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Environmental Science and Sustainability Studies

Masters Thesis

A Study of Sustainable Social Progress in the Kingdom of Tonga

Tim Taylor

Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies

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Supervisors:

Turaj Faran

Thomas Malm

Abstract

This study is a preliminary evaluation of sustainable social progress in the Kingdom of Tonga. It has been conducted by following the recommendations of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP).

Tonga appears to be making reasonable social progress according to the Human Development Index and Millennium Development Goals metrics. Closer examination shows that hardship, inequality and other social problems are actually increasing in Tonga.

It is then shown that Tonga's progress to date has been ecologically unsustainable. Future social progress will require social and cultural change to address a number of social, ecological and economic sustainability challenges.

A preliminary identification of a plausible 'shared view' of Tongan wellbeing and priorities for social progress supports the finding that Tonga's social progress has been uneven across different dimensions of wellbeing.

This study indicates that sustainable social progress needs to be far more comprehensively integrated into Tongan national development priorities and initiatives. This preliminary study would need to be repeated on a much larger scale to produce sufficiently robust findings to guide policy making.

The implications of this study support the findings and recommendations of Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. The approach taken in this study is replicable to other social contexts to build a wider understanding of how sustainable social progress can be approached and ideally achieved around the world.

*Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking;
for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else.*

- Aristotle^{*}

^{*} Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford University Press, Oxford (1980); (cited by Sen, 2001, p. 14)

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List of Abbreviations Used

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CEC	Constitutional and Electoral Commission
CMEPSP	Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress
CPD	Central Planning Department
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIRAB	Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy
NSPF	National Strategic Planning Framework
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RCISPA	Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Sinking of the MV Princess Ashika
SDP8	Strategic Development Plan Eight
SKM	Sinclair Knight Mertz
SOPAC	Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USP	University of the South Pacific

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1.0 Introduction

This study uses the recommendations of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP) to make a preliminary evaluation of sustainable social progress in the Kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific.

In Chapter Two the theoretical framework will be outlined for this thesis, concentrating on the core idea of sustainable social progress. The CMEPSP recommendations on measuring social progress are discussed in context of Amartya Sen's (2001) concept of *Development as Freedom*, and his work on sustainable human development and social choice.

The research methodology is presented in Chapter Three. This includes the research problem, aims, questions and approach and that have been used to frame the study. The fieldwork and analysis methods used are also described.

Tonga's social progress to date is analysed in Chapter Four using the established metrics of the Human Development Index and Millennium Development Goals. These metrics are supplemented with an assessment of current trends in inequality and hardship in Tonga.

Chapter Five is dedicated to examining a set of paramount socio-ecological challenges that face Tonga's continued social progress. Ten different challenges are briefly discussed, which allows an assessment to be made of the sustainability of Tonga's social progress to date.

In Chapter Six a preliminary evaluation of a 'shared view' of Tongan wellbeing is conducted, focussing on nine key dimensions of Tongan wellbeing. From the discussion of these dimensions, nine plausible socially reasoned priorities for social progress in Tonga are identified.

Discussion of the primary research question - *to what extent is the Kingdom of Tonga achieving sustainable social progress* is presented in Chapter Seven. The wider implications of this case study and the potential for a great deal of further research are discussed and lead to the conclusions presented in Chapter Eight.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

2.1. Ideas of Development

Development as a field of study emerged with decolonisation after World War II. What came to be known as the *development project* followed the idea that progress could be universalised and ‘less developed’ countries assisted towards modernity. This model was based on the objective of alleviating material poverty through means of national economic growth (Greig et al., 2007; McMichael, 2008). The technocratic approach of the development project emphasised ‘fixing’ traditional societies. As such it has been criticised for its cultural imperialism and tendency to reinforce colonial-like dependency relationships (ibid.).

Faltering national growth during the 1970s opened the door for what McMichael (2008, part. III) describes as the neoliberal *globalisation project* in which economic growth became seen as the ends of development, to be achieved through privatisation and liberalised global markets. The neoliberal development concept became globally dominant towards the end of the 20th Century as core policies of state downsizing, privatisation, deregulation and liberalised trade were imposed through the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the international financial institutions (Greig et al., 2007).

Despite emerging into dominance as a political ideology, neoliberalism conflicts with both the equality and ecological dimensions of sustainability (Hopwood et al., 2005). This can be seen in the global ecological degradation that has continued if not accelerated in recent decades (UNEP, 2007); and the increased inequality that has proven to be a ‘persistent structural feature’ of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2006, p.16). These conflicts have led to increasing social resistance to neoliberal policies at the turn of the millennium (Greig et al., 2007).

An emphasis on the universal importance of wellbeing and equality unites two important counter-visions of development as ‘sustainability’ and ‘freedom’. In these two visions a more equitable world is essential as both the means and ends of development (Greig et al., 2007). The Human Development approach and the Millennium Development Goals have been early attempts to integrate the embedded priorities of poverty reduction, equality, capabilities and sustainability into development goals and measures. However, they are somewhat limited in putting these visions into practice (ibid.). The concept of development as ‘sustainable social progress’ takes these two visions further.

2.2. Social Progress and Development as Freedom

The Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (referred to in this text as ‘the Commission’ or CMEPSP) was established to identify the limitations of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, and to investigate alternative ways to measure social progress (CMEPSP, 2009). The Commission’s work reinforces the need to broaden how development is conceptualised from a narrow economic simplification to focus on people’s wellbeing.

The CMEPSP (2009, p. 14) proposes eight dimensions universal or instrumental importance to wellbeing as the basis for measures of social progress. The eight dimensions are:

- Material living standards (income, consumption and wealth)
- Health
- Education
- Personal activities including work
- Political voice and governance
- Social connections and relationships
- Environment (present and future conditions)
- Insecurity, of an economic as well as a physical nature.

The Commission follows Amartya Sen's (2001) argument for the universal importance of instrumental freedoms as both the primary *ends* and *means* of development. It is people's capabilities that affect whether they are free to 'function' in the ways they value, or in other words achieve a high level of wellbeing. Expanding freedom means expanding people's capabilities (ibid., p. 74). Instrumental freedoms that can be universally regarded as *ends* of development are the ethical priorities of universal human rights (ibid., p. 229). These include rights to life, health, economic facilities, education, political voice, liberty, security, legal protection, and freedom of expression that are entrenched in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1948). As well as being essential ends of development these freedoms also represent the primary means of expanding people's capabilities (Sen, 2001, p. 38). The virtuous reinforcing nature of instrumental freedoms is embedded into the Commission's key wellbeing dimensions.

Comprehensive assessments of wellbeing inequality are fundamental to evaluations of social progress, and the relationships between dimensions can play a key role (CMEPSP, 2009, p.15). If improvements in one dimension of wellbeing – such as material wealth, come at the expense of people's capabilities in other dimensions then society may not be progressing (ibid.).

A society may also value quite subjective functionings alongside instrumentally important freedoms. If such subjective dimensions of wellbeing are widely socially valued then they should also be included in measures of social progress (CMEPSP, 2009, p.15). Sen sees such public valuational judgements as inescapable and an essential element of a *Development as Freedom* approach (Sen, 2001, p.75). This is echoed by the Commission who see that their report,

...provides an important venue for a discussion of societal values, for what we, as a society, care about, and whether we are really striving for what is important (CMEPSP, 2009, p. 18).

The Commission goes on to suggest that countries identify a socially 'shared view' of wellbeing and prioritise indicators for social progress. In developing this 'shared view' of what is important it is possible that the key

dimensions of wellbeing proposed by the Commission may be both instrumentally and subjectively important.

2.3. Social Choice

Social choice theory addresses the practical challenge of how societies can make aggregative evaluations of people's preferences to reach rational choices between alternative social possibilities (Sen, 1999, p. 349). The idea of reasoned social choice as a means to identify and pursue better societies is fundamental to the recommendations of the CMEPSP that tackle the 'informational broadening' needed for making better social judgements (Sen, 1999, 2001).

Social choice is required to identify the subjective dimensions of wellbeing that are important in addition to instrumentally important freedoms. The weighting of different dimensions for aggregation also becomes an inescapable social choice, challenging as that process may be (Sen, 2001, p.81). By following the Commission's recommendation to identify a 'shared view' of wellbeing, societies face a challenging 'valuational problem' that can only be solved through active public participation in rational social decision making. For aspects of tradition and culture may have to be sacrificed for the expansion of universal freedoms (ibid., p. 31).

Incompleteness of information for interpersonal evaluations is likely to be a persistent feature of any rational social choice. However, in practice partial interpersonal comparisons may be quite sufficient for making reasoned social decisions (Sen, 1999).

2.4. Sustainable Social Progress

The CMEPSP makes a clear distinction between assessing current levels of wellbeing, and the exercise of evaluating whether current levels of wellbeing can be sustained into the future (CMEPSP, 2009, p.11). However, the value of sustainability depends on the quality of what is to be sustained.

The idea of sustainability is an ethical claim to the universal rights of all people to live 'decent and satisfying lives' that arose from ecologically informed concerns for the wellbeing of future generations (Anand & Sen, 2000). For consistency, this universal concern for the fair distribution of wellbeing must be applied by tackling poverty and capability deprivation existing today to generally improve society's wellbeing and reduce inequality (ibid.).

Sustainable social progress can firstly be achieved by addressing inequality and improving people's wellbeing in the present, but it is likely that the challenges to this more immediate social progress are paradoxically social in nature. The inverse of virtuously reinforcing nature of instrumental freedoms is that the lack of freedom can be a barrier to social progress. Political voice and democracy is a clear example where less political freedom makes it harder to obtain political freedom (Sen, 2001, ch. 6).

The second aspect of sustainable social progress is the need to improve wellbeing levels within the world's limited natural resources. The CMEPSP (2009) proposes that a dashboard of indicators be developed for critically important ecological 'stocks'. This provides an alert metric for dangerous levels of ecological damage. As the practical problems with monetising ecological stocks are significant, it is recommended that

physical indicators are developed (ibid., p. 18). Ongoing research should improve indicators for ecological challenges, but in the near-term the use of relatively subjective data on ecological resource trends and a precautionary approach is needed to develop useful indicators of ecological unsustainability (ibid.).

Sen (2009) also discusses how trying to conceptualise a perfectly just society is unnecessary for making relevant decisions and addressing patent injustice immediately. The close relationship between the ideas of sustainability and justice (Anand & Sen, 2000), suggests that trying to identify a perfectly sustainable society is also neither necessary nor particularly helpful. Therefore sustainable social progress can be seen as a continuous process of addressing patent 'unsustainability.' This means addressing patently unsustainable wellbeing inequalities in the present and paramount challenges to maintaining and improving wellbeing into the future.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1. Research Problem

Without the broad measurement system for sustainable social progress recommended by the CMEPSP, limited measures of social progress have been used. These are metrics such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is modified in the Human Development Index (HDI), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The CMEPSP (2009) argues that these measures are still insufficient indicators of social progress.

Sustainable social progress requires wellbeing to be improved across society, primarily through the reduction of inequality. Following the CMEPSP recommendations a socially 'shared view' of wellbeing needs to be established as the basis for evaluating wellbeing, inequality and social progress priorities. The rational integration of instrumental and subjective dimensions of wellbeing may require modification of the cultural status-quo, making this a challenging social choice process for any society.

Sustainability requires an understanding of socio-ecological limits and challenges. These are barriers to achieving sustainable social progress, meaning generally that social challenges need be addressed while society works within its ecological limits.

3.2. Research Aims

The aim of this study is to conduct a preliminary evaluation of sustainable social progress in the Kingdom of Tonga using the CMEPSP recommendations. This evaluation will be limited to indentifying a plausible 'shared view' of wellbeing in Tonga and paramount socio-ecological challenges. This will allow an illustrative evaluation of whether Tonga appears to be making sustainable social progress, which can be compared to Tonga's progress when measured using existing metrics of GDP, HDI and the MDGs.

This research represents a pilot study that could inform further research and debate on sustainable social progress priorities and measures in Tonga. It will also be a contribution to the global discussion on measuring social progress that is being informed by the CMEPSP (2009) report and led by the OECD (2010).

3.3. Research Questions

The research problem and aim are framed into the primary research question:

To what extent is the Kingdom of Tonga achieving sustainable social progress?

This is broken into three further research questions.

Improving society's general wellbeing and reducing inequality are the fundamentals of short-term social progress. While the CMEPSP argues that existing metrics of GDP, HDI and the MDGs are insufficient measures of progress, they nevertheless provide at least partial information on:

- 1) What social progress has Tonga made to date?

The sustainability of social progress can then be considered by examining the state of social and ecological resources and problems. This helps to develop an understanding of:

- 2) What are the paramount socio-ecological challenges facing Tonga?

Answering the first two questions allows for a limited evaluation of Tonga's sustainable social progress to date. But the CMEPSP recommendations present societies with the valuational problem of identifying a broader 'shared view' of what constitutes wellbeing and thus social progress. This leads to the final question:

- 3) What represents a 'shared view' of Tongan wellbeing?

Investigation of this third question allows further consideration of the initial evaluation of Tonga's sustainable social progress provided through the first two questions.

