being that will help create a learning environment that is ‘warm’ and ‘inviting’. When teachers cross the line of what is seen as appropriate discipline and physically and verbally abuse students, it is no longer the physical punishment that matters, but the spiritual and emotional punishment that is more detrimental. The case of the 6-year-old girl running away from school in fear of her principal clearly illustrates the consequence of teachers’ failure to create learning environments that are ‘warm’ and ‘inviting’.

This also suggests that parents are not only concern with the mind and intellect of the child, but more importantly, the spirit, the behavior and the holistic being of the child. Which again, all reflect Tongan conceptualisation of *Ako* – that it is holistic.

Although there is some form of spiritual counsel given to teacher trainees, there was an overwhelming agreement amongst teacher trainees, TIOE staff as well as CDU staff that there is a real need for ethics courses to be offered at the Institute. It was clearly obvious from the data that there is a strong need for professional development courses based on ethics and values in education. Further to this, it was also believed students – particularly students at government schools – will greatly benefit from courses in values and ethics. Such courses will be based on Tongan ethics and values.

The emphasis on ethics and values coincides with the principles of *mo’ui fakapotopoto* that is holistic and inclusive of not just technical knowledge, but also spiritual, cultural and social knowledge.

### Teaching Methodology:

The study has identified the learning process for Tongans. Learning for Tongans begins by observation, trial (touch), and listening and then performance. This means that Tongan teaching methodology should reflect how Tongans learn by demonstrating, asking

students to practice (touch), talking (and correcting) and then encourage students to perform or demonstrate. To emphasis this teaching and learning process refer to Table 2.

Table 2: Tongan Learning and Teaching Process

<b>Learning (Ako)</b>	1. Observation (Sio)	2. Practice (Ala)	3. Listen (Fanongo)	4. Perform (Tā)
<b>Teaching (Fai ako)</b>	1. Demonstrate (Fakatātā)	2. Practice with students (Kaunga Ala)	3. Monitor & Evaluate (Fakatonutonu)	4. Students to perform (Tā)

This finding suggests that teachers take into account how Tongan students learn and appropriately plan lessons that will capture this learning style rather than continually forcing students to learn in a prescribed way that may not always be useful nor worthwhile. With current practices in learning and teaching, means that students often do well in theories and examinations but when it comes to actually applying these knowledge, they are not able to do so. This suggests that current practices do not allow students to fully engage their minds in such a way that knowledge is stored in their long term memory and that they are able to take this knowledge and apply it. But, with current practices of teaching and learning, learning most often takes place at a very superficial level and is forgotten after a period of time.

The study has also identified five key learning areas that with the data collected, sufficient information has been gathered to inform teachers on these areas. The areas are; research skills; evaluation and assessment; learning styles; group work; and ethical conduct. There has been a proposal by IOE and CDU to write and publish a series of handbooks for teachers based on these five key learning areas.

Knowledge systems in the Curriculum:

In *Talanoa* sessions with teachers, it became apparent that current knowledge within the curriculum is often too large to be completed within the academic year and that teachers struggle to complete the prescribed syllabus for the year. Teachers have also complaint of the lack of Tongan knowledge in subjects like Social Science. Teachers have also complaint of outdated knowledge in the current curriculum including subjects like Music and Physical Education, which are almost non-existent in the current practice. Such complaints are in agreement with parents who wish that there would be greater opportunities in the formal education to encourage talents other than academic pursuits – particularly sports, performing arts and traditional carving and handicrafts.

It was also apparent from the *Talanoa* with teachers that there is a serious lack of teaching resource for teachers. While in the past there may have been some way that teachers could borrow materials from each other – with the recent government redundancy program, more experienced teachers have left the education system. One of the serious implications is that less experienced teachers are left to fend for themselves. This also means, that the CDU urgently needs to provide the current teachers with teaching resources and basic teaching materials including syllabus, assessment criteria and scheme

of work. It was obvious from the study that the state of Tongan teachers – is in a crisis that demands immediate attention.

The study has shown that there is a knowledge system outside of the formal school system that enables people to live sustainable livelihood. The study has also identified key knowledge systems that Tongans believe to be vital to being Tongan and that these knowledge systems are missing from the formal school curriculum. While the formal education system tends to favour technical skills such as computer skills, and scientific skills, it has done very little to encourage art skills, music skills, sports skills, performing art skills and other creative skills. And while urban settings maybe moving towards more technical and computer skills, the majority of Tongans still earn their living from the ocean and from the land. As such then, it is important that farming and fishing skills are pertinent knowledge systems that are taught in formal education systems if we want people to live sustainable livelihoods in Tonga.

Although some of these knowledge systems and skills are in the current curriculum, they are not taught sufficiently well that students may be able to demonstrate these skills nor to gain a livelihood from these knowledge. Currently, any skills that are somewhat related to Tongan knowledge are all packed together in Tongan studies. The current curriculum Tongan studies, is overburden with all different kinds of Tongan knowledge. These Tongan knowledge systems range from performing arts, literature, music, science, medicine, botany, oceanography, mathematics, sociology and philosophy, history, economics, politics, geography, astronomy and language, amongst many other Tongan knowledge systems.

This study has highlighted the depth, diversity and inter-relatedness of these knowledge systems and that by trying to fit all of these knowledge systems into one subject, not only reduces the value of these knowledge systems but also encourages a very superficial teaching of a subject that is clearly vital to sustaining a livelihood and a culture in Tonga. Through *Talanoa* sessions with CDU officers it became evident that Tongan knowledge systems need to be appropriated throughout the curriculum. This means that Tongan Mathematics is taught together with Western Mathematics under the subject of Mathematics. This does not mean that western mathematics is given Tongan examples, and thereby claiming that it is now Tongan mathematics. But, rather that Tongan counting systems and Tongan mathematical language are taught as a knowledge system within Mathematics. Similarly, when teaching Science, Tongan science, astronomy, botany and medicine are also included and given appropriate weighing in the curriculum. Through this approach, Tongan knowledge, skills, and values then are weaved throughout the curriculum rather than it being a separate single subject on its own.

The suggested approach of weaving Tongan knowledge systems throughout the curriculum would be advantageous on several fronts.

Firstly, the integration would encourage improved attitude towards Tongan knowledge systems from teachers who teach the subject and consequently, improve students' attitude about Tongan knowledge systems. Findings from the study clearly illustrate that Tongan

Studies is a subject that is least favoured both by teachers and students. However, the study has also found that parents and community still strongly believe in the importance of Tongan knowledge systems not only for the survival of a culture but also survival of its people.

Secondly, this integrated approach in the curriculum would greatly enforce a teaching and learning approach that is much more reflective of the principles of *Ako* and *mo'ui fakapotopoto* – that it is holistic, dynamic, interconnected and unbounded by subject disciplinary. As the curriculum would be much more aligned with community knowledge and practical everyday lives, teachers will be encouraged to demonstrate skills and bring resources from outside of the classroom. It is also likely that teachers will be more creative with their teaching methodologies as the knowledge being taught is much more familiar to them.

Thirdly, a context specific, relevant and meaningful curriculum is offered by weaving Tongan knowledge systems throughout the curriculum. When the curriculum is relevant, learning then becomes applicable and thereby enabling young people to lead sustainable livelihoods within Tongan environment. Further to this, when learning is based on context specific knowledge, students take full ownership of the knowledge and are at a greater advantage to create, develop and enhance traditional understandings of Tongan knowledge. It will be with the skills to create and build on traditional knowledge that would encourage young Tongans to carve for themselves a unique place in the Pacific region as well as in the global world. Although Tongan knowledge systems identified in the study can sustain livelihoods in Tonga, individual case studies also show that these knowledge systems can be enhanced and developed to earn livelihoods both inside and outside of Tonga. However, the skill to recreate, develop and enhance traditional Tongan knowledge systems can only occur when the student or individual is skilful and knowledgeable of Tongan knowledge systems. Thus, an integrated approach to the curriculum would encourage young Tongans to not only earn a livelihood in Tonga but also give them a unique and competitive advantage in the regional and global world. This would mean that when Tongans migrate overseas they could be more than just 'fruit-pickers', cleaners, factory workers, caregivers and yard workers. Tongan education system has to be more than just providing seasonal labour for New Zealand, Australia and the United States – this is not sustainable development. Through a purposeful weaving of Tongan knowledge systems into the curriculum, Tongans would actually have unique skills and knowledge that they can bring to the global knowledge system.

Finally, the integration of Tonga knowledge systems into the curriculum will sustain Tongan culture and consequently, the survival of Tongan people.

### **4.3 Strategies – to improve access, equity, quality education**

The strategies suggested here are based on the Tongan conceptualisation of *Ako* (education) and *mo'ui fakapotopoto* (sustainable livelihood)

#### *i. Principles of Ako and Mo'ui Fakapotopoto*

It is vital that the formulation of educational policies and strategies to address issues of access, equity, quality education and consequently the alleviation of hardship must be founded on Tongan concepts of *Ako* and *mo'ui fakapotopoto*.

The data has shown that people living in hardship find it the most difficult to gain access to education – in other words education in its current status is exclusive and bounded by space, time and finances. Tongan understanding and beliefs about *Ako* is however, inclusive, unbounded by neither space nor time. *Ako* is also believed to have multiple teachers with learning taking place close to the source of livelihood. *Ako* also recognizes that different children have different talents and capabilities and teaches knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriately. *Ako* is beyond formal education; it includes non-formal and lifelong learning. So, if *Ako* then is inclusive, unbounded by formal education and defined curriculum then future development in education to alleviate hardship must be from a broader and inclusive approach.

