



The State of Pacific Youth 2005

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF Pacific)

Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea

United Nations Population Fund (Office for the Pacific)

Funded by New Zealand's International Aid and
Development Agency (NZAID)



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Table of Contents

i	Foreword	v
ii	Acknowledgment	vii
iii	List of Acronyms	viii
iv	Executive Summary	x
v	Introduction and definitions	xii

Part One: Overview of the State of Pacific Youth

1.1	The situation	2
1.2	Youth issues in brief	4
1.2.1	Dropping out of school	4
1.2.2	Unemployment among school leavers.	5
1.2.3	Youth substance abuse	6
1.2.4	Exposure to STIs including HIV/AIDS	7
1.2.5	Teenage pregnancy	7
1.2.6	Youth living on the street	8
1.2.7	Youth crime and youth involvement in civil unrest	9
1.2.8	Youth suicide	10
1.3	Government and community responses	10
1.4	Addressing the symptoms instead of the causes	11
1.5	Youth visions for the future	13

Part Two: The underlying causes of youth issues

2.1	The role of low self-esteem in high-risk behaviour	19
2.2	Underlying Causes	19
2.2.1	Poverty/hardship	19
2.2.2	Education systems focussed on white-collar employment skills	22
2.2.3	Scarcity of employment opportunities	25
2.2.4	Rural/urban inequalities	27
2.2.5	Conflict between traditional and modern cultures	29
2.2.6	Authoritarian parenting methods	32
2.2.7	Discrimination	35
2.2.7.1	Gender discrimination	35
2.2.7.2	Discrimination against sexual minorities	37
2.2.7.3	Discrimination against the disabled, youth with special needs and youth who are 'different'	39

Part Three: Strategic Approaches

3.1	Coordination and planning	43
3.2	Partnerships	44
3.3	Flexible and sustained strategies	46
3.4	Help young people to help themselves	47
3.5	Approaches to adolescent sexual and reproductive and health	50
3.6	Coping with young offenders	53
3.7	Listening to youth	55

Part Four: Summary and Conclusion

4.1 Youth issues and Millennium Development Goals	60
4.2 Youth issues and CRC	61
4.3 Youth and The Pacific Plan and other regional initiatives	61
4.4 Youth and the Pacific Youth Strategy	62
4.5 Conclusion	62

Annexes

References	64
------------	----

Annex One: Statistical Tables	68
--------------------------------------	-----------

Table One: Youth Population in Pacific Island Countries	68
Table Two: School enrolment	69
Table Three: School enrolment by gender	70
Table Four: Youth unemployment	70
Table Five: Cumulative HIV Cases: Total and aged 15-24 years	71
Table Six: Births to teenage (15-19) mothers	71

Annex Two: Declaration and Youth Statements	72
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2.1 Declaration from the 2005 Mauritius conference on Youth Visioning For Island Living	72
2.2 Youth Declaration on Millennium Development Goals	74
2.3 Youth Statement on the Pacific Plan	80

List of Boxes

Box One: The Tuvaluan Youth Vision	15
Box Two: Who are the 'youth leaders'?	17
Box Three: Inter-related causes of youth issues	21
Box Four: Educational reform in Fiji	22
Box Five: Jale's story	28
Box Six: Youth and cultural conflict	30
Box Seven: Impact of 'Waan Aelon in Majel' on trainees' lives	31
Box Eight: Vision of the Perfect Parent	34
Box Nine: Youth-to-Youth in Health, RMI	45
Box Ten: When donors don't understand...	46
Box Eleven: Building life skills to improve adolescent health and reproductive health	51
Box Twelve: Lessons learned from ARH programs	52
Box Thirteen: A restorative justice success story	54
Box Fourteen: Millennium Development Goals	60

List of persons consulted for this report	84
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A Collaborative Foreword

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“Youth Empowerment for a Secure, Prosperous and Sustainable Future”

UNICEF Pacific, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the UNFPA Office for the Pacific take this opportunity to present the State of Pacific Youth report 2005, initiated as collaborative effort to reflect the new partnership between the three agencies on Adolescent Health and Development. With 1.2 billion people in the world between the ages of 10 and 19 and more than half the world's population under the age of 25, all three agencies work to ensure that adolescents in the Pacific region have opportunities to develop holistically through access to information, education and services necessary to address the reproductive health needs of young people and to develop life skills to make responsible decisions in life and reduce vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

In light of the Outcome Declaration titled ‘Youth Visioning for Island Living’,¹ - the ‘vision’ formulated by young people at the SIDS meeting in Mauritius - UNICEF Pacific recognized the need to document the current situation of youth in the Pacific from which progress towards youth visions could be measured. Additionally, the preparation of this report is timely with regard to the preparation of the forthcoming Pacific Youth Strategy 2010, to be adopted by Pacific Youth Ministers in December 2005.

This report reiterates a global call to invest in adolescents, in particular, their life skills, needs for sustainable livelihood and their reproductive health needs as well as their meaningful participation in processes to address these needs. Several key events have seen world leaders promise to help improve people's quality of life especially for women, children and young people. For instance, at the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on Children in May, 2002 which involved the full participation of children and young people in its high level deliberations with world leaders. Similarly at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), in Cairo, and its five-year review at the ICPD +5 in 1999. Furthermore, the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Consultations on Children have engaged the commitments of Governments to address the protection of children and youth in their countries. In raising Pacific Island governments' awareness of children's issues, has been the implicit need to raise the profile of the young Pacific Islander in the larger Asia-Pacific region. It is timely to assess the state of Pacific youth and to seriously consider our opportunities to invest in the youth generation.

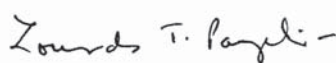
¹ The Outcome Document ‘Vision for Small Island Living’ articulated the visions of youth under three headings, ‘Money in my Pocket’, ‘Life and Love in the Islands’, and ‘My Island Home’. Young people wished for economic and educational opportunities, positive and healthy personal and family relationships as well as protection for the environment and its sustainable use of its land and ocean resources.

In the Pacific, UNFPA has been investing in an Adolescent Reproductive Health programme since 2001 implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). SPC established the Pacific Youth Bureau on 1 June 1998 and has worked to provide technical assistance at policy level for Pacific Island Governments to guide programming to train future young trainers in leadership and self-esteem skills and develop a grant scheme to engage youth from small island states in small scale income generating activities or training. UNICEF Pacific has delivered the Pacific Stars Life Skills training to Pacific youth since 2002. In recognition of the need to scale up youth programmes and extend coverage, the year 2005 marked the beginning of a partnership between UNFPA, UNICEF, and SPC where we combined efforts for the first time to support a programme on Adolescent Health and Development encompassing both Adolescent Reproductive Health and Life skills.

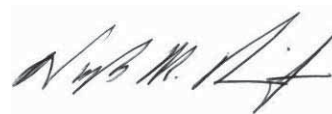
We hope that this State of Pacific Youth Report will become a useful tool for governments, development partners and civil society to identify gaps and invest in programmes addressing the immediate and long term needs of young people in the Pacific. It cannot be achieved alone but instead requires a concerted and coordinated effort by all partners.



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Acknowledgements

UNFPA, SPC and UNICEF would like to thank the many contributors to this report who have provided and reviewed the wealth of information that is presented in this report. Contributors include members of Government, non-government, other regional development agencies and importantly, young people who have shared their experiences and offered recommendations for analyzing the situation of young people and the strategies that have been previously employed to address youth issues.

The tripartite of agencies would also like to thank the Inter-Agency Task Force on Youth, which comprises of United Nations agencies, regional organizations and non-government. Their expertise has contributed significantly to the quality of this report.

Finally, we would like to sincerely thank the organizers and youth delegates of the Pacific Youth Summit on MDGs in Apia, May 2005, and the Marshall Islands Youth Congress Conference in Majuro, July 2005, for their flexibility and positive receptiveness in facilitating the consultative requirements for this report.



Photo courtesy of Dr Chris McMurray

Acronyms

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission	PNG	Papua New Guinea
ADB	Asian Development Bank	PREL	Pacific Resources for Education
ARH	Adolescent Reproductive Health	PYB	Pacific Youth Bureau (SPC)
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development	RH	Reproductive Health
CEDAW	(United Nations) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	SCF	Save the Children Fiji
CTC	Community Training Centre	SIDS	Small Island Developing States
ECREA	Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (Fiji)	SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
FESP	Fiji Education Sector Program	SPR	' <i>Sperem public rod</i> ' bislama term for unemployed youth in Vanuatu
FLE	Family Life Education	STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	TANGO	Tuvalu Association for NGOs
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994)	TFR	Total Fertility Rate
MDG	Millennium Development Goals	TVET	Technical and vocational education
MOE	Ministry of Education (Fiji)	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MOHE	Ministry of Health and Environment (Marshall Islands)	UNIFEM	United Nations Women's Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
NZAID	New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency	UNDP	United Nations Development Program
PAHP	Pacific Action for Health Project	USP	University of the South Pacific
PRJP	Palau Restorative Justice Program	WAC	Women's Action for Change (Fiji)
		WAM	Waan Aelon in Majel
		WHO	World Health Organization
		WUTMI	Women United Together Marshall Islands
		WTMIC	Women Training, Marketing and Information Centre (Marshall Islands)
		YTYIH	Youth to Youth in Health (Marshall Islands)



Photo courtesy of Save the Children Fiji.

Executive Summary

This report is a collaboration between UNICEF, Pacific, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and UNFPA to update 'The State of Pacific Youth 1998'. The objectives are:

to provide a report on current youth issues and trends in the situation of youth since UNICEF's 1998 State of Pacific Youth report;

- to analyse the underlying causes of youth issues;
- to consider the visions and recommendations of young people expressed at various youth meetings and consultations; and
- to review and evaluate various strategies proposed or implemented by young people, governments, NGOs and others, and make recommendations.

Around 20 per cent of the population in Pacific countries is aged 15-24. It is evident that in most countries young people are not completing secondary education and/or finding suitable employment, are vulnerable to engaging in activities such as consuming drugs and alcohol, unsafe sex, or crime and are therefore unable to meet their full potential.

These youth concerns were documented in the 'The State of Pacific Youth 1998' and Pacific governments and regional organizations have taken a number of initiatives to address them, including developing the Pacific Youth 2005 Strategy and establishing the Pacific Youth Bureau at SPC to coordinate and monitor its implementation. Despite these and numerous other excellent initiatives that have benefited many young people, large numbers are still exposed to the youth risks mentioned above.

This report argues that the main reason why youth issues continue to be a major concern in the Pacific region is that most of the effort has focussed on addressing the symptoms rather than the underlying causes. Furthermore, the report suggests that more emphasis is needed on the participation of young people in addressing the causes rather than just involving them at the 'problem stage'. On the whole, the report focuses on the idea of investing in youth as a resource to development rather than regarding young people as a problem group in society. Youth affected by the underlying causes tend to experience low self-esteem and feel disempowered and dependent. This, in turn, makes them vulnerable to high-risk behaviours.

The first group of underlying causes comprises four of the key economic and structural issues that are widely recognised as central concerns in most Pacific development strategies:

- poverty
- education systems focussed on white-collar employment skills
- stagnating economies that do not provide enough employment opportunities
- rural/urban inequalities

The second group manifest as mainly as attitudes and behaviour rather than as obvious economic or structural problems:

- conflict between traditional and modern cultures
- authoritarian parenting methods
- gender discrimination and discrimination against minorities
- disempowerment of youth and their lack of a voice in social dialogue

Although the second group may derive in part from underlying economic and structural problems, they can be addressed without massive capital investment.

The main body of this report analyses the way in which each of these underlying causes contribute to youth concerns, and provides examples of successful strategies that address youth issues by tackling both the symptoms and the underlying causes. It is emphasised that resources devoted to youth issues will need to be increased in most countries, and greater coordination of interventions is required to maximise effectiveness.

On the basis of the analysis, seven main strategic approaches are recommended:

- Coordination and planning of projects to target youth issues to ensure that both the symptoms and underlying causes are addressed simultaneously.
- Formation of multiple partnerships between different categories of stakeholder, including governments, donors, communities and young people, to ensure effective strategies, participation and ownership.
- Develop flexible and sustained strategies that can adapt to changing needs and provide for follow up.
- Help young people to help themselves so that they are actively involved in improving their own lives and enhancing their self-esteem.
- Use the adolescent reproductive and sexual health strategies as a model of effective mobilisation of peer educators and user-friendly services that can apply to both health related and other strategies.
- Whenever possible, implement restorative justice approaches to deal with young offenders to help rehabilitate them.
- Consult with young people, listen to their views and suggestions, encourage youth to express themselves through drama and media, and form constructive partnerships with youth to plan and implement youth strategies.

The evidence shows that when young people are given the opportunity to be involved in development they become less vulnerable to high-risk behaviours because their self-esteem and independence are increased through empowerment. Furthermore, interventions guided by youth consultations have been more effective because they are more specifically tailored to cater for the wants and needs of young Pacific islanders. The visions expressed by Pacific youth at regional meetings and other consultations indicate that they are well aware of the risks they face and are eager to work with adults to reduce them. They emphasise that they want more opportunity to contribute actively to the development of their communities. This is evident in their recommendations on the regional MDG strategy and the Pacific Plan, which focus on providing more opportunities for young people to be actively involved and to work with adults to promote regional development.

A very substantial increase in resources will be necessary to address both the underlying causes and the obvious manifestations of youth concerns. This will be cost-effective, however, because the recommended two-fold approach not only benefits youth but also benefits communities as a whole, since most of the necessary increase in resources will be devoted to generating productive economic activity. Everyone will benefit from mobilisation and utilisation of youth human resources that have been under utilised in the past. Such an approach will not only address youth concerns but also yield high long-term dividends for all youth.

Introduction and definitions

UNICEF and other agencies have conducted a series of reviews of Pacific youth issues since the early 1990s. A comprehensive review was undertaken for UNICEF in 1997 and in 1998 the Inter-Agency Task Force, led by UNICEF, undertook a review of youth issues as background for the Fourth Regional Conference for Pacific Youth and the First Meeting of Pacific Ministers of Youth in Tahiti, 1998. This review was subsequently published as a major report, 'The State of Pacific Youth 1998'. It described a number of youth issues, reviewed some of the initiatives taken to address them and presented some statistical tables and transcripts of key regional documents.

The present report is a collaboration between UNICEF, Fiji, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and UNFPA to update 'The State of Pacific Youth 1998'. The objectives are:

- to provide a report on current youth issues and trends in the situation of youth since UNICEF's 1998 State of Pacific Youth report;
- to analyse the underlying causes of youth issues;
- to consider the visions and recommendations of young people expressed at various youth meetings and consultations; and
- to review and evaluate various strategies proposed or implemented by young people, governments, NGOs and others, and make recommendations.

The core definition of youth in this report is the same as that adopted for 'The State of Pacific Youth 1998' - i.e. ages 15-24. Since Pacific definitions of youth tend to reflect social status as well as age, however, people are sometimes classified as youth until they marry or are considered eligible to speak at community meetings. This report is therefore relevant to those aged 25 and over who are still regarded as youth by their societies. Similarly, younger teenagers (13-14) are included in discussions of schooling and parenting. The term 'children' is used in accordance with the UNICEF definition of ages 0-18. 'Youth' and 'young people' are used interchangeably in this report to facilitate readability, and include both males and females except where stated.

The geographical scope of this report is the 14 priority countries of the UNICEF Suva Office (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu) and also Papua New Guinea. Unavoidable time and budgetary constraints prevented the writer from visiting them all. Visits were made to one country in each of the main Pacific sub-regions: Fiji (Melanesia), Marshall Islands (Micronesia) and Tuvalu (Polynesia) and to Samoa for the Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) held in May 2005. Other material has been drawn from the writer's previous experience in Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Vanuatu, and from discussions and email correspondence with delegates to the MDG Summit and other young people, and from published sources. SPC's Demography/Population Program prepared the statistical tables in Annex One. Inevitably, however, because of the variations in the amount of information supplied by contacts, the level of project activity in each country and the availability of documentation, more examples have been drawn from some countries than from others.

Part One: Overview of the State of Pacific Youth

1.1 The situation

Young people comprise a very substantial proportion of Pacific populations. It is estimated that in the Pacific region as a whole in mid 2005 there were around 1.6 million people aged 15-24 years (SPC, see Table One, Annexe One). In most Pacific countries this age group accounted for around 20 per cent of the total population, and at least half the population was under age 25. In Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Vanuatu the latest censuses indicate that more than half the population is under age 20 years. In the remaining UNICEF and UNFPA focus countries discussed in this report, more than half are aged less than 30 years, except in Palau, where the median age is just below 31 years (Table One, Annexe One).

Although the rate of increase of the youth population appears to be declining in most Pacific countries, Table One shows that it is still very substantial in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Kiribati. If current growth rates were sustained these countries could expect a doubling of the youth population within approximately 30-40 years.

Ages 15-24 are the time in life when every individual has to make the transition from being a child to being an adult. The transition to adulthood involves physical, hormonal and psychological changes and a progression to independence: finding an adult's place in society as a worker, a parent or in some other role, and achieving recognition as an individual in one's own right rather than only as the child of a particular family.

 *... the major task for adolescents is to re-evaluate who they are and how their bodies and identities have changed. They strive to establish final independence from their families and others their age, to become their own person. They struggle to understand the meaning of life and how to interact with others of the opposite sex. They are faced with answering the question of how they want to spend the rest of their lives...* 

(Donley and Keen, 2000).

This transition is rarely easy, and every country in the world has its share of young people who become involved in high-risk behaviours. *The State of Pacific Youth 1998* classified youth issues into two groups. First were those said to derive from the young age structure of the population: education challenges, limited employment opportunities for youth, and crime and juvenile delinquency. Second were issues relating specifically to youth health: sexual and reproductive health issues, mental health and suicide, and substance abuse (UNICEF, 1998).

These issues are a concern because they undermine and reduce the potential of young people to contribute to their society and enjoy a happy and fulfilling life. Those who do not receive sufficient or appropriate education and/or do not progress to productive employment can be viewed on the one hand as under-utilised economic and social resources, and on the other hand as citizens who are denied the opportunity to fulfil themselves, build self-esteem and maximise their contribution to society. If they drift into crime and delinquency, young people risk alienating themselves from society and being

deprived of their liberty, as well as limiting their opportunities and choices in life. Those who damage their health through substance abuse or unsafe sex, or bear children while they are still themselves children, also limit their opportunities in life and their potential to contribute to society. In the worst cases, valuable young lives are lost altogether because of deaths due to high risk and self-destructive behaviour.

Given that youth populations comprise around 20 per cent of the population in most Pacific countries, they are significant in economic terms. Young people who remain dependent because they are marginalised by high-risk behaviours represent a burden on society. If there is insufficient action to address youth issues, this burden is likely to increase and to continue to undermine development efforts, especially in those countries where the youth population is still growing rapidly (see Table One).

Since 1998, Pacific governments, civil society and donors have made considerable efforts to improve the prospects for youth, and many initiatives throughout the region

have benefited significant numbers of young people. This includes training in life skills and employment generation, provision of reproductive health services specifically for youth and projects to address issues such as substance abuse. Country governments participated in the development of the Pacific Youth Strategy, and have partnered with SPC's Pacific Youth Bureau and major donors, including UNICEF and UNFPA, to address youth issues. Youth delegates have contributed to the major regional strategies of the Pacific Plan and the Pacific Millennium Development Goals movement. Some countries have established their own National Youth Councils and prepared their own youth strategies.

Despite this, the youth issues described in the 1998 report are still a major concern in the Pacific region. Although there is a general scarcity of baseline data to support statistical comparisons over time, there is no evidence of an across-the-board improvement in the status of Pacific youth. In some countries, the opportunities and prospects for youth may even be more limited and the manifestations of disadvantage more widespread now than they were in 1998.



Photo courtesy of Dr Chris McMurray

1.2 Youth issues in brief

The next few paragraphs briefly describe Pacific manifestations of the main youth issues, with information on recent trends where available. Supplementary statistical information is provided in

Annex One. More in-depth discussions of these topics and case studies are provided in subsequent sections of this report that analyse the underlying causes of youth issues and evaluate strategies to address them.

1.2.1 Dropping out of school

A major, Pacific-wide concern is that high percentages of young people drop out of school before completing their education. Table Two, Annexe One, shows that primary school enrolment rates are below 90 per cent in nine of the 15 countries that are the subject of this report, and secondary school enrolment is below 65 per cent in all for which data are available. Table Three shows that there are also differences by gender, although this sometimes favours girls, especially in secondary enrolment in countries with higher per capita incomes.

The education systems in most Pacific countries were established by missionaries and/or colonial powers. From the outset they tended to emphasize literacy and numeracy in core academic subjects such as English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, History and Geography, as preparation for white-collar employment. This emphasis persists today, with only limited training in technical and vocational subjects provided for those who perform poorly in academic subjects. Students who are not academically oriented are therefore likely to struggle and lose interest, and eventually to drop out or be pushed out of school by poor performances. Few students who are not academically oriented pursue an education that is more appropriate to their interests and aptitudes, because the limited technical and vocational educational opportunities that are available tend to be regarded as second-rate alternatives for those who can't make it in mainstream, white-collar-work oriented education.

Dropping out occurs at all levels of primary, secondary and tertiary education. In Melanesia, especially, the highest dropout rates tend to be at the end of primary school. Many students do not progress to secondary school, because they fail the examination at the end of primary school, cannot see the value of continuing or because their families are no longer prepared to support their attendance. Since education involves significant costs, with most schools charging fees or requiring contributions and expecting students to have special clothing and equipment, parents with limited means tend to withdraw children whom they see as unlikely to benefit from formal education. Quality of all types of education is also an issue in some countries, with poorly trained teachers and didactic teaching methods contributing to dropout rates. Another factor that may encourage some pupils to drop out of school is use of corporal punishment by teachers to discipline pupils. Reports from young people suggest that corporal punishment is common in schools. The Samoa Family Health and Safety Study, one of only a few that have endeavoured to quantify prevalence, found that 18.6 per cent of 1646 respondents had been physically abused by a teacher, 9.8 per cent 'frequently' (SPC, 2003: 45).

The main reasons for dropping out of school at various levels given by a sample of Vanuatu youth were: having no money for school fees, being required by the family

to find work, failing the Class 6 exam, pregnancy, and running away from conflict or discipline in school (Mitchell, 1998: p 29). While completion rates are reasonably high in some countries, including Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga and Samoa, in some other countries, such as Marshall Islands, Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, high percentages of children do not

progress to high school. For example, the 1999 Solomon Islands census found a gross enrolment ratio¹ of 76.5 at primary level, but only 29.3 at secondary level (Solomon Islands Government and UNDP, 2002: 92), while the 1999 Marshall Islands census found that 30.4 per cent of all females aged 14-18 years were not attending school (UNICEF, 2003: 46).

1.2.2 Unemployment among school leavers

There is general shortage of wage employment opportunities in almost all Pacific countries because of limited development of the private sector and secondary industry. As youth are disadvantaged in the labour market by their lack of experience and often by lack of skills for employment, Table Four, Annex One, shows that unemployment rates for school leavers are almost

invariably higher than for older workers. Although Fiji has one of the most diversified economies in the Pacific Region, in 2000 there were around five people of working age for every formal sector job. In Solomon Islands the ratio was eight people per job, and it is expected to be nine per job by 2010 unless the population growth rate slows significantly (UNDP, 2001).