3.4. Research Approach

3.4.1. A Sustainability Science Approach

Sustainability science research seeks to provide knowledge that helps guide social transitions towards sustainability. This requires different ways of knowing and learning to be combined into innovative research methodologies (Kates et al., 2001). Komiyama & Takeuchi (2006) propose that this means taking a transdisciplinary approach to structuring knowledge produced by different disciplines to address complex sustainability problems. Maxwell (2007) argues that the problems concerning sustainability scientists demand a more fundamental shift in the aims and methods of science: from knowledge-inquiry to wisdom-inquiry that is focused on finding solutions to problems. Maxwell's approach is captured by Moses and Knutsen's (2007) argument for an evolution from the naturalist hierarchy of methods, to a pluralist methodological approach incorporating the constructivist philosophy.

This study aims to follow these recommendations by blending findings from the generally empirical environmental science and development reports with a constructed understanding of the Tongan social context. This understanding is constructed using information collection methods and a descriptive approach to analysis that remains unconventional in naturalist sciences (Moses & Knutsen, 2007).

3.4.2. A Tongan Case Study

The case study is a widely used to described the application of a theoretical proposition in a particular context. While the research findings of a case study are inevitably most relevant to the case, the implications of robust case study research can be analytically generalised back to ongoing discussion of the theory (Yin, 2009).

The Kingdom of Tonga provides an interesting case in which to apply the CMEPSP's recommendations. Tonga has a relatively homogenous society, in which traditional and culture remain central to people's identity (Fakava, 2000). This simplifies slightly the attempt evaluate a socially 'shared view' of wellbeing.

While the notion of islands as social laboratories the world may have been overplayed, it is on island nations like Tonga that ecological challenges are more easily observable and often felt first. This representation of islands as the ‘canary in the coal mine’ for global sustainability issues indicates that it is also a little easier to identify ecological challenges on Islands (Baldacchino, 2007).

3.4.3. Fieldwork Approach

Fieldwork was conducted over 10 weeks in Tonga from January to April 2010. Most of fieldwork was done in and around the capital Nuku’alofa on the main island of Tongatapu. A short visit was made to the outer island ‘Eua which is near Tongatapu – see the map of Tonga in Figure 1. The focus-groups and majority of interviews were conducted together with Nina Šrot (2010) and this information has been separately used for both studies.

Development researchers with ‘outsider’ perspectives risk adopting fieldwork approaches that are inappropriate in a different context. The result can be recommendations that are viewed as irrelevant or even a form of domination by the society subjected to the research (Scheyvens & Storey, 2006). This has certainly been a criticism of development research in the Pacific for some time (Mamak, 1978), highlighted more recently in examples of education research (Sanga & Thaman, 2009). An anthropological response to this problem can be to blend the researcher’s ‘etic’ approach with the ‘emic’ world view of the people being studied (Kottak, 2000, p. 39).

The Tongan *kakala* research framework follows the *Vaka Pasifiki* philosophy that knowledge should be constructed from the beliefs and ways-of-being of Pacific countries (Fua, 2009, p.201). This framework has been used as an emic methodological guide for my research. It is broken into six phases (Fua, 2009; Fua et al., 2007):

- *Teu* - How is the problem conceptualised within the Tongan context?
- *Toli* - Use of appropriate data collection techniques - *nofo* and *talanoa*.
- *Tui* - Analysis of findings to develop an understanding of the problem relevant for the Tongan context.
- *Luva* - Return the knowledge created to the people it was taken from, ensuring it serves their needs.
- *Mālie* - Reflection on the relevance of the research and knowledge created.
- *Mafana* - Apply the research outputs in tangible ways that create sustainable change.

The *teu* for this project was addressed in Chapter Two and is essentially an etic conceptualisation of sustainable social progress. The methods used for the *toli* and *tui* phases will be described in the following sections. The *luva*, *malie* and *mafana* phases lie beyond the scope of this study. In keeping with the reciprocity ethic of *feveitokai’aki* my thesis will be distributed to contacts in Tonga. If their *malie* on these findings helps to generate further research and sustainable change, *mafana*, then the sustainability science aspirations of this study will be met.

3.5. Information Collection Methods - *tolu*

Talanoa is a qualitative data collection technique from the *kakala* framework that was used in this study. It means collective discussion and consensus building in which ideas are debated and knowledge is created. *Talanoa* should be a conversation based on ideas "...given to the participant[s] to muse, to reflect upon, to talk about, to critique, to argue, to confirm and to basically conceptualise what he/she believes the topic to be" (Fua, 2009, p.209). It is the research participants who *talanoa*, while the researchers *fanongo* by listening deeply.

While *talanoa* is a skill 'outsiders' may be limited in using without a fluent grasp of Tongan language and culture (Fua, 2009), it was still an appropriate technique for the interviews and focus-groups conducted in this study. The relationship building and reciprocity that is paramount in Tongan society is not conducive to structured interviews and many insights were gained by adopting this approach.

No recording equipment was used for it can hinder the flow of discussions (Bryman, 2008), and is explicitly discouraged in *talanoa* (Fua, 2009). Notes were taken by hand.

3.5.1. Information on Tonga's Progress

A selective review of key literature, national planning documents and international development reports was conducted to gather information on Tonga's social progress measured by existing metrics, and evaluations of poverty and inequality trends in Tonga.

3.5.2. Information on Socio-ecological Challenges

Information on socio-ecological challenges was collected through interviews with key consultants. Interviews on ecological challenges were mainly conducted with staff from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. These were semi-structured towards specific environmental problems (cf. Kvale, 1996). The *talanoa* approach was still important to gaining rapport with interviewees, and discovering new perspectives. These interviews helped to identify key literature sources of information on the socio-ecological challenges facing Tonga.

Information gathering on social challenges was entwined with the unstructured interviews with key cultural consultants on the question of wellbeing.

3.5.3. Information on Tongan Perspectives of Wellbeing

A broadly ethnographic approach was taken to investigating Tongan perspectives on the CMEPSP key dimensions of wellbeing. Despite ethnography's traditional reliance on long-term participant observation, a broader range of techniques can be used and it is increasingly recognised as an important approach for development research (Desai & Potter, 2006, ch. 19). An independent ethnographic approach can play an important role in telling the stories of 'voiceless' people and problems, but exaggerated self-reflexivity needs

to be avoided. A researcher inevitably plays an editorial role in which the goal of complete impartiality may never be attained (Scheyvens & Storey, 2006, ch. 4).

A problem-orientated ethnographic approach was taken, using conversation-based field techniques of focus-groups, and interviews with 'key cultural consultants' to gather information, (cf. Kottak, 2000, ch. 2). The field techniques were supported by referring to literature on Tongan society and culture gathered from libraries in Tonga, New Zealand and Sweden; material provided by respondents; and internet sources.

Interviews with Key Cultural Consultants

A 'snowball' approach was taken to arranging interviews with key cultural consultants. This was an appropriate method as sampling is not an issue when interviewees are used as sources of information (Bryman, 2008). These interviews were generally unstructured in keeping with the *talanoa* technique. This meant that interviews took some time and sometimes needing to be continued at a later date, but also that a number of unexpected research directions and findings were uncovered – as is the advantage of unstructured interviews (Kvale, 1996; Bryman, 2008).

A description of all people interviewed for this study is provided in Appendix III. Where appropriate interviewees are cited in but general reference is also made to 'interviewees' to respect their privacy.

Focus-Groups

Focus-group sessions were conducted to illustrate the perspectives of Tongan youth on wellbeing.* The focus-group is a valuable research technique when one wants to rapidly get an understanding of a particular question and the group-interaction is an important part of revealing how they collectively view the subject in question (Bryman, 2008, ch. 16).

Using the *talanoa* technique ideas were introduced for the groups to discuss and work towards consensus on in the form of these two questions:

- What do you consider to be fundamental to your wellbeing and what are your priorities for the future?
- What has influenced you most in developing these priorities?

Four *talanoa* sessions were conducted with groups selected for convenience (Bryman, 2008). Such a convenience sample was intended to be usefully illustrative rather than statistically representative of the perspectives of Tongan youth. On Tongatapu the groups were: students of the University of the South Pacific, students of Atenisi University, and members of On the Spot Arts Initiative. The fourth *talanoa* was held with a group on the island of 'Eua organised by the Tonga Community Development Trust. The settings varied but the sessions were held in places where the groups regularly met with everyone seated together with us in a circle.

* In Tonga someone can be considered a 'youth' until their father dies. For this study the perspectives of youth between ages of 18 and 30 were sought, though a couple of participants were outside that range.

Notes were taken from the sessions with assistance from group members when long conversations were held in Tongan. These sessions are described in Appendix IV.

3.6. Analysis Methods – Tui

The constructivist approach to analysis means developing a useful understanding from information using descriptions (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Triangulation by comparing information from the different sources provides greater confidence in the understanding being developed and described (cf. Bryman, 2008, p.275).

3.6.1. Analysing Tongan's Progress

Literature sources of information were used as the basis for an analysis of Tonga's recent social progress when measured by conventional measures such as GDP, the Human Development Index and Millennium Development Goals. Trends in hardship and inequality are briefly described and social progress to date is evaluated using the established HDI and MDGs metrics.

3.6.2. Analysing Socio-ecological Challenges

A descriptive approach is taken to analysing information on the socio-ecological challenges facing Tonga using literature and interview sources. The selection of these challenges was based on how often they arose discussions with interviewees.

Governance & democracy is highlighted as challenging Tonga's progress even in the simpler socio-economic sense (Fisi'iahi, 2006; ADB, 2008). This is a paramount social challenge for Tonga, and will be used as the centre for descriptions of the related challenges of culture and tradition, and social learning. The vulnerability of Tonga's MIRAB economy is also discussed.

The lack of any coherent 'state of the environment' survey complicates the task of analysing paramount ecological challenges in Tonga (Pelesikoti, 2003). These are limited to describing current trends and significant ecological issues within the categories of land, freshwater, oceans and fisheries, waste and pollution, geography and climate change, and energy.

3.6.3. Analysing a 'Shared View' of Tongan Wellbeing

As has been introduced already, a 'shared view' of wellbeing requires universally important dimensions of wellbeing to be integrated with aspects of wellbeing that are subjectively important to a society. The expectation that this will require difficult 'valuational choices' suggests that there are likely to be tensions between different perspectives on these dimensions that must be resolved through reasoned social choice.

Information was collected on Tongan perspectives on the eight key dimensions of wellbeing proposed by the CMEPSP using interviews, focus-groups and literature review. These descriptions do highlight tensions between different perspectives. The complexity of linkages between different dimensions anticipated by the CMEPSP (2009, p. 55), also begins to become apparent.

These tensions would need to be resolved through reasoned social decision making in order to reach a 'shared view' of wellbeing and priorities for social progress. The descriptions illustrate that the tensions

between different perspectives are not necessarily concentrated on whether the instrumental freedoms underlying the Commission's key dimensions of wellbeing are important, but how they are important.

A plausible 'shared view' of wellbeing in Tonga is identified using the assumption that instrumentally important freedoms and wellbeing dimensions will triumph through a reasoned social choice process. Subjective and contextually unique aspects of wellbeing are integrated where there they don't conflict with instrumental freedoms. This is of course a somewhat broad estimation, but it provides a useful framework of social progress priorities for further discussion. Moses and Knutsen (2007, ch. 12) support the use of such 'interpretive experiments' that rely on reasoned but imaginative evaluations as an under-acknowledged but essential part of the scientific process.

4.0 Social Progress in Tonga to Date

The Kingdom of Tonga is a Polynesian island nation with a resident population of approximately 100,000 people, a land area of 650km² and an Exclusive Economic Zone that covers 700,000 km² of the Pacific Ocean (SPC, 2008). It is estimated that at least the same number of Tongans also live overseas. This modern Tongan Diaspora continues a long history of oceanic exploration that suggests the Kingdom of Tonga can be perceived as transcending its geographic island boundaries (Hau'ofa, 1993; Malm, 1999). While this study is focused on the island nation of Tonga, the implications of being a globally dispersed society will reoccur.