The data has also shown that *mo'ui fakapotopoto* is a way to overcome hardship. *Mo'ui fakapotopoto* is based on a holistic development of the individual – a development that is inclusive of the spiritual, emotional, psychological, physical, economic and social well being of a person. Such approach is also conscious of relevancy, meaningfulness and worthwhileness of the task. As such a person's attitude is central to attaining *mo'ui fakapotopoto* – a person who lives a livelihood that is sustainable must be able to relate to his or her cultural and physical environment.

Based on these understandings of *Ako* and *Mo'ui fakapotopoto* any strategy to address hardship and poverty through education has to be seen from a broader inclusive perspective. Such an approach must look beyond formal education to include non-formal education. As such the most effective way to target hardship in Tonga is from a multi-sector approach – not just the ministry of education – but a whole community – church, local governance, police, health, youth groups, businesses and other non-government agencies. As *mo'ui fakapotopoto* is based on the development of the whole person – spiritual, emotional, physical, economical and social well being – it takes multiple stakeholders to work together in encouraging such a life. A multi-sector approach will reflect Tongan thinking of education and raising a child – that it takes a village to raise a child.

The current formal education system is already overtaxed with financial limitations in the budget, as well as overloaded curriculum – church, local governance, health, community groups and others can help – thereby reducing dependency on one agency to educate Tongan people. A strategy that can bring together multiple stakeholders can foster a more holistic development of education (both formal and non formal) in Tonga. It is important to note here that the involved stakeholders should have a heavy community base. All too often the involvement of stakeholders are at government and at institutional level rather than at community level.

Through a greater partnership between various stakeholders – the curriculum, teaching methodology and learning strategies can better reflect the needs of the community. The

data has already shown parents who believe that there are limited pathways for their children – that only some children become successful at school. An approach based on *Ako* and *Mo'ui fakapotopoto* will enable school leavers and adult learners to continue learning through different modes, as *Ako* is no longer confined to formal education. Through a greater multi-sector approach, differences in school and home culture can be minimized as well as reduction in financing education as more stakeholders contribute.

Through this approach Tongan knowledge, skills and values are encouraged, maintained and developed. It will also reduce misconceptions of different knowledge systems, at the school and in the community.

Such an approach will follow Tonga Ministry of Education's long-term goal of 'lifelong learning' as well as sustainable development of the country.

#### *ii. Strategies – Formal Education*

Based on the data gathered and analysis of the major constraints in terms of access, equity and quality of education the following strategies are recommended:

1. Government policy that encourages equitable distribution of quality teachers, resources, professional development and infrastructure.
2. Ensure equitable and comparable salary scales between non-government and government schools
3. Improved support for the development of quality education for rural schools – particularly for rural non-government schools this can include recruiting teachers from village the same village to teach at the local school.
4. Review of the curriculum that it ensures relevant, practical, context specific and useful skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable all Tongans to live sustainable livelihoods within existing communities. TVET must be included at primary school level and that it includes traditional skills of carving, weaving, art etc.
5. Widen the scope of TVET curriculum to include courses – such as handicrafts, jewellery making, arts and crafts, hairdressing, and beauty therapy – that will encourage more girls to participate in technical education. Current technical schools can do more to encourage girls to enrol in traditionally male dominated courses such as plumbing, electrician and engineering. TVET and tertiary institutes can also do more to encourage continuing education – particularly for women to participate in small businesses and marketing of their handicraft products.
6. To reflect the principles of *mo'ui fakapotopoto* the curriculum must also move towards a more holistic approach to learning – that it engulfs spiritual, cultural, physical and emotional development. This is particularly so for government schools – and more so for primary school level, where government owns more than 90% of the primary schools in Tonga. As spirituality and culture plays a vital role in the socialisation of Tongans in the community, this must be equally reflected in curriculum and in schools.
7. Support for improvement of teacher education programs – both pre-service program and in-service program. Development of teacher education programs that would encourage *mo'ui fakapotopoto* for teachers. Teacher education programs

- must reflect core ethical conduct needed for a teacher as well as courses in values and ethics in educational practices. Teacher education programs are available for all non-government and government teachers. Greater incentive to increase training for non-government teachers.
8. Teacher education support programs must also encourage further development of understanding Tongan learning styles and consequently adjusting teaching styles that it enables a deeper and more meaningful learning process. Development of *Ako* as a conceptual foundation for learning and teaching in Tonga.
  9. Support for development of principals and head-teachers' leadership training program. With move towards school-based management principals and head-teachers need context specific leadership training support programs. Such programs can include financing education and training principals on ways to manage resources, seeking sponsorship from local business and seeking alternative funds to supplement limited maintenance funds from the government. Principals must work hard to reduce heavy dependency on parents to fund raise for school infrastructural needs. This will significant reduce financial hardship on some families. Quality leaders and quality teachers build quality education.
  10. Government and non-government teachers to work closely in review and writing of curriculum to ensure shared understanding and value of common curriculum.
  11. Develop teacher resource materials to better support teachers including teachers in the outer islands and inexperienced teachers. Support the establishment of Teacher Resource Centre accessible to all non-government and government teachers.
  12. Develop educational administration materials and support for head teachers and school principals. Support for Principals' Association and their work.

### *iii. Strategies for non-formal education*

1. Set up of a National Action Group on the promotion of non-formal education that will embrace a holistic development of the individual and the community, based on the Tongan concept of '*mo'ui fakapotopoto*'. This National body will coordinate efforts of all agencies and government organisations that are working on community education. One of its immediate tasks can be to coordinate the design and implementation of community training packages based on '*mo'ui fakapotopoto*'.
2. Community training programs can be offered in collaboration with the Ministry of Education using government schools located throughout villages and outer islands. Existing structures like home economics and industrial arts facilities can be upgraded and used for community training. Such programs will be designed to follow concept of *Ako* and use of Talanoa as a teaching and learning tool. This program will aid in the holistic development of a community and contribute to the vision of a life long learning society.
3. Community training programs can also address parenting skills amongst others. Changing roles in families as well as need to find sustainable livelihoods in communities are issues that can be addressed through community training programs aimed at developing a whole community.

4. Community training programs need to also address the challenges faced by young people. Some of these include youth and unemployment – where training is targeted at young entrepreneurship using local natural products. Such programs can also address health, cultural, spiritual and general well being of young people based on the concept of '*mo'ui fakapotopoto*'. Young people will also include deportees and children who have been sent by their parents from overseas to live in Tonga.
5. Community training programs must see the collaboration of church and local governance to ensure that communities are developed holistically. Concerns of sanitation, reproductive health, non-communicable diseases and healthy living, environmental issues and conservation of sea and land. Such a program can also include legal literacy, violence against women, parenting and community building. Church and local governance need to actively participate in promoting Christian and Tongan values at community level – particularly with young people. Holistic development ensures sustainable development of all people at local level and consequently at national level.

*iv. Stakeholders and their responsibilities*

1. Ministry of Education; ensure that their policies, strategies and support programs encompass all non-government and government schools. One of the key policies that the Ministry of Education can put in place includes guidelines and limit on '*kavenga*' and educational obligations demanded of parents. TMOE together with principals can work hard to find alternative sources of funds to aid educational development – rather than the current heavy demand on parents. The current TESP program should speed up the process of government funding for schools, however, it should be noted that the benchmark for funding schools should be based on people living in hardship and what they can afford. Government policies must ensure equitable provision of quality teachers, infrastructures, resources and professional development for all schools. Investment is much needed for the development of teacher education in Tonga and in the immediate future for the supply of teachers to reduce the poor ratio of teacher student. The TMOE must also ensure that the current review of the curriculum is based on the principles of *Ako* and *Mo'ui Fakapotopoto* and that Tongan knowledge systems are weaved into the curriculum. Sustainable livelihood can only be achieved through purposeful articulation of education and Tongan culture. TMOE needs to recognize the partnership it has with non-government educational authorities and the significant contribution that they have to the development of education in the country. Government to increase support for rural and outer island schools – particularly for non-government schools. TMOE to coordinate consolidated efforts to create community training programs for continuing education.
2. Ministry of Youth and Training; in collaboration with Ministry of Education, to include in the community training package components for youth development. In particular to include young entrepreneurship to address unemployment and other youth related issues. This program should also reintroduce returning Tongan youths from overseas into living in a Tongan community and how they can be contributing and law abiding members.