Except for Palau, which imports labour for its manufacturing industries, virtually all of the growth in the labour force in UNICEF's focal countries is the addition of school-leavers. Many find it impossible to obtain a job in the wage sector. For example, in Samoa during the mid 1990s around 4,500 students left school each year, of whom about 1000 found work or continued to higher education, while the rest were employed in subsistence work or remained unemployed (Government of Western Samoa, 1997: 20). Although the Government of Samoa acknowledges the importance of the rural sector and private enterprise to absorb the increasing labour force and these sectors are expanding, expansion has not kept pace with demand. The story is much the same in other Pacific countries.

Youth unemployment rates as reported in the official statistics (see Table Four, Annex One) are not comparable between countries because of differences in

¹ Gross enrolment ratio = number actually enrolled divided by number in the appropriate age group for that level of schooling, multiplied by 100.

the definition of labour force. What is evident from Table Four is that, within countries, the unemployment rate for ages 16-24 is almost always higher than that for the all people of working age (i.e. 16-64 years). Typically,

the percentage of young people unemployed is about twice that for ages 16-64, and higher for females aged 16-24 than for males of the same age.

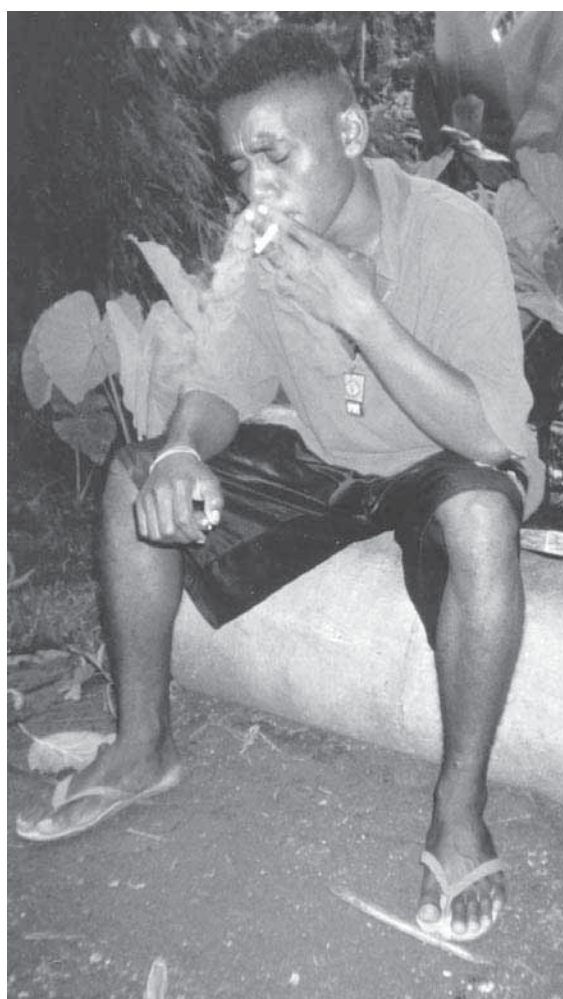
1.2.3 Youth substance abuse

Youth substance abuse is another concern in most Pacific countries. The most common substances are alcohol (both home brewed and retailed) and tobacco, but marijuana, petrol sniffing and use of any other available narcotic or hallucinatory substances that can be obtained, including hard drugs, is increasing. In some countries such as Fiji and Vanuatu, kava drinking by youth is accepted as customary behaviour, and not considered as substance abuse. Research has shown, however, that some young people in these countries are drinking kava in very large quantities and in conjunction with alcohol in a way that is potentially very harmful and completely different from its use in traditional society (PAHP, 2001). While the majority of substance users still appear to be male, increasing numbers of girls are smoking, drinking alcohol or using other substances. For example, interviews with Tongan 13 year olds found that 68 per cent of boys and 32 per cent of girls had smoked tobacco, and 33 per cent of boys and 10 per cent of girls had consumed alcohol (UNICEF, 2001a: 36).

A particular concern is that the typical pattern of alcohol consumption among young people is binge drinking, which is particularly harmful to health. Bouts of heavy drinking and/or substance abuse are often associated with youth crime and unsafe sex, and alcohol-induced vehicle or other accidents are a significant cause of youth mortality (PAHP, 2001, 2003).

Youth are clearly aware of and concerned about the dangers of substance abuse. Alcohol abuse was one of the most frequently mentioned concerns in a study or

issues, needs and concerns of youth in Solomons (Hassall and Associates, 2001: 25,29). Studies conducted by Pacific Action for Health (PAHP, 2001, 2003) found that although young people were well aware of the dangers of alcohol abuse, they become involved because of various economic and social factors (discussed in Part Two of this report).



1.2.4 Exposure to STIs including HIV/AIDS

Every Pacific country has conducted information campaigns about the risks of contracting STIs including HIV/AIDS, and condoms are available free of charge at health facilities and gathering places such as nightclubs, and sold at retail outlets. Even so, the prevalence of STIs, including syphilis and gonorrhoea, remains high, and the reported prevalence of HIV/AIDS is increasing. As there is no systematic surveillance and few people are tested unless they are showing symptoms of an STI or are known to have been in contact with HIV/AIDS, the prevalence and risk of contracting STIs tends to be vastly underestimated in Pacific communities. Although there is an increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS cases among young people in most countries, many people still see HIV/AIDS as a risk only for certain groups, such as seafarers and sex workers. While extra-marital sex is condemned by Pacific society and churches, anecdotal evidence suggests it is just as common as in the rest of the world, among both adults and young people.

Numerous studies have shown that large percentages of youth do not use condoms, even though they have heard about the risk of contracting STIs and HIV/AIDS, and the risk of pregnancy. A series of studies of knowledge and attitudes among teenagers in Samoa, Cook Islands

and Kiribati found alarming levels of exposure to risk because, although most respondents had heard about the risks, they had insufficient specific knowledge of reproduction, contraception and STIs to motivate and enable them to protect themselves (UNFPA 2002 a, b and c). Moreover, it is widely recognised in the literature that knowledge of STI risks does not guarantee behaviour change (see, for example, Kaitani, 2004).

Table Five, Annexe One, shows that of the 11,212 cases of HIV/AIDS ever reported in the 15 countries discussed in this report (up to 31 December 2004) 1750, or almost 16 per cent, were found in people aged 15-24. In every country with 13 or more cases, at least one case was a youth. This indicates that while, on a population basis, youth are still slightly under-represented in the HIV/AIDS statistics, they are clearly at risk. As always, it is important to remember that HIV/AIDS statistics relate only to people who have been tested for HIV/AIDS, and therefore almost certainly underestimate the actual numbers. Of urgent concern for Pacific Island nations, if HIV/AIDS infection continues at the current rate, some smaller populations will face risks of possible extinction in the not so far off future.

1.2.5 Teenage pregnancy

Although early marriage is now discouraged in most Pacific countries and more information on safe sex is becoming available, unsafe sex and teenage pregnancy rates remain a concern. Table Six, Annexe One, show that population based estimates for around 2000 range from 3.7 per cent in Tonga to 12.8 per cent in Palau. Rates based on hospital deliveries tend to be higher. For example, in 2004, births to mothers under age 19 comprised 17% of all births in both Majuro Hospital in Marshall Islands and Pohnpei State Hospital in Federated States of Micronesia. Fifteen per percent of these teenage

mothers in Pohnpei and 17 per cent in Majuro were delivering their second child (Latu, 2005). Caution should be exercised before drawing conclusions about trends in teenage pregnancy, because of limitations in data comparability and a tendency to under-report births that take place outside health facilities (e.g. Metai, 1995; UNICEF, 2003: 69). However, the perception of some health workers interviewed in Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu is that it is increasing.



As there are often constraints in Pacific societies that restrict discussion of sex, and hence sex education, within families, the main sources of sex education for youth are adolescent reproductive health clinics, peer education programmes and the high school biology curriculum. It is clear, however, that not all young people come into contact with health services or peer educators, and sex education is often avoided or not well taught by teachers. Many rely on their friends for information which is not always accurate, and so are likely to be poorly informed

about reproduction and conception. Moreover, girls tend to be unprepared to deal with peer pressure, to be unaware of their rights and to lack the social skills to refuse intimacy. Most of the teenage mothers interviewed for a recent study of teenage pregnancy in Tonga had intended to abstain from sexual activity until after marriage, as they had been taught, and became pregnant because they had not anticipated the risk of becoming sexually active and were not prepared to deal with that risk (SPC, 2005). That study and the UNFPA series of studies in Samoa, Cook Islands and Kiribati also found evidence of misinformation about conception and pregnancy among both boys and girls, including a belief that pregnancy could not occur at first intercourse (UNFPA, 2002 a, b and c).

Although substantial percentages of girls who become pregnant marry the father of their child, teenage pregnancy is an issue because it limits educational opportunities and imposes the responsibilities of parenthood on young people who are not well prepared for it. Teenage mothers may be at greater risk of violence from their partners (anecdotal evidence from Women's Action for Change (WAC) Fiji), and children of teenage mothers are more likely to be exposed to economic hardship and possibly to family breakdown than children of older mothers. Teenage pregnancy perpetuates many child and youth issues as the lack of preparation for parenthood inevitably takes its toll on the next generation of children.

1.2.6 Youth living on the street

Running away to live on the streets of urban areas is most often a way of escaping a broken or dysfunctional family, unsympathetic relatives, harsh discipline, abuse or other intolerable situations. Modernisation has brought an increasing incidence of family breakdown in Pacific societies. Children of broken marriages are usually left with their mother or grandmother, who is likely to face

considerable hardship in attempting to raise her family without a husband to support her. Often a parent left without a partner may be obliged to send some of their children to live with relatives. It is also common for children from rural areas to be sent to live with relatives in urban areas so they can attend secondary school or tertiary institutions. If relatives are unable or unwilling

to give their charges sufficient care and attention during the difficult years of adolescence, young people may run away and live on the street (examples in UNICEF and AusAID, 1998; and Box Five). Other young people living on the street have been simply abandoned or lost.

Young people living on the street are unlikely to receive a proper education, and are exposed to the risk of violence, sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation

including prostitution, poor nutrition, unsafe sex, poor general health and substance abuse. They are also likely to drift into crime. Information on the number of youth living on the street is usually derived from surveys and police records rather than systematic counts, so it is not clear whether numbers are increasing. It is evident, however, that homeless youth are a continuing concern in Pacific countries.

1.2.7 Youth crime and youth involvement in civil unrest

Youth crime is another increasing concern in most Pacific countries. Again it is difficult to identify trends, because sometimes an apparent increase in a particular category of crime is due to changes in community attitudes or circumstances. For example, police are more likely to investigate robberies and deal with offenders in urban areas, whereas in close-knit villages offenders are more likely to be identified by the community, and dealt with by chiefs or elders. Similarly, new legislation and conventions mean that rape and domestic violence are tending to be reported as crimes more often than in the past.

The most extreme example of an apparent escalation in youth crime is in Papua New Guinea urban areas in the last few decades. Some of this is organised crime with young people employed to work in 'rascal gangs' and commit robberies and robberies with violence (Chand and Levantis, 1998). Elsewhere in the region, it appears that increasing numbers of young people are becoming involved in larceny for various reasons, including poverty, seeking the means to purchase alcohol and other substances, and peer pressure to be daring and challenge authority, especially when under the influence of alcohol. Youth crime involvement typically begins with relatively minor larceny, such as stealing pigs or poultry and then escalates to serious crimes, including housebreaking, vehicle theft and robbery, with or without violence.

Involvement of girls in prostitution, sometimes with their parent's collusion, also seems to be on the increase in some countries, including Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, largely in response to poverty coupled with increasing opportunities to earn money in this way (UNICEF, 2003). It is difficult to identify trends in youth involvement in violent crimes such as rape, assault and murder, as these still tend to be infrequent or infrequently reported in most countries.

Another risk is that disaffected youth will become involved in disturbances caused by political crises. Hassall and Associates (2003: 3) cites Urdal's argument that a rapidly growing youth population, (termed 'youth bulges' by Urdal) *'increases the risk of domestic armed conflict, and especially so under conditions of economic stagnation'*. While disaffected young people in Pacific towns are obviously vulnerable to manipulation by political factions, youth are not in themselves a source of social unrest. A Fijian youth advocate commented *'Young people are brainwashed and used during political crises'*. Youth crime, ranging from looting to violence, appears to have escalated during "The Tensions" in Solomon Islands and during recent periods of political instability in Vanuatu and Fiji, but it was opportunistic and derived from lack of opportunity for youth rather than a particular demographic pattern.

1.2.8 Youth Suicide

Youth suicide is a very serious concern, and occurs throughout the Pacific. Research suggests that a major cause is conflict resulting from societal transition (Booth, 1999; Rubinstein, 1992, 1995). Compared with other parts of the world, suicide rates for both young males and females tend to be high in the Pacific, and in the 1990s female youth suicide rates in Samoa and among Fijian Indians were found to be among the highest recorded (Booth, 1999: 1). Rates are also alarmingly high in parts of Micronesia, including Chuuk, Marshall Islands and Guam (Hezel, 2001). Also disturbing is that fatality rates from suicide attempts in the Pacific tend to be high by world standards, exceeding 50 per cent in Samoa in the 1980s and early 1990s (Booth, 1999: 6). This can be attributed to the use of methods with high fatality rates,

such as ingesting the herbicide Paraquat and stripping electric cables.

Because the reported number of cases is still relatively small and fluctuates from year to year in small island countries, it is difficult to identify trends. Rather, it appears that suicide events tend to occur sporadically, and sometimes precipitate outbreaks because of the 'copy cat' effect. For example, Marshall Islands experienced a peak in suicide in 2003, with 23 completed suicides and 37 attempts, many among youth. Suicide was described by youth interviewed for this report as a final act of desperation, likely to be made following alcohol consumption, when youth issues became too much to handle.

1.3 Government & community responses

The youth issues outlined above are very well known to governments, communities and donors, as well as to young people themselves, and are widely regarded as a major concern. There have been many affirmations from government and community leaders that youth are the future of the nation, and many government and donor-funded projects in every Pacific country have focussed on addressing youth issues.

At the regional level, the Pacific Youth 2005 Strategy, adopted by the First Conference of Pacific Youth Ministers in 1998, was a major initiative to provide a framework for youth development, that was intended to achieve a substantial improvement in the conditions for Pacific youth by 2005 (Vainerere, 2004: 5). The strategy comprised six programmes, summarised below:

Pacifika Aspirations encourages the full participation of young people in development through the development, implementation and evaluation of holistic and gender-inclusive national youth policies;

Challenge Pacifika calls for urgent action to implement positive and practical responses to common emerging issues in the region including education, employment, youth health, environment, juvenile delinquency and promotion of peace.

Youth-lead Pacifika focuses on skills development and capacity building for youth leaders through appropriate training.

Pacifika Advocacy promotes close co-operation across all sectors and in close collaboration with the Pacific Youth Council in strengthening youth clubs and other interest groups where young people can share experiences and learn new skills.

Infoshare Pacifika focuses on the collection, compilation and dissemination of relevant information on youth development at global, regional and national levels.

Pacifika Empowerment (Small Island States Fund) provides financial assistance to the 12 SPC small island states to support in-country skills training and entrepreneurial initiatives for young people aged 15–24.

SPC's Pacific Youth Bureau (PYB) was established to coordinate the implementation, monitoring and review of the Pacific Youth 2005 Strategy. Its mission is

“To maximise the development potential of Pacific Island people in health, culture and information and enhance the empowerment of women and young people.”

It “promotes increased awareness of the special needs and problems of young people throughout the Pacific Island region and their participation in the economic, social and

cultural development of their countries and territories.”

Among the strategies used are training youth and community workers in appropriate skills and collaborations with other programmes and activities of mutual interest; for example, with the Public Health Programme on non-communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS and adolescent reproductive health. PYB has been very active in developing youth leadership and developing enterprise skills in most Pacific countries, and has assisted a number of Pacific governments with the development of youth strategies (<http://www.spc.int/pyb>). The Bureau is currently preparing a new five-year strategy (see Section 4.4).

14 Addressing the symptoms instead of the causes

Despite these plans and visions, and the considerable efforts made so far to address youth concerns, they continue to loom large in the Pacific Region. Why is this so?

This report argues that a greater emphasis needs to be applied to addressing the underlying causes and adopting prevention strategies rather than focussing on addressing the symptoms. The youth issues listed above are not problems in themselves but symptoms of underlying and interrelated economic and social problems. Moreover, patterns of youth involvement in high-risk behaviours tend to reflect socio-economic patterns.

It is widely recognised by psychologists and social workers that 'problem behaviour' in young people is usually a response to stressed circumstances. For example, it is striking that the six causes of juvenile delinquency in Fiji mentioned by Adinkrah (1995) are all factors that are beyond the control of young people themselves. These factors are: the dependent status of youth; broken homes; rural-urban migration, violence and sexual

behaviour on the media; domestic violence and sexual abuse in the home (1995: 28-36). Clearly, simply imposing discipline and attempting to reform offenders will not stop delinquent behaviour unless, at the same time, the underlying causes are addressed.

In the same way, the origins of all the youth issues discussed in the previous section can be found in the underlying economic and social context. These 'problem behaviours' - which have even led some people to say that young people themselves are the problem - are actually symptoms of social and economic factors that are beyond the control of the young people they most affect. Youth is a time of energy, imagination and enthusiasm, and most young people are bursting with potential to work hard and to express their creativity. It is crucial that they find an outlet for their attributes. Youths who are disadvantaged in some way and unable to find a constructive and creative outlet are at risk of turning their energies towards negative or self-destructive behaviour.

It has long been recognised internationally that “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO Constitution, <http://www.who.org>). The prerequisites for good health include peace, education, access to an income, social justice, equity and a supportive environment (Canada Public Health Association, Health and Welfare Canada and WHO, 1986). Young people who have to struggle with the issues described in the previous section because they are denied these prerequisites and their right to health by their society are thus the casualties of dysfunctional economic and social systems. Trying to address youth issues without tackling the underlying causes is no more effective than expecting a Bandaid to cure a broken leg.

It is important to recognise two things about the major underlying causes of youth issues. First, the causes are interrelated, and tend to be cyclical. For example, poverty contributes to school dropout rates and both of these factors contribute to unemployment, while unemployment, in turn, contributes to poverty and dropping out of school.

Secondly, the underlying causes are of two kinds. The first group comprises four of the key economic and structural issues that are widely recognised as central concerns in most Pacific development strategies:

- poverty
- education systems focussed on white-collar

employment skills

- stagnating economies that do not provide enough employment opportunities
- rural/urban inequalities

The components of the second group are quite different in that they manifest as ways in which people behave rather than as obvious economic or structural problems. They include

- conflict between traditional and modern cultures
- authoritarian parenting methods
- gender discrimination and discrimination against minorities
- disempowerment of youth and their lack of a voice in social dialogue

Although this group of underlying causes may also derive from economic and social factors, they need to be addressed by changing community attitudes and the way people think, rather than only by allocating resources. Clearly, reconciling certain aspects of traditional and modern culture and coping with discrimination is difficult for everybody, adults as well as young people. When young people are confronted with these challenges, and at the same time marginalised from adult discussion and decision-making, it is hardly surprising that they feel powerless and seek other outlets for their frustrations and anxieties.

1.5 Youth visions for the future

An important part of formulating interventions to help youth is to listen to their perceptions, experiences and recommendations. When young people are given an opportunity to express their views it soon becomes very apparent that most understand the causes of their problems and have plenty of excellent suggestions as to how to address them. This is evident from the visions expressed by young people at various meetings and consultations throughout the Pacific, including youth parliaments, youth congresses, one-on-one consultations and media talk-back. It is particularly evident in the vision statements prepared by youth delegates to two meetings in 2005.

In January 2005 delegates from several Pacific countries attended the Mauritius conference on Youth Visioning For Island Living, organised for small island states (SIDS) by UNESCO's Small Islands Voice (<http://www.smallislandsvoice.org>). Youth attending that conference, including the Pacific delegates, set out their vision for their future lives on small islands in a conference declaration. The key components of this vision for youth, set out below, focus is increasing participation of youth in development and in national economic, social and cultural life:

- **Building** partnerships with youth to support the preservation of culture with and for future generations;
- **Involving** youth in decision making concerning the social, cultural and physical environment, and in the development of policies and enforcement of laws in order to ensure good governance;
- **Educating** youth on issues such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and healthy lifestyles thereby strengthening family, school and community relations and contributing to stronger morals and values;
- **Contributing** to the development and implementation of policies to effectively manage marine and coastal resources;
- **Developing** reforestation initiatives and enforcing regulations to conserve and enhance biodiversity for sustainable development of small island nations;
- **Implementing** public awareness campaigns related to people's everyday lives to encourage changes in behaviour, engaging small island youth as environmental advocates;
- **Securing** viable job opportunities for youth by developing youth leadership and advocacy as well as strengthening networking between sectors, thereby reducing the social impact of unemployment;
- **Enabling** access for youth to appropriate training and education opportunities in both technical and academic studies, thereby providing openings to get involved in viable economic sectors;
- **Establishing** and implementing internship policies and programmes at the secondary and tertiary levels, which qualify as official job experience;
- **Securing** easily accessible financing for potential entrepreneurs as they are the engine for economic growth;
- **Providing** youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to plan for and respond to the dangers posed to their societies by both natural disasters and modern security threats.

Youth Visioning For Island Living Conference, Small Islands Voice, Mauritius, 7-12 January 2005).

(The full text of the declaration is included as Annex 2 of this report)

With support from donors, some of the youth delegates who had attended the Mauritius meeting helped to organise a follow-up mobilisation of youth delegates attending the youth-led conference on MDGs in Apia, in May 2005. The aim of the Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs was to discuss the role of youth in the regional Millennium Development Goal initiative. At this conference also, the young delegates further defined their vision for the participation of youth in development by formulating a Pacific Youth Declaration on MDGs, and also a Youth Statement on the Pacific Plan. Implicit in their vision is the full participation of youth in economic, social and cultural life (Full texts of both declarations can be found in Annexes 2.2 and 2.3).

These vision statements, along with comments by youth at many other national and regional meetings and the evidence presented in the following sections of this report make it clear that young people want to contribute to the betterment of their communities. They recognise that

being productively employed enhances self-esteem and brings empowerment.

Box One summarises a consultation with youth in Tuvalu held in July 2005 as part of the background research for this report. While the general view of youth attending the consultation was that Tuvalu is a good place to live, the points they raised spontaneously during the short space of two hours showed that they were well aware of issues that impact on Tuvalu youth, and able to recommend very practical strategies to address them. As in the case of the vision statements mentioned above, many of their suggestions relate to giving Tuvalu's youth more opportunity to contribute to the economic and social life of their communities. It is also apparent that there are startling similarities with youth issues throughout the Pacific region, including much larger countries such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Small scale and small numbers clearly do not necessarily mean fewer problems or easier solutions.