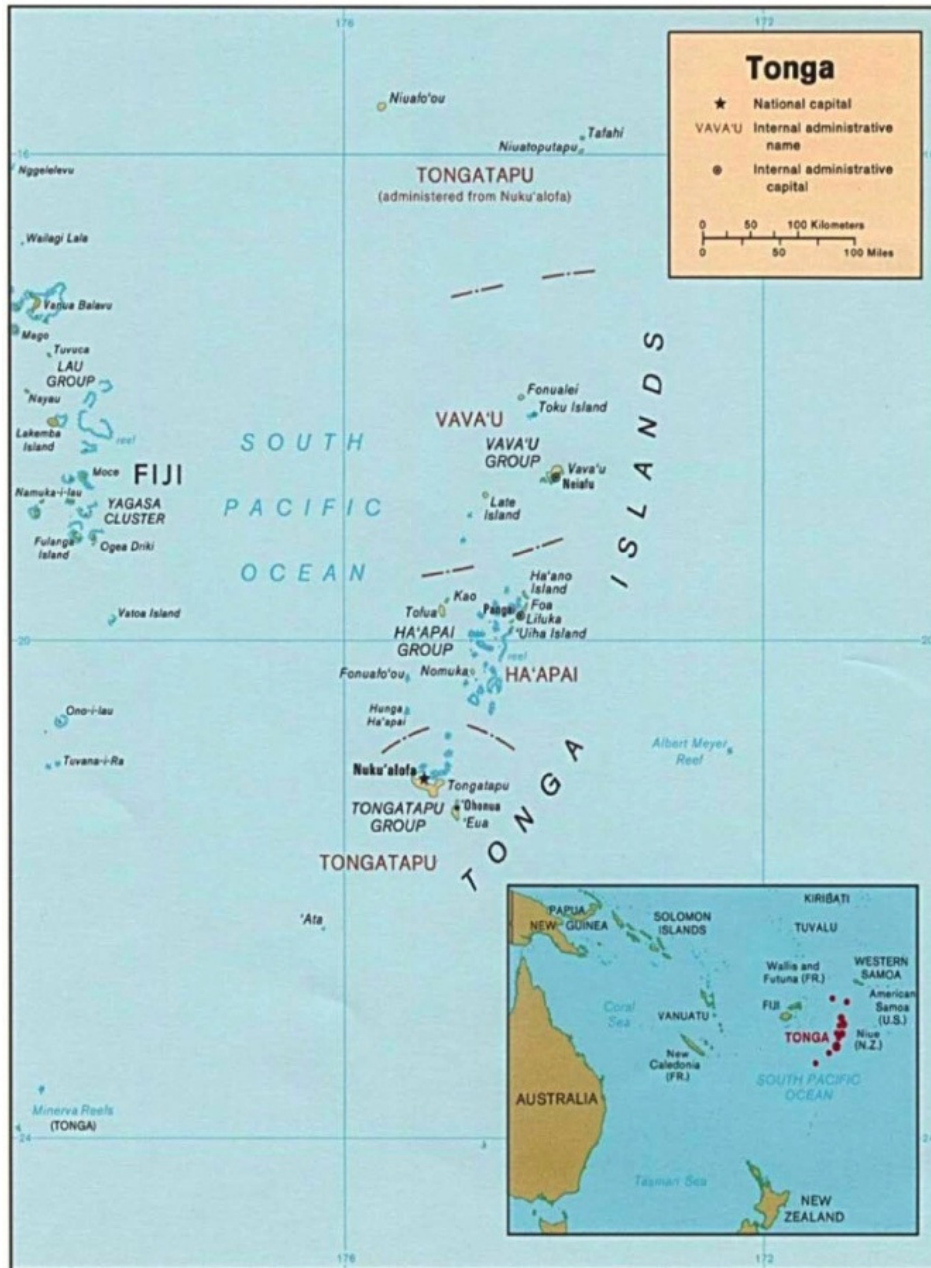


Figure 1 - Map of Tonga and the Pacific Ocean (Duplicated from Motu'apuaka et al., 2009)

4.1. A Brief History of Tonga's Development

King Tāufa'āhau Tupou I introduced the Tongan constitution in 1875. He established a new kingship and the transition to Christianity. Queen Sālote reigned from 1918 to 1965. She is credited with nurturing modernisation that emphasised the importance of traditions that are still seen as being quintessentially Tongan today. Her government began investing in education and health infrastructure while sustaining a national surplus on the back of copra exports. The reign of King Tupou IV shifted Tonga's development priorities towards economic growth and attempts at industrialisation (Campbell, 1992b).

By the 1970s internal migration to Tongatapu was being driven by the growing disparities between the main island and the 'outer islands' (Sevele, 1973). The collapse of the copra export market was a significant blow to Tonga's economy in the 1980s (Fleming & Blowes, 2003).

During the 1990's the negative environmental consequences of development initiatives and growing social tensions between modernisation and tradition began to be acknowledged (CPD, 1991). At this time Tonga experienced a boom in export earnings from pumpkin squash (Fleming & Blowes, 2003), but benefits from the squash industry were not equitably distributed. Attempts at industrialisation were also unsuccessful (ADB, 1996). Remittances from emigrants have thus significantly surpassed the value of Tonga's exports (Campbell, 1992a). Tonga has become an example of a Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy (MIRAB) economy that is dependent on remittances and aid (Bertram & Poirine, 2007). In addition, government schemes that developed into scandals have increased pressure for government accountability and political reform, such as the sale of Tongan passports and flags of convenience (Hill, 2007; Moala, 2009).

Strategic Development Plan Eight (SDP8) declared a relatively sound vision for sustainable social progress in the new millennium, but this vision was only tentatively carried over into implementation strategies (CPD, 2006).

This history is provided in greater detail in Appendix II.

4.2. Measuring Tonga's Progress

SDP8 states that Tonga has made "substantial long-term economic and social progress..." while noting a number of emerging social, economic and ecological challenges (CPD, 2006, p.33). This contradiction of social progress with increasing social challenges derives from the metrics used and problems of insufficient statistical information (UNDP, 1999).

The real growth rate of Tonga's GDP has averaged 2.5% over the last decade, which the Asian Development Bank (ADB) reports as being "disappointing" (ADB, 2008, p.1). In SDP8 the description of economic progress as 'substantial' is later downgraded to 'modest', and characterised by rising inflation and continued dependence on aid and remittances (CPD, 2006, p.18). By the simple metric of economic growth, Tonga has been progressing, but only tentatively.

Tonga is currently ranked 99th of 182 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), almost matching neighbouring Samoa that has a much higher GDP per capita, but Tonga's HDI progress since 2000 has been very slow, diverging from the average trend of improvement in all regions (UNDP, 2009a). This means that

Tonga has slipped from 54th position, highest ranked Pacific country and from high to medium human development category since the 2005 HDI report (CPD, 2006, p.1; UNDP, 2009b).*

The HDI system also misses many instrumentally important dimensions of wellbeing. For example, though Tonga improves on its HDI ranking when adjusted for gender equality, it plummets to 102nd of 109 countries when the political voice and empowerment of women is also considered (UNDP, 2009a).[†] A recent Tonga Police study showed that 76% of people perceive a recent increase in alcohol related crime (Motu'apuaka et al., 2009, p.48). In SDP8 this decrease in people's personal security, linked to rising youth unemployment, is noted alongside other worsening social problems of income inequality, environmental degradation, cultural erosion and increasing hardship (CPD, 2006, p.33). These trends indicate a decrease in wellbeing when considered within the CMEPSP framework.

The first aspect of sustainable social progress is improving wellbeing across all of the CMEPSP dimensions. The indications are that Tonga is regressing rather than progressing in many dimensions, despite its GDP growth and relatively good HDI ranking.

4.3. Poverty and Inequality

Tonga views the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a 'development manifesto' that has "transformed the conceptualization of development" and reports 'good and steady' progress towards achieving them (National MDG Taskforce, 2005, p.1). The eight MDGs do represent a significant broadening of progress measures from the HDI, but the monetary poverty measures miss the high level of subsistence farming in the Pacific that has protected countries like Tonga from absolute poverty (Abbott & Pollard, 2004, p. 21).

Poverty can be more appropriately conceptualised for Tonga as 'hardship'. By understanding hardship as being difficulties in providing for the needs of one's family and social obligations there is evidence that hardship is increasing in Tonga as the shift to a cash economy continues (ADB, 2004, p.4). 23% of the population now struggle to meet their basic needs (ibid., p. 1). The community consultations conducted for *Strategic Development Plan 8* confirmed that hardship is increasingly equated to having insufficient cash and employment opportunity (CPD, 2006) – see Appendix V. The uneven economic opportunities on outer islands continue to cause internal migration where, detached from the traditional support of land and family, people often encounter greater financial hardship on Tongatapu (Fisi'iahi, 2006). The fact that Tonga can report good progress towards the MDGs while hardship is increasing demonstrates that the MDGs are also insufficient indicators of social progress for Tonga.

Though family systems are weakening they still play an instrumental role in mitigating hardship and improving human development (Abbott & Pollard, 2004). The flow of remittances from emigrant family members has proved to be a positive and now critical informal system of social support and poverty alleviation (Ahlburg, 1996; UNDP, 1999; Brown, 2008). Remittances no longer support only Tongan families,

* The 2009 HDI Report is based on 2007 data and the 2005 report on 2003 data.

[†] This shift refers to the Gender-related Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure (UNDP, 2009a).

but have become fundamental to the whole economy, driving nearly 50% of turnover, while aid funds make up the majority of the balance (AusAID, 2008a; SPC, 2008). Any slowing of material and cash remittances is seen as a fundamental risk to Tonga's macroeconomic stability (CPD, 2006; Lee, 2006).

But the relationship between remittances and inequality is unclear. Material inequality has been essentially unknown in the Pacific because traditional systems ensured the communal sharing of resources and family support, at least amongst commoners (Malm, 1999). Ahlburg (1996) suggested that remittances initially increased inequality but have since served to reduce it. Brown (2008) since concludes that the relationship is less clear and remittances may actually increase inequality. In 2002 Tonga had an estimated Gini coefficient of 0.42, which is relatively high for the region (Abbott & Pollard, 2004, p. 31), but insufficient data on inequality is available to robustly evaluate Tongan inequality trends (AusAID, 2008a). Like other Pacific countries the general trend seems to be increasing inequality as society becomes more monetised and individualistic (ibid.).

4.4. Summary

By using the current international progress measures of GDP, the HDI and the MDGs Tonga appears to have made reasonable progress. This does reflect the positive economic growth, high levels of literacy, relatively high life expectancy and low levels of absolute poverty that Tonga has successfully achieved.

When the broader concept of sustainable social progress is brought to bear on the Tongan context, closer examination indicates that Tonga has recently been making little if any social progress. Firstly it appears that wellbeing has been declining in many key dimensions outside those measured by the Human Development Index. These dimensions will be discussed further in Chapter Six. Secondly hardship and inequality seem to be increasing, despite the fact that informal protection from abject poverty remains effective in Tongan society.

The sustainability of the social progress Tonga has achieved will be investigated with a discussion of the country's paramount socio-ecological sustainability challenges in the next chapter.

5.0 Paramount Socio-Ecological Challenges Facing Tonga

This chapter is a summary of paramount social and ecological challenges facing sustainable social progress in Tonga, though more could be added. These socio-ecological challenges could provide the basis for sustainability indicators, and grounds for evaluating whether progress to date has been sustainable.

5.1. Land

The 650 km² of land in Tonga provides just over a half hectare of total land per person if distributed equitably to all Tongans over the age of 16.* While this is only an approximation, there is clearly far less than the 3.3 ha that each young man is now officially entitled to, in addition to a village or town plot of land (cf. Maude & Sevele, 1987). Demand for land on Tongatapu is also much higher than on the outer islands as a result of persistent urbanisation (AusAID, 2008b). Land quantity is clearly a significant challenge, as the 3.3ha entitlements are still seen by many as being too small for commercial agricultural production.

Land was traditionally cultivated with a bush-fallow system where small areas of land would be burnt, planted and then allowed to regenerate in cycles of 1 to 4 years (Kennedy, 1961; Thaman, 1976). But conversion to monocropping first of coconuts and then later squash has led to a significant decline in soil quality (Fitzgerald, 1995; Storey & Murray, 2001). Tonga's almost complete deforestation has led to the loss of many indigenous plant species, and knowledge of traditional agroforestry-like methods (Thaman, 2005). This is concerning given the growing view that Tonga's main hope for economically productive agriculture on its limited land area lies in sustainable horticultural production blending the best of traditional and modern agroforestry and horticulture techniques to restore and improve land productivity (Velde et al., 2007; McGregor, 2007; Fakalata, 2010).

5.2. Freshwater

Tonga is dependent on rainfall for the majority of its freshwater for both drinking and agriculture, especially in the coral atoll outer islands where the fresh water lens is particularly thin. Rain falls throughout the year with a wetter season between November and April. While there are differences between the degree of water issues on different island groups, generally porous soils and limited tank storage means that both agricultural and drinking water supplies are vulnerable to relatively short dry spells, along with saltwater intrusion in many coastal areas (SOPAC, 2007).

Most villages in Tongatapu have village water schemes providing piped groundwater but these generally operate intermittently and are untreated, so they often fail to meet World Health Organisation standards for drinking water (SOPAC, 2008).

* Using estimations of the current population at around 200,000 including expatriate citizens and 60% of the population being over 16 - given 38% of the population was under the age of 15 in 2006 (Tonga Gov., 2006).

5.3. Oceans and Fisheries

Tonga's coastlines, coral reefs and near-shore fisheries are in a moderate to severe state of degradation. Coral reefs have been widely degraded near urban areas accelerated by some use of dynamite and poisons for fishing (SPREP, 1984, p.15; Malm, 2009). The removal of sand for construction, destruction of mangroves and modification of coastlines has altered coastal currents causing further erosion, saltwater intrusion and reduced protection from sea swells (Pelesikoti, 2003, p.109). Contained bodies of water like Fanga'uta Lagoon in Tongatapu demonstrate the damaging levels of pollutants entering coastal waters from land-sourced pollution (Prescott et al., 2001).

While deep-sea fisheries are often cited as a major economic opportunity for Pacific nations, little information exists about what might be sustainable levels of exploitation and currently it is predominantly international operators exploiting these resources (Adams et al., 1999; ADB, 2002).

5.4. Waste and Pollution

Pollution from agricultural chemicals and oil products have rapidly become a significant problem contributing significantly to the pollution found where monitoring has been done in Fanga'uta Lagoon (Prescott et al., 2001; Velde et al., 2007). Pollution with wastewater from poor sanitation system also affects the groundwater lens on most islands (SOPAC, 2008).