3. Ministry of Health: in collaboration with identified ministries develop training package for community development. This will be an extension and reinforcement of existing community health education programs. In the program, information on reproductive health, caring for elderly citizens and infants, care for physical handicaps, use of basic herbal/traditional medicine, non-communicable diseases, sports and fitness, hygiene and sanitation can be included to cater for women, men and young people.
4. Ministry of Police: in collaboration with identified ministries design and implement training package for community development. Issues of legal literacy, domestic violence, road safety, fire prevention, basic laws for maintaining community peace amongst others can be delivered through the community development program. The Police can also use this program as a way to extend their community policing initiatives.
5. Ministry of Labour and Commerce: to increase identification of overseas niche markets for women's handicrafts, to assist in valuating of women's handicrafts and defining quality levels for handicrafts, to set up policies and structures that would allow women greater access to credit, technical assistants in setting up businesses amongst other commercial and entrepreneurship assistants. To facilitate apprenticeship programs between private businesses and technical and businesses schools. Assist in marketing young Tongan farmers produce.
6. Church at community level: the village church still plays an influencing role in the socialisation process of young people. Church leaders must actively be involved in ensuring Christian and Tongan values are instilled in community development programs based. Church leaders can do more to involve young people in their youth programs and assist in parenting skills and community responsibilities.
7. Governance at community level: town officers and nobles must also be actively engaged in community development initiatives. Town officers and nobles are community leaders and instrumental in ensuring community development programs are worthwhile and useful for their community. Town officers can also work to ensure children are registered and are attending school.
8. Parent – Teacher's Association: where evident PTA is already heavily involved in providing resources and funding for village primary schools. Although accepted by most parents, these '*kavenga Ako*' (school responsibilities) are taxing on the limited resources of people in hardship. Local communities can be given support in seeking funds, sponsorships and alternative sources of funding and management of school funds. Skilled community people can be used in schools to teach skills, knowledge and attitudes that are particular to the needs of the community. Such a strategy would contribute to building strong partnerships with communities and encourage nurturing and development of traditional skills. This would also develop mechanisms whereby communities could have inputs into educational policies and curriculum taught in their schools. Through stronger partnership with communities PTA could find alternative funds to support 'teachers' recruited from the communities.

### **Future investment in Educational Development**

1. Quality Teacher Education – aid in the development of teaching materials and resources that are contextual and are specifically developed for the needs of Tongan teachers and their students. Enable greater access to teacher education (both pre-service and in-service) for non-government teachers. Aid in the establishment of Teaching and Learning Resource Centre – for teachers to have access to curriculum materials, teaching aid, resources and assessment materials. Support of professional development programs for teachers that are continual and accessible to non-government teachers and rural and outer island teachers. Current teacher education program can be extended to provide distance and flexible learning programs for outer island teachers. One of the most pressing needs for teacher education in Tonga is the development of professional development program for ethical conduct and also for research skills. There cannot be enough support for the encouragement of quality teacher education in Tonga. Suggested partner: Tonga Institute of Education (TIOE).
2. Quality Educational Leadership – support the development of a leadership-training program for school principals and head teachers. A Principals’ qualification program needs to be developed specifically for the needs and context of Tonga and this program to be offered by TIOE. Suggested partner: TIOE.
3. Provision of Learning and Teaching materials – in an effort to improve literacy and numeracy skills greater investment needs to go into production of teaching and learning materials in the Tongan language. There is a dearth of reading materials in the Tongan language throughout all levels of education. Research has proven that the mother language is the language of cognition. Suggested partner: Curriculum Development Unit (Ministry of Education).
4. Rural Schools – investment in the provision of quality infrastructure, resources and teaching materials for rural schools and outer islands schools (primary and secondary) will aid in resolving the issue of equity. Suggested partner: Non-government educational authorities.
5. TVET – to encourage greater access to TVET aid in the establishment of TVET courses throughout primary and secondary school level. Widen the TVET curriculum to include courses that would best utilize local knowledge, skills and attitudes<sup>13</sup>. Such a curriculum will encourage girls to participate in TVET programs as well as encourage young people to live sustainable livelihoods within their communities. TVET program to also include entrepreneurial courses. TVET courses to also include the promotion of sports and music – two key areas that have been identified as preferred by students but not adequately supplied through the current school curriculum. Suggested partner: Ministry of Education and non-government educational authorities.
6. Community Development: training based on holistic development of ‘*mo’ui fakapotopoto*’ in a community. Training package includes leadership, entrepreneurship, health, spirituality, legal literacy, environmental conservation and other skills needed for community development. Partner with Ministry of Education, Women and Culture, the Ministry of Youth and Training and the University of the South Pacific.

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<sup>13</sup> Fishing, agriculture, weaving, tapa making, cooking, creative art and design, sewing etc

7. Community Outreach for government agencies: future investments can provide technical assistants to Ministry of Education, Women and Culture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Police and Ministry of Labour and Commerce, in ensuring that their services reach out to local communities. Through community outreach these government agencies can foster closer working relationships with local governance and communities.

## **Recommendations**

1. Support the development of programs that are sustainable and will encourage Tongan people to live sustainable livelihoods within existing communities and elsewhere. Education for sustainable development<sup>14</sup> is based on a strong foundation of culture from which economic, social and political growth are build upon.
2. Support of programs that directly impact on teaching and learning – improvement of teacher education programs through provision of teacher education materials, professional development programs, teacher education programs for outer islands and rural teachers, greater access for non-government teachers to participate in teacher education.
3. Support of quality educational leadership programs – research, development and design of principals’ qualification program for TIOE.
4. Support the production of teaching and learning resources in the Tongan language for primary school.
5. Support of TVET programs to include entrepreneurship and local skills like fishing, weaving etc. TVET to be accessible throughout primary and secondary school. TVET to reflect the needs of local communities and Tonga. Widen scope of TVET to encourage participation of women in traditionally male dominated technical subjects. Include new courses such as beauty therapy, hairdressing etc that are attractive to girls.
6. Assist in the set up of a National Action Group to co-ordinate community training program based on concept of *mo’ui fakapotopoto* and *Ako*.
7. Assist Ministry of Education, Women and Culture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Police and Ministry of Labour and Commerce to design and implement a community-training package that is holistic and is based on Tongan concept of ‘*mo’ui fakapotopoto*’. The University of the South Pacific’s Continuing Education unit can provide technical assistance with this project.
8. Provide equipment and technical assistants to enable identified ministries to promote community outreach programs using the suggested community training package based on ‘*mo’ui fakapotopoto*’.

Future investments can contribute to a more sustainable development of education in Tonga by strengthening current technical colleges and the inclusion of TVET throughout primary and secondary school. Future investments can support curriculum review, provision of materials and encouragement of the use of local knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will give Tonga a competitive edge in the wider regional market. However,

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<sup>14</sup> UNESCO launched in 2005 the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development.

most importantly, is the support given to the enhancement of professional development programs for teachers in Tonga.

While Tonga has made some significant progress in the development of education, the issues of access (both physical and attainment), equity and quality still needs further support. We recommend future investments to be in support of educational programs that promote sustainable development of Tongan people and their culture.

## 5. Impact of educational policies & practices on improvement of sustainability of livelihoods of families and individuals – to what extend?

This question has many aspects to it. It considers: *how has education contributed to lives of the people in hardship; how have people improved their lives, with or without education; what aspect of education are positive contributors to the lives of people in hardship, and to what extend could education be accredited to 'success'?*

In answering all the above questions, one needs to view the quality of education in Tonga, not just in the present but also from the past. The Tongan data has shown evidence of the effect of past education to various individuals, families, development groups and communities. Further discussion of the data has also elaborated on the present situation in Tonga. Based on such discussion, the future in Tonga will not be as fruitful or improved if no adjustment is being made to the current educational system. The following discussion attempts to justify this position by looking at the nature, the effect, and the relationship between 'education' and 'hardship' as seen through the Tongan data by exploring each of the sub-questions mentioned above.

### 5.1 How has education contributed to lives of people in hardship?

Most Tongan people who started out living in hardship and have successfully completed formal education have gone on to find a decent way of living; some in Tonga while others have moved on to live overseas. Education for these people has contributed greatly not only in upgrading their standard of livings but also in their own personal developments – spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and social. This is true in Tonga and perhaps in any other country that endorses formal education *for all*.

But what the Tongan data has also revealed is that 'education' is not restricted to formal education. It includes non-formal education where most people in hardship have successfully found a way to improve their lives. The stories of all the successful Tongans in the individual cases who earned good money through weaving, hairdressing, landscaping, vegetable-gardening, music-production, fixing tyres, carving, plantation, fishing, etc., have all bear witnesses to the reality of life in Tonga and the potential for others alike to live a sustainable livelihood. There are four main convictions or beliefs these successful and skilful individuals have in common:

First, their formal education, although minimal, have contributed in many ways to their trades and professions. For them, the ability to communicate well with tourists is better nurtured in their formal education. The ability to be creative and innovative in what they do can also be developed in formal education. The ability to learn in depth the knowledge associated with their trades can also be taught in school. All of these suggest that formal education is still significant to the intellectual development of each individual. It is this belief that all of these successful individuals have continually supported their apprentices (and any other interested individuals) to continue with their formal education to whatever level they can possibly achieve. In addition, these successful individuals have offered their assistance to teach or demonstrate their professional work in the classroom.

Secondly, any successful non-formally educated individual must be creative and strategic to use available resources. Tongan individual must have first and foremost faith in him or herself, be strategic, and make utilise available resources that would enhance his or her talents. It is the innovation within each individual that would allow him or her to find a way of incorporating new materials into his or her art, or explore new ways of doing things.

Thirdly, any successful non-formally educated individual must attain knowledge of, and exercise living with, the appropriate values and attitudes. These values range from what are considered the Tongan and religious values of respect, love, honesty, commitment, hard-work, enthusiasm, reciprocity and sharing. They must also have the ability to make the right decisions, to budget money and use time wisely. All of these make an individual a better or 'whole' person. To live wisely and productively, one needs to be equipped with the right social or cultural values and attitudes..

Lastly, any successful non-formal educated individual must be willing to share with others particularly those less educated, the skills and knowledge that would enable them to live sustainable livelihoods.