Box One: The Tuvaluan Youth Vision

The status of Tuvaluan youth has little place in community decision-making. A network of youth organisations however, is coordinated by Government's Youth Office and the National Youth Council. The structure is in need of substantial resources to enable the efficient provision of services for Tuvaluan young people. Youth consulted for this report provided the following vision. Of the 23 attending the consultation, 13 were 'employed', but about half of these were working with NGOs, including churches, as unpaid volunteer youth leaders or peer educators.

Government/youth dialogue:

- *Improved communication between youth organizations and Government and shortened response time when requests for assistance are submitted.*

Youth services:

- *A youth centre of appropriate size in Funafuti to house a variety of youth social, learning and income generating activities and provide a meeting place for youth. In outer islands, allocated buildings for youth activities.*
- *Funding provided to support substantial expansion of supportive environments and confidential counselling services for youth in both church and government facilities, in both Funafuti and outer islands.*
- *Expanded services so there is sufficient capacity for counsellors to liaise with parents in the home and provide advisory services for parents.*
- *More support provided for life skills training for youth so they can learn to cope with modern challenges and the pressures of adolescence. Include training in how to set realistic and achievable life goals.*

Employment opportunities:

- *Increased funding and support mechanisms for youth income generation initiatives. Eg. Piggeries, fisheries, agriculture etc.*
- *Government and donors provide project support to improve handling and marketing structures for outer island enterprises.*
- *Career structures for youth whereby young employees graduate to paid positions or receive stipends after a period of volunteering and satisfactory performance.*

Recreation:

- *Every island has some sports facilities for youth such as a large recreation centre on Funafuti with facilities for young people to develop skills in sport and benefit from healthy exercise and to serve as a focus for youth activities of all types, including recreation, socialisation and relaxation, meetings and counselling. This facility should be open at nights and at weekends as well as during school and working hours.*

Education and tertiary education:

- *Diversified school curriculum to give youth the option of entering either an academic or a technical and vocational stream that teaches industry-standard trade skills.*
Increased non-formal education to allow school-leavers to acquire additional skills so they can find employment.
Increased level of overseas scholarships for post-secondary study linked with expected employment opportunities in Tuvalu.
- *Careers advice provided in both primary and secondary schools.*
- *Training in enterprise and self-employment included in the school syllabus. Schools should also conduct community information sessions on the need to foster enterprise and self-employment among youth so that parents understand the objectives and offer support and encouragement.*
- *School counsellors teach youth about career paths and the acquisition of skills in the workplace.*

Reproductive health:

- *Increased availability of condoms in locations where youth gather.*
- *Renamed Adolescent Reproductive Health Clinic to the Youth Health Centre to change the community perception of people who go there,*
- *Extended opening hours to include evenings and weekends, and increased availability of other health services, recreational facilities and social activities.*
- *More family life education provided in schools and clinics so that adolescent boys and girls are well informed about human reproduction.*
- *Trained health service delivery personnel do not discriminate against unmarried girls and to provide them with appropriate contraception including hormonal methods of contraception, such as oral pills if requested.*

(Based on a two-hour consultation with 23 youth representative members of the National Council of Youth in Funafuti, 15th July 2005)

The youth vision provides valuable information on the needs and wants of Tuvaluan young people and offers specific guidance for any interventions and strategies that would ensure a greater success. Seeing situations from the youth point of view minimises the risks of making adult assumptions about youth behaviours that may not reflect reality. It also becomes evident that

disempowering youth by denying them a voice and opportunities to find a secure place in society is a major factor sustaining youth issues.

There are at least two good reasons why empowering youth is the key to addressing most youth issues. First, when youth are disempowered and marginalised rather

than productively employed, they must depend on others for support, so are burdens on society rather than assets. Utilising their skills turns them into productive members of the community. Second, empowering youth has been shown to reduce high-risk behaviours and assist them in realising their development potential. For example, the WAC Theatre Unlimited pilot project with Sangam School, Suva, for young people at risk has successfully used restorative justice and non-violent principles to empower and reduce high risk behaviour (personal communication, WAC).

This report argues that the most effective way to address youth issues is to empower youth by giving them a voice in society, to listen to their visions, and to work with them to achieve these visions. More specifically, this report argues that support to enabling environments for youth participation is a critical strategy to address causes

of youth problems, rather than only involving them at the 'problem stage'. Working with young people, involving them as partners in development and finding ways to utilise their energies in constructive ways not only addresses youth issues but also increases both their own and national development capacity.

Some Pacific governments and communities have recognised this and have established mechanisms to enable youth to contribute to policy. So far, however, only relatively small numbers of youth have been involved in such consultations, while many still have not had the opportunity to participate in development efforts or to benefit from the empowerment that participation would bring. As shown in Box Two, all too often decisions affecting youth are made without consulting them.

Box Two: Who are the 'youth leaders'?

Many organizations and respected people preach loudly and talk about youth participation but in practice nothing happens. I remember a workshop that was conducted in Port Moresby last year, called the leadership workshop. ... (when I accompanied my friend to the meeting because she had been asked to report on it)... I was very upset to see all the adults and the old folks discussing youth participation and involvement as youth leaders, but there was not a single young person in the room except us. I couldn't bear it any more so I excused my self and pinned them with there own words by saying "This is a leadership workshop but where are the young people. Aren't we supposed to be here to discuss our own issues?"

(Email from Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs participant)

Part Two of this report considers how underlying economic and social factors, disempowerment and lack of a youth voice sustain youth issues. It is shown that when these factors undermine the self-esteem of young people they become vulnerable, disaffected and

marginalised, but when they are empowered their vulnerability to youth issues is dramatically reduced. Much of the information comes directly from conversations with young people about their personal experiences.

Part Two: The underlying causes of youth issues

2.1 The role of low self-esteem in high-risk behaviour

In order to fully appreciate how the social and economic factors discussed in this section contribute to the youth issues that are such a concern, it is necessary to remember the role of self-esteem (self-worth) in human behaviour. As everybody knows, self-esteem, or one's opinion of oneself, is a major factor shaping behaviour. People with a good opinion of themselves tend to be confident and positive in their outlook and are usually tough enough to overcome setbacks and to persist in their objectives. In contrast, low self-esteem tends to produce the opposite traits, such as lack of confidence, a negative outlook and lack of persistence.

What confuses the picture, however, is that people with low self-esteem are likely to try to hide or compensate for their low self-esteem with aggressive or confronting behaviour. A vast amount of psychological research has shown that although some young people with low self-esteem are timid and withdrawn, others are more likely to be disobedient, rebellious, bullying, destructive and violent, because protesting in this way gives a short-term boost to their confidence (see extensive literature reviews

in Tomari, Zalar and Plesnicar, 2000 and Carr and Vandiver, 2001).

Unfortunately, society does not always understand this connection, especially in adolescent boys, who are typically boisterous and defiant, suggesting too much rather than too little confidence (Maakrun, 2000). Parents and other authorities that perceive badly behaved young people as over-confident rather than lacking in self-esteem often inflict harsh punishment. This, in turn, further damages youth self-esteem and fuels rebellion and further 'problem behaviour'.

This process, or cycle, is central to the perpetuation of youth concerns. Although young people do not necessarily understand what is happening to them, all of the issues described in Part One contribute to, or are exacerbated by, low self-esteem. Self-esteem thus figures as very important in the following discussion of how underlying social and economic factors create youth issues. Since low self-esteem is a widespread problem among Pacific youth, strategies that empower youth and build self-esteem have proved to be the most effective.

2.2 Underlying Causes

2.2.1 Poverty/hardship

In the past, poverty was seldom mentioned in connection with traditional Pacific subsistence society, because basic needs of food, clothing and shelter could usually be readily obtained from the land and sea most of the time or by utilising trade networks. The term 'subsistence affluence' was used to describe traditional Pacific lifestyles because of the apparent abundance of basic necessities for life (Fisk, 1978), and because communities provided a 'social safety net' to assist those facing hardship (SPC, 2001: 14).

Modernisation has made purchasing power the new international standard for measuring wealth and poverty.² Some Pacific countries have argued that this is not necessarily valid for them, and have developed their own non-cash definitions of poverty, or prefer to use

² e.g. UNDP's Human Development Index includes effective purchasing power as one of its key indicators and average per capita consumption of less than \$US 1.00 per day is used as the measure of extreme poverty in the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 1999; United Nations Statistics Division, 2002).

terms that mean hardship rather than poverty, such as the Tuvaluan word *mativo*. The fact remains, however, that although many Pacific people have the option of living comfortably without money, if they do not have access to cash they are excluded from participating in the modern economy.

In all but the most remote villages, people now rely on basic consumer items such as rice, salt, tinned fish, matches, cooking and eating utensils, kerosene, petrol and diesel, and also require money for school fees. Most people also want to purchase many other items to make their lives more comfortable, enjoyable and entertaining, while cash is now required for birthday, marriage and funeral observations in all but the most remote communities. Those without cash are disadvantaged in terms of the modern economy and likely to appear disadvantaged relative to others, even if they are 'affluent' in subsistence terms. In addition, people without access to cash may be unable to access basic services such as health and schools, even when fees and/or costs are very low, and their children are likely to drop out of school. Lack of access to cash thus restricts the right to choose, and results in economic and social inequalities.

There is an obvious connection between poverty and low self-esteem among youth (Mosley, 1995). Even if basic needs are supplied by family subsistence activities, Pacific young people who come from cash-poor families are likely to feel disadvantaged because they are excluded from the modern economy. Observing more privileged groups enjoying modern consumer goods and modern lifestyles, and being subjected to media messages that promote unattainable lifestyles contributes to low self-esteem. Exclusion from participation in the modern economy also creates 'poverty of opportunity' (UNDP, 1999) which, in turn, encourages high-risk and self-destructive behaviours.

The contribution of lack of cash to school dropout rates and inter-generational transfer of disadvantage is noted

in the following extract from Save the Children Fund's Report on how to prevent children from dropping out of school. *'There is a very clear association between school dropouts and poverty. Research indicates that poverty is the principal reason that children leave school, either being unable to meet the financial costs of schooling or dropping out to help support their family through menial employment. Children from families that cannot afford to send them to school are at risk of becoming the next generation of disadvantaged adults'* (Save the Children Fund, 1998:11).

Poverty also can drive youth into high-risk activities. Participants at the Pacific Regional Workshop on Combating Poverty and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Youth (Nadi, September 2003) recognised that this is becoming an issue their countries (UNICEF, 2003). A follow-up round of studies in seven Pacific countries (in progress while the present report was being prepared) found that in the countries covered so far - Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - some young people are becoming involved in transactional sex (offering sex in exchange for food and other goods) and prostitution (RRRT and UNICEF, 2004). Other obvious consequences of poverty, as demonstrated by the case of Papua New Guinea, are theft and robbery (Chand and Levantis, 1998).

Another consequence of poverty at both the national and the community level that is often overlooked, but which has a major impact on youth, is lack of access to sporting and recreational facilities, including opportunities to participate in the creative arts. Some form of physical activity or self-expression is an essential ingredient for health and wellbeing at all ages. For youth, exercise, sport or some other outlet for self-expression such as dance or drama may be an alternative to high-risk behaviour. Youth commented that although adults closely follow the fortunes of their own national sports teams, they tend not to take youth sport seriously, regarding it as an indulgence rather than a need or a viable employment alternative.

Few Pacific communities are able to offer a wide range of sporting facilities that are accessible to both males and females, and opportunities to exercise tend to be especially limited in atoll communities where grass tends not to grow well. Lack of resources may also prevent maintenance or after hours use of sporting facilities provided by donors, and promotes elitism in sport rather than opportunities for all youth regardless of capability. For example, the excellent gymnasium in Majuro, Marshall Islands, is not open most evenings or on Sundays because there is an insufficient budget for staffing, while young people who are not part of an organised group must pay for admission. Clearly, more funding is needed so that young people can make

more use of this facility and inequalities of access are removed.

The effect of poverty is so far reaching and complex that addressing it must be considered an integral part of any strategy to address youth issues. This is explained very well in the comment in Box Three, from a Papua New Guinea youth worker. Whereas it is not feasible for every project to include income generation, there needs to be coordination and collaboration to ensure that income generation projects exist side by side with those focussing on other youth issues. This is discussed in more depth in Part Three, of this report.



Photo courtesy of Dr Chris McMurray

Box Three: Inter-related causes of youth issues

"Being a young person myself and working with my peers there are so many issues affecting us and most of these issues are interrelated like poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS, constant mobility etc....There are so many things that many organizations are doing to address issues affecting young people but why has there being no change - for example a decrease in the HIV prevalence? It's about time people started addressing the root causes rather than one issue at a time. For example, if an organization is doing HIV/AIDS then they also have to do the other activities as well, like addressing income generation etc...For PNG, money itself is not a problem for the vast majority of the population as people don't need even one dollar to survive for a day. But the problem is opportunity.... young people are not given enough opportunity to build their skills and capacity to help themselves and contribute positively to their community. So they need income generation to enable them to do this."

(Email from Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs participant)

2.2.2 Education systems focussed on white-collar employment skills

The two youth issues that figure prominently in development planning discussions are dropping out of school and high rates of unemployment. In fact they are interrelated symptoms of two underlying problems: inflexible education systems geared mainly towards white-collar work and distorted economies that do not provide enough employment opportunities. Clearly, young people who perform poorly or are disinterested in school are likely to drop out, while parents with limited cash resources who cannot see the relevance of formal education for their children's future are likely to withdraw them from school. Whether or not formal education is required for a particular job, school dropouts tend to lack appropriate skills for securing and undertaking paid employment and are likely to be perceived as failures, and thus are disadvantaged in very tight labour markets. In addition, although there are insufficient white-collar jobs to satisfy the demand, schools continue to emphasise formal education so substantial percentages of school leavers lack the technical and trade skills for blue-collar work and cannot compete with older and more experienced workers.

The importance of reducing the emphasis on examinations and diversifying education systems to facilitate youth employment is widely recognised

throughout the Pacific. These objectives have been included in several key regional documents, including the Forum Education Action Plan 2001 (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 2001) and the Pacific Youth Strategy 2005 and draft strategy for 2010 (<http://www.spc.int/youth>). A number of Pacific countries are currently implementing educational reforms, including reducing the emphasis on examinations as determinants of progression (e.g. Fiji and Solomon Islands).

To date, however, progress in education reform has tended to be very slow. This is largely because Pacific education systems are shaped not only by national policies but also by community attitudes, and this makes it very difficult to effect change. For example, Fiji has one of the highest participation rates in the Pacific, at both primary and secondary level, and successful Fijian students tend to be among the most literate and best prepared for white-collar work or tertiary study. Even so, many people in Fiji recognise that both the institutional structure and the curriculum are in need of reform to reduce the dropout rate and equip more school leavers to find employment. Despite strong Government commitment to reform, community attitudes as well as purely economic factors are hampering efforts to adapt the educational system to the needs of a modern economy, as described in Box Four.

Box Four: Educational reform in Fiji

The present Fijian education system focuses on preparing pupils for examinations in core academic subjects. It is very formal in character, with teachers adhering closely to a prescribed syllabus that does not encompass the needs of students from rural areas whose future will be earning an income from the land. As teachers are judged by the performance of their pupils in examinations, they focus on cramming students with examinable information from the curriculum.

Secondary school students described how teachers lecture and write copious notes on the board while the class sit passively, writing down and memorising information, and completing formal textbook exercises. There is so much prescribed material to be conveyed to classes that teachers have no time to teach in depth or discuss material, and no time to teach the key life skills of questioning, analysis, evaluation and problem solving. Large class sizes of 40 or more also prevent teachers from encouraging creativity, giving individual attention or forming mentoring relationships with individual students. Students commented that teachers use passive learning as a way of keeping control over their classes. *'Children should be seen but not heard, and teachers see their role as just to give out the information and the notes. They do not expect a response and so do not get one'*. School inspections focus on whether the prescribed syllabus is completed rather than the quality of teaching. Established teachers are not updated with refresher courses, so do not learn modern creative methods of teaching.

Pupils who perform well in examinations progress through a formal education system geared towards white-collar work and tertiary education. Those who perform poorly in secondary school are directed to technical and vocational education (TVET) within their school or in one of 60 dedicated TVET centres. This has led TVET centres to be labelled as the 'dropout schools' and means that, from the outset, pupils at these centres, or in TVET courses offered by 94 per cent of Fiji's secondary schools (MOE, 2005: 11), are regarded as failures. The notion that TVET schools are for dropouts is not merely a perception but a reality. Except in the case of two secondary schools that have recently introduced a choice of streams, students who achieve pass marks in the formal examination system are not admitted to TVET, even if they wish to obtain technical or vocational employment. Moreover TVET schools generally do not teach to industry standards, so TVET students are not regarded by industry as trained and employable.

- At the national level the education system is not meeting the needs of the community, since each year more than half of approximately 15,000 school leavers join the ranks of the educated unemployed (MOE, 2005: 14). At the same time, Fiji is experiencing a critical shortage of skilled tradesmen and has to recruit overseas workers at high cost to meet the demand.
- At the community level the current education system fosters elitism rather than egalitarianism, and leads to under-utilisation of human resources.
- At the individual level students who are not academically oriented are likely to feel bored, inadequate or dissatisfied in other ways, and this contributes to negative and self-destructive behaviours. Moreover, if they do find employment, graduates from passive, rote-learning-based education systems tend to lack initiative, problem solving ability and other key skills for successful performances in the workplace.

Government response:

The Fiji Education Sector Program (FESP) AusAID is a substantial donor-funded initiative *'to assist MOE (Ministry of Education) to implement strategic reforms, thereby improving the delivery and quality of education services in Fiji, especially to children in disadvantaged and remote communities'* (FESP brochure). The project

components are to build leadership, management and planning capacity within MOE and to improve curriculum relevance and flexibility. It includes curriculum reform, de-emphasis of external examinations and promotion of less didactic approaches to learning. FESP runs pilot projects in schools that have volunteered to participate, and is piloting enterprise and vocational education in rural and disadvantaged areas.

Clearly this is the type of program that is needed, and Fiji is well on the way to making education more appropriate to youth needs. Nonetheless, FESP, like similar programs in other countries that seek to improve the quality and delivery of education, must overcome attitudinal as well as structural and financial obstacles.

In Fiji, as in most Pacific countries, there is a deeply entrenched, community-wide belief that academic achievement as the best measure of scholastic excellence, that white-collar employment as the only worthwhile goal, and examination results are the best measures of success. Parents gamble that their children will be among the small percentages of lucky ones who succeed in finding white-collar work, *'so invest in long years of formal academic-oriented education because they see it as the best way of maximizing the return from their children'* (Kick, 1999: 42). This supports the current system, even though it does not meet the real needs of the majority of students.

Even if these attitudinal obstacles can be overcome, educational reform is extremely costly and few Pacific countries are able to increase the resources devoted to education without substantial donor assistance. For example, currently it costs an average of \$30,000 to establish a single technical or vocational training course in a school in Fiji, but the current budget for TVET is only \$1 million a year, which is shared between 60 TVET schools. Vastly increased resources are needed to introduce TVET options to other Fijian secondary schools, and to upgrade the quality of existing TVET schools.

Source: Interviews with students, teachers, Ministry of Education staff and FESP consultants, July-August, 2005.

The structural, financial and attitudinal obstacles evident in the Fijian education system are common to most Pacific countries. Some, including Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru and Solomon Islands face additional obstacles in the process of educational reform because they are starting from a lower baseline than in Fiji, with lower participation rates, fewer and lower quality fixed assets, and greater reliance on under-qualified teachers.

Regardless of the situation, a key requirement is that educational reform takes account of social and economic

conditions. While every young person should acquire basic literacy and numeracy, they also need to obtain skills for employment. In most of the Pacific, these skills must be learned at school, because there are few opportunities for education outside the school system. It is therefore crucial that the percentages receiving various types of training reflect sectoral patterns of employment. Preparing young people for jobs that do not exist simply builds frustration and discontent.

2.2.3 Scarcity of employment opportunities

When they reach the end of their education, most young people are confronted with the daunting task of trying to find employment. Early contact with developed countries and colonial rule produced not only education systems designed to produce clerks and administrators, but also distorted economies based mainly on trade and administration with little development of manufacturing and small enterprise. Few Pacific countries have been able to reshape their economies to provide a better balance, and growth in employment opportunities is usually nowhere near sufficient to provide for the increasing numbers seeking wage employment.

Mismatch of education and employment opportunities contributes to wastage of resources and low-self youth esteem. Youths who cannot find white-collar work may not see much connection between the education they have received and the few opportunities available. Owners of small businesses say they have difficulty finding young workers who can repair an electrical appliance, an outboard motor or a vehicle. Youths who are locally trained may not meet industry standards because of the poor quality and low morale associated with TVET, so many Pacific countries import skilled tradesmen. Even so, ECREA's survey of Fijian youth found that the majority of unemployed young people interviewed in both rural and urban areas *'still harboured dreams of being civil servants'* (ECREA, 2002: 33-34).

In countries where few employment opportunities are available, school leavers with parents or relatives in the wage sector are more likely to find work. Usually they receive a better education, and are more likely to be assisted into employment by family connections. Moreover, if they become involved in community and NGO activities, youth from more privileged backgrounds who have had more opportunities to develop skills are more likely to be selected as youth representatives. It is very difficult to remove this inequality because

opportunities for employment and youth representation are really only geared for those with developed capacity. Integrated capacity development frameworks in employment structures are highlighted as a much needed service for young people.

Such inequalities make the task of finding employment appear even more daunting to those who lack such advantages, and further undermines their self-esteem. High-risk behaviour becomes an alternative to work, as a strategy for building self-esteem and a way of filling in spare time. This is well documented in the video *'Kilim Taem'* about unemployed youth in Vanuatu (UNICEF and AusAID, 1998). Another consequence of socio-economic inequalities in employment is that those who still are in school may be discouraged by the lack of the success of their older peers, and drop out because they know they will face the same obstacles.

Most of the young people interviewed for this report and various other recent studies of Pacific youth mentioned secure employment somewhere in their vision for the future. For example, unemployment was one of the main issues mentioned by youth in the ECREA study, who also pointed out that it leads to other social problems such as drug use, delinquency, crime and suicide (ECREA, 2002: 28). Finding work was a major issue for youth in Mitchell's study of 811 Vanuatu youth, with 37 per cent aspiring to work for money and 11 per cent to setting up a small business. When asked what they would do to improve the lives of young people if they had the power, 'create employment' was a common response (Mitchell, 1998: 55-57).

Youth attending the 2005 Marshall Islands Youth Congress Conference listed 'employment preparation classes' and 'training in trades to certificate level' among their priorities for the National Youth Policy (RMI, 2005). Similarly, various forms of training to assist employment

and/or income generation topped the lists of needs mentioned by young men and young women in a 2003 participatory study of youth in Solomon Islands (Hassall and Associates, 2003: 25-28). Clearly, being properly prepared and having the opportunity to obtain employment is very important to young people, and a major determinant of their self-esteem.