Solid waste has become a significant problem with increased consumption of imported and packaged products. Tonga's traditional solid waste stream would clearly have been biodegradable, but now less than half of household waste is organics (SKM, 1999, p.16). Disposal of hazardous wastes such as used oil, paints and agricultural chemicals is poorly managed and monitored. Studies have demonstrated isolated but significant pollution of soils and groundwater (Pelesikoti, 2003, p.77). A recent development project in Tongatapu has improved the landfill and collection capacity there but on other islands there is little or no waste management (Faka'osi, 2010). Illegal dumping and burning of rubbish remain widespread and significant pollution and health problems (Pelesikoti, 2003, p.75).

5.5. Geography and Climate Change

Tonga's location presents the country with a number of challenges, especially exposure to extreme natural events. As well as being prone to tropical cyclones, its location on the Pacific plate boundary means that earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis occur with relative regularity (J. Lewis, 1982).

Cyclones cause varying degrees of damage to crops and infrastructure, as well as storm surges and coastal erosion. Climate change is expected to aggravate the frequency and/or intensity of cyclones; cause more erratic rainfall raising the risk of drought; affect fisheries and coral reefs; and eventually lead to erosion and inundation of low lying coastal areas (Tonga. Gov., 2005).

Transportation infrastructure and services are limited and expensive both to the outer islands and internationally, which raises the costs of imports and reduces the competitiveness of exports (Fisi'iahi, 2006). Tonga attracts relatively few tourists compared to other Pacific countries, partly because it is harder to travel there than many other tropical island destinations (Fagence, 1999).

5.6. Energy

Almost all of Tonga's electricity generation and 75% of the country's energy needs are supplied through imported fossil fuels leading to high and volatile energy prices (Tonga Gov., 2010, p.2). Small rises in oil prices have a significant impact on national revenue as the government limits electricity price rises (Levantis, 2008). This is clearly a high risk for Tonga's economy. In response Tonga has developed an 'energy roadmap' for a rapid transition to renewable energy sources – primarily solar, landfill gas, wind and coconut oil, but implementing this strategy will require a significant leap forward in management, government leadership and investment (Tonga Gov., 2010).

5.7. A MIRAB Economy

Tonga has evolved into a MIRAB economy that is largely dependent on remittances and aid funding. Debate continues about the economic sustainability of continued reliance on migration and remittances. There is a likelihood that second-generation Tongans overseas will be less likely to send substantial remittances (Lee, 2006); destination countries are becoming increasingly selective of immigrants, which puts the safety-valve of migration at risk; and migrants are likely to be the first to suffer job losses in times of economic crisis (Connell, 2007; CPD, 2006). Observation and interviews during this research indicated that the current economic crisis seems to be causing a significant contraction in remittance flows. Greater financial hardship, more business failures and mortgage foreclosures, and a weakening Tongan economy appear to be the result.

The embedded dependency of a MIRAB economy represents challenges to Tonga whether attempting to maintain remittances through continued export of people, or attempting to change direction and reduce dependency by increasing 'home-grown' economic output.

5.8. Culture and Tradition

Tongans are highly aware of the importance of their tradition and culture despite its evolving nature (Morton, 1996). But this dedication to national identity may also be a barrier to progress towards universal freedoms. Some see a tendency towards cultural superiority that is leading to dangerous nationalism (Moala, 2009). Futa Helu argued that Tonga's 'morally undeveloped' culture is resistant to positive foreign principles - especially equality, justice and freedom (Helu, 2002, p.7).

In recent history the Tongan government regularly used preservation of tradition as justification for restricting Tongan's political voice and freedom of speech (Bataille & Benguigui, 2005). Helu (1999, p.33) argues that the hierarchical separation of chief and commoner classes in Tongan culture 'clashes head on' with the principles of equality and human rights embedded as instrumental freedoms in the concept of sustainable social progress discussed in Chapter Two.

In his 'search for the Friendly Islands' Moala (2009, p. 141) sees that Tonga is at a critical developmental point as a nation. One that requires a socially accepted shift in what being *fakatonga** means to capture the best of Tongan culture but abandon aspects that constrain social progress.

5.9. Governance and Democracy

Government regulations and procedures are already criticised for being barriers to economic development (Fisi'iahi, 2006; ADB, 2008). The recent scandals around sale of passports and maritime 'flags of convenience' have been embarrassing. But the saddest and most blatant example of failed governance in Tonga has been the sinking of the clearly unseaworthy inter-island ferry the *Princess Ashika* on her 5th Tongan voyage in August 2009. The significant loss of life was reported to be 'completely unnecessary' and a result of the systematic failure of those in authority 'perform their duties properly' (RCISPA, 2010, p.iv).

It is such failures that have led to the major shift in political discourse and a new emphasis on political reform in Tonga's national planning (CPD, 2006; CEC, 2009; Tonga Gov., 2009). But Tonga's national culture is deeply entwined in the country's governance system, more so than most countries (Helu, 1999, ch. 1). As will be discussed further in the next chapter, retaining Tongan identity while achieving political reform will be a real challenge. The other major challenge to good governance is the 'chiefly' traditions generally exhibited by Tongans in positions of power that reduce the state's ability and inclination to advance social justice and thus social progress (Ibid).

Many people are concerned about the lack of political leadership emerging to guide Tonga's progress from the ongoing political reforms. Moala (2009, p.82) sees no 'long-term vision' or indication that the reforms will reduce the social elite's dominance over the people's freedoms. He sees that the 'pro-democracy' movement lacks a true democratic ideology and highlights their leaders' pivotal role in inciting the riots that devastated Nuku'alofa in 2006.

5.10. Social Learning

Modifying Tongan culture and tradition may be increasingly seen as a challenge that has to be undertaken for social progress to proceed in Tonga, but it remains far from clear how it can be brought about. The need for social learning in creating reasoned cultural change has many parallels with the reasoned social choice that already been discussed.

Nina Šrot's (2010) study into the limitations of social learning in Tonga identified challenges to social learning on different levels. The traditional emphasis on collective discussion and consensus building in Tongan offers opportunities for social learning, but the hierarchical nature of Tongan society that poses challenges to democracy also limits social discussion and the exchange of ideas essential to social learning. Tonga's educational system also limits critical thinking and reasoned debate on contentious ideas. This reinforces limitations to reasoned social debate and learning.

* *Fakatonga* means 'the Tongan way' or used to describe things and behaviours that are 'truly Tongan'.

5.11. Summary

This chapter has presented a summary of some paramount challenges facing Tonga's sustainability. They are a mix of ecological, socio-cultural and economic.

Indicative information on ecological trends indicates that Tonga's social progress to date has come at a heavy price. Pollution and degradation of resources are beginning to have a negative impact on Tongan people's wellbeing. Future sustainable social progress may need to include restoration as well as preservation of key ecological resources such as coral reefs, soil quality and freshwater lenses.

It appears that navigating all of these sustainability challenges will require extremely challenging socio-cultural changes. Whether changing ecologically damaging behaviour, adapting to climate change, defusing the chiefly culture of those in power, creating a new land tenure system, or igniting new economic directions; significant shifts will be required in behaviours and systems that are considered as being 'truly Tongan'.

6.0 A Shared Tongan View of Wellbeing

The South Pacific Commission suggests that “the single greatest issue that must be solved for successful social development [in the Pacific] is how to reconcile the best of both traditional and modern worlds” (SPC, 1995, p.17). As discussed in the previous chapter, addressing social challenges the face social progress will require a reasoned balance to be found between what are often competing traditional and modern values (Campbell & Coxon, 2005). While tradition is seen by many as a foundation for deriving a distinctly Tongan concept of progress, the need for Tongan culture to evolve in parallel is also acknowledged (Moala, 2009; Taufe’ulungaki, 1992; P. Finau, 1994).

The key dimensions of wellbeing proposed by the CMEPSP (2009) are used as the frame for the following analysis. The different perspectives found during this study on these wellbeing dimensions are described, illustrating tensions between different perspectives. These descriptions lead to identification of a plausible social compromise or ‘shared view’ on priorities for social progress for each dimension of wellbeing. In these evaluations it is assumed that instrumental freedoms will triumph in a social choice process, for this underlies the ideas of Amartya Sen and the CMEPSP discussed in Chapter Two. However, an effort is made to highlight subjective aspects of wellbeing that are also seen as being important alongside instrumentally important aspects of wellbeing. This highlights not only *what* dimensions of wellbeing are important but also *how* they are important in Tonga.

Attempting to rank these evaluated priorities for social progress is beyond the scope of this study. They are discussed in the order presented by the CMEPSP.

6.1. Material Living Standards

Before the arrival of Europeans Tonga was a non-monetary society based on a system of reciprocal exchange of foods, labour and *koloa* (Malm, 1999).^{*} This traditional subsistence culture required relatively low labour inputs and Tonga’s tropical climate allows year-round growing. As a result greater importance was placed on leisure, kinship and community than on work, savings and investment (Crocombe, 2005). Communities were based on the communal sharing of success and individual material wealth was essentially an unknown concept amongst the *tu’a* - common people (Taufe’ulungaki, 1992; Tonga, 2010).

Tongan society is based on a complex system of social obligations to one’s community and extended family – *kāinga*; and the *‘eiki* - aristocracy. Tribute to the *‘eiki* was paid in ‘first fruits’ from the fields and oceans (Cowling, 1990; Malm, 2009). Land access and protection was received in return (Taufe’ulungaki, 1992). The complex *fahu* system of the *kāinga* establishes the responsibilities of family members - especially brothers to provide for their sisters (Helu, 1999, ch. 15). Gifting of traditionally important goods still remains of high social importance and often transcends incentives to sell them today, though they are increasingly exported to ‘exchange’ with family overseas for remittances (Cowling, 1990; Fakava, 2000; Tonga, 2010).

* *Koloa* are hand-crafted ‘treasures’ of traditional value

While these traditional perspectives remain strong, much has changed – see Appendix II for an overview of Tonga’s development history. Interestingly it has been some commoners gaining most from joining the global economy, in both material wealth and social importance (Hau’ofa, 1992). Modern forms of material wealth now play an important role in meeting social obligations and raising one’s social standing (Cowling, 1990; James, 1993a; Fakava, 2000). This has led to an array of material wants in Tongan society today that can only be supplied through imports, though for many these are the housing, cars, fridges, washing machines, mobile phones, computers, and internet access that would be considered essentials in many parts of the world (Cowling, 1990; Malm, 1999).

While poverty can be understood better in Tonga as hardship in meeting one’s social obligations, as was discussed in Chapter Four, there has been a significant shift in the importance of money as the means of meeting these obligations (Fua et al., 2007; ADB, 2004). The most recent Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) showed that on average only about 30% of households’ income comes in non-cash forms and a similar percentage for expenditure, though the proportions remain higher on some outer islands (Tonga Gov., 2002, p.7 & 10).

In the focus-group sessions the importance of material living standards to young Tongans was clear in the priority they placed on well-paid employment in order to provide for the increasing expectations of their families and the costs of education - see Appendix IV.

Higher material living standards and cash income have certainly become high priorities for Tongan’s and the country’s low cash reserves mean that increased national income must then remain an important priority (ADB, 2002). However, many people are concerned by the social and ecological flow-on costs of economic growth and see individual materialism as a great threat to Tongan society (Finau, 1994; Fua et al., 2007; Moala, 2009). Their note of caution is that Tonga is ‘putting the cart in front of the horse’ by singly prioritising material living standards over other dimensions of wellbeing (Helu, 1999, ch. 19). These concerns seem salient in light of the limited recent social progress, increasing social problems and decline in the quality of ecological resources described in Chapters Four and Five.

Material living standards remain a high priority dimension of wellbeing in Tonga, but many see that renewed emphasis need to be given to the collective sharing of wealth and mitigation of associated social and ecological costs.

6.2. Health

Tonga has historically prioritised national expenditure on health, and infectious diseases have largely been brought under control (Campbell, 1992b). The country has a relatively high standard of health when measured by Human Development Index life-expectancy statistics (CPD, 2006), but this misses many other health issues. Skin diseases, wounds, infections and respiratory illnesses are often ineffectively treated at home as there is a widespread distrust of the hospital system (Morton, 1996). Changing diets and lifestyles are leading to increases in obesity, diabetes and heart disease (Pollock & S. A. Finau, 1999).

Health is clearly of universal importance, but priorities for progress in Tonga are improving the trustworthiness of public healthcare and addressing increases in lifestyle diseases.

6.3. Education

Education has become of paramount importance to Tongans (Cowling, 1990; Morton, 1996; Bataille & Benguigui, 2005). Formal education was introduced by the first missionaries, and since the reign of Queen Sālote it has been strongly promoted as the means to development (Campbell, 1992b). Education gets the largest share of national spending, supporting the high rates of literacy and school enrolment that boost Tonga's HDI score (CPD, 2006). Many people pursue tertiary education overseas and Tonga has the highest ratio of PhDs per capita in the Pacific (Maka, 2005).

A recurring comment in interviews was that Tonga has frustratingly little to show for its high percentage of well-educated citizens - the majority of whom live overseas, but the 'brain-drain' phenomenon is condoned for the importance of skilled-emigrants' remittances (CPD, 2006; Maka, 2005). It was also described in interviews and the focus-groups how education is a primary means of raising one's status in Tongan society. While people are respected for their qualifications, they do not always put their knowledge to good use.