However, education and hardship is a two-way relationship. Through education, some people in hardship have defied the odds and rose above their hardship. Sustaining that livelihood is a different story. The Tongan data provides both a reality check and a lesson to be learned from how some people have improved their lives, with or without education.

## **5.2 How have people improved their lives – with or without education?**

The key to improving lives, and more importantly in someone attaining sustainable livelihood, has been found and described in the Tongan concept of *mo'ui fakapotopoto*. This concept has been described to encompass spiritual, emotional, physical, inter-social and intellectual dimensions. The Tongan study found that some people have improved their lives without formal education and some people have done so with pride in formal education. In addition, those who did so without formal education have done so through non-formal education, as in many of the described individual cases.

With formal education, people have gone on to find a decent job either by working in a Government office or for a private company, while some have continued to pursue further studies in or outside the country. Those who were unfortunate to find work within the available job-market have gone on to create one for themselves either at home or in their own communities. Yet an "improved" or "sustainable" life is not necessarily measured only by the amount of money they make in each pay-cheque but by *how* they live life within their particular social or cultural context.

Some of the case studies involved educated individuals who have successfully completed tertiary education, have worked civil servants, and others for non-government

organizations. Despite these benefits, those who lived or exhibited a *mo'ui fakapotopoto* not only applied their education appropriately and efficiently in what they do but also ventured out into creating more opportunities for others, mainly high school push outs. In addition, these educated people managed to fulfil most of their social obligations to others while sustaining an accomplished family life at the same time.

In the same way, those who succeeded outside of the formal education system have done so through non-formal education. These skilful and talented people have done so mainly by first observing then practicing. The school-age appears to be irrelevant in terms of when their non-formal training had started. The individual cases showed how some successful individuals have done so without completing primary school while others did so after dropping out mid-way through secondary school. These skilful individuals have also shown great interests in nurturing young learners in their trade or profession. At the same time, they too, like those successful formal-educated people, have lived a sustainable livelihood by exercising *mo'ui fakapotopoto* in their daily lives, a life that incorporates social values and individual obligations. *Ako* or education in the Tongan context is indeed all-inclusive and unbounded.

In both cases then, it is the principles of *mo'ui fakapotopoto* that has enabled them to live sustainable livelihoods – with or without formal education. Principles of *mo'ui fakapotopoto* are mainly learnt at home and in the community.

### **5.3 To what extent could education be accredited to 'success', and what aspect of education are positive contributors to the lives of people in hardship?**

'Success' is a relative term or concept. In the Tongan context, it is defined in relation to the social and cultural roles and values associated with each individual or community. People in hardship are often concerned or faced with issues of access, equity and quality of education being offered in the country.

What the Tongan data have shown is that education and hardship are indeed related but the multifarious relationship goes beyond the scope of formal schooling. This can be no better illustrated than in the case study of Sitiveni Fehoko, a master in his own right at wood carving in Tonga. Sitiveni's story below not only endorses the role of formal education in his success but also describes how he values education and how much he loves to pass on his learned knowledge and skills to others through his own non-formal training, and also, he hopes, through formal education:

*Mr. Sitiveni Fehoko, age 47, is one of Tonga's most talented wood carvers. He was born in the Ha'apai group to a family Sitiveni described to have lived in hardship. Sitiveni's father was a carpenter who preferred his children to follow his trade rather than trying to earn a living from the ocean or from the plantation. He strongly believes that there will always be pieces of wood here and there for them to work on and make money from what they produce. It is here where Sitiveni first experienced wood carving when he helped his father built a canoe. The children including Sitiveni gradually got the hang of it and became very much interested in carpentry and wood carving work.*

*Sitiveni first went to a Mormon primary school in Pangai, the capital of Ha'apai. Then after completing his primary education, he moved to the main island, Tongatapu, and continued with his secondary education at Beulah College, a Seventh-Day Adventist Church school. Sitiveni successfully passed Form 5 New Zealand's School Certificate at the time. He then left school and moved back to Ha'apai where he worked for the Government's Telecommunication branch there. Sitiveni returned to the main island where he got married; he now has seven children in total.*

*Quite often in those early days, Sitiveni would visit the Fa'onelua Part in Nuku'alofa where wood carvers usually demonstrate and sell their work to the passed-by tourists. Sitiveni became interested to do similar work partly because he said he knows a thing or two about it from his earlier carpentry work.*

*One day, a palangi (white person) approached him and made him a deal to sell his carved products only if Sitiveni works with him. At the time, his wife was working for the Bank of Tonga. After a few weeks, he noticed immediately how different their weekly incomes, and that he made much more money than his wife. Soon after, they agreed that his wife leave her work and join him. It is to this day that Sitiveni and his wife have worked alongside each other.*

*When their work profited, Sitiveni employed a lot of people including eleven individuals whose families are now relying on their earnings. Sitiveni claims that he has a certain criteria for selecting these unemployed youths. Sitiveni deliberately chose people without any experience or skill in his trade, and who either dropped out after primary school or later in Form 2. He would love nothing but to pass on his skills and knowledge to his apprentices.*

*One of Sitiveni's beliefs is that his work would have been far better had he continued or pursue further studies. He believes that through formal education, he would be more creative and innovative in his art work and carving. Because of that, Sitiveni has strongly encouraged his children to take up their education to the highest level. Sitiveni does not agree therefore with some of his fellow carvers who insist on pushing their children to drop school and join them in their work. He also adds that his regular travels overseas have also incorporated into his work a much more diverse and other innovative ideas.*

*One of the things Sitiveni treasures is how much he embraces his own Tongan values of respect and sharing in particular. He also values highly one's commitment and hard work in what he or she does. Sitiveni also believes that the ability to budget money wisely is also crucial to his success and in sustaining his livelihood. After every week, he would take his earnings, pay off his employees, buy new tools for his work, cover other expenses including his family's weekly spending and other obligations, and there will always be money left, he said. Sitiveni's annual income is well over T\$100,000 though he was reluctant to disclose the actual amount. With that, he takes pride in not having any loan to pay or owe anyone anything.*

*Currently Sitiveni has marketing outlets in the International Dateline Hotel and in Talamahu Market, and he owns 'Fehoko Art Creation', a small shop on Vuna Road near the domestic wharf. This sophisticated store carries excellent baskets, tapa, and*



*coral jewellery, and both whale and fish bone scrimshaw. His wife helped him with some of the work, and also adds to their collection her own beautiful photo-album frames that are decorated using dried banana leaves. In all, Sitiveni and his wife relied mainly on resources available in the country.*

*They would like therefore to establish a wood carving school in their village, specifically for drop-out students and unemployed youths. But they would like to see a special centre being established just for young people who need it or have the interests to pursue such skills. The couples are also willing to help with the Tonga Ministry of Education in doing workshop in their trade especially for interested students, teachers and educators.*

Sitiveni's example above clearly illustrates the relationship between education and hardship. In such example, the key to the success of both formal and non-formal educated people has not been just the learned skilled or knowledge these people have accumulated. It is also about the learning, understanding and application of the social values and norms that allowed them and their families to live an improved, successful and sustainable livelihood within their own communities. There was evidence of educated people, both through formal and non-formal means, who could not develop or maintain a successful livelihood because of lack of knowledge in how best to sustain such livelihood and the kind of attitude, self-belief and conviction they bring to bear in their work and in their daily lives.

## Conclusion - Malie

This project was an opportunity to pilot a belief that poverty and hardship is not always measured in money terms for Pacific people. Through this project, the Institute of Education supported by NZAid was given the opportunity to re examine poverty and the role that education can play in the alleviating this. To do this, it was believed that new lenses should be used – specifically, Pacific lenses. It was believed that there's a need to have a more authentic understanding of poverty and hardship in the Pacific.

To do this, NZAid agreed to fund a pilot of this approach. To pilot the project, we used Tongan research framework of the Kakala, Tongan research ethics and the Talanoa and newly designed Nofo methodology. Through this lens, we have discovered new and greater understanding of hardship and poverty. Most obvious of all is that hardship and poverty in Tonga had more to do with *'ulungaanga* than money or resources.

Results of this study suggest that current educational practices and policies need to be founded on Tongan concept of *Ako*. This means that education – in an effort to alleviate hardship – must be fluid, unbounded and dynamic. Education must be more than just formal school education. Tongan concept of *Ako* includes non-formal education and life long learning. With this understanding it reiterates an old saying that it takes a village to raise a child – the child learns at home, in the community and at school. Education then must become more fluid and embrace other knowledge systems outside of the classroom. Education must also be part of the whole community – *mo'ui fakapotopoto* must be taught at school and reinforced in the community through different community activities. This will further align values and cultures of the school and the community – thereby lessen the gap between these two worlds.

This study has also shown that people who are able to live sustainable livelihoods have what Tongans desire – *mo'ui fakapotopoto*. This is an approach to life that is spiritual, emotional, social, physical, environmental and economical – it is a holistic approach to life. For Tongans then, a *mo'ui fakapotopoto* is not always about matters of economy and finances. One can live under USD\$1 per day and be considered a sustainable livelihood.

The findings of this study recommend that to alleviate hardship in Tonga, educational policies and practices must be based on *Ako* and *mo'ui fakapotopoto*.

