



Pacific Climate Mobility

IN MEMORY OF OUR FOREFATHERS OF LEALATELE WHO SETTLED IN LEALUVA, UPOU
AFTER THE VOLCANO ERUPTIONS OF MT. MATAVANU FROM 1905 - 1908

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>SUAFA</u> | <u>FALEVALU & FALESEFULU</u> |
| Salā Senio | Tauaifaga Laumua |
| Salā Simeauli | Tunai Lolesio |
| Salā Toloto | Lemalu Vitolio |
| Salā Saapea | Lealiifano Toma |
| Salā Leo | <u>TULAFALE</u> |
| Tuala Silivelio | Tevaga Tominiko |
| Tuala Vaauli | Tevaga Suafo'a |
| <u>TULAGA O AIGA</u> | Tevaga Tusiupu |
| Aualiitia Tailalo | Vaifale Faatonu |
| Aualiitia Tufanua | Vaifale Tuliolo |
| Natoealofa Kelemalie | <u>ISI MATAI</u> |
| Lauano Lameko | Tamatimu Sakaio |
| Iga Pisa | Lutu Pasitale Siagia |
| <u>FALEVALU & FALESEFULU</u> | Fonoti Kalepo |
| Tunai Pa'ofe | Fue Akeli |
| Setiu Taemiti | Fue Finau |
| Fulu Teofilo | Lava Pone |
| Tanoai Tulua | Tuilau Fatu |
| Lili Teotimo | Sao Pogai |
| Lemalu Tapaevalu | Tuifelasai Pipili |
| Fulu Polito | Segi Fulu |
| Fulu Alosio | Muliaga Teleaga |
| Fulu Peasolo | Saofia |
| Tanoai Molia | Mailo Tonise |
| Fue Ioane I | Laumoli Siasoi |
| Tautagi To'i | Tau Tilipi |
| Sagote Simeti | Malautea Apelu |
| Matafeo Pio | Semu Taupau |
| Sola Nikolao | Vailua Sii |
| Tualasea | Taulamago Lui |
| Ainiu Ioane | |
| Matafeo Vito | |

IA FOAI ATU IA TE I LATOU LE MAPUSAGA E FAAVAU
Donated by TUALA TELEA LILII, MARGARET and family



TONGA AND SAMOA: THE CASE STUDIES

Pacific Climate Mobility Research

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NOTE ON THE CASE STUDIES

This product fits into a broader research effort on the future of climate change mobility in the Pacific, enabled by New Zealand's climate finance through the International Development Cooperation (IDC) Programme.

This document is in support of the Tonga and Samoa Climate Mobility Synthesis Report and contains a total of 10 case studies. These case studies are the result of a number of field trips and targeted talanoa with people in Tonga and Samoa in 2023 and early 2024 and focus on groups and individuals who have undertaken climate related or environmental mobility in Tonga and Samoa, including those relocated following the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption and the 2009 Samoa tsunami. Case studies also include those reporting current efforts to relocate due to the impacts of climate change. The case studies help illustrate several key themes in the Synthesis Report and add a level of richness and particular 'humanness' to the project findings.

The researchers are grateful to our in-country research partners, including Velata Tonga Ltd, the Samoan Education Network (SEN) and Dr Tepora Wright for facilitating these connections, and to the participants themselves for their willingness to share their stories which were highly personal, and at times painful to revisit, for the benefit of others.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the participants and authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

CASE STUDY 1 - SAMOA

LEAUVA'A – PEOPLE OF THE BOAT

CONTEXT

The people of Leauva'a were relocated from Savai'i to Upolu following the eruption of Mount Matavanu in 1905. Many moved from their original villages, including Leootelele, on the island of Savai'i to Upolu and were allocated a block of land, reported as 723 acres, to establish a new village for themselves – Leauva'a (translates as people of the boat/canoe). This relocation occurred during the time of the German administration and land allocation was, and is now, done in a way that runs counter to other village land systems – passing through bloodlines. Not everyone moved however, with some remaining, reportedly concerned at the time about where they may be going, preferring to stay where they were familiar.