The divide between levels of educational achievement and Tonga's progress has brought the relevance of the current education system into question. The current orientation of education to economic priorities ignores the traditional *ako* - concepts of knowledge and learning practical skills, which are important for living sustainable livelihoods in the Tongan context (Fua et al., 2007). This alienates a large percentage of youth and instils in them unrealistic aspirations for employment they currently cannot get in Tonga, while the minority who succeed emigrate (UNDP, 1999; Maka, 2005; Sanga et al., 2005; AusAID, 2008a).

The young people in the focus-groups generally valued education primarily as a means to get well-paid work and the choice of studying and working overseas. This concurs with Morton's (1996) findings that the importance placed on education is largely tied to hopes of employment and emigration; though she notes that disillusionment is a common result, which contributes to increasing social problems among youth.

Another critique is that instead of encouraging people to think critically the current education system serves to preserve unquestioning allegiance to aristocracy, which as mentioned in the last chapter is quite problematic for the social learning needed to address social sustainability challenges (Cowling, 2005; Thaman, 2005; Helu, 1999).

Education is of paramount importance to Tongans' wellbeing but while literacy, enrolment and tertiary achievements are important, Tongans are likely to agree that education also needs to provide youth with traditional alongside modern knowledge and value systems. For it is important that they can function effectively in traditional and modern contexts. Emphasis on both critical thinking and practical skills also clearly need to be brought more into education.

6.4. Personal Activities Including Work

As mentioned, traditionally greater importance was placed on kinship and community activities than work in Tonga, but this is changing. The role of work in people's lives will be described along with the core community activity of church-going.

Work

Tonga has a very low level of national unemployment but if subsistence farming is not included unemployment levels leap to over 35% (Tonga Gov., 2006). On this feature of economic development thinking Vusoniwailala (1978, p.121) concluded ironically that: “We of societies whose cultures that have survived thousands of years one day suddenly to awake with the embarrassing discovery that all this time we have been ‘unemployed’.” But as discussed in the previous section, young Tongans seem increasingly reluctant to engage in agricultural work upon leaving an education system that has trained them for formal employment. Opportunities for formal employment remain limited and problems with disillusioned youth in Tonga (CPD, 2006) eventually spill over into the large migrant Tongan communities in New Zealand, Australia and the USA (Moala, 2009).

Agriculture and fisheries remain the largest economic sector and hold many opportunities for growth but exports have been in decline for a number of years (ADB, 2008). Agriculture exports have dropped to insignificant levels due to a range of factors including bio-security restrictions in destination countries (McGregor, 2007), and the disillusionment of many growers with the inequitable distribution of costs and benefits of exporting highlighted by the failed squash industry (Storey & Murray, 2001). Offshore fisheries are dominated by foreign operators operating under lenient licences that return few benefits to the Tongan people (ADB, 2002).

The priority of improving material living standards does not mesh well with the current trend of increasing youth unemployment in Tonga. Finding ways to reengage young people into socially valuable work would most likely be widely agreed on priority for social progress.

Church-going

The Church plays the primary role in Tongan social and community life and by law most other activities cease on Sundays (Moala, 2009). Churches are the biggest educators in Tonga, schooling up to 90% of high school students (Fakava, 2000). Church donations are seen as being important for increasing social status and maintaining reciprocity with the Lord.

Tongans make very significant public contributions to their churches in goods, labour and time but increasingly in cash. The 2001 HIES study indicated that households spend on average about 4% of their annual expenditure on church donations (Tonga Gov., 2002, p.vii). The views heard during the interviews and focus-groups suggest that this is probably a significant underestimate. Though financial obligations vary between different denominations (Cowling, 1990), young people agreed it was not uncommon for children to go hungry or have to forego attending school because large amounts family money was spent on donations. Interviewees noted that church obligations sometime require families to take significant loans. Indications are that church donations now take up a much larger share of families’ livelihoods than the traditional system of gifting a smaller proportion of high-quality produce (Fakava, 2000; Cowling, 1990), and this is a contributing cause of increasing hardship (ADB, 2004).

The focus-groups indicated that while young people are moving away from the traditionally dominant denominations to relieve financial and institutional obligations they still see Church participation as being core to Tongan identity and wellbeing.

The late Bishop Finau (1994) was outspoken in advocating the rationalisation of donations to be more in balance with families' means. For it seems that church obligations are encroaching on many people's freedom and wellbeing. This means that the rationalisation of church obligations would be an expected social choice outcome. Interviewees discussed that churches could play a more active role in facilitating community initiatives to which contributions of time are again respected alongside monetary donations.

6.5. Political Voice and Governance

When King George Tupou I established the Tongan constitution in 1875 he established a western style of government without the checks, balances and participation of a democracy (Helu, 1992). Indeed to many observers the existing constitution appears 'manifestly undemocratic' by cementing absolute power of the Monarchy with a minority of people's elected representatives that cannot directly influence policy (CEC, 2009, p.7). This is hardly surprising in light of Tonga's long history as a stratified society in which chiefly elites looked down on the *me'avale* or 'ignorant ones' (Moala, 2009, p.109). But in the last two decades the government has faced increasing opposition from a 'pro-democracy' people's movement pushing for greater accountability from government (Bataille & Benguigui, 2005; James, 2003).

The Constitutional and Electoral Commission has recommended reforms that will remove the Monarch's executive powers and commoners will elect 17 representatives to the legislative assembly while the nobles will still elect 9 (CEC, 2009). Elections are scheduled for November 2010 but whether this commitment is met still remains to be seen (Matangi Tonga, 2010a).

Political reform represents an enormous shift in the Tongan socio-political system (Tcherkezoff et al., 2006), for the Monarchy remains at the centre of Tongan social identity (Hau'ofa, 1992). While Tongans generally support the reforms they are nervous of losing their traditional social system and identity with it (CEC, 2009). While the focus-group participants were enthusiastic about the opportunities they expected to result from democracy, they also noted that the Monarchy still remains important to their identity.

Political voice and an accountable government have become priorities for modern Tongans, but the planned democratic reforms alone are unlikely to be a silver bullet. This Tongan saying captures the reciprocity that Tongans are seeking in their new government and the shift to democracy: *Saipē 'a tau'atāina ka e 'oua fa'ifa'iteliha* - responsible freedoms are good, but not freedoms without moral responsibility.

6.6. Social Connections and Relationships

Social life in Tonga revolves around one's extended family and social obligations. The *kāinga* system of ranked social and hereditary relationships in Tonga is so complex that it is said that no two Tongans can be equal (Taufe'ulungaki, 1992). Ranking and status play an instrumental role in people's motivation and sense of identity (Morton, 1996). As noted already, hardship in Tonga is understood as having difficulties in meeting social obligations (ADB, 2004). Though, the importance of social relationships can also be a cause of

financial hardship as it is not uncommon for people to give away more than they can really afford (James, 1993b).

Family is of utmost importance in Tongan society and it is the extended *kāinga* network that provides people with food and economic security (Fakava, 2000). The focus-groups highlighted how extended family networks remain of huge importance to young Tongans' upbringing, but ironically that it is this unquestioned support that allows such a large number of young people to remain unemployed.

Funerals are social occasions that demonstrate Tongans' commitment to their *kāinga* responsibilities. These celebrations may represent an investment of time and resources one hundred times the relative cost of such a ceremony in New Zealand (Crocombe, 2005). Tongans are often criticised for such a waste of economic resources but they defend these practices as being fundamentally *fakatonga* as social relationships take precedence regardless of the cost (James, 1993a).

As mentioned, it is the strength of family connections perpetuating the flow of cash and material remittances that play such an important role in the country's social progress (Lee, 2004). But while emigrants tend to retain their Tongan identity, they often do so within expatriate communities (Lee, 2003). People primarily identify with where their family lives, and where whole families have migrated their direct identification with Tonga tends to narrow (Marcus, 1993). Continued emigration therefore becomes essential to sustaining the remittances on which the country remains dependent (Lee, 2006).

Tongan society has undergone significant dislocation as a result of this large scale emigration and families are becoming much more nuclear in the process (P. Finau, 1994; Morton, 1996). Separation of families often leads to children being raised by distant relatives with little supervision or schooling in traditional norms (Thaman, 1992). The strength of *kāinga* networks has been weakening as a result (Hau'ofa, 1992). At a social level this weakening may represent opportunities to overcome the challenges facing social learning and democracy, but the breakdown of families is regarded as another important driver of increased youth social problems (CPD, 2006, p.39).

Tonga then faces a real paradox between the need to sustain remittance flows and the need to sustain families as the core of their increasingly transnational society. The next section will show that already strained family ties can be further affected by conflicts over land. Restoring and strengthening families represents an important if relatively subjective aspect of social progress in Tonga.

6.7. Environment - Land

While this is clearly a large simplification only 'land' will be discussed within the dimension of environment, for land is of paramount importance to the identity, security and livelihoods of Tongans (Fakava, 2000). Paramount ecological challenges that clearly affect the wellbeing of Tongans have already been discussed in the previous chapter.

The focus-groups and interviews confirmed that access to agricultural land remains of great importance, even if people are employed and use it just to grow food for their family. Town plots of land can be hard to obtain, but are fundamental to ensuring security for one's family.

The Tongan land system is based on hereditary inheritance by the eldest son of titled access to land - all of which is owned by the Monarchy. All males over the age of 16 are entitled to a small town plot of land and bush allotment (Maude & Feleti Sevele, 1987), though this entitlement has become impossible to implement. The result has been increasing landlessness and up to 60% of eligible Tongans are not allocated the land they are legally entitled to (Fakava, 2000). Women do not have the right to own land titles - only to lease or hold them in trust.

While land technically cannot be sold in Tonga, the Land Acts of 1976 and 1978 allowed for land leases to be traded. The sale of leases in Tongatapu and Vava'u to foreigners and general shortage of land are driving up land values, which is causing more cases of exploitation and rent seeking by the nobles who administer access to land (James, 1993a).

In the traditional *fahu* system the oldest son is obliged to provide access to his land for his brothers and together they must provide food for their sisters (Taufe'ulungaki, 1992). The way land bonds Tongan families together is reflected in the word *'api* that describes both the family and their lands (Morton, 1996). But the rising values of land are causing increasing cases of family disputes over land, especially when older brothers sell leases to the land their siblings are using (Blake, 2010; Halatuituia, 2010).

Foreign investment is promoted as critical for economic growth (CPD, 2006). Many reports conclude that restrictions on land ownership and lease terms preclude foreign companies from investing, especially in tourism infrastructure (Fisi'iahi, 2006; ADB, 2002).^{*} The implication is that Tonga is limited in attracting foreign investment until it creates freehold land ownership (Crawford, 2001). A shift to freehold land tenure would almost certainly increase landlessness, with greater social, cultural and political dislocation as a result (Maude & Feleti Sevele, 1987).

However, the existing Tongan land tenure system faces issues of equality. The inability of women to inherit land title puts them at a disadvantage, especially as the *fahu* system increasingly fails to provide for their needs (Taufe'ulungaki, 1992).[†] Support is growing for universal land entitlement but many people fear that changing the relationship of women to land will only further undermine the family unit (Radio NZ, 2009). There is also the issue of expatriates retaining large land holdings that are not used (Crawford, 2001).

With the mounting range of tensions between traditional land tenure and the demands of modern Tonga, some form of land reform seems to be inevitable and necessary (AusAID, 2008b). But Tongans are generally nervous of being alienated from their land by any change to the existing system (CEC, 2009), so in practical terms they are far from agreeing to any reforms. The principle of equality suggests that reforms are required to provide universal land entitlements for housing and subsistence food production, which can be distinguished from land that is being used commercially (Helu, 1999).

^{*} Foreigners can only lease land for a maximum period of 99 years (Crawford, 2001)

[†] This inequality also applies somewhat to younger brothers, though they do have some recourse in being able to apply for their own allocation of land.

6.8. Security

The wellbeing dimension of security was not analysed in great detail. As described in the previous sections, land and family networks are fundamental to people's economic security, but these traditional systems are increasingly failing some individuals. The problem of increasing youth crime is a relatively new threat to people's physical security. The focus-groups showed that young Tongans are increasingly aware of the challenges facing their generation posed by climate change.

Restoring the strength of families is a widely supported priority for ensuring social security, but it may be that Tonga needs to explore establishing a state social security system to address rising inequality and support the most vulnerable citizens who are facing increasing hardship.

6.9. Summary

Using the dimensions of wellbeing highlighted by the Commission on Economic Development and Social Progress (CMEPSP) as a starting point, nine important dimensions of Tongan wellbeing have been described. These descriptions were used to identify a 'shared view' of these priorities for social progress that could plausibly be agreed through a process of reasoned social choice. These priorities are as follows:

- Raising of material living standards while being cautious of the social costs and reemphasising the importance of collective wealth
- Improving public healthcare and reducing lifestyle diseases
- Introducing practical skills, critical thinking and traditional knowledge into education
- Engaging youth into socially valuable work
- Encouraging church-led community projects and rationalising of financial church obligations
- Increasing accountability and moral responsibility of government
- Finding ways to restore and strengthen families
- Pursuing land reforms that provide universal basic-needs entitlements to land
- Establishing a state social security system for those facing greatest hardship

7.0 Discussion

The aim of this study was to conduct a preliminary evaluation of sustainable social progress in the Kingdom of Tonga following the recommendations of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP). This can be seen as a pilot study to inform further research and debate on sustainable social progress priorities and measures in Tonga.