## Acknowledgements – Fakamalo

The Institute of Education, USP is greatly appreciative of the support and commitment that it has received from the Ministry of Education in Tonga. We would like to thank the Ministry of Education Hon. Rev. Dr. Tevita Palefau for accepting the offer and to have this project piloted in Tonga. We would also like to thank Isikeli Oko and his staff at the Community Development Training Centre for their hospitality, assistance and support by housing us while we were in Tonga. We would especially like to thank Seluvaia and Amelia who by default became our support staff during the fieldwork. We would also like to thank Petelo for all the early morning and late night driving to deliver field researchers to and back from field sites. Without your support the project would not have been completed on time – Malo.

We would also like to thank the education officers of the Curriculum Development Unit – Laveni, Seini, Talahiva, Tevita, Sateki, Masi and also Sisilia. Thank you for your tireless work, commitment to this project and also the many many Talanoa sessions that we shared. You reminded us how to Talanoa again and to Talanoa malie! We would especially like to thank Kalala Unu the CEO for the Curriculum Development Unit for her great enthusiasm, intelligence, commitment and her encouragement to see this project through.

We are also very much indebted to the field researchers from the Tonga Institute of Education – for their tireless work, their dedication and also their laughter! The 22 field researchers who participated in this project provided much needed energy and enthusiasm to complete this project. It is with gratitude that we thank the principal of the institute Liuaki Fusitu'a and her deputy principal Seilose for their support in this project.

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We would also like to thank Koliniasi Fuko and his assistant Kohe for the many hours spend taping the debriefing sessions. Thanks guys.

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## Appendices

Appendix One: Study proposal

(attached separately)

# Sustainable Livelihood and Education in the Pacific: Tonga Pilot

## A Preliminary Report

By

Seu‘ula Johansson Fua<sup>15</sup> and Sitaniselao Manu<sup>16</sup>

### **Summary**

The success of the Tonga pilot very much depended on the timing of the project and the significant support given by the Tonga Ministry of Education. In collaboration with the Curriculum Development Unit and the Tonga Institute of Education, the project provided research training and collected worthwhile, useful data for the planned review of the curriculum. Based on the pilot, some recommendations are made to adjust the project budget and the timeline activity. The Institute, in close partnership with NZAID, and participating Ministry of Education will work hard to meet the December 2007 deadline.

### **Distribution List**

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<sup>15</sup> Fellow in Research and Leadership in Education, principal field researcher & coordinator for project

<sup>16</sup> Fellow in Mathematics and Assessment, assistant principal field researcher

## **Introduction**

The pilot of the ‘Sustainable Livelihood and Education in the Pacific’ (SLEP) Project was conducted in Tonga from 20<sup>th</sup> June to 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2006. This pilot included the selection and training of 36 field researchers, the collection of data from ten villages on Tongatapu, *talanoa* sessions with over 40 teachers from secondary schools, the survey of 350 students throughout Tonga, and the analysis of pertinent educational documents. To conduct this work, Dr Seu‘ula Johansson Fua was assisted by Dr Sitaniselao Manu (from the Institute of Education, USP) and Ms Tu‘ifua Takapautolo (Deputy Director, Tonga Ministry of Education). The fieldwork involved two key educational institutions within the Ministry of Education: the Curriculum Development Unit and the Tonga Institute of Education.

This report presents preliminary findings from the pilot of the project in Tonga. The report will outline key events and outcomes, achievements and limitations of the pilot and will suggest strategies and adjustments for the next phase of the SLEP project. Detailed findings and theoretical implications of the research methodology tests will be provided in the full report to be submitted later this year.

This report should have been produced soon after the pilot in Tonga i.e. September 2006. However, we did not anticipate gathering such a large amount of raw data nor how long it would take to prepare the data for analysis. The raw data is still in the process of preparation for full analysis as we write this report. Due to demands from donors and other countries interested in this project we have, in agreement with the principal investigator for SLEP, Dr ‘Ana Taufe‘ulungaki, prepared this preliminary report. As such this preliminary report mainly focuses on the logistics of the project.

## **1. Account of the Work Done**

### **1. In-Preparation**

- 1.1 The Institute of Education recruited Dr Sitaniselao Manu to assist in this project as well as other projects of the Institute.
- 1.2 Dr Seu‘ula Johansson Fua traveled to Tonga on 20<sup>th</sup> June to begin preparation for the training and the fieldwork.
- 1.3 At this point, the contract with NZAID had not been sent to the Institute. nor had it been signed. The decision to begin work on the project was made based on the timeline that the Tonga Ministry of Education set. It was imperative that the project start at this point, in order to use the teacher trainees from TIOE. The cordial and trusting relationship that NZAID and IOE have enjoyed in the past encouraged IOE to begin the project, knowing that the contract and the funds would be delivered.

### **2. Preparation in Tonga**

- 2.1 Ms Tu‘ifua Takapautolo was recruited as country associate researcher (CAR). Tu‘ifua, a deputy director within the Ministry of Education, was currently supervising TIOE and CDU. She was also a former CEO of the Examination Unit in the Ministry and has worked for the Ministry for well over 15 years in

various capacities. Her involvement and background knowledge of the current Tonga Education Support Program (TESP) made her a key person in the project. Her experience and knowledge of MOE policies and plans guided the project and ensured that the work would benefit the Tonga MOE.

2.2 Meetings with CDU officers to go over the project. This was a crucial part of the preparation for the project. In order for the fieldwork to collect meaningful and worthwhile data, it was crucial that CDU officers and the SLEP team were very clear from the beginning about what was needed. In these meetings, key terms were reconceptualised and redefined to ensure that they were ‘Tongan’. Most important here was the reconceptualisation of ‘sustainable livelihood’ to mean ‘*mo’ui fakapotopoto*’.<sup>17</sup> The meetings with CDU officers also involved the selection of sites, and the criteria for sample selection in the villages, schools and communities selected for study.

The decision to remove Pātangata (often identified as a squatter settlement outside of Nuku‘alofa) from the tentative sample was strongly argued by CDU officers. They reasoned that this site was an exception to the norm in Tonga and that if we wanted to look for people in hardship we would be able to find them in almost every village.

In these discussions there were also concerns about the use of TIOE teacher trainees as field researchers. The concern here was whether they would be mature enough to handle this work; there was a possibility that they might compromise the data collection through behaviour that was inappropriate, thereby closing ‘access’ to the data. After much deliberation, the CDU officers and the team finally agreed that, with comprehensive training in Tongan research ethics, careful selection of field researchers and detailed monitoring of their progress in the field, these very real concerns would be addressed and resolved.

2.3 Meetings with TIOE staff were held in order to explain how their students would be involved in the project and the need for a TIOE venue for training. The TIOE principal and staff were very keen to have their students involved in the project. They saw it as an excellent opportunity for their students to gain knowledge, skills and experience in doing fieldwork. The TIOE principal had initially asked if 50 of her students could be involved in the work, but in the end only 30 students were trained and 22 were selected for the fieldwork.

2.4 The TIOE principal also requested us to run several sessions of research training for their staff. Two sessions were conducted, but time was limited. We have since agreed that the TIOE will make a formal request through the MOE to provide more comprehensive and concentrated research training for their staff.

### 3. Training of Field Researchers

3.1 The training of 30 TIOE students together with six CDU officers took three full days. The training was held at TIOE. Training materials used were specifically designed for this project. They can be made available for other countries to use.

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<sup>17</sup> *Mo’ui fakapotopoto* – literally translates to a life that is well lived – meaning that there are attitudes, knowledge and skills that are important in order to have a *mo’ui fakapotopoto* within the Tongan context. The SLEP team designed the consequent methodologies to collect data about what attitudes, knowledge and skills are needed to have *mo’ui fakapotopoto*.

- 3.2 After the training, and in collaboration with the CDU officers, we selected 22 TIOE students to work as field researchers during the project.
- 3.3 The field researchers' contacts and time of availability were noted, and they were allocated to different sites.
- 3.4 Most important to this training was the field researchers' understanding and use of Tongan research ethics. Tongan research ethics were considered essential when it came to the selection and continuation of the field researcher's work.

#### 4. Entering the Field – *Talanoa* and *Nofo*

- 4.1 In preparation for the fieldwork, we sought the permission of nobles whose estates were included in the study. In sites where nobles were absent, we approached town officers for their permission. In some sites, the SLEP team were able to personally identify households and seek their permission to participate in the study. In other sites, the town officer preferred that he make the selection – although not our preference. The problem with this approach was that we often found households who were not prepared to receive our field researchers. Informed consent and method of approaching homes to participate in such a study is imperative.
- 4.2 Each field researcher was given a notebook and a pen. Field researchers were asked to use the notebook as their field journals.
- 4.3 The MOE assisted in transporting field researchers to designated sites. This involved picking them up at 6.00 am and, at 4.00 pm, taking them to either a school in the village or to classroom at the Community Training Centre (CTC) in town. Field researchers were to dress appropriately for the work that they would be doing. Where the field researcher was to follow the father (of the household) to the plantation he would be dressed for such a task.
- 4.4 In the transportation of field researchers to the field and back, Dr Manu or I would always travel with them. This was to ensure that field researchers were mentally ready to enter the field and also to ensure that there were not unexpected problems once there.

#### 5. Debriefing

- 5.1 When the field researchers were brought back from the field it was vital that the debriefing took place immediately. As they were not given any tape-recorders or videotapes, they had to rely on what they remembered and the few notes that they had made in their field diaries.
- 5.2 During the debriefing sessions, dinner and coffee were made available. Sometimes, the field researchers would not eat until they had had their debriefing. At other times, some of them –depending on allocated household – would come back with food or have already eaten before returning.
- 5.3 The CDU officers and the SLEP team were always present at the debriefing sessions to guide the debriefing and also to ensure that the data collected were what we had set out to gather.
- 5.4 All debriefings were videotaped and are being transcribed.