BACKGROUND AND UPDATE SINCE FIELDTRIP

The researchers were connected via our in-country research partner with the heads of three families living in Leauva'a, including the current Mayor. Stories were shared by each family of the process of relocation, the establishment of the village and the outcomes of relocation which were wholly positive. Questions around land, including land inland were broached and responded to, however there was some feedback on current sensitivities around these matters.

Following the fieldtrip, contention over land between Leauva'a and neighbouring Afega became particularly public, with media reporting on issues of members of Leauva'a settling on land outside of their allotted 723 acres, and a ruling in favour of Afega by the Land and Titles Court. Since the ruling, Afega have reportedly given people time to vacate their houses on contested land, however, have progressed land clearance, including plantations of cocoa, banana, taro and tobacco which people of Leauva'a had planted. As the disagreement played out, a religious statue outside Leauva'a's Catholic church was reportedly bulldozed. At the time of writing, representatives of Leauva'a had appealed to Samoa's Supreme Court to intervene (Samoa Observer, 7 March 2024).

WELL PREPARED, WELL SUPPORTED, MOSTLY WELL-ARTICULATED

During the time of the eruption in 1905, the descendants of those who relocated report there was a lot of fear and confusion

"There was a lot of anxiety among the people. There was a meeting of the Chiefs to decide where to go for safety".

When the decision was made, small German motorboats transported people and their things of value to the island of Upolu. They prioritised bringing a lot of culturally, socially (and religiously) significant things with them – including all the detailed but fragile stained glass from their home church, photos of ancestors, as well as a very large crucifix that reportedly takes up to 20 people to carry. They share with humour local jokes about them floating to Upolu

"People make jokes that the people of Leauva'a floated here, but the truth is it was a highly organised move. We know this because of all of the things they brought with them, that's proof."

No one in the home village perished but also, not everyone moved – some decided it was better to stay where they were familiar.

For the two years following relocation, the focus was on clearing the land. People in the surrounding villages (like Malie, Tuanai, Saleamoa) 'were very compassionate'. They saw the people of Leootelele walking daily to clear their land, working hard to try to set it up and they offered them shelter – some were family, some were not.

LAND, CLARITY AND DEVELOPMENT

By 1908 the cleared land was subdivided, and only those of Leotelele who moved were allocated land. The land arrangement is 'very clear cut', they have records (held at the church as well as reportedly in New Zealand) and they believe the method of land assignment and its clarity has and still does reduce conflict. Each family was allocated 10 *ngafa* (an arm span) on the ocean-facing end of the block, with 'free planting' arrangements (use of any land one can cultivate) as the land extends in land. Land here is passed through the bloodline which is different to land arrangements in other Samoan villages.

The houses they built first were more traditional thatched roof houses. They continued their practices of crop growing in their new village, growing tobacco successfully and with this income they upgraded their houses – Leauva'a was the first in the district to have corrugated rooves.

Though a relatively recent development, in 2000, those in Leauva'a reportedly negotiated and secured access to land back in their origin village on Savai'i, taking the process through the Land and Titles Court to reach agreement with the neighbouring villages.

BELONGING, CONNECTION AND RECONNECTION

Once the generation of those who relocated passed away, every subsequent generation has felt deeply that this is their home. They belong in Leauva'a. Other than (re)securing rights to their origin village, there are other connections that weave through their everyday lives. Stories are still told to village children about the old village and the big eruption in Savai'i. Formal greetings exchanged in gatherings with people of other villages have stayed the same – still referencing the old people and places of Leotelele. Family from the old village come to Leauva'a frequently, though travel the other way, from Leauva'a to Savai'i, is much less common. They also rebuilt the Catholic church – in the same style but bigger, with all the old stained glass from their origin village in place, and the large crucifix transported across from Savai'i hanging front and centre.