It is now widely recognised that formal sector employment is unlikely to expand sufficiently in the near future to cater for the increase in labour force in most Pacific countries, and informal private sector enterprise and diversification of agriculture must be promoted (UNDP, 1999: 83-84). Increasing community involvement is one strategy that can help to integrate education and employment. There is already significant community involvement in education, with many communities providing and/or maintaining school buildings and providing other support. Community members could also contribute more expertise in enterprise training, TVET and agriculture, both in school and by participating in out-of-school non-formal education. In effect, this is a way of reviving the customary education style of the pre-modern era, when youth were taught subsistence and survival skills by adults in their communities. Blending traditional and modern education systems helps to revalue informal work in the eyes of the community, while mentoring helps young people find an adult identity and a livelihood, and strengthens their bonds with their communities. The Tongan Young Farmers Project is an example of how exchange of agricultural information can benefit both young farmers and their village-based mentors. The young farmers tell their village-based mentors about modern farming techniques they have learned in school, while the mentors train the young farmers in practical aspects of cultivation. This helps to build mutual respect and increases youth self-esteem.

Significant numbers of jobless youth in the Pacific join youth organizations and volunteer to work with NGOs. This involvement in worthwhile activities is a kind of 'pseudo-employment' that fills in time and boosts self-esteem. Ideally, voluntary stints lead to paid job placements however many of those involved as youth leaders and peer educators receive no payment other than access to facilities, occasional meals and sometimes the opportunity to attend meetings in their own or another country. While volunteering is an excellent way of acquiring skills and experience, status, respect and self-esteem, it does not provide a secure future, and some volunteers find themselves with nothing to do when they become too old to be peer educators. For example, a pastor interviewed for this report commented that although he had attained the age of 38 and was at last receiving a salary, he has spent so much of his life as a volunteer that lack of resources still prevents him from marrying and establishing his own household. Other youth interviewed in various countries commented that youth workers tend to be looked down on or not regarded as a serious profession because youth work is associated with volunteering and so lacks status.

Several NGOs visited for this study reported that donors refuse to support wages and other human resources payments as components of funding proposals. Donors should recognise that donors have an obligation to provide young volunteers with at least a minimal career structure, and build these costs into projects. When young volunteers have learned any necessary skills and fulfilled other requirements they should be promoted into posts that provide a basic salary. Initiatives to build capacities of youth volunteers for paid employment need to be promoted to avoid creating a discontented group of young workers with no sound financial basis for marriage, family formation and full community participation.

2.2.4 Rural/urban inequalities

Rural/urban disparities and how to address them have long been a major preoccupation of national governments and planners in the Pacific. While most Pacific Islanders live in rural areas, except in a few countries that comprise only one island, there are substantial rural/urban differences in access to and quality of services. Secondary schools, medical facilities, household services and most economic activities cluster on the main towns because it is costly and difficult to service outlying and remote areas. Inadequate roads and transport that restrict movement and access to markets exacerbate the disparities.

Although there have been many attempts to decentralise both services and economic activity, the flow of population to urban areas continues (SPC, 2001). Recent data from the 2000 round of censuses shows that the urban growth rate exceeded the rural growth rate in every country discussed in this report except Federated States of Micronesia (<http://www.spc.int/demog>).

Rural/urban disparities contribute to youth issues in various ways. Concentration of secondary and tertiary education and employment opportunities in urban areas promotes a flow of young people away from rural areas. Many of Port Vila's SPRs³ and the young men who fill in their days by sauntering along the streets of Honiara have been sent to town from rural areas in the hope that they will find work, or have come with relatives who were themselves looking for work (Mitchell, 1998). Those who cannot find work are vulnerable to engaging in high-risk activities.

The likelihood of being exposed to these risks is exacerbated when rural to urban disparities involves separating young people from rural families and sending them to stay with relatives in urban areas, a common event since both secondary schools and employment opportunities cluster in urban areas. Many are separated from their families at a time when they most need parental support and guidance. Even well-meaning relatives tend not to give other people's children the same care and attention that they give to their own, and this increases the risk that houseguests experience low self-esteem and become vulnerable. Girls living away from their parents may also be at risk of exploitation and abuse, such as being forced to do long hours of housework and stay home to care for the children of their relatives, or becoming victims of physical or sexual abuse (RRRT and UNICEF, 2004). Boys living with relatives also have an increased risk of dropping out of school, becoming involved in substance abuse and/or crime and/or running away to live on the streets. Jale's story in Box Five is an example of how a youth living away from home can drift onto the streets and become involved in high risk and criminal activities.

³ The term SPRs derives from the Bislama phrase 'sperem public rod', literally 'hit the road'. Since unemployed young people spend much of their time wandering around, they are called SPRs in Vanuatu.

Box Five: Jale's story

Jale dropped out of his school in Fiji when his father migrated overseas and left his wife alone with seven children. Because his mother was unable to care for such a large family by herself, Jale was sent away from his village to live with his uncle's family in the city. Like so many children sent to live with relatives, Jale felt isolated and alienated, so spent increasing amounts of time on the streets where he made friends and found acceptance among the others in the same situation. Concerned that he was unable to control his nephew, the uncle reported Jale to the social welfare department, and, at the age of 16, Jale was put in a detention centre. In the detention centre he came into contact with boys who were already very tough and/or hardened criminals. Eventually he persuaded his uncle to send him back to live with his mother in the village, and he also returned to secondary school. By this time Jale was 19, however, so he felt embarrassed and humiliated when he was put in Form Four with much younger children whose education had not been interrupted.

Jale began to look back on his time on the streets as the happiest in his life because he had felt a sense of belonging, and after a little more than a year he dropped out of school for the second time and returned to the streets. Despite strong bonds, life on the streets was very hard for Jale and his peers, and committing occasional crimes was a form of personal challenge, a way of testing their skills to see if they could survive. One day Jale was caught and received a 14-month sentence, this time in an adult prison. There he found himself totally subordinated and controlled by the prison guards. He spent long hours reading the Bible, and decided to reform his ways because prison life was so intolerable. After serving six months of his sentence, he was released for good behaviour.

Since 2000 Jale has been involved in a support group for young people living on the streets of Suva. The group has a good relationship with the police and cooperates with them to assist their peers. Some of these young people have even joined the police force. Jale now draws on his own experience of living on the street and his understanding of how youth in this situation think to make recommendations on how to prevent other young people getting into the same situation. As well as being a volunteer peer educator for youth on the streets, he has found paid employment as a bartender.

(Source: Summary of interview, 3/8/05)

Rural/urban disparities in basic services such as electricity, communications and transport not only attract rural people to urban areas, but also inhibit the development of small-business, cash cropping and small-scale income earning opportunities for young people in rural areas. Irregular shipping services and lack of electricity increase isolation and create difficulties in marketing perishable produce. In Tuvalu, for example, efforts of some young people to develop potentially lucrative commercial

piggeries on outer islands have foundered because there are no abattoirs with freezer facilities (personal communication, Tuvalu youth meeting)

Although it is common for youth in urban areas to say that they would prefer to live in rural areas, even those who have no work seem to believe that they are more likely to find work in the town (e.g. Mitchell, 1998). At the same time, however, they also recognise that there

tends to be less to interest and entertain young people in rural areas. They often lack sporting and recreational facilities, places for young people to meet and entertainment. In Tari village in Choiseul, Solomon Islands, for example, young men interviewed by the writer did not even have access to portable radios or cassette players.

Servicing rural areas with electricity and improved communications can make rural life more attractive for youth and encourage them to stay there. Electricity gives access to modern entertainment and the Internet. In the remote island communities of Tokelau, for example, the

availability of electricity has made it possible for young DJs to run a music radio station, and from time to time disco sessions with dancing and loud music are held in the community meeting place. Although adults do not necessarily supervise them, these village events provide good fun and entertainment, with less risk of substance abuse and other negative behaviours commonly associated with nightclubs in urban areas.

Providing electricity and other services in rural areas is an integral part of any strategy to curb rural to urban migration and promote employment in rural areas. As such, it is also part of any strategy to address youth issues.

2.2.5 Conflict between traditional and modern cultures

Conflict between traditional and modern cultures is an attitudinal rather than economic or structural cause of youth issues. Hooper (1999: 3) observes

“culture plays a much more significant role in national economies and national life of Pacific countries than it does in most other regions of the world.”

Pacific people do not gradually become less traditional and more modern, but must be both at the same time, even though the emphasis varies according to the situation and setting. Hezel (2001) describes a raft of conflicts between traditional culture and the requirements of a modern lifestyle that have impacted family life, land ownership, gender roles, sexuality, political authority and observances of birth, marriage and death in Micronesian societies.

Particularly important is the changing nature of families. The shift to a nuclear family structure reduces support mechanisms such as shared or communal child care, while the continuing social obligations and responsibilities of the extended family may constitute a heavy burden for young wage-earning couples.

While Hezel's focus is the impact on men and women, it is evident that parents' struggles to manage these conflicts are observed by, and transferred to and impact on young people. The impact on youth is summarized very well in the quote in Box Six.



Photo courtesy of Dr Chris McMurray

Box Six: Youth and cultural conflict

'Youth in Fiji and in the Pacific are in a state of confusion. We are victims and witnesses to the change in lifestyle and introduction of new ideas through formal education, trade, international and regional relationships, Christianity and the new central government system. You see, most of the issues we in Fiji are facing today are because we are witnesses of the tussle between communal rights and individual rights, between democracy /legal systems and the chiefly rule/hierarchy, between formal education and customary knowledge, between religions of the past and Christianity today. On top of that we have unique multiracial issues. All of these value systems are operating simultaneously and we youths are caught in the middle and this situation gives birth to the current problems we are facing today such as unemployment, poverty, school dropouts, alcohol and drug abuse. We are taught one thing at home and exposed to another in society. Young people need the right information at the right age, to make the right decisions and not bombard them all at once with knowledge that would put unwanted pressure on them'.

Source: A young person consulted for Carling, 2004: 9

These cultural changes may contribute to uncertainty about roles and responsibilities, and may also result in less parental care and attention being given to young people at critical phases in their lives. The effect may be intensified by bombardment with Western media. Historically, there is a universal tendency for modern Western culture to be promoted as the ideal, and for youth to be saturated with Western values via the media and urban life. Particularly confusing for young people is that Western entertainment often glamorises confronting, immoral and illegal behaviour and lifestyles that are unattainable and/or questionable as regards promotion of human happiness.

Even so, it is clear from many discussions that young people in urban areas recognise this and still see great value in their traditional culture. For example, 81 per cent of youth interviewed in Port Vila saw *kastom* as important. Their reasons related directly to self-esteem and also to the economic potential of custom 'Because custom and culture is my identity – who I am and where I come from.' 'You don't need money to learn it or to take part in it' 'Because there isn't work, so learning *kastom* is one way to make money' (Mitchell, 1998: 21). A Tuvaluan pastor

interviewed for this report believes that one of the most important things young people need to learn is how to manage the two cultures simultaneously, and he advises them not to abandon traditional practices in favour of modernity but to learn to manage the two lifestyles in parallel and take the best from each.

This 'management' includes recognising that culture can change to meet society's needs, and working in a culturally acceptable manner to promote 'modern' values, such as some rights for children and women.

“The challenge is to find ways to celebrate the resilience and innovation in Pacific young people, not to advocate for “culture as an artefact” to be held onto blindly. As one young person said to me in a workshop “I know who I am as a Fijian, and tomorrow I will still know that, but I can still be different from my parents.”

(Comment from WAC, Fiji).

An example of how traditional culture can be used to provide youth employment, build self-esteem and

generate community respect for youth activities is the 'Waan Aelon in Majel' (WAM) project in Marshall Islands. This donor-funded project has trained 46 young people in outrigger canoe building, boat maintenance and repair, sailing and navigation - skills that are relevant to both current economic opportunities and traditional life in Marshall Islands. The original trainees were male school dropouts who were previously involved in high-risk behaviour, but several girls have now joined the program. Trainees market their work and generate income, speak

in schools, bring children to observe boat building and involve parents and the community in sailing regattas. As of the end of 2004, WAM outreach activities had involved 4800 students. A follow up survey of alumni found that 76 per cent of the trainees were utilising the hands-on and life skills they had gained during the program, and some had returned to their home islands or undertaken further study (WAM, 2005). A summary of an evaluation of WAM by 12 trainees is presented in Box Seven.

Box Seven: Impact of 'Waan Aelon in Majel' on trainees lives

All 12 trainees identified positive changes as a result of their engagement with WAM (ranging from 3 months to 3 years). 'With respect to relationship changes, most youth reported that the quality of their interaction with family members had improved dramatically. Many said they are more respectful of their parents and more helpful at home. Significantly, they also reported that their parent's views about them had changed and that family members showed interest and pride in their work. In terms of behavioural changes, participants reported that they no longer "run around" and get into trouble in their communities. They also reported consuming much less alcohol. Many said they had changed peer groups and are better able to handle pressure from friends and girlfriends. Their status in the community has changed too; *"people know me and respect me now"*.

One of the most significant changes reported by all alumni was in the area of improved self-worth and cultural pride. The process of building traditional canoes has changed their lives. These young people say they now feel good about "being Marshallese" and have much greater understanding and respect for their culture. They talked about spending more time with their grandparents and being interested in "the old stories"; their memories of customs they heard as young boys are returning. Traditional leaders talk to them now and are interested in what they are doing. They strongly believe Marshallese culture must be maintained and passed on to the next generation.

As a result of their experience with WAM, these young men and women now have goals for the future. To make these dreams a reality however, most alumni said they still need support from WAM, particularly in terms of finding employment or returning to school. Many talked about wanting to train other youth to be boat-builders, carpenters and fibreglass workers; some want to go to the outer islands to contribute to development there. They think WAM should expand to work with youth in the outer islands and teach a wider range of vocational skills so alumni can find jobs. They also think that more girls should get involved'

Source: WAM Draft Project document ((2005: 8) quoting ADB Youth Social Services Project Interim Report, March 2005).

2.2.6 Authoritarian parenting methods

Authoritarian parenting methods that deny youth a voice are another underlying factor caused by attitudes rather than economic or structural factors. Carling, (2004: 19) comments *'The issue of young people voicing their opinions opposes the traditional notion of youth common to Pacific Island States, which is generally to be seen and not heard. Derived from the days when young people gained their knowledge and life-skills from their elders, Pacific Island cultures still demand a respectful silence from younger community members, while the elder members make the decisions for the community'*. Adinkrah, writing of Fiji what is true of most Pacific countries, puts it in stronger terms: *'... deference to authority pervades the entire Fijian social structure and is reproduced through the socialization process, beginning in infancy. From the time they learn to speak Fijian children learn that to ask questions of adults is to incite verbal rebukes, while to challenge or actively disobey the dictates of an adult is to invite corporal punishment'* (1995: 168).

Some Fijian youth interviewed for this report said that children tend to be raised as the property of parents and taught that it is the right of parents and family to discipline them. *'We are taught to sit quietly in adult company without speaking, or to go outside and not bother the adults. If we attempt to express our opinions we are criticised and belittled and told to keep quiet because we do not know anything about life'*. Many young people throughout the region would identify with these comments.

There is no question that raising an adolescent is a challenging task for any parent, and there is no magic cure guaranteed to eliminate all conflict and rebellious behaviour. What has been demonstrated by a many research studies, however, is that authoritarian parenting methods tend to promote rather than discourage adolescent rebellion and high-risk behaviours (Carr and Vandiver, 2001). Hezel (2003) writes that while

punishing children when they misbehave is an important part of child raising, it can also drive them to self destructive behaviour, including suicide.

Authoritarian styles of parenting undermine youth self-esteem, foster resentment and alienate youth from their parents, especially when harsh physical punishments or belittling is used to enforce passivity and silence. Youth oppressed in this way tend to turn to their peers for support and often form stronger bonds with siblings and peers than with parents, especially fathers. This brings the risk that if they are subjected to peer pressure to engage in high-risk behaviour, they are unlikely to confide in their parents or seek their support. The usual approach of authoritarian parents is to tell their children what they must not do, then punish them if they disobey without realising that their son or daughter may have been subject to peer or other pressure, and is likely to need advice rather than punishment.

For example, the PAHP baseline surveys found that the most common reason why youth in Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tonga first used substances was peer pressure. Almost all kept their behaviour a secret from their parents because they feared harsh punishment. As the parents were unaware of what their children were doing, they were unable to provide support and guidance to help end this high-risk behaviour. If they did find out what was happening, the usual reaction was severe punishment, which reinforced the alienation and further reduced opportunities for parental guidance (PAHP 2001 and 2003). A similar pattern was evident in parent/daughter relationships in the Tonga pregnancy study, which found that girls who were at risk of becoming sexually active were afraid to seek information and advice from their parents (SPC, 2005). Sadly, the results achieved by these authoritarian parenting methods were the opposite to that intended. In contrast, research has

shown that adolescents whose parents take a more flexible approach and build rather than undermine self-esteem are more likely to withstand peer pressure (Donley and Keen, 2000).

Children of authoritarian parents may be challenging and disobedient when their parents are not present to supervise them. For example, a Kiribati secondary schoolteacher described how teenagers often defy the authority of teachers, arguing that only their parents have the right to tell them what to do. This disrupts classroom environments and forces teachers to become increasingly authoritarian in order to keep control. It is difficult to teach creativity and provide a stimulating learning environment when such power struggles develop. Similarly, young people who are oppressed by authoritarian parents have been found to be more likely to attempt to assert their independence with violence and other criminal behaviour (Carr and Vandiver, 2001).

In addition to promoting high-risk behaviour, authoritarian parenting is not good preparation for modern lifestyles and wage employment. Success in a modern environment usually comes from learning to evaluate situations, finding innovative solutions to problems, and having leadership skills. Research has shown that suppressing children's initiative and raising them to be passive rather than providing mental stimulation impairs mental development and can make it difficult for them to learn new skills later in life (UNICEF, 2004: 2).

While there is interest and support for early childhood development projects and new approaches to school-based learning in most Pacific countries, it is evident that some community resistance stems from parents' fears that raising children to be active rather than passive will

cause them to be disrespectful. The challenge for parents is to teach their children how to behave appropriately in both traditional and modern situations as part of positive parenting. Children raised this way are more likely to be well-adjusted when they become teenagers, and more likely to be successful in finding opportunities and creative outlets for their talents.

The issue of parenting was raised many times by young people during the research for this report. All seemed well aware that their lives and futures were shaped by their parents' attitudes and behaviour. They described how discouraging it is to have parents who go out most nights and expect their children to stay home alone, or parents who do not show any interest or pride in their children's achievements. One group of young people interviewed in Suva suggested that a major cause of teenage pregnancy is that girls left to care for their siblings see children as their main source of warmth and affection, so want to have a child of their own to love.

A common observation was that while mothers tend to be more approachable, it is difficult for young people to develop close relationships with their fathers. They said that many young people see fathers as authority figures to be feared, and this fear undermines their self-esteem. The presentations on violence against children and women in the home made by various speakers at UNICEF's September 2005 *'Pacific Consultation on Addressing Violence Against Children'* suggest this fear is often well founded (see UNICEF forthcoming (a)). Many young informants interviewed for this report said they longed for closer, more supportive relationships with their parents. Box Eight sets out the vision of 'the perfect parent' of one group of young people interviewed for this study.

Box Eight: Vision of the Perfect Parent

- Non-violent
- Understanding
- Well-informed about their children's needs
- Love their children and shows them often that they love them
- Communicates with their children
- Takes an interest in what their children do and what is going on in their lives
- Speaks respectfully to their children at all times - including when asking them to help
- Appreciates their children's efforts to help
- Doesn't shout at their children
- Doesn't abuse their children - physically, emotionally or sexually
- Trusts their children to behave responsibly

(Suggestions from the WAC Youth Drama Group, Suva)

Parenting education for unmarried teenage mothers can provide an opportunity to introduce less authoritarian methods of parenting into communities that might otherwise regard parenting education for conventional mothers as unnecessary or intrusive. At the same time, receiving support and assistance with child-raising and being recognised as 'model' parents can give a tremendous boost to the self-esteem of young mothers, as well as helping to ensure that their children are well cared for. UNICEF Pacific has introduced a parenting module into its life skills training manual for young Pacific islanders.

For example, in Marshall Islands parenting support for teenage mothers is available from both an NGO and a government organization. Since November 2004 a government facility in the Marshall Islands, WTMIC (Women Training, Marketing and Information Centre)

has offered several one-week training courses for teenage mothers to teach them how to care for an infant. At the time of writing more than a hundred teenage mothers had participated and there were plans to extend the course to include income-generation skills for teenage mothers, most of whom are obliged to drop out of high school. WUTMI (Women United Together Marshall Islands) is a vigorous NGO that addresses a range of women's issues, and also provides parenting education, with the assistance of Pacific Resources for Education (PREL), for very young parents of children aged 0-3 years. It has recently received a New Zealand grant to strengthen parenting education in Majuro and Ebeye, especially for teenage mothers. Elsewhere in the region, initiatives to involve fathers as well as mothers in learning about good parenting methods include those of the Pacific Children's Program and Pacific Stars Lifeskills Project (see UNICEF, forthcoming (a)).

2.2.7 Discrimination

Youth everywhere are at risk of various forms of discrimination. In the Pacific, as discussed above, there is the widespread tendency for adults and leaders to marginalise young people and not listen to what they have to say. Usually this is regarded as normal behaviour and not recognised as a form of discrimination. At worst, young people may be seen as 'the problem' rather than victims of factors beyond their control.

As signatories to international conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), most Pacific governments are officially committed to eliminating discrimination. Some have introduced anti-discrimination measures into their constitution. For example, Section 38 of the Bill of Rights in Fiji's 1997 Constitution states:

Every person has the right to equality before the law. A person must not be unfairly discriminated against directly or indirectly on the grounds of his/her:

- a) personal characteristics or colour circumstances including race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, birth, primary language, economic status, age or disability or*
- b) Opinions or beliefs except to the extent that those opinions or beliefs involved harm to others or diminution of rights.*

(Government of Fiji, 1997).

Even so, discrimination is a very complex issue that is deeply rooted in culture and attitudes. It remains an ongoing issue for Pacific youth.

Certain social sub-groups are especially vulnerable to specific forms of discrimination that affect both youth and adults. Three such forms of discrimination are discussed in this section: gender discrimination,

discrimination against sexual minorities and discrimination against the disabled. It is recognised that some young people are also at risk of experiencing a fourth form of discrimination: discrimination against ethnic minorities. As this form of discrimination is specific to particular countries and ethnic groups, however, a comprehensive discussion is beyond the scope of this report.

2.2.7.1 Gender discrimination

Pacific societies in general tend to be male dominated, and men tend to predominate in all aspects of economy, society and decision-making. Some communities do not perceive this as gender discrimination, and believe there is gender equity because women are respected and often own key assets such as land (SPC, 2001: 24). The fact remains, however, that many Pacific women are at risk of being disadvantaged and discriminated against relative to their male peers, whether or not they are married and whether or not they own land.

In some countries gender discrimination is clearly evident in lower education and employment participation rates. For example, in Solomon Islands in 1999 the gross enrolment ratio for males in primary school was 78.2 compared with 74.6 for females, and in secondary school was 33.6 for males and only 24.8 for females (Solomon Islands Government and UNDP, 2002: 92), while only 34 per cent of all paid workers aged 19-25 were female (Solomon Islands Government, 2002). In others, such as the countries for which secondary education statistics are provided in Annex One, Table Three, the statistics tend to suggest equity, while gender discrimination manifests in other ways, such as different attitudes to girls and boys, different ways of raising them and permitting them different freedoms and rights in society.