- 5.5 To debrief one site took 5 to 8 hours. This meant that the field researchers, CDU officers and the SLEP team did not get home until midnight. On average the whole team would be working 18 hours per fieldwork day.
- 5.6 The fieldwork was completed in two weeks of continuous work (except for Sunday, which is a rest day in Tonga).
- 5.7 Certain themes and patterns began to emerge by the third site. At the completion of the fieldwork, all the field researchers and SLEP team came together to discuss the identified themes and to suggest possible strategies based on the data.
- 5.8 The field researchers were asked to hand in their journals and their recorded thoughts about the whole processes.
- 5.9 Field researchers were paid on the final debriefing date.
- 5.10 Field researchers were given IOE certificates of participation in the training and the fieldwork for the SLEP project and, where requested, we have also provided letters of reference. The certificates and the letters of reference will be used for their job application at the end of this year.

## 6. Talanoa with Community Development Groups

- 6.1 *Talanoa* sessions with selected community groups began immediately after the fieldwork with households. The CDU officers conducted this segment of data collection. The development groups were identified from the villages that we had studied using the TIOE field researchers. The rationale behind this is that the villagers would by then be used to our presence and would have already heard about the study. Further to this, through the data gathered from the *talanoa* and *nofo* sessions, we were able to identify key people and development groups to have further detailed conversations with. In some sites, because the data collected were robust, we did not need to collect further data. In such cases we used other sites to collect data on this segment. Where available, CDU officers held *talanoa* sessions with community development groups from their own villages and neighboring towns.
- 6.2 Even though most of the *talanoa* sessions with the community development groups were completed within one week, the royal funeral of the late Prince Tu'ipelehake and Princess Kaimana delayed our fieldwork as there was a *tapu* for ten days.
- 6.3 The *talanoa* sessions with community development groups were scheduled around the available time of the groups and when they were actually working. For example, a CDU officer would visit a group of women when they were actually weaving, rather than wait for their work to be completed.
- 6.4 Community development groups were mainly involved in farming, weaving, and making *ngatu* or *tapa*.
- 6.5 There were five community development groups involved in the *talanoa* sessions. There were 10 – 15 people in each group.
- 6.6 The majority of the members within these development groups were high school drop-outs and had no formal qualification, nor had they learnt any of these skills at school. They were learning new skills within these groups.

6.7 None of these groups was supported by any outside funding agency; they were all self-sufficient.

6.8 The average duration of a *talanoa* session with a community development group was eight hours. The CDU officer holding the session was often either in the plantation or the weaving house by 7.00 am and returned to the office by 2.00 pm when the work for the group was completed.

As with the *talanoa* and *nofo* sessions in the households, the CDU officers were issued only with a pen and paper, for reminders only. Like the *talanoa* and *nofo* sessions held in the households, CDU officers held everything in their head until they returned to the office for the recorded debriefing .

#### 7. Talanoa with Individual Cases

7.1 The SLEP team identified 20 individuals with whom they held *talanoa* sessions. These individuals were selected for their unique skills and ability to use those skills to earn a living. The skills are those that are not taught in the formal curriculum: wood carving, gardening, art, sewing, weaving, fishing, hairdressing and others. We also selected people who did not complete high school.

7.2 As with the *talanoa* sessions with the community development groups, these *talanoa* sessions were scheduled around the individual's availability and were held either in their homes or in their workshop. This meant that sometimes the *talanoa* session was held in the evening, early morning or during working hours.

7.3 These *talanoa* sessions varied in length from 2 hours to 4 hours, depending on the participant.

7.4 As with other *talanoa* sessions, the SLEP team member would return to the office to debrief and record the conversation.

7.5 These *talanoa* sessions were held simultaneously with the *talanoa* sessions with the community development groups.

#### 8. Talanoa with Youth

8.1 Due to limitations in time and the fact that most of the *talanoa* sessions with the community development groups and with individuals also included young people, it was decided that we would just hold *talanoa* sessions with the National Youth Congress. The initial planned had been to hold *talanoa* sessions with youth groups from each of the participating villages.

8.2 *Talanoa* sessions with the National Youth Congress confirmed themes and patterns that were already evident from the data gathered from the community development groups and the individuals.

#### 9. Talanoa with Teachers

9.1 The SLEP team invited Form 2 teachers from 14 selected schools representing all the educational authorities in Tonga and all the subjects taught at Form 2 level. Over 40 teachers who were involved in the *talanoa* sessions .

9.2 Two *talanoa* sessions were held: the first with the science, Maths, English, social science and industrial arts teachers.

- 9.3 Because many subjects were not represented, a second invitation was send out to all schools, specifically inviting teachers of Tongan studies, music, physical education and home economics.
- 9.4 The *talanoa* sessions were held at the CDU office and all the SLEP team were involved, sitting in with each subject group.
- 9.5 As with other *talanoa* sessions, a responsible SLEP team member recorded the conversation later and a debriefing followed.

#### 10. Survey of Form 2 Students

- 10.1 With a homogenous population a sample of 15% was decided on as a baseline for the survey of Form 2 students. This meant that 350 students were involved in this survey throughout Tonga: from Tongatapu, ‘Eua, Vava’u, Ha‘apai and the Niuas.
- 10.2 Dr Manu and Tevita ‘Ofa were responsible for conducting the survey on the main island. In the outer islands, education officers were asked to conduct the survey.
- 10.3 The questionnaire was piloted in one of the private schools before it was revised and conducted in identified schools.
- 10.4 Unfortunately, due to limitations in flight schedules and also boats traveling to the northern islands – questionnaires from Niuafu‘ou have yet to be received.

#### 11. Document Analysis

- 11.1 An analysis of pertinent MOE documents was conducted by Ms. Takapautolo to identify existing strategies, policies and planned work that the Ministry is embarking on to address issues of access, equity and consequently quality education.

#### 12. Final Debriefing

- 12.1 A final debriefing of the SLEP team together with the principal investigator Dr ‘Ana Taufe‘ulungaki was held in Tonga when all data had been gathered. In this *talanoa* session, the SLEP team presented key themes that had emerged from the data. With the knowledge that Dr ‘Ana had gained while she was working with the National Reform Committee, she was able to tell us what other Tongans (in the outer islands and overseas<sup>18</sup>) were thinking about education. This sharing of information confirmed to the group that the emerging themes and identified patterns from our study are in agreement with the concerns of Tongans elsewhere.
- 12.2 The final debriefing was also an opportunity for the team to pull together ideas, suggestions and proposals on how identified problems could be resolved.

#### 13. Post Field Work

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<sup>18</sup> Tongan parents overseas send their children to Tonga for education – particularly so that their children will learn Tongan culture, values and attitudes.

- 13.1 A teleconference meeting was held with Anna Pasikale, Dimitri Geidelberg, Henry Elder, Dr Manu and I (at the time still in Tonga). In this meeting, we had the opportunity to share with NZAID the progress of the project, including key outcomes of the project. This meeting was also an opportunity to clarify some contractual issues and other administrative matters. IOE and NZAID agreed that better communication and support need to be in place to ensure that this project is completed on time.
- 13.2 The data has since been transported back to Fiji and transcribers are currently working on preparing them for in-depth analysis.
- 13.3 The advisory committee for the SLEP project has since met several times to discuss logistics and financial matters in preparation for this report and the financial report. With Dr 'Ana's return to USP and her being currently temporarily housed in IOE, the SLEP team is able to meet regularly to discuss findings and the progress of the project.

## 2. Key Results

### 1. In-preparation

- 1.1 The recruitment of Dr Manu has greatly assisted the analysis of the data and coordination of the project. With the pilot in Tonga, two new components of the data collection, the student survey and the teacher *talanoa* sessions, were added upon request from the CDU. We now anticipate and fully expect other countries to add new components to the data collection.
- 1.2 The fieldwork was completed as scheduled in 8 weeks.
- 1.3 The Project contract has now been signed and the fund for the pilot has since been transferred to the IOE account.

### 2. Preparation in Tonga

- 2.1 The terms of reference (TOR) for the country associate researcher (CAR) have now been drafted and distributed to participating countries. The TOR template was based on the work experience of the Tonga CAR.
- 2.2 Preparatory meetings with CDU personnel indicated a need to spend at least one week reconceptualising key variables, selecting samples, discussing training, clarifying research ethics and ensuring clear understanding of the purpose of the project. This one-week's preparatory work is crucial to building a research team and ensuring everyone is on the same platform.

### 3. Training of Field Researchers

- 3.1 The need for research skills has clearly been identified with this pilot. The fact that the TIOE welcomed this project to enable their students and staff to gain research skills indicates the need for training in this field. It is likely that other countries will also welcome the opportunity to learn this skill.
- 3.2 The three days' training involved 30 TIOE students and six CDU officers. Research sessions were also provided for 20 TIOE staff.