A BLESSING TO BE CELEBRATED, 'GOD'S VILLAGE'

The relocation is looked on as wholly positive by the ancestors of those who moved. This is illustrated by a large plaque set by the entrance of the village church which names all of those who relocated and set up the village of Leauva'a. They see the relocation as a blessing – 'life is easier here'. The land is flat, it is bountiful, and it is well laid-out. They have good access to shops, work and education is easier. They think that if they were still living in Savai'i it would be a harder, more expensive life. Of those who remained in Leotelele, the perceptions of some in Leauva'a is that they may regret the decisions of their ancestors to remain.

"This is the most good-looking village, it's God's village, we have a sense of happiness here".

Policy implications

- A lack of information on their proposed destination appears to have been a barrier for mobility for some who chose to remain in their original village of Savai'i. It can't be known whether improved information would have convinced some or more to leave however it is an important consideration in future relocation events to ensure that maximum information can be provided to support informed decision making. While not feasible to plan ahead for all for a disaster like a volcanic eruption, areas and specific villages have been identified as relatively more exposed to climate hazards – it would be possible to begin discussions about possible relocation destinations ahead of time for these affected populations.
- The consideration of, and the prioritising of retaining and transporting cultural, religious and spiritual items of meaning (including at a village level) appears to have delivered both immediate value (familiarity, tangible connection to one's past) for the generation that moved, as well as a means of pride and storytelling about the success of the move itself for subsequent generations. No doubt, having highly visible markers of their origin held in reverence in a stunning new (and larger) building affords emotional and spiritual value for the people of Leauva'a.
- Notwithstanding the current land challenges between Leauva'a and Afega, those of Leauva'a appeared to attribute high value to the clarity of land boundaries and believed it has (generally) led to relatively lower land-related conflict particularly intra-village.
- The researchers took away a strong sense of gratitude for the relocation from the families engaged at Leauva'a, particularly in terms of the improved access to education and work opportunities being in Upolu compared with Savai'i. Again, notwithstanding some of the current land related challenges, there are positives, or opportunities that could be highlighted in the story of Leauva'a for others facing future climate displacement.



L-R: Plaque celebrating all those who relocated from Savai'i following the eruption of Mt Matavanu and set up the 'blessed village' of Leauva'a. Village sign. Relocated and rebuilt Catholic church in Leauva'a, which incorporates many windows of detailed stained-glass transported from Savai'i on their relocation in the early 1900s.

CASE STUDY 2 - TONGA

'EUA, MANGO-'EUA

"Eua is the collection of relocated people. All of Tonga is in 'Eua"

CONTEXT

'Eua has been an island of refuge in Tonga for several population groups over the last 200 years. One participant reflected on the old history of 'Eua, that people initially believed Maui lived there, and fearful of paranormal activity, people kept their distance. When people believed Maui had moved on they started visiting, then moving inland and settling, particularly on recognising the particular fertility of the soil. The island is one of the most elevated of Tonga's islands, with its highest point just under 330m above sea level (Britannica, accessed Feb 2024¹).

One of the first groups to move from another island or island group and resettle in 'Eua were the people of 'Ata, around 160 years ago - relocated in part by the King at the time to protect them from foreign exploitation. Then there were the people of Niua Fo'ou, who were evacuated to 'Eua following a volcanic eruption in 1946. Some returned to Niua Fo'ou some years later, some did not (Mr. Tanieli Fusimalohi, talanoa, Nuku'alofa, July 2023).

In the days following the record breaking 2022 Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption, the full population of Mango, approximately 60 people, were evacuated first to Tongatapu, and have now been resettled in the island of 'Eua. Mango is an island in the Ha'apai island group – a relatively low-lying set of atoll islands, characterised by white sandy beaches. The people of Mango are known for their fishing skills and knowledge and that was their primary income, with a fisherperson able to earn TOP\$4,000 or more a month from selling their catch (Sione, Town Officer, talanoa, 'Eua, April 2023).