Some of the discrimination against young girls stems from a desire to protect them, and some from perceiving the role of females in society as subordinate to that of males. This may provide some explanation as to why fewer girls get involved with substance abuse in comparison to boys. The traditional view is that women take care of the house and family while men make decisions and represent the family in society. At most community meetings in Kiribati, for example, women sit behind the men in the *maneaba* and do not speak. In other societies women may have the right to speak out, but many do not have the right to vote on community issues (SPC, 2001: 24).

In general, all of the other factors underlying youth issues are exacerbated by gender discrimination. For example, as discussed in previous sections, gender discrimination translates into favouring boys when school fees are limited. The subordinate status of women also means that in most Pacific countries, girls are likely to be kept at home assist with housework and care for younger children, and sometimes kept away from school to help in the home, while boys are permitted much greater social freedom. While obviously girls tend to need more protection than boys, it is significant that relatively little attention is given to devising other ways to protect them, because confining them is not perceived as discriminatory. Similarly, restricting girls' participation in sport for cultural reasons is accepted and not regarded as discriminatory.

Discrimination against girls is very evident in the case of teenage pregnancy. A striking feature of the Tonga Teenage Pregnancy Study was that young mothers were forced to drop out of school and stay home with the baby, while most of the young fathers were able to continue with their education or employment. The main reasons why respondents thought teenage mothers should not be permitted to resume school after the birth of the baby were concern that allowing them to return to school would imply that teenage pregnancy is

acceptable, that they could have a bad influence on their schoolmates and they should be punished (SPC, 2005: 49). The possibility that teenage fathers might provide an undesirable role model if they returned to school was not mentioned. In fact it was apparent from the interviews that most teenage mothers had certainly not planned to become pregnant, but had simply not known how to deal with emotional pressure and/or sexual excitement. Learning about their experiences of giving birth and the problems they encountered would seem more likely to discourage teenage pregnancy rather than encourage other girls to copy them (SPC, 2005).

Being taught from the outset that they are less important than their male siblings increases the risk of low self-esteem in girls relative to boys. Low self-esteem tends to produce different behaviour in girls than in boys, with girls more likely to be withdrawn and quiet as compared to boys. They tend to be more likely to internalise their problems, less likely to seek help, and in some cultures, more likely to become suicidal (American Psychological Association, 2001). In the Pacific fewer adolescent girls than boys tend to be involved in substance abuse, living on the street and involved in crime, but are equally likely to be exposed to unprotected sex with its attendant risks (Hassall and Associates, 2003; UNFPA 2003 (a-f), UNICEF 2001 (a)). Moreover, because of cultures that encourage females to be more reserved than males, there is a danger that dangerously low-self esteem in girls can go unnoticed and contribute to significant problems, including poor educational performances and a tendency to yield readily to peer pressure. It may also be a factor in the exceptionally high rates of female youth suicide discussed in Section 1.2.8 above.

Gender discrimination also contributes to the risk that girls will be abused and exploited, thereby wasting their potential and denying them their rights. As discussed in previous sections, girls are especially vulnerable to child sexual abuse, transactional sex and commercial sexual exploitation when they are disadvantaged by poverty and

family disruption. Recent studies conducted by RRRT and UNICEF in several Pacific countries found that although both boys and girls can be victims, the majority of reported cases involve girls (RRRT and UNICEF, 2004). Although not numerous, some of the extreme forms of discrimination against girls identified by these studies include parents arranging marriages to older men and foreigners in return for cash payments or prostituting their daughters to seafarers, loggers and others with access to cash. Girls also are at risk of being raped during periods of political instability, while in Papua New Guinea the risk of being raped or a victim of other violent crimes is so great as to be recognised as an enormous deterrent to the participation of young women in the labour force and low cost income generation activities (Chand and Levantis, 1998: 37).

Gender discrimination not only manifests as specific, demonstrable instances of discrimination against females, but also in a general climate in which insufficient effort is made to ensure that gender discrimination does not occur. The natural tendency for Pacific communities to be led by and dominated by men means that female youth are always at risk of being disadvantaged compared with male youth unless special efforts are made to ensure equity. Unless women are specifically defined in project design, often the main beneficiaries of projects are male. *'In the Pacific, 'community' usually means 'men'. If you want to reach women or youth, you have to spell it out.'* (Dr Peggy Fairburn-Dunlop, 5/7/2005).

A very positive feature of discussions with youth for this report, and also mentioned in numerous other studies, is that both young males and females are very conscious of gender discrimination, and often advocate more equity. For example, youth delegates to the Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs in Apia wrote in their conference declaration: *'There is a great need to promote gender equality and empowerment of young women and girls...innovative measures to support the development of skills and enhancement*

of leadership qualities of young women and girls are needed. This includes providing sustainable opportunities for young women to participate in decision-making at all levels of society...' (UNDP, 2005: 3). Gender discrimination was also raised as an important issue by groups of peer educators from Save the Children and Ministry of Health who were interviewed in Suva, while the majority of urban and rural Fijian youth surveyed by ECREA said that women should be given equal rights to men and should be respected (ECREA, 2002: 37). Although canoes are traditionally perceived as 'men's business' in Marshall Islands, the predominantly male respondents who evaluated the WAM canoe project in the Marshall Islands said that more girls should be involved in the project in the future (WAM, 2005: 8).

2.2.7.2 Discrimination against sexual minorities

Although the vast majority of people throughout the world are clearly defined as either male or female at birth by their biological characteristics, for various reasons significant percentages do not fully identify with their biological gender. For more than 50 years biologists have recognised that gender identity takes the form of a continuum rather than a polarity of two genders, and inconsistencies of psychological and biological gender range from being attracted to people of the same sex through to overt homosexuality. Sexual minorities can include anyone who does not identifying wholly with either the male or female biological gender (Kinsey, 1948, 1953)

In the context of the CRC, it is most important to distinguish between the right to freedom from sexual exploitation and abuse and the right to non discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (United Nations, 1989, Articles 2, 34: 11). Sexual activity by adults with children under age 18, whether they are of the same or different sexes, and whether participation is by apparent consent, coercion or purchased with

money or other inducements, constitutes a crime in most countries and is a violation of the rights of the child as defined by CRC (United Nations, 1989, Article 34: 11). On the other hand, children have the right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation under the CRC and UN Charter of Human Rights (United Nations, 1989, Article 2; United Nations, 1948).

In the past, many countries throughout the world outlawed adult homosexuality, but most repealed these laws during the first part of the 20th century or after the UN Charter of Human Rights was promulgated. Moreover, discrimination against sexual minorities is now widely recognised as a violation of human rights and has become illegal in most countries. As noted above, in Fiji it is specifically precluded under the Constitution, a constitutional protection which the High Court recently found nullified the prohibition on private sexual relationships between consenting adult males in the Penal Code s. 177 (*Nadan v State*, High Court, 2005). Social attitudes have tended to lag behind legal recognition of the rights of sexual minorities, however.

Sexual minorities in the Pacific are likely to encounter social restrictions and to face discrimination from many sections of the community. During adolescence, when members of sexual minorities usually experience confusion about their identity and suffer especially low self-esteem, they are likely to conceal or deny their sexuality rather than seek support and counselling, because they fear discrimination and violence, both within and outside the home. This contributes to low self-esteem and lack of success in the school and workplace. When/if they do publicly acknowledge their sexual minority status, they are likely to be stereotyped by the community, pushed into particular roles, excluded from participating in some aspects of social life, discriminated against and even persecuted. The first national needs analysis in Fiji (Sexual Minorities Project and Family Planning Australia, 2001) described sexual

minorities as 'highly vulnerable and living on the fringe of society'. Pinhey and Millman (2004) concluded that gay, lesbian, and bisexual Pacific Islander adolescents in Guam were particularly vulnerable to suicide.

Most Christian churches have a strictly heterosexual view of marriage and the family, so sexual minorities are especially likely to face discrimination in countries where high percentages of the population are practicing Christians, as in the Pacific. Although some churches accept sexual minorities and do not discriminate against them, members of a sexual minority group reported that some of the harshest condemnation originates from conservative religious communities, and sexual minorities are likely to be excluded from community spiritual activities.

Fiji is one of only a few Pacific countries with an NGO dedicated to supporting sexual minorities, although the Sexual Minorities Project receives only limited funding from overseas sources to support education and counselling activities, maintenance of a safe house and modest allowances for a few staff. Members of the Project reported many instances of discrimination at school and in the workplace. Gay men described being stereotyped by the community as only employable as hairdressers or entertainers. A lesbian described how she had been ordered by her employer to adopt feminine hairstyles and dress, and said that because of fear of recriminations she never mentioned her sexual orientation until, at the age of 32, she discovered a support group at the Sexual Minorities Project. Until then, low self-esteem and anxiety about her identity undermined her attempts to study and enjoy a successful career.

In fact, members of sexual minorities are employed in all types of work, and make major contributions in the fields of counselling and peer education, especially in reproductive health education. Early recognition of the risk of HIV/AIDS by sexual minorities have made them leaders in the promotion of safe sex, although HIV/AIDS

transmission in the Pacific is principally male to female. Even so, the important and valuable contributions of sexual minorities to Pacific society tend to be undervalued or ignored, and members of these groups may even be prevented from participating in some community and educational activities. For example, a former peer educator with a Fijian reproductive health project that emphasised abstinence rather than distribution of condoms described how the project manager disparaged him because he was gay, and would not allow him to provide advice to male clients or to distribute condoms.

One gender minority, called *fa'afafine* in Samoa, *fakaleiti* in Tonga and *rae rae* or *mahu* in French Polynesia is uniquely Polynesian. Their gender ambiguity is fostered by the socially sanctioned practice of raising some boys as girls so they will perform the household duties of daughters. Traditionally, families that lacked girls, or had no girls old enough to help in the house would raise a boy as a *fa'afafine*, even if he had shown no inclination towards feminine behaviour (ABC, 2005). Moreover, whereas most adopted female dress, many were not homosexual.

Schmidt (2005) argues that gender identification in Samoa is based on work performed rather than sexuality, and *fa'afafine* are identified at an early age by virtue of their propensity for feminine tasks, but according to an ABC report, (2005) this seems to be a recent development. *'Modern fa'afafine differ in two fundamental ways from their traditional counterparts. First, they are more likely to have chosen to live as women, and, secondly, they are more likely to be homosexual'* (ABC, 2005).

While self-selection may be a positive change from the point of view of gender identification, it may also have brought a change in community attitude to *fa'afafines* that has significant implications for the treatment of young people in this category. Now that all *fa'afafines*

are likely to be regarded as homosexual, they are at greater risk of discrimination, especially in Samoa where homosexuality is still illegal. As adolescents, *fa'afafine* are likely to be stereotyped and face restricted employment options. They also may be perceived as a source of unacceptable behaviour.

Sexual identity is a human right, and cannot be changed by humiliation, punishment or suppression. Parents of young people who identify with sexual minorities and other adults should provide supportive environments to build their self-esteem, and help them obtain non-judgemental advice and counselling. Governments should ensure that sexual minorities have equal access education, health and other services, and their rights to these services are not compromised in any way by discrimination.

2.2.7.3 Discrimination against the disabled, youth with special needs and youth who are 'different'

Disabled youth tend to be invisible in the Pacific. As there is a general shortage of special education facilities and opportunities for them, they tend to be kept within the household and excluded from community activities. In the past the only information about disabled people was provided by any special facilities they had come into contact with. Most countries did not even know their total numbers of disabled. This has changed in recent years, with Samoa, Solomon Islands and several other countries including questions about disabled household members in their latest census forms, but this information is not necessarily linked with information on personal characteristics.

Tuvalu Red Cross statistics for 1999 list 160 disabled people, 86 male and 74 female. Although the ages with each condition were grouped, it was clear that at least half were aged under 25 years.

“The disabled are almost non-existent (i.e. invisible) in Tuvalu in regards to education, work and participation in social activities. The major problem faced by disabled people is (lack of) facilities...the formal sector and Government relies on families and the Tuvalu Red Cross to look after the disabled”

Tuvalu Department of Community Affairs (2005a: 23))

A participant in Fiji's 2004 Youth Parliament commented

“Education is about the development of the child's personality, both mentally and physically, to its fullest extent. Children with special needs are neglected. Our schools are inaccessible to wheelchairs, there is a lack of Braille textbooks for Braille users so children with special needs are taken from their homes and placed in special institutions at an early age e.g. when they are five or six years old. These children are kept in special institutions until they are 18 and then sent back home”

(Ministry of Youth Employment Opportunities and Sports, 2004: 85).

Facilities and opportunities for the disabled tend to be accorded low priority in national education and health budgets, and opportunities for the physical and mental development of the disabled may be almost non-existent unless NGOs are active in this area. For example, in mid 2004 Nauru's Able Disabled School catered for around a dozen disabled children, but lack of access to transport prevented half from attending regularly. The school's three teachers were employed by the Department of Education, but no premises were provided, so activities took place in the private home of one of the teachers

who is the mother of a disabled youth. The pupils ranged from pre-schoolers up to age 19 years, and exhibited a range of physical and sensory disabilities, from mild to severe. The 19-year-old was completely paralysed down one side, confined to a wheelchair and had limited ability to communicate, so needed constant attention and assistance with daily activities. Insufficient training of staff and a shortage of classroom resources meant that teachers tended to provide 'day care' rather than 'special education', although they arranged excursions and special activities whenever they could. They said they needed more in-service training and technical assistance, and a budget to provide and maintain special equipment. There was also a pressing need for expert advice to mothers of the disabled on how to manage and develop their children (UNICEF, forthcoming, (b)).

Solomon Islands has adopted a community-based rehabilitation approach to meet the needs of the disabled. The objectives of this approach include:

- Promoting equal rights and the equal participation of people with disabilities in school, work, leisure and political activities within their communities;
- Training of rehabilitation aides;
- Early identification, detection and referral of disabilities;
- Improved supply and distribution of essential adaptive equipment;
- Better coordination between government, NGOs and churches; and
- Promotion of national and community awareness of disability;

(Solomon Islands Government and UNDP. 2002: 38)

In 2002 the Styvenburg Vocational Training Centre in Honiara, assisted by the Red Cross, introduced skills training for disabled youth. Another initiative was to

provide teaching aides who are proficient in sign language to assist deaf children in classrooms, thus avoiding distracting children who are not hearing impaired. A local businessman has employed a group of deaf adolescents, who are now successful workers in a furniture factory where they assist with the production of parquet flooring and the manufacture of firewood blocks from sawdust. So far most of these activities have been confined to Honiara, however, and have reached only a very small proportion of the 2,600 disabled under age 18 years identified in the 1999 census (UNICEF, forthcoming, (c)).

A particular problem for the disabled in Pacific Island countries is mobility. Few urban areas have continuous footpaths, and wheelchairs are unsuited to rough rural terrain. An audit of Suva conducted in August 2005 identified many obstacles for those in wheelchairs, and



Photo by Margaret Chung

found numerous public buildings that were inaccessible to the disabled (Fiji Times, 2 August 2005) while it is very difficult for the disabled to use public transport. Restricted access to buildings and limited mobility increases the dependence of disabled youth and contributes to social exclusion and isolation.

In addition to obvious physical disability, there is little doubt that substantial numbers of Pacific youth have undetected visual or aural impairment. Only a few countries implement routine testing of the hearing and sight of school pupils, and compared with other countries, very few Pacific youth wear spectacles and cases of ocular misalignment are seldom corrected. It is likely that significant numbers of learning difficulties can be attributed to undetected visual or aural impairments or other undetected conditions such as dyslexia.

Youth and others interviewed for this report said that obese and disfigured youth and any others who are 'different' in some other way are almost inevitably victims of discrimination. This can contribute to high risk and anti-social behaviour and prevent them from realising their potential.

Disabled and any other young people who are different in some way are especially likely to lack a voice in community affairs. Although they may be less likely to become involved in some forms of high-risk behaviour because of restricted mobility, they have an increased risk of suffering abuse and violence. As is true for all youth, marginalizing these groups creates dependence rather than utilising their human potential for the benefit of society.

Part Three: Strategic Approaches

Parts One and Two of this report have emphasised the importance of addressing the underlying causes of youth problems rather than just the symptoms. A recurring theme has been the importance of listening to youth and addressing youth issues and their root causes in participative ways that youth believe will be effective.

3.1 Coordination and planning

A common limitation of strategies targeting youth is that they are not well coordinated with each other or with other development strategies. Youth tends to be compartmentalised, and there is more focus on issues that society perceives as an immediate risk than on addressing the underlying causes. Although some countries have now formulated national youth policies that mesh with other development objectives, most of these visions have yet to be translated into practical development strategies. In the words of one informant *'In business terms, there is no marketing plan for youth.'* (Neil Netaf, Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, Suva).

This has been recognised by regional agencies, such as SPC's Pacific Youth Bureau, and youth issues are addressed in the Pacific Plan. What is needed now is further incorporation of youth plans into national development plans at the national and regional level. Since youth issues cannot be separated from a range of economic and social factors, the impact on youth of planning initiatives should always be assessed, just as it has become the norm to assess gender and environmental impacts.

For youth activities to be addressed effectively, there must be appropriate coordination structures in place and sufficient funds available to enable implementation of strategies as well as the participation of young people themselves. A number of Pacific countries do not have a strong ministry or other office for youth. Although it is impractical to have a separate ministry in very small countries, all countries need to ensure that a strong

This section focuses on general approaches to increase the effectiveness of interventions. It also considers the best way of ensuring that youth are properly informed about reproductive and sexual health, and reviews some strategies for dealing with young offenders.

governmental structure of appropriate size is in place to coordinate youth activities. A key function of this office should be to liaise and coordinate with NGOs, churches and community organizations. A network of youth officers at the provincial or island level may be required to provide communication channels between government and village communities in larger countries. Similarly, NGOs also need to have an appropriate structure to facilitate representation and coordination, such as a national youth council. Such structures are absolutely essential so that there can be effective communication and coordination between the highest level of government and the grassroot communities, as well as between all stakeholders.

When such structures are in place, youth activities can be coordinated using a comprehensive operational plan or similar approach. In simple terms, regardless of the planning method adopted, the first step is to prepare a plan for youth that sets out comprehensive objectives and describes necessary activities to address both the underlying causes and the symptoms. The plan should be based on consultations with all stakeholders - youth, government, NGOs, churches and communities and include a clear vision that all understand and agree to work towards. Donors should provide advice and assistance as required.

The next step is to evaluate the activities of all government ministries and NGOs to identify those that relate to youth issues. In countries such as Kiribati, where all ministries have formulated ministry operational plans as part of

the National Development Strategy (Republic of Kiribati, 2003) this is not difficult. When all the information has been assembled it will be evident which of the plan objectives are well covered and which areas need more attention. Government, donors, development agencies, NGOs, churches, young people and communities can then work together to formulate a coordinated approach that covers all the plan objectives, and agree on a system of monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

An important part of a comprehensive collaborative strategy is that it makes it possible to reach youth in all locations. To date, too many youth activities have focussed on youth in urban areas and not reached into outlying rural areas. The main providers of youth programs in rural and outlying areas tend to be the churches, which often have insufficient personnel or resources to cover a wide range of activities. Any organization that is undertaking activities relevant to the national youth plan should be included in the strategy and supported as necessary. Thorough monitoring and reporting is essential to ensure that interventions are being effective, all funding is utilised for the intended activities and specific targets are met.

3.2 Partnerships

Effective coordination of youth strategies requires partnerships. Examples of the partnerships that are needed are: between government and NGOs; between government and communities; between donors, governments, and communities; between various NGOs; and between governments, NGOs, churches and young people.

In order that government and NGO and activities complement each other and do not duplicate or compete, they need to recognise and adapt to their differing capacities and strengths. Many projects that address youth issues are funded by donors and managed by NGOs.

Informants for this report made the point that to prevent duplication and perceived competition, regional organizations should not attempt to run national level projects. Instead they should work through local organizations, and involve both the government youth office and the NGO coordinating body, e.g. a national youth council, in planning.

Coordination is not only essential to ensure efficient allocation of resources, but also to prevent communities becoming confused as to the purpose of activities. When different organizations say and do the same thing in different ways via multiple projects that use different terminologies, local communities tend not to understand that they have a common objective. In such cases the message is lost rather than reinforced. This can be avoided if activities begin with thorough consultation with communities, then donors coordinate and cooperate to avoid duplication. In the case of youth projects, it is essential that youth participate in project planning to ensure that planned strategies really are appropriate, not simply derived from assumptions about what will be effective in addressing youth issues.

While this arrangement appears logical because governments are obliged to maintain and operate core services while NGOs are more flexible, in fact NGO-managed projects often face difficulties because of the differing expectations and priorities of governments, donors and NGOs.

First, because donor funded projects operate on a fixed time frame, donors usually expect that governments will take over long-term and core costs, but governments are sometimes reluctant or unable to do this because of other priorities. Second, except in the case of major donors that have externally funded offices in project countries,

there is seldom provision for follow-up support once the projects ends, but, again, governments may not be in a position to provide on-going support. Third, both donors and governments require levels of documentation and accountability that can be difficult for small NGOs with limited human resources to understand and/or provide, while donors sometimes do not understand local capabilities. Fourth, there can be tensions between donors and governments, such as when donors want to work directly with NGOs because they believe this will maximise efficiency, while governments want to manage all external funding so that activities can be coordinated. These tensions may be exacerbated if governments would prefer donors to fund different activities that have higher priority from a national perspective. Strong partnerships and mutual understanding are essential to enable

governments, donors and NGOs to work together effectively to meet community needs.

The example of RMI's Youth-to-Youth-in-Health (YTYIH) in Box Nine illustrates some of the difficulties that may constrain NGO projects. 'The State of Pacific Youth 1998' describes YTYIH as a successful NGO that is expanding and increasing in scope (UNICEF, 1998: 24). Since then, YTYIH has faced a number of administrative, financial and human resource constraints that have prevented it realising its enormous potential for assisting youth in the Marshall Islands. It is clear from the description in Box Nine, however, that stronger partnering and more consistent government support could have brought benefits to both parties and prevented these difficulties.

Box Nine: Youth-to-Youth in Health, RMI

Youth to Youth in Health (YTYIH) was established in 1986 by a former staff member of the Ministry of Health and Environment (MOHE). YTYIH became an NGO in 1989. Its purpose is to provide a range of support services, health education and life skills for youth, with outreach via peer education.

The current premises comprise a small two-storey building in Majuro and a newly constructed Community Youth Centre. Both buildings were funded from contributions from several different donor sources. YTYIH conducts a reproductive health clinic and offers counselling in substance abuse and other personal matters. General health advice and monitoring are also provided to those attending the clinic. All services are offered on a strictly confidential basis. YTYIH also offers a range of other activities, including music, drama, crafts, watching TV and videos, and is also used for training workshops for peer educators and life skills development. The Outreach Coordinator sets a weekly activity timetable that may include outreach, preparation of media presentations, environmental clean up, income generation and fundraising. The centre is open most evenings and on weekends. Each year since 1986 YTYIH has conducted two-week Youth Health Leadership Seminars. Over the 20-year period, around 1000 young people have participated in these workshops, which are highly participatory, build self-confidence and self-esteem and develop skills in health promotion that are subsequently applied through the medium of peer education.