### 4. Entering the Field – *Talanoa* and *Nofo*

- 4.1 The selection of homes is to be done in close consultation with the SLEP team, and is not to be left entirely to the town officers. It is vital that a SLEP team member is present to explain and answer any questions that a householder may have about the proposed work. This must be done at least two days before the field researcher begins the *talanoa* and *nofo* sessions.
- 4.2 The SLEP team greatly appreciated the availability and support of the Tonga MOE in providing a driver and vehicle to transport the field researchers to and from the field sites. It is expected that SLEP team will ask participating MOEs for their support in providing transport and driver, and the project will pay for the petrol.
- 4.3 The Tonga pilot did not take any photographs of participants who were involved in the *talanoa* sessions out of respect for our participants' dignity and privacy. Photographs and audiovisual recordings may be taken of village sites and surroundings.

## 5. Debriefing

- 5.1 Based on the pilot, it is strongly recommended that the debriefing take place on site. Field researchers need to debrief soon as possible.
- 5.2 Future CARs and participating MOEs should expect at least 18 hours of work per field day, often for several days running, until data saturation has been reached in that particular site.
- 5.3 Video recording of debriefing is crucial. This was not factored in the budget as we had planned to take IOE equipment to do this job. However, the pilot has shown that this task needs to be done by an experienced person who will also be responsible for copying the tapes into VHS (in the case of Tonga). The revised budget will reflect this adjustment.
- 5.4 In the case of Tonga, the field researchers were away from their homes for only two days while doing fieldwork on one of the outer islands. In larger countries, the SLEP team and CAR must expect to take into account the logistics of providing room and board for field researchers. The budget will have to be adjusted to reflect this.
- 5.5 When taking field researchers to remote areas and to outer islands, the SLEP team and CAR must ensure that they are safe, secure and well taken care of. Their health and well being must be taken into account during the selection process as well as during the fieldwork.
- 5.6 The debriefing sessions are vital to the data collection and to the first level of field analysis. It is then that raw data are collected and it is important that all the SLEP team and CAR are present so that they all have an understanding of the data.

## 6. Talanoa Sessions Community Development Groups

- 6.1 As with the *talanoa* and *nofo* sessions in homes, the SLEP team should also expect working long hours with the community development groups (CDG). Transportation is also needed to move SLEP team members from the office to the site where the CDG is working, sometimes in the plantations.
- 6.2 *Talanoa* sessions with CDGs can be video-recorded. From the pilot it was clear that we need comprehensive documentation of key skills and knowledge that

people use to maintain sustainable livelihoods. Based on the pilot, it was obvious that the CDGs were proud of their work and in such cases it would be appropriate to have these video-recorded. However, before this takes place, it is important to seek consent from the CDG.

- 6.3 The pilot in Tonga shows that we should always expect the unexpected and follow cultural protocol when needed. This project will not pretend to be outside of the country's culture and protocols and must adjust appropriately. The royal funeral of the Tu'i Pelehake and Princess Kaimana showed that, despite the SLEP team trying to work through it, the participants were not willing to talk about any issues other than the funeral, and people from CDGs and from individual case studies were busy in one way or another with the royal funeral.
- 6.4 Data collected from the *talanoa* sessions with CDGs made a significant contribution to the overall study in identifying and documenting key skills, knowledge and attitudes that come to define a life that is sustainable within a given context.

## 7. Talanoa with Individual Cases

- 7.1 *Talanoa* sessions with individual people confirmed data from the CDGs *talanoa* sessions and the household data; that there is livelihood that can gain by utilisation of traditional local skills and knowledge. It also confirmed the importance of other technical and vocational skills, including auto mechanics, art and hairdressing in creating a livelihood for people living in urban areas with little access to land.
- 7.2 Over 20 individual case studies were conducted using *talanoa* sessions.
- 7.3 The *talanoa* sessions with individual people confirmed that, in order to attain a sustainable livelihood in Tonga, an individual must have the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude; all three are complementary.

## 8. Talanoa with Youth

- 8.1 Despite the time limitations, this component of the data is still a crucial addition to the total study sample.
- 8.2 *Talanoa* sessions with the Tonga National Youth Congress confirmed what the team was already observing in the *talanoa* sessions with the CDGs and households.
- 8.3 Future participating countries need to allow sufficient time to collect these obviously valuable data.

## 9. Talanoa sessions with Teachers

- 9.1 This segment of the study was conducted upon a request from CDU and was not in the project proposal. Nevertheless, it was an eye-opener for the SLEP team. The data collected from this segment shed a lot of light on data we were already collecting from parents and students. It gave the SLEP team a greater understanding of the current status of Tongan teachers. This segment comes highly recommended for future participating MOEs to consider when conducting the study in their country.

- 9.2 Participating countries are encouraged to consider adding this segment of the study to their fieldwork. Such an addition should be reflected in the timeline. The two *talanoa* sessions with teachers took two weeks with each session taking 3 – 5 hours. Organising time for teachers to come out of the classroom took time to coordinate.
- 9.3 The teachers were very pleased to have had the opportunity to come to CDU and share experiences and propose new strategies to resolve some of the problems. During the meeting, people suggested creating teachers' associations for social sciences, Tongan studies, home economics and industrial arts, and strengthening the professional ties of existing teachers' associations such as those for science, maths and junior English.
- 9.4 Most evident from these meetings was the lack of resource materials for teachers and the need for greater professional development programmes for all teachers.
- 9.5 Future participating countries are strongly advised to consider expanding the *talanoa* sessions with the teachers to include teachers from rural areas and outer islands. The pattern already evident from the pilot is that the lack of resources and professional development offered to teachers on the main island is probably true for rural and island teachers to an even greater extent.

#### 10. Survey of Form 2 Students

- 10.1 The survey collected valuable data and is highly recommended for other countries to consider.
- 10.2 Researchers need to allow for unreturned surveys from the outer islands and isolated schools. Sometimes, boat and flight schedules are just beyond the control of the project. In such cases, it is always best to increase and diversify the sampling procedure. However, all efforts should be made to ensure that data are collected from the rural and outer islands. If this project is to seriously address issues of equity and access, the time and budget should be designed to meet the challenges of collecting data from rural areas and outer islands.
- 10.3 Researchers need to ensure that SLEP team members working on this segment maintain a sense of consistency in implementation of the survey in order to maintain internal validity.

#### 11. Document Analysis

- 11.1 Document analysis has now been completed and has provided crucial data for this project.
- 11.2 It is advisable that someone from the MOE who is familiar with MOE documents, policies, acts and regulations carry out this document analysis. In the case of Tonga, the CAR conducted the document analysis.

#### 12. Final Debriefing

- 12.1 This is an important part of the data collection in order for the SLEP team to clarify emerging themes, clarify patterns and begin discussion about possible recommendations.
- 12.2 The final debriefing and constant briefings during the data collection process ensured constant monitoring of the project. The briefings ensured that everyone within the team had a shared understanding of the processes as well as

a very clear understanding of the data. This has made it possible for the team to already have an understanding of data, findings and possible recommendations before the report is completed. What will appear in the report will not be a surprise to the CDU officers, as they were part of the process from the beginning. The CDU officers already know what to expect from the report. CDU officers also have a strong sense of ownership of the data and the recommendations that will be proposed, as they were involved in the research process. CDU officers were also key participants in the monitoring process.

### 13. Post-fieldwork

- 13.1 The post-fieldwork meeting with NZAID was timely, supportive and greatly appreciated. It is proposed that meetings with NZAID be held at strategic stages during the process of this project. In order for this project to be completed in time, constant supportive dialogue between NZAID and IOE is needed.
- 13.2 Continual meetings with the principal investigator, Dr 'Ana, has helped in guiding the analysis processes as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the data.
- 13.3 It takes more time to analyse qualitative data than quantitative data, so two to three months should be spent on this.
- 13.4 The transcription of the video-tapes and the preparation of the journal data should be done immediately, as they are completed in the field. There should be transcribers available on site, who should be native speakers of the research language. The transcription work is time-consuming and the organisation of equipment (laptops, headphones, video head and screen) should be done during the preparatory stage of the project. Transcription can take place on site until the fieldwork is completed and/or the data can be transported to Fiji to be completed using USP students.
- 13.5 A request is put forward to NZAID to adjust the budget to make provision for transcription equipment and an increased fee for transcribers in order for this work to be done in less time. Even within USP, transcribers have access to only four video heads and screen (owned by the library) and two laptops (IOE) and with three transcribers working since September there are still seven tapes to be transcribed. To transcribe one tape takes approximately 30 hours; data from Tonga for the *talanoa* sessions alone takes up 17 video tapes.
- 13.6 Currently the advisory board comprises Dr 'Ana Taufē'ulungaki and Professor Konai Helu Thaman. We will expand this advisory board to include other regional staff from the university as the project moves to the next phase.
- 13.7 Anna Pasikale maintains her role as critical friend for this project. A follow-up meeting is suggested once this report is released. Anna's input and suggestions are very much valued and needed for this project. Ideally, we would like her to be invited to the regional meetings and a debriefing session during fieldwork. Such an experience would be an added benefit to understanding the process as well as the final product of this project. As with the CDU officers in Tonga, such an involvement will ensure that Anna is part of the process and her role as a critical friend is constant and continual. The project's monitoring and



evaluation mechanism has always been based on Pacific conceptualisation and practice. Evaluation for Pacific people is not at the end, but rather during the process.

13.8 The research report will be ready before the end of the year, both the Tongan and English versions.

### **3. Key Discussion**

#### **1. Current MOE Strategic Plan**

The pilot of the Tonga project fitted in well with the current MOE strategic plan and work plan for this year. The Tonga MOE was already planning to involve the CDU staff in a research project in order to collect data for the proposed review of the curriculum. When IOE/NZAID offered this project, they saw how this pilot could be used to also achieve their plan. The pilot was successful as they, the MOE personnel and the CDU officers, recognised how this project was helping them with their work; it was a meaningful engagement for them.