At the time of the researchers' visit, the people of Mango were being hosted on the King's land in 'Eua – on Palace property in temporary housing, awaiting completion of new housing. Their presence had been acknowledged through the formation of 'Eua's 16th village – named Mango-'Eua. Their new housing estate, where they will eventually relocate, is elevated with grand views of the ocean and has an adjacent plantation, planted out for them by the people of 'Eua. The people of Mango have been provided with support from the Royal Family, including island transport and fishing boats and at the time of the fieldwork trip, continued to receive support from the 15 villages of 'Eua, who take turns monthly providing money and food. Though those from Mango are permitted to return to the waters of Mango to fish, they have reportedly been forbidden by the King to resettle Mango permanently out of concern for their safety (Mr Lolo Fili, talanoa, 'Eua, April 2023).

When the research team travelled to 'Eua to meet with leaders there and some relocated families, there were interesting divergences in views and expectations, between those 'of' 'Eua, and those from Mango (including Ha'apai leadership). The following is a summary of some relevant conversations, mostly from the fieldtrip taken in April 2023, but also from follow up conversations in subsequent fieldtrips, for example with the Governor of Ha'apai in November 2023.

MANGO -'EUA, LENS ONE: 'EUA

"We are Mango-'Eua" (Government Representative, Mr Lolo Fili)

Conversations with local government leadership demonstrated a motivation to achieve social and particularly economic integration of the people from Mango, and from some, a frustration at the time it was taking for people to demonstrate a willingness to play their part in that.

1. 'Eua island, Tonga. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Eua>, accessed 16 Feb 2024.

"It is very hard. We help them a lot. I want to motivate them because here in 'Eua, [we] are working peoples in the plantation. 'Eua supplies most of the food to Tongatapu. I want them to change their mind [from focusing just on fishing]. But slowly, slowly, [they are] moving from Mango people to Mango-'Eua people. The name Mango-'Eua – it suggests a joining, an integration." Mr Lolo Fili.

There was a finality in the move underlined by a government leader in conversation with the Mango Town Officer:

"The King has forbidden their return – [they have] no choice, [it has come] right from the top."

While in 'Eua, the researchers met with a community member from 'Eua, testing the feelings and perceptions of the receiving villages including around their ongoing support roles. They described how each of the 15 villages have been taking turns monthly to provide money and food to the people in Mango-'Eua. This support was initiated by churches before the wider community got involved. Each village runs a collection and can gift around TOP\$4000 each time. The King reportedly provides them beef from his own livestock and when the King is presented a pig or similar, he also shares that on to the Mango people.

Further, a growing frustration at the perceived lack of willingness of the people of Mango to help themselves, to reciprocate the support of those of 'Eua by showing some motivation to work the land came through in conversations with some community members in 'Eua, with one person suggesting that the active support from the different villages might not continue for much longer.

MANGO-'EUA - LENSTWO: MANGO

The Mango-'Eua Town Officer, Sione, described some of the differences in life now they are living in 'Eua:

"When in Mango, [the people] were not thinking about going out to the plantation. They were just used to resting then fishing. And when they fish they would catch big fish – tuna and other large fish, [they would] collect lobster. The fish in Mango are different to the ones around 'Eua, and it takes a different technique to catch them."

"We miss how we used to earn a living from fishing. Because we are here now, I had to plant kava but it will take 3-4 years to mature. [With] fishing, we would have the money straight away. I could have paid the contribution to this house in one month fishing how we used to. Family overseas had to pay that instead."

The town officer shared how he would like to go back to Mango to stay but won't as it is not the King's desire. He spoke of a survey that was taken where some said it would be good [to return] but the decision was still no.