YTYIH is highly regarded as the main source of peer education and life skills training in RMI and, over the years, has made a very important contribution to youth development and raising community awareness of health issues. Although it is one of the best examples of a peer and community education programme in the

Pacific Region, it has always faced many resource constraints. While YTYIH's current premises are vastly superior to those it occupied in the early 1990s, and it still undertakes collaborative activities with MOHE, a dwindling operating budget has forced cutbacks in services and activities, especially outreach activities in the outer islands. Capacity to provide services has also been hampered by rapid staff turnover and funding uncertainty. The Outreach Coordinator has no backup and works long hours to keep the centre open, and there is no budget for rewarding or developing a career structure for peer educators. Volunteer members of the advisory board have themselves had to contribute money to cover core costs.

YTYIH is an example of a very effective initiative to assist youth and communities being undermined by administrative, financial and human resource constraints. Given the vast social benefits and cost savings to be had from preventing problems before they develop, YTYIH should have increased its staffing levels and activities, and established facilities in Ebeye and the outer islands. Instead it has struggled to survive.

Source: Discussions with YTYIH staff, volunteers and board members,

3.3 Flexible and sustained strategies

If youth strategies are to be effective, they must be flexible and sustained. Projects should be designed so they are responsive to changing circumstances and changing needs. Circumstances often change during the life of a project and/or new needs become apparent. Partnerships

between NGOs and other stakeholders can make it easier to address such gaps if they should appear.

Box Ten presents an example of what can happen when there is insufficient support and a lack of flexibility.

Box Ten: When donors don't understand...

'One project I was associated with was a cutting edge project, the first of its kind in PNG. Initially support came from a major donor. As we were young people who lacked experience and skills, they promised ongoing technical support. A consultant helped us to start off and when she left we were fine for some months, but then nothing. They left like a bubble in the air with no structure or entity. My friends and I worked so hard to sustain the project for the next two years and finally registered it as an NGO. At that point the donor walked into our office and took back all the office equipment they had originally given us and accused us of mismanagement. What a struggle! ... We don't care what they have done as the youth project is still surviving on the scraps we started with. But it's a terrible situation when donors want things to be done their way and when we young people want it our way everything is withdrawn from us... That's not the way things should be.'

Email from Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs participant

While it is easy to understand the donor's concern that the property of one project appeared to have been diverted to another project, it is very unfortunate that no consideration was given to the bigger picture and the donor failed to recognise that the equipment was still being used for the intended purpose, although the institutional context had changed. Had there been other partners to provide on-going support, continuity and regular monitoring of the activities of this project, a mutually satisfactory agreement could surely have been reached, thus avoiding serious damage to donor/youth relationships and the self-esteem of the hard-working young peer educators. Follow-up is not just a necessary part of projects but should be part of any participatory activity, not least because young people's expectations are raised whenever organizations consult with them.

It must also be recognised that community attitudes tend to be slow to change and it is vital to use appropriate approaches. Many projects to address youth issues and their underlying causes involve attitudinal change, but this cannot be achieved overnight. Authoritarian parents need time to learn to listen to their children's views and to learn more about child rights, while traditional and

church leaders need to be involved in innovative projects from the outset, because their attitudes shape those of the community.

For example, reproductive health advocacy and promotion workshops conducted for religious and traditional leaders in Solomon Islands substantially increased community receptiveness to adolescent reproductive health (ARH) education, and training (Konare, 2002: 3). A former youth officer from a remote rural area of Vanuatu explained how it had taken two or three years for his community to adjust to a new strategy for youth and develop a sense of ownership and obligation to youth projects. The on-going presence of the youth officer gave continuity and facilitated this essential period of preparation. Without this period of time for attitudinal change and acceptance, the project activities could not have succeeded, but in this case an effective government/donor/NGO partnership made it possible. In recognition of the need to develop community ownership of initiatives for children, the Pacific Children's Program approach to child protection begins with advocacy that targets chiefs and community elders (UNICEF, forthcoming (a)).

3.4 Help young people to help themselves

Every one knows the old maxim *'if you give a man a fish it will feed him for one day, but if you teach him how to fish you can feed him for a life'*. The same is true of youth strategies. The best way to help young people is to help them to help themselves, but there are not nearly enough examples of successful self-help income generating projects for Pacific youth. Self-help strategies not only provide youth with a way of earning income but also reduce dependence and other factors that contribute to low self-esteem. It is most important, however, that young people are also equipped with the tools that are necessary for them to practice the skills they learn. While there has been plenty of training in leadership and life

skills including income generation, with young peer educators teaching skills to peers, few young people have been given the means to create a successful livelihood. While knowledge is an essential part of being a good fisherman, no matter how knowledgeable you are it is difficult to catch a fish without some basic equipment. In the same way, skills training is likely to be wasted if trainees are unable to acquire the necessary tools of trade.

Young people in Choiseul, Solomon Islands, who had returned to their villages after completing carpentry and agricultural courses at Rural Training Centres, told the writer that they were unable to utilise the skills they had

learned because they lacked tools or the resources to purchase them. In the same district a group of girls were no longer able to make clothes and mosquito nets because they lacked the resources to arrange for their sewing machine to be repaired (UNICEF, forthcoming (c)).

Jale, the boy who had lived on Suva's streets and whose story is told in Box Five, said that the main reason why runaway youth are able to survive on the streets of Suva is that several agencies provide meals for them. He believes that if these agencies helped youth living on the streets find ways of earning an income instead of providing them with meals, they would not stay on the streets. He suggested that agencies could contribute brush cutters so these young people could earn money from garden maintenance and that attention should also be focussed on young people in rural areas to prevent them from turning to the streets in the first place.

Youth offices and NGOs need to be proactive in identifying opportunities to promote employment and self-employment of youth. A good example of this is SPC's Pacific Action for Health Project. As it became increasingly evident during the life of the project that lack of employment and other opportunities were major causes of youth substance abuse, small loans for income generation were introduced as part of the projects broad approach to health promotion (PAHP, 2005).

Promoting mutually beneficial partnerships between the community and businesses is one strategy that tends to be under-utilised in the Pacific. Work-experience, traineeships, apprenticeship and subsidised employment for a fixed period are some of many variations of this type of partnership. Obviously there must be regulations and supervision to ensure that participants are not exploited, but once they are in place there is no limit to the opportunities and benefits that such schemes could provide. For example, a hotel proprietor in Tuvalu has noticed a demand for housekeepers in Funafuti. She

plans to conduct short training courses in housekeeping skills on the premises of her hotel. Graduates of these courses will have the necessary skills to obtain full or part-time employment. The same hotel proprietor recommended that, since a small income would meet the cash needs of many young people, there should be more job sharing and employment of staff on a part-time basis.

Some of the most effective examples of self-employment and income generation projects among Pacific youth have been sponsored by religious organizations. Church-based projects often combine strict supervision with strong support for work activities, while emphasising spiritual development. An example is the Marist Training Centre in Tutu, Fiji, which emphasises the empowerment of young people. Seventeen graduates of its young farmers' course '*collectively amassed a total asset of \$FJ 1,434,106 during their three years of training*'. Their strategies included growing and selling *yagona*, buying a chainsaw with the proceeds and building houses with the chainsaw and the skills they had learned (Fiji Ministry for Education, Youth and Sports, 1999).

Two key elements of any strategy to help youth help themselves is the provision of grants or credit so they can obtain tools and materials with which to begin, and on going support and advice. These elements were clearly present in the Marist Training Centre example above. Other Fijian organizations that have created successful youth employment projects with government grants, including the Navuso Agricultural School, the Navuso Student Farmers Scheme, the Fiji Scouts Association and the Fiji Girl Guides Association. Among the projects supported were servicing brush cutters and contract brush cutting, coffee bean cultivation and processing, livestock raising and ferrying across waterways. These included both small businesses and less formal income generation activities (Samuwai, 1999:187-188).

Some examples of small grants being made available to fund the establishment of successful youth enterprises in Niue are: \$NZ 1823 and \$NZ 2,000 for two traditional carving businesses; \$NZ 3,500 for a Pendant and Wood Jewellery business; \$NZ 4,000 to upgrade a Coin-Operated Laundromat; \$NZ 1,867 to upgrade a builders' business and \$NZ 1,598 to upgrade a gardening and cleaning business (Pacific Youth Resources Bureau, 2000: 9). Other activities that have been promoted and supported by the Pacific Youth Resources Bureau include food processing (drying bananas, fish, making coconut and taro sweets) and livestock-raising (chickens, ducks, pigs, goats).

Sport-related activities, such as providing swimming lessons and coaching, also have the potential to provide opportunities for youth enterprise. Sport and fitness have become major industries in developed countries, and although the market in the Pacific is still small because of limited resources, there is much potential to develop this industry. Art also was traditionally a 'free' commodity in the Pacific but now provides substantial incomes for young people who have identified appropriate markets. For example, an exhibition of printed hand-made paper at the New Zealand High Commission in Solomon Islands brought substantial profits and many orders of more work for the youth involved (Purdie 1999: 70). In Fiji, some young artisans who lacked retail outlets have formed linkages with a Sigatoka gallery that makes special efforts to market local arts and crafts (personal communication, WAC).

What is less common, and sometimes even more important, is management support for small businesses. A common story is that youth enterprises activities begin well but fall apart if a key group member has to leave, or if no one has bookkeeping skills and funds are not managed properly. The Solomon Islands Small Business Enterprise Centre was established to provide training and advice for small enterprise, including advice on how to resist pressure from *wantoks* to share rather than re-invest

business profits, a common cause of business failure in Melanesia (McCutchan, 2005a: 28).

One youth enterprise that has received support from the Centre is a very successful furniture business established by a former high school dropout. After completing some short courses in the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education's School of Finance, Robert spent six years working for furniture companies, during which time he learned about furniture manufacture. In 2002 he left steady employment with a well-established company and set up his own business with capital of only \$50.00. Now he employs 15 people and his customers include World Vision, Oxfam and AusAID. A major factor contributing to the success of his business was that these customers paid in advance for their furniture orders, so he was able to purchase machinery and tools (McCutchan, 2005b: 30). This particular example clearly illustrates the potential significant contribution and assistance by young people to the development of national economy. Another example of business support, can be found in the Cook Islands, where a village youth leader who manages a small, AusAID-funded enterprise has trained many of his peers to go into small businesses, providing them with the basic skills to set up and run a small business (Email from Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs participant).

Many similar business support agencies with a specific focus on youth enterprises are needed throughout the Pacific. In addition to providing training and advice, these agencies could provide management advisors to make regular visits to enterprises and provide on-the-job management and book keeping training and assistance until young entrepreneurs have learned these skills or are able to pay for a book keeper (McMurray, 2001: 21). The Pacific Plan includes other recommendations to support youth participation in the private sector, including a Youth Trade Show (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2005).

3.5 Approaches to adolescent sexual and reproductive health

Whether or not they are socially or economically disadvantaged, all young people need to be properly informed about reproductive and sexual health so they can protect themselves from unwanted sexual activity, STIs and pregnancy. Learning to manage their emerging sexuality and its attendant risks is one of the greatest challenges that young people face during their transition from childhood to adulthood. All young people who are not properly prepared are at risk of becoming casualties of the global epidemic of HIV/AIDS, contracting other STIs and/or becoming parents before they themselves have become adults.

Even so, sexuality is the youth issue that adult society tends to find the most confronting and is least willing to discuss with young people. Sex is often a taboo subject in Pacific society and between certain family members, and many adults believe that sex education for young people is likely to increase pre-marital sexual activity, although much research, from as long ago as the 1980s, has demonstrated that the opposite is true (e.g. Howard and McCabe, 1990).

A particular challenge for Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) programs is that knowledge is not sufficient to change behaviour. A series of studies of 'Reproductive health knowledge and services', and 'Sexual knowledge and attitudes of adolescents' in Cook Islands, Kiribati and Samoa found substantial discrepancies between knowledge of contraception and STIs and ever use of contraception, in each country and among both young people and adults, males and females (UNFPA, 2003a, b, c, d, e, and f). Similar discrepancies were also a key finding of Kaitani's study of Fijian men (Kaitani, 2003). Successful ARH programs must therefore do much more than simply educate; they must also promote behaviour modification.

A series of ARH programs in nine countries, funded by UNFPA and implemented by collaborations of government, SPC and UNFPA, have pioneered community- and youth-friendly strategies to address the particularly challenging youth issue of reproductive health. Some of the core principles guiding these programs include creating supportive environments and working 'hand-in-hand' with youth, especially employing peer educators to communicate information to other young people, thereby circumventing the major barrier posed by restricted adult/youth communication and linking education and information with readily accessible, youth-friendly services (UNFPA, 2005). In mid 2005, UNICEF's Pacific Stars Life Skills Program joined this project, so that it now includes self-esteem, decision-making, relationship skills and HIV/AIDS prevention in the curriculum to complement ARH activities. The expanded project, jointly funded by UNFPA and UNICEF and implemented by SPC, has been renamed Adolescent Health and Development Project (SPC 2005, UNICEF, 2001). The addition of Life Skills to ARH education methods will help to translate information into responsible decision-making by young people.

Family life education to teach ARH and sexuality in schools from primary level is being formalised and institutionalised in some countries. For example, the UNFPA-funded ARH project is working with Fiji's MOE to pilot family life education to deliver age appropriate sexuality and reproductive information as a compulsory subject that involves all students in primary and secondary school (see Box Twelve)

Box Eleven: Building life skills to improve adolescent health and reproductive health

Youth require life-building skills such as negotiation skills, values clarification, refusal skills, decision-making and goal setting as well as sexual and reproductive health information. These skills will enable youth to cope with the demands and challenges of growing up, self-management and other transitions.

In School Initiative – Compulsory Family Life Education

The introduction of Family Life Education (FLE) programmes in various school levels from primary to tertiary will ensure that all young people going through the school system will be educated on various topics related to population education and family life education in an age-appropriate approach. This helps to build among young people knowledge, attitudes, values and life skills to help them cope with youth challenges they face. Inter-relationships between population dynamics and the various aspects of quality life are important so that young people begin to understand the concept of MDGs and poverty reduction.

FLE programmes should begin early, when children are in primary schools, and continuing through adolescence. Teachers need to be trained, and programmes should involve the community, parents, administrators and religious leaders. The curriculum should include information on human development, reproductive anatomy, relationships, personal skills, sexual behaviour and health, and gender roles. Gradually content on reproductive and sexual health can be incorporated such as those dealing with risky behaviour, sexual violence, family planning, responsible parenthood, STIs/HIV/AIDS, social aspect of sexuality education, gender equity, and boy-girl relationships.

Out of School links to in-school Initiatives

A number of out of school initiatives can complement in school activities. Such an approach ensures that young people are reached through a variety of channels with messages that reinforce what they learn in school. It also implies the importance of involving the larger community, including parents, school administrators, the church, the mass media, and other concerned groups, in the development and the promotion of FLE programmes.

Programme planners need to analyse youth needs and health seeking behaviours to determine where and how they spend time, obtain health information, and seek health services. Then programmes could be designed to use approaches favoured by those they are intended to reach.

(contributed by R.Latu, ARH Program, SPC)

The adolescent sexual and reproductive health initiative has contributed many valuable lessons, not only in the delivery of these services but lessons that can be applied to a wider range of youth strategies. Many of the ARH principles in Box Twelve have wider applicability to youth

projects in general. The lessons on increasing access to services, especially, point to the importance of recognising youth sensitivities, involving them in planning, diversifying activities and not undermining their self-esteem.

Box Twelve: Some lessons learned from Pacific ARH programs

...On generating community support for ARH

- Keep leaders informed to win their support over time
- Customise strategies and arguments to specific situations and concerns
- Earning community approval paves the way for community support
- Community attitudes need to be assessed carefully so that activities are tailored to the majority view, not swayed by vocal minorities
- Program managers need an acceptable image, personal conviction, perseverance and courage

...On building capacity

- Teachers and peer educators need on-going mentoring, support and supervision
- To be sustainable, ARH education in schools needs to be incorporated into the curriculum and teacher training
- Youth peer education programs need secure funding if they are to be sustainable

...On increasing access to services

- A range and combination of approaches should be used to make services youth-friendly
- The principles of youth-friendliness for the Pacific are:
 - > Friendly, professional, non-judgemental and sympathetic staff
 - > Opening after school and working hours
 - > Absolute confidentiality
 - > Easily accessible and acceptable location
 - > Not combining youth clinics with STI clinics
 - > An acceptable name not identified only with RH
 - > As wide a range of services as possible
 - > Youth involvement in the design, operation and evaluation of the facility
 - > Other non-RH-related activities to put youth at ease

(Source: UNFPA, 2005)

This list of lessons represents a substantial and very commendable learning process on the part of ARH service providers, and serves as a model for other providers of youth services. The importance of partnerships with communities and young people, of being 'in for the long haul', of on-going evaluation and responsiveness are particularly apparent. ARH experiences in service provision also illustrate the crucial importance of having friendly, sympathetic and non-judgemental people to interface with youth.

Even so, despite considerable progress and many successes, ARH services are still largely confined to urban areas in most Pacific countries, and more still needs to be done to change community attitudes and youth behaviour. They are in need of substantial increases in resources so they can improve services to meet ICPD and MDG targets, especially contraceptive prevalence, which, in most Pacific countries, is still well below the ICPD threshold for those of reproductive age (UNFPA, n.d., Annex 2: 52).

3.6 Coping with young offenders

If young people do stray into conflict with the law, it is crucial that the strategies promote reform rather than repeated offences. There is no question that society must be protected against youth crime, regardless of the underlying causes and who is ultimately responsible for the criminal behaviour. How to do this while giving as much consideration as possible to the rights of young offenders poses a social dilemma. However, while some form of punishment is essential to deter potential offenders, harsh punishments tend to foster resentment and recidivism.

Most Pacific countries have legislative provisions to handle juvenile justice, and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (1985) provide for observance of the principles of CRC and emphasise the well-being of the juvenile (Averre, 2004: 9). Even so, because of a scarcity of alternative forms of justice and appropriate social welfare structures, the most common approach is to prosecute and incarcerate youth offenders who are deemed to be old enough for incarceration. As is well known, however, *'Incarceration usually does not cure the root of the problem that has caused the criminal activity, and rehabilitation for inmates is usually the exception. High rates of recidivism are the reality'* (Bergeron, 2003, unpaginated). Moreover, if a young person is convicted, they acquire a criminal record that is likely to hamper any future efforts to find employment and a respected place in society.

Averre (2004) writes of Solomon Islands that while the legislation fully encompasses the basic minimum standards for juvenile justice, in practice these standards may not be met. Many juveniles are sent to prison without being represented by a lawyer, and custody is 'all too readily used' partly because of lack of specific training of magistrates in relation to juvenile justice. Substantial backlogs of cases mean that an appeal may not be heard until after the expiry of the sentence. Juveniles are kept in an adult prison and share cells with adults. 'They are subject to regimes which have been questioned as to their legality and there have recently been violent disturbances in the prison...' (Averre 2004: 11). There is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that Solomon Islands is not the only country in the Pacific where young offenders are at risk of such treatment.

One strategy that is providing a good model in Palau is restorative justice. This involves bringing the victim and the offender together in the presence of mediators so that the offender gains an appreciation of how the crime has impacted the victim, and is allocated certain duties to compensate society for the crime. The Palau Restorative Justice Program (PRJP) is based on a traditional justice system in which the offenders have to make reparations to their victims, often in the form of assistance. It was established without legislation, but builds upon customs and traditions.

PRJP is for both adults and juveniles, but juvenile cases are referred more commonly. It does not deal with major crimes such as sexual offences, substantial violence, repeat offenders and victimless crimes, but lesser crimes may be referred at the discretion of the Attorney General. The goal is to teach the skills of reconciliation, forgiveness and spirituality to all participants. *'Studies around the world have shown that the court process results in satisfaction for crime victims in only about 20 per cent of cases, while victim satisfaction in a restorative justice program approaches 80 per cent'* (Bergeron, 2003: not paginated). A key component of PRJP is teaching offenders to respect community leaders.

The restorative justice process begins with a conference between victim and offender, mediated by traditional leaders, community representatives and/or other appropriate people, and held at the Ministry of Justice. The offender must acknowledge their improper actions and accept responsibility, and the victim is given the opportunity to tell the offender about the consequences of the criminal act. All participants at the conference, including offender and victim, then agree on appropriate actions for the offender to provide restoration for the victim and society, which must be completed within one year and under supervision. Actions may involve

community service, contributions such as labour, food or supplies to, for example, Senior Citizens groups, and may also involve attending church or specific behavioural programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous. If the offender fulfils the terms of the agreement, no criminal case is filed and the offender does not receive a criminal record, but if the conditions are not met the case may be referred to the Attorney General for prosecution. Although the program is relatively new so the long term impacts cannot be assessed, in approximately one and a half years more than 300 cases - about 50 per cent of all cases - were referred to the PRJP, and *'To date there have been few cases in which the offender has failed to perform the terms of the agreement'* (Bergeron, 2003: not paginated).

Key ingredients in the success of the PRJP is that it gets to the roots of the problem rather than addressing only the symptoms and involves consultation. Parents and relatives who attend the conference gain a better understanding of the offender and are thus better equipped to provide guidance and support while youth come to realise how their actions have impacted other people. Also crucial is that the young offenders are given the right to express their opinions during the conference, so are not as disempowered as they would be during a legal trial.

Box Thirteen: A restorative justice success story

In past years I did many bad choices and I didn't think about going to church. I always disobeyed my parents and thought that they were wrong and I was right. But on October 2nd 2002 the panel judges made me realise that I was making lots of bad choices for the past years and my parents were right all along...in the conference room I was angry and embarrassed at the same time. But the panel judges touched my deepest heart. I was sad that day, but I made up my mind to do what they all had to say and invite God to come into my heart and guide me to make the right choice. When I was in this program I was glad to learn many things from the judges and the most important thing I learned from one of them is "Success in life is equal to success in school".

Source: Young offender participating in the PRJP (Bergeron, 2003: not paginated)

Restorative justice is not a complete solution for all youth crime. It has limited applicability in that it cannot be used for serious crimes, some people are unwilling to participate, some offenders fail to complete their obligations and there are insufficient resources for adequate follow up. Nonetheless it represents an innovative alternative to methods of punishment that are known to have a low success rate. Several other Pacific countries including Samoa, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands are also prioritising new approaches to juvenile justice. Samoa is focussing on custody as a last resort, which includes raising magistrates' awareness of the need to handle juvenile offenders in a different way from adults. Fiji is developing therapeutic jurisprudence for young offenders. This approach includes among its objectives that justice must serve the interests of the community, must deal proportionately with young offenders according to their age and the offence committed must seek reintegration of young offenders into the community (UNICEF, forthcoming (a)).

An important regional initiative is the formation of the Heads of Children's and Youth's Courts Council - comprising eminent legal persons from Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - to provide free technical advice on drafting legislation for juveniles, and on dealing with children who come into contact with the law, including victims and witnesses as well as offenders.

3.7 Listening to youth

The importance of giving young people a voice and listening to what they say has been emphasised throughout this report, but a few additional points still need to be made about the process and the importance of identifying appropriate and egalitarian mechanisms.