Sustainable social progress can be achieved through reducing inequality and improving society's general wellbeing in the present; and by addressing challenges that could constrain the expansion of wellbeing in the future, or at least make it difficult to maintain today's levels of wellbeing. This evaluation of sustainable social progress in Tonga was conducted in three parts around the overarching question: to what extent is the Kingdom of Tonga achieving sustainable social progress?

The first part was an investigation into Tonga's progress to date using the metrics of GDP, the Human Development Index and the Millennium Development Goals. This investigation was presented in Chapter Four. The first impression given by these indicators is that Tonga has indeed been making reasonable social progress. However, once other information is considered it becomes apparent that hardship and inequality are increasing in Tonga. This does not negate Tonga's success in the dimensions of wellbeing that are captured by these metrics. Tongans do enjoy high rates of literacy, the economy has been growing slightly and the lack of abject poverty means that Tonga is mostly on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals. However despite these successes, the indication from this preliminary study is that Tonga's overall social progress may not be so positive. This is of course very difficult to quantify given the lack of data on other dimensions of wellbeing, which reinforces the CMEPSP's (2009) recommendations that countries need to significantly broaden their statistical information base on a range of interlinked dimensions of wellbeing.

The second part of the study was to identify a set of paramount socio-ecological challenges to the sustainability of Tonga's social progress. While the ten challenges discussed in Chapter Five by no means represent a complete set, they serve to highlight Tonga's most pressing sustainability challenges in two ways.

Firstly, even the partial information available on Tonga's ecological resources indicates that a heavy price has been paid for social progress achieved to date (Pelesikoti, 2003). Resource degradation and pollution levels are already starting to impact on the health and wellbeing of Tongan people and ecosystems. The CMEPSP (2009) recommends that countries develop a 'dashboard' of sustainability indicators that can be used to signal unsustainable trends in ecosystems. This analysis suggests that a number of ecological sustainability indicators for Tonga would already be showing yellow and red warning lights.

Secondly, the social, economic and ecological challenges reviewed in Chapter Five highlight how difficult making sustainable social progress may be in practice. Tonga has limited land and marine resources that need to be utilised sustainably and fairly, while it is clear that existing degradation and pollution urgently needs to be addressed. Fossil fuel dependency and the expected effects of global climate change are likely to exacerbate existing economic and ecological problems. While the sustainability of Tonga's MIRAB economy has been the subject of much debate, the Commission's proposal that a broader set of economic indicators might provide better warning of economic crisis suggests that existing vulnerabilities in the

country's economy may have been overlooked by recent analysis. On top of these risks, the greatest challenges are likely to be the socio-cultural changes that appear to be essential to making future sustainable social progress.

The extent of these socio-cultural challenges can be illustrated with an example of the political reforms that are now underway in Tonga. The discussions of political voice, governance and democracy in Chapters Five and Six showed that Tongans are demanding greater accountability and reciprocity from their government, but by articulating these demands they are directly challenging the social system that is central to Tongan identity and wellbeing. Preservation of culture is seen as being essential to people's unique identity and thus wellbeing. As Hau'ofa (2000, p. 464) ironically puts it, erasure of culture allows people to be "...globalized and whateverized, and slotted into our proper places on the Human Development Index."

At the same time, Tonga's hierarchical culture is central to the existing political system that is unaccountable in its restriction of people's freedoms, and the traditional importance of respect has been regularly used to defend this status-quo (Helu, 1999; Tcherkezoff et al., 2006). This leads to the paradoxical situation where culture and tradition are both barriers and fundamental to sustainable social progress. Achieving a balance in socio-cultural reform, that is inevitably difficult but needed, must be publically debated and negotiated for "the work of public valuation cannot be replaced by some cunningly clever assumption" (Sen, 2001, p. 110).

Perhaps the overarching social challenge then is how to bring such public debate and cultural change about in reality. Sen's (2001; 2009) arguments for the importance of rational social choice are central to the CMEPSP recommendations on sustainable social progress that provide the basis for this thesis. Šrot's (2010) investigation into the practicalities of social leaning in Tonga, conducted in parallel to this study, demonstrated that the hierarchical Tongan culture and tradition pose similar challenges to reasoned public discussion as they do for accountable and reciprocal governance. Tonga is currently somewhat trapped in a vicious circle of 'unfreedom.' The traditional system restricts public expression of opinion, which reinforces a political system that does little to encourage reasoned public debate. The planned institutional political reform alone may fail to fully address the depth of this social challenge, and current reports following the Princess Ashika inquiry suggest that the much needed improvement of Tongan governance is continuing to recede into the distance (Matangi Tonga, 2010b).

This discussion has highlighted that the greatest sustainability challenges facing Tonga appear to be social and cultural. The challenges that restrict reasoned public debate may have to be tackled before other priorities for social progress can be effectively identified. This is of course remains a paradoxical situation. There are however, positive indications that informal *faikava* discussion is increasingly turning to what *fakatonga* values and priorities will be needed for Tonga's social progress in the 21st Century (Moala, 2010). It remains to be seen as to whether this debate will be lifted into the political discourse through the current reforms.

The third part of this study followed the Commission's call on countries to identify and prioritise a socially 'shared view' of wellbeing as the basis for establishing a broader and better integrated set of indicators and objectives of social progress. The importance of reasoned social decision making to the Commission's proposal has already been made clear. In light of the above discussion about the practical challenges facing

reasoned public debate in Tonga, this research was an attempt to identify a plausible *fakatonga* 'shared view' of wellbeing. This evaluation followed the idea that reasoned social choice should acknowledge the paramount importance for social progress of equality and instrumentally important dimensions of wellbeing.

Different Tongan perspectives on the eight key dimensions of wellbeing proposed by the CMEPSP were described in Chapter Six. One dimension was split into two, leading to discussion on a total of nine dimensions. From these descriptions it became clear that a number of tensions exist between different perspectives and between dimensions. This finding supports the Commission's emphasis on the importance of investigating the complex linkages between dimensions. It also illustrates that priorities for social progress depend not only on *what* dimensions are important, but also *how* they are important.

The set of priorities for social progress identified for Tonga in this study are very preliminary. They are sufficiently plausible for this discussion, but far more research is needed before detailed indicators or policy objectives could be established. The complex links between dimensions leaves any ranking of these priorities beyond the scope of this study. The potential for further research is clearly substantial, which will be returned to at the end of this chapter.

Even with only partial information the first two parts of this study indicated that Tonga's recent sustainable social progress would be described as slight at best, and possibly even negative. The discussion of wellbeing dimensions provided an opportunity to consider these social progress trends more broadly. In discussing how different dimensions of wellbeing are important in Tonga, it was shown that the state of some important dimensions have been in decline. For example, the dislocation of family ties has had a major impact on Tongan society. Perhaps it could be argued that family is a relatively subjective dimension of wellbeing, but given the instrumentally important social security role families play in Tonga the weakening of family is hard to dismiss as an acceptable trade-off against other dimensions of wellbeing.

The example of land in Tonga also demonstrates the importance of examining how key aspects of wellbeing are important. Land is of instrumental importance in Tonga for both identity and economic security. The shortage of land in Tonga, issues of gender equality and increasing landlessness indicate that a reform of the land tenure system is required but a social priority for any reforms would most likely be to create and ensure universal land entitlement. Such an understanding of how land is important raises serious questions about past proposals to free up the limited land in Tonga in order to improve wealth levels and material living standards. These proposals are especially problematic in light of the effects that limited land trading in Tonga has already including increasing inequality, reducing people's economic security and causing the breakdown of family relations.

The discussion of wellbeing dimensions and identification of social progress priorities also reinforces the previous discussion on the limitations of the HDI and MDG metrics for social progress. Tonga's high scorecard on the HDI measure of education has been discussed, but it misses important aspects of how education is important to Tonga's social progress, especially the need for youth to gain practical skills, learn traditional knowledge and be encouraged to think critically.

All this indicates that the answer to the primary research question of this study is that on balance Tonga has recently not been achieving sustainable social progress to any extent. Though the aggregation and ranking of

priorities that would quantify this lies well beyond the scope of this study. Having followed the CMEPSP recommendations to develop a broader set of priorities for social progress in Tonga, it can be seen that progress in some wellbeing dimensions has come at the expense of other dimensions, or even aspects of the same dimension. Recent progress has also been ecologically unsustainable, the sustainability of Tonga's economy is uncertain, and the current political reform represents only a very tentative step towards addressing social sustainability challenges.

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The priorities identified in this study represent a plausible, but very preliminary, framework for development planning that more comprehensively addresses the different dimensions of social progress in Tonga. These need to be integrated with initiatives that tackle the sustainability challenges described in Chapter Five to provide a complete framework for sustainable social progress in Tonga.

The vision from *Strategic Development Plan Eight* and carried over into the recent draft *National Strategic Planning Framework* (NSPF) is:

To create a society in which all Tongans enjoy higher living standards and a better quality of life through good governance, equitable and environmentally sustainable private sector-led economic growth, improved education and health standards, and cultural development. (PMO, 2009, p. 2)

This broad vision encompasses much of the concept of sustainable social progress. There is a focus on quality of life or wellbeing; and it identifies the sustainability challenges of equality, governance, ecological problems, and cultural change. The NSPF strategic objectives also have many important parallels with the priorities for social progress identified in this study (PMO, 2009, p.3).

This makes it enlightening to compare the plausible framework for sustainable social progress identified through this study with Tonga's current national strategic planning objectives. This comparison is illustrated in Table 1 and the match between the two is evaluated as being either 'absent', 'poor', 'partial', or 'good'. It is noted if the NSPF objectives are 'additional' to the priorities identified in this study.

From this comparison it can be seen that in many cases there is at least a partial match between the priorities for social progress identified in this study and the NSPF strategic objectives. This is an encouraging finding. In the NSPF it is noted that sustainability challenges need to be addressed through the integration of environmental sustainability and climate change into all planning and programmes (PMO, 2009). However, this leaves much to interpretation and the match of the NSPF objectives to the sustainability challenges identified in this study, while good in some cases, is generally poor or absent.

In summary it can be concluded that priorities and challenges of sustainable social progress are being increasingly adopted in Tongan national planning. This is a positive move, but much remains to be integrated into planning for the country's future if sustainable social progress is to be achieved. This must include initiatives to address the hardest sustainability challenge facing Tonga that is social and cultural change.

Table 1 - Comparison of Sustainable Social Progress Priorities and Challenges against the NSPF

Identified Social Progress Priorities	NSPF Strategic Objectives	Match?
Raise material living standards while reemphasising the importance of collective wealth	Support private sector growth	Partial
Improve public healthcare and reduce lifestyle diseases	Minimise non-communicable diseases	Good
Introduce practical skills, critical thinking and traditional knowledge into education	Increase technical and vocational education	Partial
Engage youth into socially valuable work		Absent
Encourage church-led community projects and rationalising of financial church obligations	Community development the involves district/village communities	Partial
Increase accountability of government	Continuation of constitutional Reform	Partial
Find ways to restore and strengthen families		Absent
Pursue land reforms that provide universal basic-needs entitlements to land		Absent
Establish a state social security system		Absent
	Maintain and develop infrastructure	Additional
Paramount Sustainability Challenges		
Land quantity, soil degradation and biodiversity loss	Use land optimally	Poor
Freshwater pollution and intermittent supply		None
Coastal & reef degradation, deep-sea resources	Use resources more efficiently	Poor
Solid waste, chemical and wastewater pollution		None
Transport distances, cyclones and climate change	Integrate climate change into planning	Partial
Dependence on fossil fuel energy sources	Develop renewable energy sources	Good
Embedded dependency of a MIRAB economy	Build economic activity in Tonga	Good
Cultural barriers to social change		None
Lack of government accountability and leadership	Set up village councils and continue political reform	Partial
Cultural and educational barriers to social learning		None

Implications of this Study

In Tonga the future is referred to as the past, implying that a knowledge of history is essential if society is to consider where it should go (Kavaliku, 2000; Hau'ofa, 2000). This study indicates that social progress in Tonga has slowed and may well be declining, while it has been generally unsustainable. Tonga now faces significant sustainability challenges to future progress that require deep social reflection, discussion and cultural adjustment to address. Despite a partial march, many important priorities for social progress have been overlooked in past and current national planning approaches. This is beginning to change, but much more has to be done to thoroughly integrate priorities and initiatives for sustainable social progress into the national planning approach.

The implication is that more research, strategic planning and policy development that engages Tongan society is of vital importance for achieving sustainable social progress in Tonga.

This study indicates that the CMEPSP report is immensely important. By following the Commission's recommendations this study illustrates that currently used progress metrics of GDP, the Human Development Index or the Millennium Development Goals indeed only represent the 'bare bones' of progress. The findings of this study support the Commission's case that a far broader concept of progress is needed to adequately measure and guide a society's sustainable social progress.

Given the theoretical weight behind the CMEPSP report and recommendations, the implication is that what is true for Tonga is likely to be generally true elsewhere. Therefore this study helps to strengthen the CMEPSP recommendation that countries need to embark on developing a 'shared view' of measures and objectives for sustainable social progress.