Talanoa with an elderly couple who had relocated from Mango shared how the husband used to deep sea dive and spearfish in the waters of Mango. Their old fishing spear and equipment were displayed on their front porch. The couple discussed how when the eruption and subsequent tsunami happened, everyone wanted to leave:

"When the waves came everyone panicked. Straight after, no one wanted to stay, they knew it wasn't safe and the air was toxic to breathe. Everything was washed away. We had to remain for three days before we were evacuated. [There was] only young coconut ('uto) and the big bananas to eat... While waiting, people just swum and washed in the sea. People have helped [us] from the start – both in Tongatapu and 'Eua. People provided clothing, bedding, money – money was the most helpful as [we] could use the pa'anga for the children's school needs."

"We used to grow food back in Mango – [we] had a tax allotment – [and we are] planning to grow food in 'Eua too."

The researchers travelled to the island group of Ha'apai in November 2023 and were grateful to have time with the Governor of Ha'apai – Dr Pita Taufatofua. This conversation traversed many topics, but the relocation of the people of Mango – an island within the Ha'apai island group – was discussed.

"[After the eruption] we were the first people to get to Mango. There were about 60 people there. You know, when we arrived, I don't think the people there recognised me, I think they thought I was one of the Navy staff"

or something. But the first thing they said was they are 'very sorry for our appearance, what we are wearing'. That was a concern for them, how they were presenting to us. They said 'we found this dress in the sand, we took it to wash it in the sea and that is what we are wearing'. I remember seeing the children without shirts on, that was emotional to see."

The matter of cultural, social, historical diversity between Tongan population groups was discussed, and how deeply embedded they are in one's identity.

"People say 'oh it's great they have land and a home in 'Eua', I sit back and laugh. You can't change them just because you give them land."

"People from Mango come to me and ask me – do we vote as Ha'apai or as 'Eua now? They want to keep links, their identity as Mango. They asked for houses to stay in when they go to Mango's waters to fish. It will take one or more generations for them to be farmers. They are fisher people since they were born."

MAKING PROGRESS WITH DIVERSITY

Researchers met with a Member of Parliament for 'Eua – Taniela Fusimalohi in July 2023. He referenced the challenge of cultural and identity clashes and the time it can take to resolve, if at all:

"It's [about] how people self-identify – they want to preserve their old identities. Whereas 'Eua wants a more inclusive identity. That's the challenge."

"It takes time for the friction and cultural clash to dissipate. Well, they are supposed to dissipate. When I go to 'Eua I think of Fiji – how the Fijians and Indians are trying to live together. I don't think other MPs face the same challenges I do – bringing people together is my greatest challenge."

Mr Fusimalohi reflected on what he described as a 'leadership issue' in 'Eua, that leadership and governance training is missing 'on the ground' and that people need to develop skills to bring people together. He has taken a unique approach to addressing the division he sees in 'Eua:

"The way I've approached it is to try to rise above or operate a level above the politics and personal disagreements, instead focusing on common goals and projects and the economic future of the children. People who were once clashing are now talking. I've set up around 8 - 10 different committees – committees for fisheries, for animal husbandry, women's committees... they all have a plan they work on together."

Policy implications

This case study centred on 'Eua as an island and population that has supported multiple relocations from other areas of Tonga, with a focus on the more recent relocation of the people of Mango, raises several policy-relevant insights:

1. **Decision-making** around the timing and permanence of relocation, and the rules of return should be open for examination by the Tongan people in the context of worsening climate change. Could there be some standardisation of decision making on whether relocation needs to be permanent based on, for example, the level of ongoing risks and the range of (social, economic and cultural) benefits and drawbacks? Reports of survey results, feedback from some in Mango-'Eua as well as some leadership suggests some people of Mango wish to return to Mango to stay. Monitoring and evaluation should also form part of the longer-term processes of evaluation to track social, cultural and economic impacts, to inform changes in approaches (as indicated) and any future relocation efforts.
2. The case study highlights the challenges of unmet expectations around how people may continue to identify following relocation, how and if that will change and how quickly that can (or cannot) change. Unmet expectations have led to resentment and frustration which may negatively impact social cohesion outcomes in future. Efforts should be expended to explore the diverse nature of **self-identity** within Tonga in the context of relocation and communicate what receiving communities can realistically expect around identity evolution. Further, there is an opportunity to engage those in receiving roles, like the population on 'Eua, on the benefits of maintaining or protecting cultural diversity, including what could be lost if inclusivity and integration are taken to a point of cultural or identity absorption.