Mechanisms to facilitate youth participation are very variable in their effectiveness. Hart (1992) identified

Another issue in juvenile justice that authorities are sometimes reluctant to discuss is protection of young offenders in custody. Lack of protection has become a concern in Papua New Guinea where stories of girls in custody being raped by police officers and boys being beaten and slashed surfaced in September, 2005 (ABC, 2005b). Article 19 of the CRC requires state parties to take

"all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child

(United Nations, 1989).

Article 37 of the CRC specifically relates to the care and protection of children in custody requiring states to ensure no child is

"every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age"

(United Nations, 1989).

Provision needs to be made to ensure that young people over age 18 receive to similar protection while in custody.

eight levels of Young People's Participation. They range from 'manipulation', where adults use young people to support causes and then pretend that the causes were inspired by young people, through to 'young-people initiated, shared decisions with adults' which involves shared and equal participation that empowers youth while enabling them to learn from adult experience and expertise. It has been pointed out, however, that this

model focuses on the varying roles adults play in relation to children's participation and children's responses, rather than on the nature of the actual participation (The Concerned for Working Children, 2002). The proposed alternative is to visualise a spiralling partnership in which repeated, constructive interactions of adults and children benefit both parties, build interdependence and allow children to emerge as stronger individuals. The elements of this constructive partnership are that it should involve:

- openness
- respect and trust on the part of both
- freedom to express oneself
- sensitivity
- affection
- commitment
- understanding
- mutual support
- empowering
- based on friendship
- based on negotiation
- flexible
- one of sharing
- mutual accountability
- sharing both rights and responsibilities
- joyful
- agreeing to disagree sometimes
- challenging
- accepting of each other's reality
- shared vision
- based on listening to each other
- not manipulative

(The Concerned for Working Children, 2002).

Consultative mechanisms used in the Pacific include youth parliaments and communication channels such as Fiji's National Youth Advisory Board. The latter gives youth delegates direct input into national policy via regular meetings with politicians, including the Minister for Youth. Other mechanisms also include national youth

meetings, which may be organised by government, the NGO/donor community or a collaboration of the two. They vary considerably in the extent to which adults or youth set the agenda and lead the discussion.

For example, the topics debated in Fiji's first two Youth Parliaments in 2002 and 2004 were selected by the organisers and most of the delegates were school students. Youth delegates learned a great deal about the parliamentary process and were given an opportunity to research and speak on topics of importance to youth, boosting their confidence and self-esteem (Fiji, Ministry of Youth Employment Opportunities and Sports, 2002 and 2004). Although they were very important and worthwhile events, these youth parliaments should not be mistaken for democratic forums that allow youth of all ages to debate their own priorities and communicate their needs to government. The same can be said of most other youth meetings and consultations that follow a pre-set agenda. While pre-structured approaches may appear necessary for practical purposes, it should be recognised that setting an agenda and then asking youth to discuss it is very different from letting youth set their own agenda. Informants said that this has been recognised in the case of many forums, and plans are underway to increase youth involvement in planning and implementation.

The Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs held in Apia in May 2005 is an example of an effective strategy to give youth a voice on national and regional issues. The event was initiated by young people - Youth for Sustainable Futures and several youth participants who had attended the World Congress for Youth meetings and the Youth Visioning For Island Living meeting in Mauritius earlier in the year - and attended by youth delegates from most Pacific countries. UNDP Samoa co-funded and facilitated the meeting with contributions from UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and UNAIDS and the assistance of Samoa's Ministry of Women, Community and Social

Development. Young people were involved in planning the Summit, setting the agenda, facilitation and resourcing, and are taking the lead in the meeting follow-up. The meeting achieved its objective of obtaining input from Pacific youth on MDGs and the Pacific Plan, (see declarations in Annexe Two), and follow-up has included establishing a support network for young people in the Pacific, providing funding and other advice and forging contacts and opportunities with donors such as the World Bank.

Sometimes a combination of structured agenda and participatory research methods can meet the requirements of both organisers and youth. The 4th Marshall Islands Youth Congress Conference of July 2005 used participatory research methods to obtain youth input into the National Youth Policy. Although the main agenda was set by the organisers, some sessions allowed youth to express their views and priorities through small group work in which they answered a series of fairly open questions. In this case, as in other most other meetings that have adopted similar approaches, the main constraint on these activities was limited time.

One excellent but infrequently used mechanism for giving youth a voice is to appoint young people to senior government posts. For example, in the Cook Islands the Chief Executive Officer to a former cabinet minister was only 28 years old. A strong advocate for youth issues, he was able to provide advice to senior government. He also helped to establish a youth group for potential Cook Island Party leaders, which provides advice to government on policy issues relating to youth (Email from youth delegate to Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs).

A structural limitation of official mechanisms is that they involve selection of delegates. Youth delegates are usually very diligent about canvassing their peers and ensuring that they are effective representatives. Even so, it is inevitable that representation is limited and youth in

remote and outlying areas tend to be marginalised, especially since they are likely to be least familiar with national issues and programs of action. It is difficult to overcome this limitation, but even so on-going efforts are needed to make youth representation as democratic as possible.

Mechanisms initiated by youth for youth include a variety of meetings and communication activities, ranging from structured activities like Fiji's Youth-e-media to informal 'phone-in, talk-back' and computer noticeboards and chat-rooms. Youth-e-media was a four-year project in the late 1990s, initially a response to the CRC campaign and geared towards UNICEF's International Children's Day of Broadcasting. Youth-e-media was effectively peer education via the media, backed by donor funding. Mentors taught media techniques to selected youth advocates and encouraged them to become media advocates, making media presentations on the issues they regarded as important. The topics selected included orphanages, youth living on the street, reproductive health and abuse. The professional quality of presentations and the compelling subject matter attracted much attention in the community and led Prime Minister Rabuka to meet with the youth presenters.

Vanuatu's Wan Smolbag Theatre also provides professional standard media training and outreach performances of dramas dealing with community and youth issues including reproductive health. The project organisers work with young actors to identify key issues and develop scripts for theatre, radio and videoed performances which reach a wide community audience in Vanuatu and neighbouring countries and are a very effective form of education on youth and community issues. There is also a youth clinic in the Wan Smolbag office, which helps to meet the increased demand for services generated by the theatre's presentations on youth issues and needs. Some of Wan Smolbag's scripts on youth issues have been published for distribution to peer

educators in other countries (Wan Smolbag Theatre, 2003a). Wan Smolbag Theatre's work is of high quality, with movie-length dramas such as *'A Piece of Land'* exploring a range of interlinking youth and community issues through very compelling dramatic performances (Wan Smolbag Theatre, 2003b).

Another example of effective use of theatre for participative involvement of youth in community issues and social justice is WAC's Youth Theatre in Fiji. WAC has helped young actors to develop dramas on child rights, suicide prevention, HIV/AIDS, and prevention of child abuse, and presented them to audiences throughout Viti Levu and Ovalau. They are currently being trained as restorative justice facilitators.

Whereas professional presentations tend to be taken seriously by the community, informal sessions on youth issues, such as phone-in discussions, tend to be less well accepted, even though they may provide a vital service for youth and the only source of information for some. For example, a peer educator in Kiribati who uses a radio phone-in session to answer young people's questions on reproductive health reported that adults sometimes phone in to complain. Informal phone-in and chat-room sessions that provide an opportunity for youth to discuss issues often are not taken seriously by adults and may

be regarded as entertainment rather than as important youth activities.

Language is also an important issue in the empowerment of youth. In countries where English is an official language, exclusive use of English at youth meetings discriminates against those who have not learned English well, that is, most school dropouts and many students from remote areas. Discussion of issues should be conducted in the vernacular, even if the results of deliberations are communicated in a different language. In countries with multiple vernacular languages, strategies are needed to ensure that all youth can contribute to discussions. The same applies to media broadcasts for youth.

The observations in this section and, some previous sections in Part Three, point to the importance of raising awareness among adults and leaders so that they understand the value of youth participation. Without this understanding, simply building capacity in young people to participate in development agendas will achieve little unless adults recognise the value of their contributions and make use of them. As described in Section 3.7, what is needed is a constructive partnership between adults and children, as this will benefit both parties.

Part Four: Summary & conclusion

This report has described the main youth issues in the Pacific and analysed their underlying causes. It has been argued that a major factor limiting the success of interventions to address youth issues is that not enough has been done to address the underlying causes. Most importantly, that youth tend to be disempowered, and insufficient attention has been paid to listening to youth, seeing issues from a youth perspective, and taking the

advice of young people on how to address them. Part Three recommends some strategic approaches to address youth issues by mobilising, involving and empowering youth. This concluding section shows how the preceding analysis and the recommendations relate to the wider context of initiatives and strategies already endorsed by Pacific countries.

4.1 Youth issues and Millennium Development Goals

Addressing youth issues by focussing on their underlying causes is consistent with at least six of the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (see Box Fourteen). This is apparent from the

recommendations of participants at the Apia Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs (May, 2005) as set out in the conference declaration. The full text of the declaration is in Annex 2.2

Box Fourteen: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)



- Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4 Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5 Improve maternal health
- Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development

Source: United Nations <http://www.un.org/MDG>

Two of the MDGs specifically target underlying economic and structural causes of youth issues, that is, Goal One: Elimination of Poverty, and Goal Two: Universal Education for All. Goal Three focuses on one of the important underlying attitudinal causes of youth issues: gender discrimination. Although less concerned with

underlying causes, Goal Six: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases targets one of the most important health issues for youth. Addressing Goal Seven provides an important opportunity to increase youth employment and self-esteem.

Goal Eight: Develop a Global Partnership for Development, however, is perhaps the key to addressing youth issues throughout the Pacific. Although this goal is usually interpreted as referring primarily to partnerships between country governments, communities, donors, NGOs and other organised groups, it can also be interpreted in much broader terms as integrating everyone within communities and making them partners rather than marginalizing certain groups. This was recognised by participants at the Apia Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs who wrote in their conference declaration:

'Strengthening global partnership is a vital component to ensure that young people become active partners in development. Resourcefulness for development can serve as a means for involving youth and creating

sustainable livelihoods that provides new opportunities for today's isolated youth in the global economy'. (UNDP et al, 2005a, see Annex 2.2).

The strategies recommended to achieve Goal Eight include giving youth a stronger voice in development dialogues:

- Advocate for youth representatives on national MDG task forces
- Advocate for youth representatives to be part of government delegations to regional and UN leaders meetings.

(UNDP et al, 2005a, see Annex 2.2).

These strategies are entirely consistent with the approaches to addressing youth issues identified in this report.

4.2 Youth issues and CRC

Empowerment of youth is also at the core of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and implicit in most of the Articles that give specific rights to children. Article 12 refers specifically to the child's right to form and express his or her opinion freely in all matters concerning him or her (United Nations, 1989).

Most Pacific countries have already committed to implementing CRC and to achieving MDGs, and have participated in the formulation of various regional declarations and national policies to address youth issues. This widespread endorsement suggests that there are no regional or national level political obstacles to addressing the issues affecting children and youth. What is needed, however, is the political will to translate these commitments into action.

4.3 Youth and The Pacific Plan and other regional initiatives

The Pacific Plan is a major initiative to promote regional collaboration for economic and social benefit. The main targets are economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. All of these targets impact on youth issues and strategies to address them, and achieving significant progress in any of them could make a major contribution to youth. To ensure that this happens, specific mechanisms and safeguards are

needed so that substantial proportions of any benefits accruing from these initiatives are channelled into addressing the needs of youth. Youth attending the Apia Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs prepared a statement on youth involvement in the Pacific plan, presented in full in Annexe 2.3 that proposes some appropriate mechanisms and safeguards (UNDP et al, 2005b).

4.4 Youth and the Pacific Youth Strategy

As discussed in Section 1.3, the Pacific Youth Bureau has actively implemented the Pacific Youth Strategy 2005. The Bureau's analysis and recommendations for youth development in the Pacific Region points out that youth development in the past decade has focussed on *'income generation initiatives, cultural development, vocational education programmes for out-of-school youth, youth health, development of young women, sports and recreation, special training for youth workers, development of national youth policies and exchange of information. These programmes were implemented according to national priorities and available resources'* (Vainerere, 2004: 4).

There is no doubt that these are very appropriate activities to address youth issues. The problem, however, is that there have been far too few of them. As Vainerere says in above quote *'These programmes were implemented according to national priorities and available resources.'* In other words, youth activities have often been accorded low priority

compared with other development activities, and, in most countries in the Pacific Region, have been allocated too few resources. Given the importance of youth issues and the very substantial percentages of Pacific populations in this age group, it is clear that much higher levels of funding are needed for youth development.

As this report was being written, the new Pacific Youth Strategy 2010 was being circulated in draft form (<http://www.spc.int/youth>). The new PYS emphasises promotion of education for employment, and also greater integration of young people with their communities, including in decision-making. These strategies are entirely consistent with the findings and approaches advocated in this report and, if strongly endorsed and well funded at the country level, could contribute to substantial improvements in the state of Pacific youth in the future.

4.5 Conclusion

Serious commitment to addressing youth issues in the Pacific requires substantial increases in resources and in the scale of activity, to address the underlying causes as well as the surface symptoms. This is achievable if youth are empowered and involved as partners. Youth must be given opportunities to contribute to their communities, because this will build their self-esteem and independence and reduce high-risk behaviour. Since most of the necessary increase in resources will be devoted to generating productive economic activity, they will yield dividends in the long term. Youth human resources that have been under utilised in the past should

be mobilised and involved in the development process, for the benefit of the entire community.

There is no magic overnight cure. Addressing youth issues and reducing high-risk behaviour is an on-going process that requires sustained effort as each successive generation enters adolescence. The key to success is to consult with young people, listen to their views and work with them to tackle both youth issues and development simultaneously. In the words of a participant at the Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs in Apia:

“What should be done to improve the lives of young people? More opportunity should be given to build confidence, skills and capacity. We are not the problem; we are the solution to problems.”

ANNEXES

References

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Annexe 1: Statistical Tables

(prepared by Demography/Population Programme, SPC,
Noumea and Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme, SPC, Suva)

Table 1 : Youth Population in Pacific Island Countries

Region/country or territory	Last census	Population as counted at last census	Mid-year population estimate 2005	Mid-year population estimate 2015	Estimated annual pop. Growth rate 2004-2015 (%)	Number aged 15-24	Median age	Percentage aged 15-24	Annual growth rate of ages 15-24 (%)	Estimated number aged 15-24 in 2015
Cook Islands	2001	18,027	13,819	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹	2,178	25.3	15.8	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹
FSM*	2000	107,008	114,093	129,000	1.2	24,415	18.9	21.4	-0.1	24,275
Fiji Islands	1996	775,077	832,700	891,100	0.7	163,368	21.2	19.6	-0.7	151,774
Kiribati	2000	84,494	95,252	119,700	2.3	19,300	19.7	20.3	1.7	22,795
Marshall Islands	1999	50,840	56,297	66,100	1.6	11,192	17.8	19.9	-1.2	9,899
Nauru	2002	10,065	10,204	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹	2,004	20.7	19.6	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹
Niue	2001	1,788	1,540	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹	237	29.0	15.4	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹
Palau	2000	19,129	21,118	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹	2,948	30.8	14.0	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹
Papua New Guinea	2000	5,190,786	5,821,419	7,236,200	2.2	1,133,969	19.7	19.5	2.4	1,440,771
Samoa	2001	176,710	184,367	201,900	0.9	32,719	19.7	17.7	2.1	40,414
Solomon Islands	1999	409,042	470,805	589,700	2.3	97,243	18.8	20.7	1.8	116,547
Tokelau	2001	1,537	1,500	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹	225	19.9	15.0	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹
Tonga	1996	97,784	98,006	95,400	-0.3	20,005	19.9	20.4	-1.2	17,663
Tuvalu	2002	9,561	9,636	n.a. ¹	n.a. ¹	1,661	23.7	17.2	n.a. ¹	n.a.
Vanuatu	1999	186,678	221,635	289,400	2.7	43,818	19.6	19.8	2.5	56,230
TOTAL		7,138,526	7,952,389		2.7	1,555,282				

* Federated States of Micronesia

Source: Pacific Island Populations 2004, Secretariat of the Pacific Community

(1) No 2015 population projections are provided for small countries and territories. With international migration impacting severely on these countries, population projections in such highly volatile demographic environments would provide, at best, very spurious results.

A recent population projection for Niue, for example, was based on assumptions of continued negative growth towards 2015, due to unabated emigration levels during the 1990s. Developments since cyclone Heta, however, saw Niue's population rebound, with Niue's 2005 resident population of 1,745 very similar to 2001 census data (1,788).

Table 2 : School enrolment

Region/country or territory	Year for Primary school enrolment	Primary school enrolment	Year for Primary school attained	Primary school attained (%) (population 15 years and older)	Year for Secondary school enrolment	Secondary school enrolment	Year for Secondary school attained	Secondary school attained (%) (population 15 years and older)
Cook Islands	2000	92.3 ¹	2001	22.4 ²	2001	n.a.	2001	73.6 ²
Federated States of Micronesia	2000	92.3 ¹	2000	53.3 ²	2000	24.9	2000	22.2 ²
Fiji Islands	2000	94.7 ¹	2000	n.a.	2000	n.a.	2000	n.a.
Kiribati	2000	93.5 ¹	2000	49.2 ²	2000	38.5	2000	27.0 ²
Marshall Islands	2000	84.1 ¹	1999	18.00 ³	2000	n.a.	1999	21.4 ³
Nauru	2000	60.3	2002	4.9 ⁴	2002	58.0	2002	88.5 ⁴
Niue	2000	90.2 ¹	2001	14.4	2000	64.9	2001	38.3
Palau	2000	76.2 ¹	2000	11.5	2000	23.1 ⁵	2000	56.8
Papua New Guinea	2000	77.4 ¹	2000	33.9	2000	n.a.	2000	18.6
Samoa	2000	87.0 ¹	2000	46.8	2000	16.6	2000	6.7
Solomon Islands	2000	56.0 ¹	1999	25.6 ⁶	2000	n.a.	1999	8.8 ⁶
Tokelau	2000	33.2	2001	62.1	2001	57.8	2001	40.9
Tonga	2000	89.4 ¹	2000	n.a.	2000	62.7	2000	n.a.
Tuvalu	2000	99.6 ¹	2002	55.1	2002	n.a.	2002	14.3
Vanuatu	2000	78.2 ¹	1999	35.2	2000	18.3	1999	13.4

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Note : Where enrolment numbers are available but the population numbers by single years are not, we have taken the population 5 to 9 years old for primary schooling and 10 to 19 years old for secondary schooling

(1) Source : Pacific Islands Regional Millenium Development Goals Report 2004, SPC and the UN/CROP MDG working group

(2) Population 5 years and older

(3) Population 6 years and older

(4) Please note that this is the highest level of educational attainment achieved by the Nauruan population over 5 years of age, that has left school

(5) Population 10 to 24 years old

(6) Population 7 years and older

Table 3 : School enrolment by gender

Region/country or territory	Year	Primary school enrolment (%)		Secondary school enrolment (%)	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Cook Islands	2001	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Federated States of Micronesia	2000	n.a.	n.a.	24.0	25.9
Fiji Islands	2000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Kiribati	2000	n.a.	n.a.	34.1	43.0
Marshall Islands	2001	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Nauru	2002	62.1	58.4	57.3	58.7
Niue	2000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Palau	2000	n.a.	n.a.	23.4 ¹	22.8 ¹
Papua New Guinea	2000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Samoa	2000	n.a.	n.a.	16.2	17
Solomon Islands	2000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Tokelau	2001	32.7	33.7	55.4	60.2
Tonga	2000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Tuvalu	2002	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Vanuatu	2000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Note : Where enrolment numbers are available but the population numbers by single years are not, we have taken the population 5 to 9 years old for primary schooling and 10 to 19 years old for secondary schooling

(1) Population 10 to 24 years old

Table 4: Youth unemployment

Region/country or territory	Year	Unemployment rate (15-64) (%)	Average annual number of school leavers (circa 2005)	Unemployment rate (16-24) (%)	
				Male	Female
Cook Islands	2001	13.3	n.a.	22.1 ¹	26.3 ¹
Federated States of Micronesia	2000	22.5	n.a.	35.0 ¹	35.4 ¹
Fiji Islands	2000	12.1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Kiribati	2000	1.6 ²	n.a.	2.0 ¹	2.2 ¹
Marshall Islands	1999	31.3	n.a.	59.8 ¹	67.0 ¹
Nauru	2002	17.0	n.a.	20.8	27.2
Niue	2001	2.8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Palau	2000	2.3	n.a.	5.5	6.0
Papua New Guinea	2000	2.8	n.a.	9.6 ¹	7.4 ¹
Samoa	2001	5.1	n.a.	10.6 ¹	15.4 ¹
Solomon Islands	1999	10.9 ²	n.a.	19.4 ¹	12.3 ¹
Tokelau	2001	0.8 ³	n.a.	0.0 ^{1&3}	2.6 ^{1&3}
Tonga	2003	5.2	n.a.	9.9 ¹	15.1 ¹
Tuvalu	2002	6.5	n.a.	7.6	12.7
Vanuatu	1999	1.6	n.a.	4.0 ¹	2.1 ¹

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

(1) Population 10 to 24 years old

(2) Population 15 years and older

(3) There were 7 people (0 males and 7 females) who declared they were looking for work at the 2001 Tokelau Census

Table 5: Cumulative HIV Cases: Total and aged 15-24 years

All Pacific Island Countries and Territories (As at 31Dec2004)

Country	Total	15-24 years
American Samoa	3	2
Cook Islands	2	0
Federated States of Micronesia	25	4
Fiji	182	47
French Polynesia	243	56
Guam	168	24
Kiribati	46	2
Marshall Islands	10	2
Nauru	2	1
New Caledonia	272	24
Niue	0	0
Northern Mariana Islands	25	4
Palau	8	0
Papua New Guinea	10,184	1580
Pitcairn	0	0
Samoa	12	0
Solomon Islands	5	0
Tokelau	0	0
Tonga	13	2
Tuvalu	9	2
Vanuatu	2	0
Wallis and Futuna	1	0
Total Pacific Region	11,212	1750
Total excluding PNG	1,028	170

Please note this is not PLWHA, it is all HIV cases ever notified to PICT Ministries of Health.
Some of these persons have subsequently died, moved abroad or been lost to follow-up.