Future Research Directions

Clearly this study leaves plenty of scope for future research. For Tonga these findings can be no more than preliminary, a point has been repeated throughout this work. A selection of the excellent literature on Tonga has been used, but much more could be included. The perspectives of the key cultural consultants interviewed in this study have been invaluable, for they are all leaders in different aspects of Tongan society, but their wide range of views still only provides an illustration of the Tongan context. The convenience selection of participants for the focus-groups does not provide a truly representative sample of young Tongans whose perspectives are critical to a study of this nature and could be much more thoroughly investigated.

This research does not escape two long standing critiques of development research in the Pacific. One is that time and finances limited the study to only the main island of Tongatapu, with a short visit to 'Eua. Literature sources have been used to capture perspectives from outer islands as well as possible. The other is that outsiders in Tonga are inevitably limited in understanding Tongan society and this limits applicability of this research. Adoption of the *kakala* framework was been an attempt to lessen this criticism.

The response to these critiques is that much work remains to be done. This research represents a preliminary evaluation or pilot study. This study can be repeated on a scale that much more robustly informs

national planning for sustainable social progress in Tonga. This research could be effectively undertaken by the Tongan Government and its development partners. It is recommended that the research on dimensions of wellbeing is conducted by people deeply familiar with the Tongan language and culture.

The implications of this study also suggest the value of conducting similar studies in any other society around the world. This could be meaningfully done at any scale – national, regional or local. Such studies can help to precipitate social discussion and identification of priorities for sustainable social progress, and continue to reinforce and expand on the ground breaking work of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress.

8.0 Conclusions

This study has been a preliminary evaluation of sustainable social progress in the Kingdom of Tonga. It has been conducted by following the recommendations of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP).

Firstly an analysis of Tonga's social progress was made using the established measures of the Human Development Index and Millennium Development Goals. By these measure Tonga appears to be making reasonable progress, however other sources of information indicate emerging social problems, increasing hardship and rising inequality in Tonga that are hard to reconcile with such reported progress.

Ten paramount socio-ecological sustainability challenges facing Tonga were investigated. This showed that what progress Tonga has been making has come at a high cost. Future social progress faces a number of social, ecological and economic sustainability challenges that require social and cultural change to address.

A 'shared view' of Tongan wellbeing was described, starting from the Commission's proposed key dimensions of wellbeing. This analysis described a range of different perspectives on each dimension, and often significant tensions between these perspectives. These descriptions supported the finding that Tonga's social progress has uneven across wellbeing dimensions. Nine priorities for social progress in Tonga were identified that represent the plausible outcome of reasoned social choice.

A positive sign is that aspects of sustainable social progress are being better integrated into Tonga's national strategic planning. However, this preliminary study illustrates that sustainable social progress needs to be far more comprehensively integrated into national development priorities and initiatives. This requires significant amounts of further research.

The implications of this study support the importance of the CMEPSP report and recommendations. The general approach of this study is replicable to other social contexts, and could be undertaken by any development research orientated intuition. Such studies would lead to a greater understanding of how sustainable social progress can be approached and ideally achieved around the world.

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Appendices

Appendix I – Glossary of Tongan Terms Used

<i>‘api</i>	A allotment. An <i>‘api ‘uta</i> is for growing food and an <i>‘api kolo</i> is a village residential plot. <i>‘Api</i> was also used to refer to the household
<i>ako</i>	<i>Knowledge systems and ways of learning</i>
<i>‘eiki</i>	Aristocracy – formally chiefs, but today used to refer to nobles and royalty.
<i>fahu</i>	The family relationships in which a sister is superior to her brothers meaning that a father’s sisters are superior to his children.
<i>fa’ifa’iteliha</i>	Irresponsible freedom.
<i>faikava</i>	Social drinking of <i>kava</i> with due form and ceremony
<i>faka’apa’apa</i>	Respect that is closely related to <i>‘ofa</i> .
<i>fakalalakala</i>	The process of modernisation and ‘progress’.
<i>fakatonga</i>	The ‘Tongan way’ or used to describe things and behaviours that are ‘truly Tongan’.
<i>fāmili</i>	Modern term derived from English to describe the nuclear and sometimes extended family.
<i>fe’ofa’aki</i>	Mutual love, caring, and generosity.
<i>feveitokai’aki</i>	Reciprocity, cooperation, consensus, and the maintenance of good relationships.
<i>fono</i>	Meetings held with people in authority.
<i>fonua</i>	Country or land and the people belonging to it.
<i>fanongo</i>	To listen deeply.
<i>inasi</i>	Traditional gifting of the finest produce to chiefs, and in modern times also the church.
<i>kāinga</i>	Extended family or the entire group living on a noble’s estate.
<i>kakala</i>	Traditional decorative flowers used for garlands.
<i>kava</i>	A beverage made from the a plant root used in ceremonial occasions and today in <i>faikava</i> .
<i>koloa</i>	Goods of traditional value - primarily finely woven mats and barkcloth made by women.
<i>kolo</i>	Administrative village unit.
<i>lototō</i>	Humility and generosity.

<i>luva</i>	Giftng – used to describe the transfer of knowledge in the <i>kakala</i> framework.
<i>mālie</i>	good, pleasing or pleasant: but used in the <i>kakala</i> framework to describe the process of reflection on the relevance of research findings for Tonga.
<i>mafana</i>	warm: but used in the <i>kakala</i> framework to describe the application of research findings to create sustainable change.
<i>me'avale</i>	Old term for commoners meaning 'ignorant ones.'
<i>ngatu</i>	Tongan barkcloth.
<i>'ofa</i>	Love and compassion.
<i>talanoa</i>	A discussion – it can be used to refer to discussion in a formal or informal setting.
<i>tapa</i>	Often used to refer to <i>ngatu</i> in discussions with foreingers.
<i>tau'atāina</i>	Freedom and liberty with responsibilities.
<i>teu</i>	Conceptualisation of research problems in the <i>kakala</i> framework.
<i>toli</i>	Data collection in the <i>kakala</i> framework.
<i>tu'a</i>	A commoner, or someone of lower rank in any relationship.
<i>tui</i>	Contextual analysis in the <i>kakala</i> framework.
<i>Tu'i Tonga</i>	The sacred paramount chief of Tonga before the new Monarchy was established.

This glossary has been compiled from the range of sources used in this thesis including advice from cultural consultants.

Appendix II - A History of Tonga's Development

Early Developments

Social stability in Tonga deteriorated in the late 1700's, undermining the stability of the ancient *Tu'i Tonga* high-chiefdom system and leaving the country divided. The paramount chief Tāufa'āhau began to restore unity to Tonga in the early 1800s and assumed the title of King Tupou I in 1931 (CEC, 2009). With the constitution of 1875 he abolished the old chieftom system and established a new kingship in which the monarch held vast amounts of power. The transition to Christianity played an important role in empowering these changes. Missionaries from Britain had gained little inroad since their arrival in the 1790s but found a champion in Tāufa'āhau. Despite these official changes the end of the 19th century life was still very much traditionally Tongan (Campbell, 1992b).

The reign of King Tupou II was a time of ongoing political negotiations with colonial powers. Tonga retained self-governance while engaging increased foreign development advice. Queen Sālote reigned from 1918 to 1965. She is credited with ensuring national peace while nurturing modernisation that emphasised the importance of tradition. It is the traditions of Queen Sālote's era that are generally viewed as being quintessentially Tongan today. She concentrated development on education and healthcare – with a temporary but important boost from the American military base located on Tongatapu during WWII. Increased exports from copra meant that the government at this time sustained a net surplus while investing in education and health infrastructure. To a large extent 'development' was still seen as a process of spiritual improvement within the context of Christianity (Campbell, 1992b).

The reign of King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV lasted until his death in 2006 and he shifted Tonga's development approach towards intensive industrialised economic growth (Campbell, 1992b). Formal development planning began in 1965 and was initially focussed on self-sufficiency but emphasis shifted to attracting foreign aid for development initiatives in the third to fifth plans (Campbell, 1992a). By the 1970s it was already apparent that disparities between Tongatapu and the 'outer islands' were encouraging internal migration to Nuku'alofa and Tongatapu (Sevele, 1973). The collapse of the copra exports was a significant blow to Tonga's self-reliance into the 1980s (Fleming & Blowes, 2003).

The 1990s

The *Sixth Development Plan 1991-1995* objectives include sustainable resource management and the need for more equitable distribution of income, but the predominant objective is economic growth. The plan acknowledges that such growth may have negative environmental consequences and that youth are facing challenges of growing tensions between modernisation and traditional values. Social development remained focussed on health and education, with the addition of public transport (CPD, 1991). During this period Tonga experienced a unique increase in export earnings from pumpkin squash (Fleming & Blowes, 2003). However, the industry also caused increases in chemical pollution and other ecological degradation (Velde et al., 2007).

Improving human development performance according to the UNDP Human Development Index emerged as a goal in Development Plan 7. This plan followed the model of the sixth calling for 5% per annum economic growth, but actual performance fell well short of this (CPD, 2006).

Income from the initially successful squash industry was not equitably distributed, and having caused significant environmental pollution and damage the industry has collapsed (Fitzgerald, 1995; Fakalata, 2010; Velde et al., 2007). Today Tonga's agricultural exports of *kava*, traditional crops and *koloa* to expatriate Tongan communities are relatively insignificant and to somewhat on represent as exchange for cash remittances (Malm, 1999). Attempts at industrialisation have also been unsuccessful (ADB, 1996). Some proposals have been extreme ideas such as incinerating imported toxic waste - this triggered the first environmental resistance in Tonga and the proposal was luckily abandoned (Blake, 2010).

Sadly other extreme 'get rich' schemes have attracted international condemnation in the last decade (Hill, 2007). One of the most glaring of these was the illegal sale of Tongan passports; a constitutional amendment by parliament to legitimise these transactions; and the high-risk investment followed by eventual loss of the profits. Another was the sale of 'flags of convenience' for shipping until one of these ships was caught smuggling weapons (Bataille & Benguigui, 2005; Moala, 2009). Such scandals have accelerated pressure for greater government accountability and political reform.

Becoming A MIRAB Economy

By the early 1990s remittances from migrants significantly surpassed the value of Tonga's exports (Campbell, 1992a). Like many island states, remittances have become the main driver of improvements in material wellbeing in Tonga (Connell, 2007), and Tonga has become an example of the Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy (MIRAB) description of a national economy that is largely dependent on remittances and aid for foreign revenue (Bertram & Poirine, 2007). Remittances now represent almost half of Tonga's economy, while aid funds make up the majority of the balance (SPC, 2008), and any slowing of material and cash remittances is seen a fundamental risk to Tonga's macro-economic stability (CPD, 2006; Lee, 2006).

Debate continues about the economic sustainability of continued reliance on migration and remittances. There is a likelihood that second-generation Tongans overseas will be less likely to send substantial remittances (Lee, 2006); destination countries are becoming increasingly selective of immigrants - putting the safety-valve of migration at risk (Connell, 2007; CPD, 2006); and emigrants are generally the first to suffer job losses in times of economic crisis. Observation and interviews during this research indicated that the current economic crisis seems to be causing a significant contraction in remittance flows; with financial hardship, business failures, mortgage foreclosures, and a weakening Tongan economy as a result.

Strategic Development Plan 8

The broad vision of *Strategic Development Plan Eight (SDP8)* is:

To create a society in which all Tongans enjoy higher living standards and a better quality of life through good governance, equitable and environmentally sustainable private sector-led economic growth, improved education and health standards, and cultural development. (CPD, 2006, p. 35)

With this vision *SDP8* declares a relatively sound set of objectives for sustainable social progress but it then lacks any general translation of aspiration into balanced strategies and objectives. There is no explicit explanation of how concepts like quality of life, sustainability and culture are conceptualised in the Tongan context; and economic priorities remain dominant over planned implementation strategies.

Community consultation was conducted for the first time in the preparation of *SDP8*. This consultation was clearly a positive step towards identifying Tongan development priorities, but appears to have had little impact on the overall planning approach. For example the consistent importance communities placed on employment opportunities – see Appendix IV, is presented as a preference for policies to encourage foreign investment (CPD, 2006, p.32). The analytical connection is not at all clear given that an earlier ADB study highlighted access to land, markets and transport as priorities for creating income opportunities (ADB, 2004, p.16).

Draft National Strategic Planning Framework

A change of direction has been taken in the draft *National Strategic Planning Framework* (NSPF) issued for discussion in February 2010. Rather than the prescriptive approach of previous development plans a set of primary strategic objectives are briefly stated as the basis for ministerial planning, action and reporting, as follows (PMO, 2009, p.3):

- Community Development by involving district/village communities
- Private sector growth
- Constitutional Reform
- Maintain and develop infrastructure
- Increase Technical and Vocational Education
- Minimising Non-Communicable Diseases
- Integrate environmental sustainability and climate

It is noted that better monitoring of progress against these strategic objectives is required (PMO, 2009, p.2).