3. The impacts of self- or group-identification has been shown to have quite a direct impact on **economic and social participation**, for example a clear resistance to shifting to farming or plantation work despite having all means made available, including land provision, support with planting and even transport to the plantation. This should be explored further, including appropriate ways to possibly decouple people's sense of identity with what they need to do in order to support themselves in a new environment.
4. Related, **successful approaches** to community cohesion, like the establishment of different project committees by MP Taniela Fusimalohi, should be spotlighted, supported and expanded where possible. Gaps identified by leaders on the ground, like training in leadership and good governance, should also be supported where possible.



L-R: Town Officer, Mango-'Eua, government-built houses for those in 'Eua whose homes were impacted by the 2022 eruption and tsunami, young boy Mango-'Eua

CASE STUDY 3 - TONGA

'ATATAA, 'ATATAA SI'I

CONTEXT

Following the massive eruption of Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai in January 2022, the entire population of the island of 'Ata'taa Tonga was evacuated to Tonga's main island of Tongatapu. 'Atataa is Royal Estate land and sits under the King's youngest son. The Royal Estate allocated the people of 'Atataa land on Tongatapu to establish a new village – named 'Atataa Si'i (little 'Atataa). At the time of the fieldwork visit, 21 homes had been built for some of the families of 'Atataa and many other families and individuals were in a state of protracted mobility – still living with extended family or in a church hall in Nuku'alofa, not knowing when they may have a home built or assigned, nor the location of their small plot of land where their unbuilt house would rest. In April 2023, the researchers visited both 'Atataa Si'i, and the church hall where those without homes were living to talk about their experience so far, and their major concerns approximately 14 months after the eruption and relocation event.

MOVING, TOGETHER

One woman in 'Atataa Si'i told their family story of survival, sharing that she carried her mother up to higher land to escape the tsunami and doing the same for her elderly uncle. He daughter also tried to take a local elderly man with a disability, and an elderly woman to safety but all three of them were washed away in the tsunami wave. Miraculously they all survived – the daughter and woman were eventually rescued, and the man was found back in Tongatapu, somehow having managed to drift there.

There were reported practical challenges with the evacuation. The first boats sent were small and would fit only five people at a time. There were attempts to send a Navy boat but it had engine troubles due to ocean debris and other volcanic contamination. Ultimately it was a church boat that enabled the evacuation of 177 people in lots. 57 people were evacuated first, then 58 people. There were supposed to be 178 people to evacuate but one man – the elderly man with a physical disability was missing – the same man they ultimately found safe back in Tongatapu.

When asked whether everyone wanted to leave or whether any one resisted, the Town Officer recalled:

"One person wanted to stay. He didn't want to leave his farm - his plantings and animals. I told him, 'OK. If you stay, I will stay with you'.

I talked to him for a long time. I told him, we will let the pigs out, [we'll] just cut the ropes, open the fence. Let them find their own food. He agreed to come [with us] after that".

A QUIET DEPARTURE, A QUIET WELCOME

In the early hours following the eruption and tsunami, The Town Officer was in brief contact with the government to work out how to get the people of 'Atataa to Nuku'alofa. The researcher's impression of the 'feeling' in 'Atataa following the eruption and tsunami is one of quiet resolve. And perhaps speaks to assumptions about how permanent the move would or would not be. While most of the property and contents on the lower part of the island were lost to the ocean, many properties on the more elevated sections survived. People took the time to lock those homes and organise themselves for a period of time away, leaving many items behind.

The Town Officer reports that before leaving they took time to pray.

"Two [church] ministers ran a prayer for us. After that we felt happier and that we could go."