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Table 6: Births to teenage (15-19) mothers

Country	Year	As a % of all births
Cook Islands	1996-2001	11.7
Federated States of Micronesia	2000	6.2
Fiji	2000	10.0
Kiribati	2000	8.2
Marshall Islands	1999	8.2
Nauru	1997-2002	11.6
Niue	1997-2001	5.8
Palau	2000	12.8
Papua New Guinea	2000	7.6
Samoa	2001	4.9
Solomon Islands	1997-1999	7.5
Tokelau	1997-2001	4.6
Tonga	1999-2001	3.7
Tuvalu	1997-2002	4.7
Vanuatu	1999	9.6

Source: SPC Pacific Islands Population Poster 2004

Annexe 2: Declaration & Youth Statements

Annex 2.1 Declaration from the 2005 Mauritius conference on Youth Visioning for Island Living

DECLARATION

YOUTH VISIONING FOR ISLAND LIVING

We, the ninety-six youth of thirty-one Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and six other small island nations with other affiliations, meeting at Pointe aux Sables, Mauritius, 7-12 January 2005:

Call upon the delegations at the Meeting for the Review of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States, to recognise and take into account in your deliberations and national plans of action, the concerns and specific needs of youth living in small islands as noted below;

Recalling the United Nations Agenda 21 adopted at the Earth Summit in 1992, which established the framework for sustainable development among the world's nations;

Taking into account the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States adopted at the Barbados Conference in 1994;

Recognising that as the leaders of future generations, we have specific rights, obligations and responsibilities, and that it is our duty to present to the global community our concerns and proposals for achieving and maintaining sustainable development for young people living in small island nations;

Understanding that as small island nations are part of the global community, we therefore have a responsibility to conserve their biodiversity, culture, historic, and economic value for the needs of both present and future generations;

Noting the importance of preserving small island cultural identity and acknowledging the need for co-existence between traditional and western/modern culture, the youth of small islands have a vital contribution to make as they have the experience of living both in traditional and modern settings;

Acknowledging that the health and well-being of youth is of critical importance to the long term sustainability of small island communities;

Emphasising the importance of coastal and marine environments to small islands, small island youth see the need to conserve these resources for survival and economic viability;

Realising that equipping youth with skills and knowledge of environmental protection and conservation enables them to make a difference for the sustainable management of small island natural resources for present and future generations;

Taking into account that improper waste management leads to pollution, poor sanitation, loss of biodiversity as well as a decrease in the quality of life and the aesthetic value of small islands, thereby causing a decline in tourism, revenue and economic viability;

Highlighting that the large-scale, unsustainable use of forest resources leads to a loss of biodiversity thus upsetting the balance of survival of the local people and limiting the livelihood opportunities for small island youth;

Recognising that encouraging and supporting youth to live and work in their small island nation is of critical importance for the building of the sustainable small island nations;

Noting that flexible and diverse pathways for youth should be based on developing the means for youth to have access to appropriate and diverse educational opportunities, both academic and vocational, in national, regional and interregional contexts;

Taking into account the limitations of small island resources and the social impact of unemployment, securing viable job opportunities for youth is of prime importance;

Recalling that natural disasters as well as modern security issues pose a particular threat to the sustainable development and viability of small island nations and their youth;

We, the youth of Small Island Developing States and other small island nations call upon our governments, private sector, and civil society to assist us in:

Building partnerships with youth to support the preservation of culture with and for future generations;

Involving youth in decision making concerning the social, cultural and physical environment, and in the development of policies and enforcement of laws in order to ensure good governance;

Educating youth on issues such as HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and healthy lifestyles thereby strengthening family, school and community relations and contributing to stronger morals and values;

Contributing to the development and implementation of policies to effectively manage marine and coastal resources;

Developing reforestation initiatives and enforcing regulations to conserve and enhance biodiversity for sustainable development of small island nations;

Implementing public awareness campaigns related to people's everyday lives to encourage changes in behaviour, engaging small island youth as environmental advocates;

Securing viable job opportunities for youth by developing youth leadership and advocacy as well as strengthening networking between sectors, thereby reducing the social impact of unemployment;

Enabling access for youth to appropriate training and education opportunities in both technical and academic studies, thereby providing openings to get involved in viable economic sectors;

Establishing and implementing internship policies and programmes at the secondary and tertiary levels which qualify as official job experience;

Securing easily accessible financing for potential entrepreneurs as they are the engine for economic growth;

Providing youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to plan for and respond to the dangers posed to their societies by both natural disasters and modern security threats.

We, the ninety-six youth of thirty-one Small Island Developing States and six other small island nations with other affiliations, thank you.

Annex 2.2 Declaration from the Pacific Youth Summit on MDGs

PACIFIC TOFAMAMAO 2015

Declaration of the Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs

We, the future leaders of the Pacific, pledge to take positive action for the betterment of our region. We seek the guidance and support of our political leaders to fulfill our vision for Pacific Tofamamao 2015 and beyond.

We, the delegates of the Pacific Youth MDGs Summit, being future leaders of the Pacific, gathered here in Tofamamao, Apia, unified in our rich diversity and regional solidarity:

- **Affirm** the UN Millennium Declaration and its six core values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility endorsed by all UN Member States at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000
- **Appreciate** Pacific Tofamamao 2015, the region-wide initiative spearheaded by UN agencies and youth and all sections of society
- **Believe** that the success of the MDGs in the Pacific requires the direct involvement of youth and all sections of society
- **Acknowledge** international, regional and national youth summits and declarations
- **Recognize** the unique distinction and dynamics of the Pacific region
- **Reaffirm** universal values such as equality, justice, peace and respect for human dignity
- **Recognise** the progress made to date in the area of MDGs in the Pacific
- **Welcome** the opportunity to work in partnership with religious, political, civil society, business organisations and associations.

However,

- We express our deep concern that there are limited resources and severe constraints faced by people in the Pacific in meeting basic necessities
- We highlight the immediate need for gender equality across the Pacific
- We are concerned by the lack of recognition and commitment in achieving environmental sustainability in the Pacific
- We are mindful of the limited opportunities of ICT development for youth in the Pacific
- We are concerned with political conflicts and civil unrest that have impacted the lives of people in the Pacific region
- We are concerned with the rising incidence of youth suicide in the Pacific.

We therefore,

- Urge the Pacific region to strengthen its commitment and focus to achieve the MDGs and to improve the lives of all its people
- Embrace the United Nations World Youth Report 2003
- Are determined to integrate MDGs into local and national policies
- Are committed to act upon the National Youth MDGs Action Plans for each country and their full integration at a national level as outlined in the National Youth MDG Action Plans developed at the Pacific MDG Youth Summit
- As Pacific youth, governments and all stakeholders express co-ownership of the MDGs
- Call for empowering youth representation in government and non-government institutions to proactively achieve the MDGs
- Stress the importance of integrated national youth policies and their linkages to the MDGs and Pacific Tofamamao 2015
- Urge for open and accessible information sharing and networking opportunities for Pacific youth. **Moreover,**

We recognise regional issues affecting youth and communities in the Pacific pertaining to each of the MDGs as highlighted below;

MDG 1: ERADICATE POVERTY AND HUNGER

There is an urgent need for linkages between youth and poverty to be identified in the Pacific perspective. With the lack of data on youth living in poverty in the Pacific region, we call for island governments and development partners to conduct studies on poverty of opportunities and accessibility to basic services in the region. In addition, governments should create mechanisms to ensure that young people are involved in the development of poverty reduction strategies in their respective island nations.

Options for action:

- Initiate non-formal education programs to build the capacity of young people to initiate poverty reduction strategies
- Encourage, support and promote self income generation initiatives e.g. young farmers projects, home gardens, etc.
- Establish initiatives for young people to contribute productively to food security
- Improve accessibility for young men and women to essential social services and life enhancement opportunities.

MDG 2: ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Education is the key for the future of young people and young people's knowledge. Their ideas, talents and skills must be developed to foster peace, equity and sustainability in the Pacific region.

Unfortunately not all young people of school age have access to or complete a full course of formal education. Initiatives should be implemented to encourage regular participation of young people in the formal education system and making formal education affordable for low-income families.

Options for action:

- Parents and communities to be actively involved in the operation of educational institutions
- Terms and conditions of service and training for teachers need to be improved

- School curriculums need to be designed and regularly updated to cater for the changing educational needs of young people
- Provide opportunities for young people to contribute to curriculum content and implementation through the establishment and on-going support for student school councils
- Introduce measures to ensure that all students attend school and involve students in the enforcement of these measures e.g. Student Truancy Policies
- Establish affordable non-formal educational initiatives to supplement the formal primary curriculum e.g. summer schools, holiday programs and after school programs
- Introduce measures to reintegrate youth who have dropped out of school into skills building and training programs to ensure that they have access to a range of learning options outside of mainstream education
- Encourage the establishment of schemes to subsidize the participation of school children from low income families in the formal education system
- Encourage the establishment and increase access and awareness to specialized services and amenities for children with disabilities and special needs.

MDG 3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

There is a great need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of young women and girls. However we recognize that the statistical data and information on the status of young women in the Pacific is limited. Innovative measures to support the development of skills and enhancement of leadership qualities of young women and girls are needed. This includes providing sustainable opportunities for young women to participate in decision-making at all levels of society and sensitizing male leaders to the advantages of working in equal partnerships. These initiatives can be further enhanced through the recognition of the contributions of young women to the development of society.

Options for action:

- Establish more training programs for leadership development of young women. e.g. the Tonga National Youth Congress Women's Youth Caucus and the Samoa Women's Youth Parliament
- Establish programs that promote the active participation of young women in the economy
- Introduce programs that provide opportunities for young women to fully participate in decision making processes including male advocacy programs
- Encourage and support the advancement of women in the political arena.
- Encourage advocacy initiatives on women's issues
- Encourage the compilation of data on young women's participation in education, literacy, the labour force, and political decision making
- Strengthen national efforts to implement initiatives under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

MDG 4: REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY

Young people can contribute towards the reduction of child mortality in their communities. This is possible through training young people to provide health related services to their peers. Young mothers, midwives, health professionals, and community health workers need to be trained in the provision of high quality pre and post-natal care. Youth advocacy initiatives are needed to ensure the provision of essential vaccinations, clean water and air, and sanitation to children at risk.

Options for action:

- Establish more training programs for young people in community based health work, antenatal care, emergency obstetric care and family planning
- Provide services to help young people prevent unplanned pregnancy
- Establish youth friendly clinics and promote peer to peer education on adolescent reproductive health
- Promote youth campaigns to make vaccinations for infectious diseases available to all children
- Provide easier access to clean water and sanitation through the promotion of youth initiatives to address local public health problems
- Provide financial support where necessary to young mothers from low income families for the maintenance of the child
- Conduct ongoing awareness programs on malaria and malnutrition issues as underlying causes of child mortality
- Strengthen national efforts to implement initiatives under the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

MDG 5: IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

We recognize the achievements and significant progress that has been made towards achieving the targets of this goal by Pacific nations. We highlight the need for the obligations of Pacific Governments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to strengthen policies and programs to ensure that the targets in this goal are achieved. In order for maternal health to be improved, there needs to be programs that deal specifically with maternal health, safe motherhood and nutrition. Religious and cultural barriers continue to present a challenge when addressing maternal health and therefore needs special attention. A distinct lack of resources exists in some areas, such as specialized services for childbirth needs to be addressed.

Options for Action:

- Resources must be made available to ensure that all mothers have access to quality maternal health care that is safe and reliable
- More accurate information on the rate of teenage pregnancy needs to be readily available
- Establish youth friendly clinics to help prevent child bearing at young ages and unplanned pregnancies as well as promoting longer intervals between pregnancies
- Establish youth friendly clinics for young mothers
- Improve involvement and role of men in maternal health programs.

MDG 6: COMBAT HIVAIDS MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

Despite efforts to reverse the spread of HIVAIDS being undertaken in the Pacific we recognize that some nations will not achieve the targets of this goal by 2015. We also recognize the problem of Non Communicable Diseases in Pacific nations such as Diabetes and Gout, communicable diseases including Tuberculosis and vector-borne diseases like Malaria. The Governments of Pacific island nations are urged to increase their efforts towards halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases in their countries. Globally, everyday 6000 young people become infected with the virus, and in the Pacific statistics show that young girls in particular are the most vulnerable to infections; therefore the susceptibility of youth to HIVAIDS must be examined in detail. Young people face difficulty accessing sexual and reproductive health services, especially Voluntary Counseling and Confidential Testing (VCCT) information.

Options for Action:

- Work in partnerships with the church and leaders and integrate HIV/AIDS, STIs and NCDs education into theological training
- Establish Parent Education Schemes e.g. Parent to Parent Outreach, Peer to Peer Education and more educational HIV/AIDS programs in schools
- Ensure the involvement of young people in sexual behavioral research and the implementation of programs
- Encourage abstinence and safe behavior through individual spiritual commitments
- Make available finance and resources for HIV/AIDS, STIs and NCDs awareness and advocacy programs
- Establish mobile youth friendly clinics
- Mainstream youth issues into health services
- Greater provision of condoms in communities including female condoms
- The establishment of a Scientific Research Center for the Pacific to contribute towards finding a cure for HIV/AIDS
- Promote Lifeskills education
- The need for more accurate information on youth infections (reported and unreported cases)
- Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS programs into national development programs and policies
- Provide a supportive environment to minimize the stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

MDG 7: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Significant amounts of funding have been channeled to ensure that the principles of sustainable development have been integrated into national policies and programs to reverse the loss of environment resources. However there has been very little overall progress and results despite effective community based environmental management initiatives in many countries of the region. . Environment exploitation continues to escalate and must be strategically addressed.

We realize that there are no local targets, and that there continues to be a lack of integration of sustainable development policies into national planning frameworks. In some countries there is weak or no legislation, which presents a difficulty in enforcement. A lack of data and statistics has contributed to limited environmental education and awareness programs for youth including waste management programs. Furthermore, there is a lack of capacity to report on this goal. Geographic disparity presents a challenge in achieving some of these targets. In some cases environment projects have lacked the capacity for sustainability due to the lack of resources and management.

Options for Action:

- National Youth Policies highlight the need for youth to be involved in decision-making on the environment
- National surveys and data collection undertaken to reflect the involvement and impact of the targets in relation to youth.
- That there be equal support and resources available for both urban and rural youth to support their work to achieve the targets of this goal.
- There be more training opportunities for youth through the provision of scholarships and exchanges.
- Campaigns on sustainable practices involve youth and also have specific targeted campaigns for youth e.g. recycling plastics
- There is a need to promote youth environment groups and strengthen youth environment networks
- That young people mobilize donor resources to compliment existing programs
- That more effort be channeled towards implementing the Youth Visioning for Island Living Declaration adopted in Mauritius 2005.

MDG 8: TO DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening global partnership is vital to ensuring that young people become active partners as well as beneficiaries in development. Resourcefulness for development can serve as a means for involving youth and creating sustainable livelihoods that provide new opportunities for today's isolated youth to participate in the global economy.

Options for Action:

- Advance ICTs to enhance and increase productivity, strengthen regional networks, increase education opportunities that will address unemployment and economic growth
- Ongoing regional consultations between Pacific countries to address debt
- Increase funding commitments for youth development with proper monitoring and reporting systems
- Engage young people in developing income generating activities and opportunities for business investments as a means for addressing youth unemployment
- Introduce regional youth tradeshows to showcase the contributions of young people to economic development
- Advocate for the inclusion of Youth representatives in National MDG Task Forces
- Advocate for Youth representatives to be part of government delegations to regional and UN leaders meetings.
- Lobby Government and Development Agencies to allocate more resources towards the establishment of employment, self-employment and innovative income generation schemes for young people
- Lobby for increased funding support from donor agencies to help countries meet their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals.

To achieve all the visions articulated in this declaration, we call for continuous collaboration in the Pacific region and dialogue between youth leaders in the Pacific and around the globe. As advocates for positive development in the Pacific region,

- **We are honored to have been designated Millennium Campaign Youth Advocates and we strive to contribute to the mobilization of our societies towards the goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015**
- **We are committed to spreading the messages of Pacific Tofamamao 2015 by mobilizing global and local resources, raising awareness and, ultimately, as agents and advocates of positive change in our countries**
- **We call for the incorporation of the aspirations of this declaration into the Pacific Plan and the Pacific Youth Strategy 2010.**

Annex 2.3 Statement on the Pacific Plan

YOUTH STATEMENT ON THE PACIFIC PLAN Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs

8-12 May 2005, Tofamamao, Samoa

Opening statement

We, the youth of thirteen Pacific Island Countries convened at the Pacific Youth Summit for MDGs at Tofamamao, Apia, Samoa from 9-12 May 2005 commend the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for the preparation and the development of the Pacific Plan. In particular, we welcome the four goals, which will deliver tangible benefits to the people and communities of the Pacific region.

Strengthening global partnership is a vital component to ensure that young Pacific Islanders can become active partners in development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Regional resourcefulness for development can serve as a means for involving youth in the creating sustainable livelihoods and provides new opportunities for today's isolated youth into the global economy.

We as the representatives of Pacific Island Countries believe that young people make invaluable contributions to the development of the region and invite our political leaders to share our vision for the future of the Pacific region.

In support of the purpose, and objectives of the Pacific Plan, we encourage the Pacific Plan Task Force to consider the following key issues concerning Pacific youth, for incorporation into the Pacific Plan.

1. Economic Growth

Youth and poverty are serious issues that affect the development and well-being of young people in the Pacific. In the Pacific, there is a high youth unemployment rate and young people must be recognised as a resource for progressing economic development. Therefore, governments should create mechanisms to ensure that young people are involved in the economic development strategies in their respective island nations. We are strongly concerned about the increasing debt burden on Pacific Island countries. If not properly addressed by our current leaders, we and our children will carry this burden onwards.

We call for:

- Island governments and development partners to conduct baseline studies on youth with reference to gender equality in the areas of poverty of opportunities and accessibility to basic services in the region;
- The enhancement of youth capacity for sustainable economic growth and employment through facilitating *self-employment* and *youth-enterprise* programmes as an example of alternative income generation activities in agriculture, tourism and trade;
- Initiating non-formal educational programs and strengthening apprenticeship schemes to build the capacity of young people to be self-sufficient;
- Encourage, promote and protect the informal business sector
- Expanding academic scholarships, internship and exchange programs for Pacific youth, with direct employment incentives in home countries upon completion;
- Strengthening regional partnerships to increase trading initiatives between young entrepreneurs;

- The advancement of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance and increase youth productivity, strengthen regional youth networks and increase education opportunities for youth;
- Increased funding commitments by governments, donors and development agencies for economic development for young people.
- Promote short term employment opportunities for young people in Australia and New Zealand

2. Sustainable Development

We believe that in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, this will contribute to achieving sustainable development. We recognise the achievements and significant progress of Pacific nations made towards achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Agenda¹. We believe that youth have a key role in participating in decision making for sustainable development to understand implications of current decisions as well as receiving the mentoring from today's leaders. We highlight the need for Pacific governments to implement the following strategies:

We call for:

- a) Education
 - To strengthen the introduction of measures to promote school participation of students eg. legislation and enforcement measures;
 - The encouragement of the establishment of scholarships to subsidise the participation of school children from low income families in the formal education system;
 - The coordination of lifeskills education to empower young people to make informed choices and to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- b) Gender
 - The establishment of more regional training programs for leadership development of young women;
 - Involve men in all gender equity programs;
 - The introduction of regional programs that provide opportunities for young women to fully participate in decision making processes;
 - Encourage and support the advancement of women in the political arena.
 - Apportion a greater priority to achieving the articles pertaining to the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by implementing the Pacific Platform for Action.
- c) Health
 - Ensure the delivery of quality training programs for a greater number of young people in community based health work, antenatal care, emergency obstetric care and family planning;
 - Regional sharing of knowledge including traditional medicinal cures, resources and materials;
 - Reduce prohibitive costs of medication through regional bulk buying of medicines for preventable diseases;
 - The coordination and implementation of ongoing awareness programs on malaria, other diseases and malnutrition issues such as underlying causes of child mortality;
 - Make available finance and resources for HIV/AIDS awareness programs and sharing of knowledge in regards to essential and affordable social services and life enhancement opportunities;
 - The establishment of a Scientific Research Center for Pacific to contribute towards finding a cure.

d) Environment

- Ensure the effective and timely implementation of regional environmental strategies as defined in the Pacific Oceans Policy, 2002, and mandates of the Alliance Of Small Island States (AOSIS) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to protect our Islands and the Pacific Ocean and its resources.

e) Participation

- The allocation of a fixed proportion of donor funds to specific youth-led and youth-managed sustainable development projects;
- The establishment of initiatives for young people to contribute productively to food security;
- The engagement of community leaders and faith based organisation leaders in partnership with the young people to fight poverty;

3. Good Governance

We believe that good governance is founded upon the respect for human rights and the equal opportunity for development for all communities in the Pacific region. In this regard, it is the shared responsibility of public, private and civic spheres of society to uphold good leadership. We support the Pacific Island Forum Principles of Good Leadership however, we also urge Pacific Island leaders to respect and adhere to intergenerational partnerships for good governance. Pacific Island youth consider ourselves to be guardians of good governance because we inherit the decisions of leaders today.

We call for:

- Stronger linkages between the Millennium Development Goals and the Pacific Plan which entails greater participation of all sectors of society, including youth.
- The utilisation of the Millennium Development Agenda as a standard framework for monitoring and reporting of the Pacific Plan.
- The consideration of forming an independent regional judiciary to arbitrate on bilateral and multilateral issues of conflict.
- Further regional efforts to eradicate corruption and maintain transparency and accountability at all levels of society.
- The need to raise awareness on the concept of good governance and civic responsibility for the general community and including political, traditional and church leaders.

The development of the civic education curriculum for all children and young people of Pacific island countries to exercise good governance and democratic processes in order to influence political processes and policies.

4. Security

We recognise that security in the Pacific Plan is narrowly defined. The security of the Pacific region affects the lives of every Pacific Islander, most especially, those most vulnerable, the young people, women and children and therefore, human security which refers to the creation of a safe environment for families, women and children is imperative. We fully endorse the Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security, 2002, which aims to reduce the threat towards governments in terms of national stability and global stability. Thus, it leads to discuss the Millennium Development Goal, which highlights the fact that there is a need for global partnership and development. We urge leaders to consider the implications of regional insecurity on the psychosocial status of young people and women, affecting their ability to develop and prosper.

We call for:

- Regional partnerships to work together at a regional level to provide security to regional hotspots and to protect our nations from global threats, including terrorism (gun smuggling), drug trafficking and hazardous waste (Waigani Convention, 1995);
- The harmonisation of relevant immigration, customs and quarantine policies to adequately protect our individual countries and the region;
- Overseas donor agencies to assist with building capacity of the Pacific region to provide regional security;
- Ensure adherence to international United Nations Conventions pertaining to the security of women and children eg. CRC and CEDAW.

Governments and development partners to place emphasis on and direct support to meeting international commitments, such as CEDAW and CRC that are about protecting the family, women and children.

Closing statement

We are proud to call the Pacific region our home and we respect our rich and diverse cultural heritage and identity. We envision our home as a harmonious and opportunistic environment for:

- Economic Growth
- Sustainable Development
- Good Governance
- Security

We commit ourselves to work together in partnership with leaders to achieve the above goals recognizing the close links to the Millennium Development Goals.

We also undertake to do all we can to inform our consultancies/youth in our islands to work together to achieve the vision of our leaders we share.

In addition to that, we urge our leaders to continue this dialogue with youth and look forward to hearing the progress of the implementation of the plan

We are united by our common aspiration for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous future not only for us but for our brothers, sisters, children, grandchildren and many more generations to come.

¹ The Millennium Development Agenda includes the Millennium Declaration and the 8 goals to be achieved by 2015.

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Mr Ben Chutarro, ADB Consultant
Ms Florence Peter, College of the Marshall Islands
Ms Sefita, Principal, Foundation Program.
Various youth attending the 4th Marshall Islands Youth Congress Conference