Appendix III – People Interviewed

Mrs Betty Blake

Ma'a Fafine no e Famili Inc

10 March 2010 – Nuku'alofa

Mr 'Ofa Fakalata

Organic Farmer and formerly Head of Research at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

25 March 2010, in Nuku'alofa and 29 March at his 'api

Mr Sione Faka'osi

Executive Director – Tonga Community Development Trust

10 March 2010 – Nuku'alofa

Ms Tufui Faletau

Deputy Secretary of Finance - Ministry of Finance and Planning

18 March 2010 – Nuku'alofa

Mr 'Ata'ata Finau

Government Statistician – Tonga Statistics Department

5 February 2010 – Nuku'alofa

Mrs Ana Bing Fonua

Programme Director - AusAID

1 March 2010 – Nuku'alofa

Dr Seu'ula Johansson Fua

Fellow – Institute of Education, USP

4 March 2010 – University of the South Pacific & 16 March Nuku'alofa

Mr Talo Fulivai

Environment Officer – Ministry of Environment and Climate Change

5 March 2010 – Nuku'alofa

Dr Sione Nailasikau Halatuituia

CEO – Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources

8 February 2010 – Nuku'alofa

Mr Drew Havea

Chairman - Civil Society Forum of Tonga

31 March 2010 – Nuku'alofa

Mr Gabrielle Mafi

CEO – Tonga Waste Management Authority

1 February 2010 – Nuku’alofa

Mrs Mafi Le’o Masi

Environment Officer - Ministry of Environment and Climate Change

5 March 2010 – Nuku’alofa

Ms Lupe Matato

Head of Technical Division - Ministry of Environment and Climate Change

18 March 2010 – Nuku’alofa

Mrs Lee Miller

Waste Management Ltd

3 March 2010 – Nuku’alofa

Mr Kalafi Moala

Taimi o Tonga

25 February 2010 – Nuku’alofa

Mr Semisi V. Tapueluelu

Technical Officer – Tonga Waste Management Authority

24 February 2010 - Tapuhia Landfill Tongatapu

Dr ‘Ana Maui Taufe’ulungaki

Director – Institute of Education, USP

4 March 2010 – University of the South Pacific

Mr Tukua Tonga

Director of Urban Planning – Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources

27 January and 4 February 2010 – Nuku’alofa

Mrs Monalisa Tukuafu

‘Aloua Ma’a Tonga

23 March 2010 – Nuku’alofa

Mrs Suliana Vi

Environment Officer – Ministry of Environment and Climate Change

1 February 2010 – Nuku’alofa

Appendix IV - Focus-group Descriptions

Presented here are the results of the *talanoa* focus-group sessions conducted in Tonga. These results will contribute to the analysis that also draws on a range of literature and interview sources of information.

Group 1 – University of the South Pacific Tonga Campus, 9 March 2010

The *talanoa* group at the University of the South Pacific (USP) consisted of eight students, 6 male and 2 female. Their ages ranged between 18 and 31, and they were studying a range of different courses. The group discussed mainly in Tongan, and reported back to us in English. Members of the group alternated in taking notes of the key points of the discussion that supplemented the oral summaries.

The group concluded with these four essential aspects of wellbeing that they prioritise in their futures:

- **Education and Employment** – was agreed to be unanimously most important and the reason that they are all studying at tertiary level. Despite their different backgrounds, they agreed that higher education is critical in order to obtain a good “white collar job” and better income. They also mentioned the importance of education in promoting oneself.
- **Family** – was the primary motivation for seeking better education and earnings. They stressed the importance of being able to support one’s extended family. They also discussed the need for restoring family strength in addressing social problems – especially crime. All of them had family living outside of Tonga.
- **Religion** – was related to a need for education in order to help guide people about the bible’s message.
- **Country** – The democratic reforms being implemented in 2010 were highlighted as an opportunity to influence the future direction and development of Tonga. In Tonga they have access to land, and the importance of being able to grow food for one’s family is still very strong. Leaving Tonga means sacrificing this and many other connections to their traditions, so the group agreed that they all preferred to stay in Tonga if they could get a good job.
- One member of the group stayed behind to highlight his perspective that **having a vision and a dream** is most important to his wellbeing, and he thinks that of many others, but this was not really discussed by the group. His motivation was to make a valuable contribution to improving education in Tonga.

In response to the question of factors that most influenced their priorities the group focussed on education. Foremost of the discussion was money. Money was seen as the primary enabling factor that allowed further education. Family was seen as the thing that made it possible to have the finances for study, so a major influence on their priorities was centred around the need for their families to have sufficient funds for good education.

The importance of family influence was stressed in that if a family is well educated then children naturally get a better education at home as well as at school. Thus the support of family is essential for students to concentrate well on their studies and accordingly perform well.

They agreed that the importance of education was pervasive in society and stressed through family, formal education, the church and by the government. The result was their belief that with education they will be alright – “that’s the Tongan way” they said.

Group 2 – Atenisi University, 12 March 2010

The *talanoa* group at Atenisi University consisted of five students, 2 male and 3 female. Their ages ranged between 20 and 25. They are studying the prescribed but diverse range of courses making up that Atenisi programme. Most of the discussion was conducted in English, but some prompting was required.

The most important aspects of well being discussed by the Atenisi group were:

- **Money** – was seen as being important both as a means and an ends. Having sufficient money was seen as being critical in order to obtain a high standard of education and to provide properly for family.
- **Education** – is seen as the primary means to achieve choice in one’s life and to obtain a well paying job that will bring in sufficient earnings. Education overseas was seen as being of very high importance. Education leading to good employment was also seen as a way of gaining respect from the community. The group noted that there are many people who would like to get high school and tertiary education, but cannot afford it. The group also agreed that they had been strongly influenced by the education system.
- **Choice** – is the underlying priority behind discussions of whether staying in Tonga is a priority or not. The group saw positive aspects in being in Tonga, and living overseas. Their opinions ranged from wanting to come back and work for the country and wanting to leave and only return to visit family. They all agreed that choice was a main priority, and that education represented the means to gain that degree of choice over their lives. They also saw that
- **Employment** – is a concern. They expect finding work in Tonga to be a challenge, and that they will seek work overseas. Corruption in the government was highlighting as being a major barrier to feeling encouraged to work in Tonga, and thus it impinges on their future choices.
- **Land** – is a reason to return to Tonga because one needs land for a home and it inherited for free in Tonga. It was also seen as a risky resource given the likelihood that climate change will reduce the ability to produce food from the land, and thus its value. The transfer of land to foreigners is seen as being unfair because it limits the land available to young Tongans, and without land in Tonga you are a nobody. Land in Tongatapu is regarded as being of much higher value, and none of the group really saw living on the outer islands as an option. Those from outer islands thought they might be able to exchange land on other islands for land in Tongatapu.

- Providing for their **family** was also a motivation for the group, including traditional *fahu* support of the boys' sisters. The nuclear family was a major influence on their priorities, but most of them highlighted the importance of their extended family in helping to make their studies possible. Working on the family land had influenced one of them. Partners and friends are also important influences on the group members' lives.
- Being able to get good **employment** is an important means to provide for family. They thought that probably only 15% of youth in Tonga work their family's *api* for food, 35% are in education and the remaining 50% are unemployed and contributing to social problems.
- The Christianity and the **church** remains a very important influence. They weren't sure how the role of the church may evolve in the future, but they are confident that it will remain a highly valued and important community institution.

Group 3 – On the Spot Arts Initiative, 31 March 2010

Six members of the 'On the Spot' group participated in the *talanoa*. There were two women and four men aged between 21 and 31 (one of the women had to leave early). The session was held at one of the group's house that also serves as a studio for the group. The group was formed in 2006 to develop an informational radio programme for youth, and has grown to engage in a range of arts and media activities. Members' contributions are voluntary.

The group discussed a broad range of wellbeing dimensions, and because they know each other well the discussion flowed relatively easily. The session was conducted entirely in English. The priorities for the wellbeing that the group discussed were as follows:

- A clean environment – as being important for raising a family and a healthy, pleasant lifestyle.
- Having access to **land** is a challenge, though it is really important for one's security. The group discussed the challenges that young people face today in getting access to land, especially as women and younger brothers. They agreed that equality of the opportunities for women is an important step that Tonga needs to take, especially in ownership of land. Conflicts over land have made family relationships increasingly complicated. While land in Tonga was discussed as being of primary importance for security, some members of the group highlighted the vulnerability of Tonga with climate change and the land shortage mean that **migration** may be a more secure option.
- **Family** is an important motivating force. Like the other groups there was a greater focus on providing for their nuclear families, though the importance of extended family in raising children in Tonga has played an important role in their lives. With the shortage of land security, families are putting all their investment into children's education.
- Many of the group are in formal **employment**. Work was seen as being universally available where land and the opportunities are not. They cited stories of how the collapse of exports and cash returns on agriculture has pushed greater numbers of people to seek formal work.

- Others in the group are studying and **education** is seen as the means to employment and the ability to provide for one's family and raising one's status in society. Though they noted that post-grad education is a minimum for getting work in government.
- The ongoing **political change** is seen as necessary to ensure that the executive power of the monarchy is removed. However the group was also concerned about the nature of the democracy that may emerge and the likelihood that this will fuel greater conflict and personal feuds that are hard to deal with on small islands where everyone is closely associated. They agreed that leaders need to start listening to the people, especially young people, and this is a motivation behind their arts initiative.
- While political change is creating wider appreciation of the importance of **rights** such as equality and freedom, there is a risk the **social relationships** that are also of great importance will be undermined. The group discussed how in Tonga there two acknowledged types of freedom - one comes with responsibilities *tau'atāina*, but socially dangerous freedoms that are not attached to moral obligations and responsibilities is referred to as *fa'ifa'iteliha*. Growing awareness of people's rights is positive in encouraging people to ask 'why?' but there is a need to balance cultural morals and obligations with the introduction of equality, liberty and democracy.
- The group see that Christianity and **church** remain cornerstones of Tongan identity. Living in accordance with the proclamation of King George Tupou I that "Ko e fanua'ni kuo tuku ki langi" – this land has been offered up to heaven remains an important part of being Tongan.
- **Status** in society remains an influencing force that greatly affects dating and education. If one does not do well in education then working for the church towards becoming a minister is seen by many as an alternative way to improve one's status in society.

Group 4 – 'Eua, 2 April 2010

Seven people from the island of 'Eua participated in this *talanoa* session. It was arranged with kind assistance from the Tonga Community Development Trust. The group was made up of three women and four men, two of the group were over 30, but the rest were aged between 18 and 30. The participants were all raised on the island, and provided a valuable 'outer island' perspective.

The group made their *talanoa* in Tongan, and reported to us the conclusions of their discussions in English. They highlighted the following priorities for their wellbeing:

- The importance of their nuclear **family** and the fact that children in Tonga respect their elders. The importance of respect in Tongan culture was emphasised. They noted that family relationships are being strained by the influence of 'development' and resulting problems in communication within the family.
- The shift to **democracy** is seen as being important in order to get government to listen to the needs to the people. The importance of the Monarchy to Tonga was highlighted. They discussed how they see it as government's role to provide employment opportunities.

- They noted the importance of their **environment** to their sense of identity and place, and especially the national park on 'Eua that protects the last substantial area of indigenous forest in Tonga. They also noted the importance of protecting their historical sites.
- **Religion** remains a fundamental part of their identity
- Exchanging ideas and engaging in *talanoa* with their peer group of **friends** is important. They see that their expectations for entertainment are substantially different to their parents.
- **Employment** is lacking in 'Eua and there is no market for agricultural products, so farmers only grow food for their families. Chinese immigrants are seen as having out-competed Tongans for the small shops and businesses, especially because they do not have the same social obligations to meet.

Summary

The four groups consistently highlighted the following priorities for their wellbeing now and into the future:

- Education that leads to employment and financial security
- Employment in order to provide for their family and obligations
- Family and social relations as a unifying force and as a major influence in their lives and identity
- Religion and the church as a core aspect of Tongan identity
- Land for security, though many of the participants faced struggles to get it
- Choice and opportunity including the option of migrating and possibly returning to Tonga.

In addition the following factors were mentioned by some groups:

- Serving the country
- Money as a means to other ends
- Status in society
- Rights and equality of opportunity
- Political change and democracy to enable accountability and rights
- A clean and conserved environment

Appendix V – People’s Priorities Listed in SDP8

The findings of the community consultations undertaken for the preparation of *Strategic Development Plan 8* are summarised in the table below. The consultations were conducted as public meetings, consolidated into focus-groups, in each district of Tonga. Participants were asked to identify priority issues for development (CPD, 2006). The findings are summarised by whether different issues were identified as a priority in each island group – marked with an ‘X’.

Development Issues	Tongatapu	The Outer Islands			
		Ha’apai	Vava’u	Eua	Nuias
Unemployment and financial hardship	X	X	X		X
Health facilities & village water supplies	X	X	X	X	X
Infrastructure*	X	X	X	X	X
Community equipment†		X	X		
Unavailability of markets for produce		X	X		X
Equitable access to education		X	X		X
Transport and communications		X			X
Youth Facilities and training		X	X		X
Coastal erosion	X				
Drug/alcohol abuse and youth crime	X				
Early school leaving	X				

These results are not entirely consistent, as participants were asked to decide what issues are of primary importance and more were listed for some island groups than other. For example, it is most likely that citizens of low-lying Ha’apai do indeed think that coastal erosion is an important issue, even though it was not noted in this research.

* Important infrastructure needs varied across the island groups, but included roads, wharves, marine beacons and village boundary fences

† Community equipment needs related to fishing, agriculture, environmental preservation and communal social activities