The people of 'Atataa also highlighted that they recognised a different level of attention on them compared to the group evacuated from Mango. Sikula shared:

"We knew that people from Mango had a big group of important people waiting for them, the government, officials. When we arrived, we had no one.

So, I tell them that we are lucky, and that God was waiting for us at the wharf. We laughed about that."

LIVING, APART

Those who received homes were randomly allocated their position, though they were given a limited set of design options, all small in size. The government initially asked for a contribution of TOP\$4000 from each family for a home, however the Town Officer pushed back, saying the people had no way to pay and the ask was withdrawn. Those with homes expressed general gratitude with having land and a house – "it's free and it's ours". One woman based in 'Atataa Si'i, stated that her life in 'Atataa Si'i is happy and though grateful to have a house and small land allotment, shared the difficulty with the size of the house.

"The house here is small compared to what we had in 'Atataa... we can't all fit in this house. We built a [makeshift] shelter out the back of this house as brothers and sisters can't stay together."

One of the women living in the church hall in Nuku'alofa shared that some who are staying there initially stayed with extended family in Nuku'alofa but moved into the hall as they did not want to be a burden on their family. Herself, she is there alone. She prefers to stay in the hall as the family home in Tongatapu is overcrowded. Her husband passed away over two decades ago and he remains buried in 'Atataa. She feels OK about him remaining there.

At the time of talanoa, the woman's daughter was there dropping off food and supplies, something that happens frequently for those staying there. People fend for themselves in the sense that no coordination of group cooking or similar has been organised.

The hall itself is cluttered with people's belongings, clothes, bedding, some small appliances gathered into semi-ordered lots with people eking out an area to sleep among their things. One person was sweeping the floor and plush velvet seats, presumably used for church events were stacked up against one wall. The researchers noted a large tank of water outside the hall, presumably drinking water for the group, and washed clothes and towels drying on lines in the carpark.

The Town Officer laments the separation of the 'Atataa community.

"Being spread out like this, it is hard to do my job. There are 21 houses here, but others are staying with their families, and some are still sleeping in a hall. I need to be able to access people easily so I can talk to them, help them. I take village kids to school in that van. It's hard like this... I want them to build the other 19-20 houses so the other families can join us."

UNTOUCHABLE LAND

The people of 'Atataa were assigned plantation land to grow food, but 14 months post relocation they were still not using it. The land was already held under an existing lease and the person with the lease had already planted out the land. That farmer however, on finding out the situation, despite not being reimbursed for the remainder of his lease, vacated the land and gifted the harvest when ready to the people of 'Atataa Si'i. The people didn't feel right about taking this man's harvest without him being paid and many reported they will await notification that that had been settled before harvesting the man's crop and using the land themselves.

In terms of land for housing, of those without a home they had been asking to know where their home allotment would be.

"I wish we could be told where our allotment is in 'Atataa si'i so I can transport my house from 'Atataa there. I asked if I could move there but I was told no. I asked the Town Officer, I was told no. I could even grow things on the small house allotment for now if I just knew where it was".

For 'Atataa itself, the Town Officer reports that the Royal Estate said 'let them be free – they can stay, and they can come and go [freely between 'Atataa and 'Atataa Si'i]'. People reportedly do travel back and forth – some go on Wednesday and come back on Saturday for Church on Sunday. The Town Officer believes that if church was restarted [in 'Atataa], people would stay there. This arrangement runs in contrast to the instructions and expectations of those relocated from Mango.

FROM PANDANUS TO STRING

Financially, things are tough. All who the researchers met reported that income was their greatest concern. While one could effectively live for free in 'Atataa in Tongatapu, money is needed to survive.

Some grew emotional speaking about their income worries, including the Town Officer

"This is hard to talk about. One of the hardest things for people here continues to be income. Having enough money to provide for your kids, your family. In 'Atataa you would pick the produce you grow in the morning then sell it that evening. Here it's very hard now. People are trying to grow small gardens on their small land [around their house]"

One woman in the church hall shared that she wants to work, do something:

"We don't do anything in the hall. I used to weave and earn an income. I could spend a month making a ta'ovala and sell it for TOP\$800-1000. There is no land here to grow pandanus, and even if [we were] given access now, it would take a couple of years for it to reach maturity to be able to use it."