#### **2. Timeliness**

The key success of this pilot has been its timeliness – it recognised an opportune time for Tonga and utilised it. The field work was conducted when TIOE students were on their mid semester-break. Similarly, the CDU officers were already planning on undertaking a research project to help them with their review. The involvement of CDU officers in the project was seen as an uplifting activity for them. In the last year, Tonga witnessed an eventful year of civil strike and involvement of the teaching profession in national politics. As the pilot was launched in late June, the government's redundancy programme began in the first week of July and saw a huge number of teachers leave the profession. This was a very trying time for Tonga and for Tongan education. However, the project was seen by the CDU officers as well as the TIOE students and staff as an opportunity for them to be engaged in something that would help turn the wheel and reconstruct education in Tonga.

#### **3. Willingness of participants**

The success of the data collection depended on the willingness of participants to be involved in this study. This project involved families, teachers, students and development groups, all of whom were willing to be part of this project. The project also involved field researchers spending long hours in homes, plantations, weaving houses and workshops and a shorter time in classrooms. The principal data came from the *talanoa* and *nofo* sessions with families, and the willingness of these families to share their private worlds with our field researchers is deeply appreciated. For the field researchers to enter these homes and to learn about their knowledge, skills and aspirations for their children's education was an honour and a learning experience for them.

#### **4. Use of Tongan Research Ethics**

The ability to enter a field—any research field—depends on the field researchers' understanding of the ethics that are needed for the field. In the case of Tonga, it was absolutely critical that the field researchers understood the technical skills of *talanoa*

and *nofo*, and that they lived according to the principles that guide these research tools. They needed to work with *faka'apa'apa* (respect) and *anga fakatokilalo* (humility) and be able to listen with engagement. Although there were 30 field researchers trained, only 22 were selected to participate, and three were taken off during the field work as they failed to follow the set research ethical conduct. It is not enough that field researchers understand the technicalities of the data collection; they must be culturally competent.

#### 5. Communication Strategy

As with any field research, a researcher should always expect the unexpected. The pilot of SLEP was successful, as the *kakala* framework had built into it a monitoring mechanism through the concept of *mafana*. The *mafana* concept forced the SLEP team to constantly ask questions about the progress of the project. Were we collecting worthwhile data? For whom will the data be useful? Throughout the fieldwork there were constant briefing and debriefing meetings. At times we completed fieldwork debriefing at 12 midnight and the team was tired. However, with constant dialogue and several levels of *talanoa*, both at field level and post-field analysis level, a spirit of collaboration grew and consequently the SLEP team and the field researchers owned the work. At a regional level, partner institutions need to be committed to a communication strategy that reflects core Pacific values of respect and humility. Participating institutions also need to recognise that the reality of doing research is that there are often unexpected problems in the field. With a supportive, respectful and encouraging communication strategy IOE, NZAID and the participating MOE can resolve these problems, if and when they arise.

#### **Conclusion**

Overall, the pilot of the SLEP project successfully collected data that met the need of the Tonga CDU in preparation for the up-coming review of the primary school curriculum. The pilot confirmed that the *kakala* research framework is applicable, accessible and a clear guideline for the work. The pilot also enforced the need for the field researcher to be culturally literate and adhere to research ethics in order to enter particular fields. Through this pilot the methodology of *talanoa* and *nofo* sessions has been proven to be sound, robust and dynamic. The pilot of the SLEP in Tonga using a Tongan research framework, Tongan research ethics and Tongan research tools confirm that when the research paradigm is in alignment with the researched site, significant findings are revealed.

#### **Key Recommendations**

1. Allow adjustment to be made to the overall project budget with specific increase in the costing for the following field expense items; transportation, recording cost and transcription cost. Further to this, an increase in the overall contingency fund is recommended.
2. Identify strategic meeting points in the process of the project, and confirm meeting strategies and processes between IOE, NZAID and also the critical friend from NZAID. If possible, arrange for an NZAID officer to join a fieldwork site for at least one week.

3. Allow adjustment to be made to the project activity plan for the following; regional meeting dates, training and fieldwork, data analysis and reporting.
4. Continue the current payment procedure into the second phase of the project, i.e. payments are made in advance and prior to commencement of each identified activity.

### **Acknowledgement**

The success of the Tonga pilot was due to the coordinated efforts of the Tonga Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Unit, the Tonga Institute of Higher Education and the Community Development Training Centre. The SLEP team is indebted to them for their support, hospitality and determination to complete this project on time. The project team is deeply grateful to the officers of the NZAID office in Wellington and in Fiji for their hard work in ensuring that all financial support was given in order that this pilot could be carried out. We are also very grateful for Anna Pasikale's effort in supporting and believing in the philosophy that drove this project and supporting Pacific people look for Pacific solutions.

## Appendix Three: Logical Framework

(attached separately)

Appendix Four: Revised Budget

(attached separately)

Appendix Five: TABLE: KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS FOR TONGA

No.	Educational Indicator(s)	Result	Source(s)
1.	Literacy rate for 15 – 24 year olds.	99%	ADB Report, 2006
2.	Adult literacy rate (15+ year olds) for 2003.	98.9%	UNDP Report 2005
3.	Government schools' proportion of the total number of primary schools.	89%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
4.	Non-government schools' proportion of the total number of high schools.	76%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
5.	Government schools' proportion of the total primary school enrolments.	92%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
6.	Non-government schools' proportion of the total high school enrolments.	67%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
7.	Proportion of non-government post-secondary education and training schools, which in 2004 involved a total of 1,813 students.	40%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
8.	The ratio of pupils to teachers at the primary school level in 2004.	20.3	World Bank, 2006
9.	The ratio of pupils to teachers at the secondary school level in 2004.	14.4	World Bank, 2006
10.	Net primary school enrolment ratio in 2001 (Millennium Development Goal).	100%	ADB Report, 2006
11.	Net enrolment ratio in primary education in 2004.	97.3%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
12.	Gross primary school enrollment ratio in 2004.	115%	ADB 2006
13.	Gross secondary school enrollment ratio (Net was 67.7% in 2004).	97.8%	World Bank 2006
14.	Gross tertiary school enrollment ratio.	6.1%	World Bank 2006
15.	Combined gross enrollment rates.	83%	UNDP Report 2005
16.	Proportion of pupils who remain in school from grades 1 – 5 in 1996.	84%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
17.	Proportion of pupils who remain in school from grades 1 – 5 in 2002.	92%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
18.	The net enrollment ratio for secondary schools is in 2004.	72%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
19.	The transition rate from primary to secondary education for 2004.	83.6%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
20.	Percent of the total of 3,186 students from 113 primary schools who sat and passed the High School Entrance exam in 2005.	51%	Tonga MOE Annual Report, 2005
21.	The primary completion rate in Tonga.	106.9%	World Bank, 2006
22.	The 6.2% repetition rate in Tonga at the primary school level.	6.2%	World Bank, 2006
23.	The percent of all the students in year 6 of primary school who were repeaters. The Tonga MOE cited <i>numeracy</i> and <i>literacy</i> problems as the main reason.	19.8%	Tonga MOE Annual Report, 2004
24.	Progression rate of student-flow to secondary level (a repetition rate of 11.0%).	76.5%	World Bank, 2006
25.	Pass rate out of a total of 1,080 Form 6 high school students who sat the 2005 regional Pacific Senior Secondary Examination (PSSC).	55%	Tonga MOE Annual Report, 2005
26.	Drop-out rates of government secondary schools in 2004.	2.3%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
27.	Drop-out rates of non-government secondary schools in 2004.	7.9%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
28.	Proportion of the total 752 non-government school teachers that have only certificates.	19.4%	Tonga MOE Annual Report 2004
29.	Proportion of the total 752 non-government school teachers that are untrained.	9.7%	Tonga MOE, 2004
30.	Proportion of the non-government primary school teachers that are either untrained or have had incomplete training.	38%	Tonga MOE Annual Report 2004
31.	Proportion of the 313 government secondary school teachers that have either graduate or diploma qualifications. Two others have certificates but no untrained.	99.4%	Tonga MOE Annual Report 2004
32.	Youth unemployment as recorded by the Tonga's Labour Force Survey in 2003, with most (88%) indicating they had never held a job.	11.9%	Tonga SDP8, 2006
33.	Overall unemployment rate in Tonga was recorded in 2003.	5.2%	ADB Report, 2006
34.	Male youth joblessness in Tonga for being active (not working or studying).	6.5%	Pacific 2020 (Fig. 3)
35.	Male youth joblessness in Tonga for being unemployed (seek employment).	16.5%	Pacific 2020 (Fig. 3)
36.	Percent of Form 2 students who like 'vocational' subjects the most such as Agriculture, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, and Physical Education.	5.0%	SLEP Report, 2006
37.	Percent of Form 2 students who chose to remain in their current school even if given a financial support through scholarship to study overseas or another school.	42.5%	SLEP Report, 2006
38.	Percent of Form 2 students who believe they may not have a way to earn a living (or livelihood) if drop-out of school now.	55.5%	SLEP Report, 2006
39.	Percent of Form 2 students who chose to pursue further education at a technical school.	4.3%	SLEP Report, 2006