Another woman in 'Atataa Si'i had found a way around traditional material limitations in her new location. Entering her property, she had fabric soaked in cement drying over the curve of old tyres – making her own planter pots. She also used to earn an income from weaving. She showed us her new innovation – weaving with string – holding up a detailed woven red and white ta'ovala, part of a three-piece set. While she used to sell her work at her local market, she now sells via Facebook to the Tongan diaspora overseas. She believes she is now making as much as she used to make, maybe a little more.

The Town Officer reported that people can access new training opportunities in Nuku'alofa. Those without work are being offered training opportunities. Some from 'Atataa have started aged care training via the Tupou Tertiary Institution who have partnered with the Australian government. He reported that some might go to Australia to finish their training with the intent of remaining there to work.

Sporadic support is received from the 'outside'. Electricity at the church hall is paid for (though unclear if this cost is being covered by the government or the Royal Estate). The Royal Estate reportedly has food delivered to the people every now and then. Those from 'Atataa report that formal support from the Tongan government mostly wrapped up around 10 months after relocation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS

On speaking briefly to a young lady from 'Atataa who stays with family in Nuku'alofa not in 'Atataa Si'i or in the church hall, she shared some of the impacts on her.

"I find it really hard to talk or even think about what happened in 'Atataa. When I think about it, I feel sick, dizzy... faint."

Another reflected

"When [I] really look at what happened [in 'Atataa], I feel stronger about staying in Tongatapu. I'm losing interest in 'Atataa, I'm just looking toward 'Atataa Si'i"

Finally, the woman living in 'Atataa Si'i, the one now weaving with string, reported how she has no desire to return after seeing the destruction of the tsunami. She also shared that a number of family members passed within months of the relocation – her mother, younger brother and six others. She shared how a local doctor believed the event affected people's health – that the stress, the [traumatic] memories caused semi-delayed deaths after the event.

“My mother was always recalling the old island before she passed. Always talking about it. When she passed, we brought my father back from 'Atataa to be buried with her here in 'Atataa Si'i”.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The naming of the villages established following the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption is worthy of reflection. On Mango's eventual relocation to 'Eua, their new village was named Mango-'Eua – a suggestion of integration. For 'Atataa, the local noble wanted their new village to be named Kolovai Si'i, noting how it sits adjacent to the village of Kolovai. The Prince reportedly pushed back.

'Atataa is still there, so this is just 'Atataa Si'i.”

SINCE THE RESEARCHER'S VISIT

The researchers noted reports in late 2023 that there was a government decision to not provide houses for all relocated from 'Atataa. Nine remaining families would not be provided a house in 'Atataa Si'i as their homes were not fully destroyed following the eruption and tsunami.

IOM Tonga reported to the research team that they are working on supporting these families into homes, noting that though they can return to 'Atataa in principle, people can't return long term due to government defunding of the school and the health centre. They also report the church no longer operates there.

Policy implications

- Similar to the people of Mango, there appears to have been an assumption of permanency for the relocation of those from 'Atataa. However, unlike those from Mango, the people of 'Atataa were told explicitly by the Royal Family (who own 'Atataa) that they are free to travel to and from 'Atataa and return as they wish. Many months later however, particularly those without allocated housing in 'Atataa Si'i, have been informally prevented from any permanent return given the closure of necessary infrastructure and amenities in 'Atataa (reported in discussion with Tonga's IOM). A 'soft permanency' of their relocation is playing out, where their choices to stay or return have their limitations.
- Those the researchers spoke to from 'Atataa, including those who were living in a church hall in Nuku'alofa awaiting notice of housing allocation lamented the lack of communication or transparency from government decision-makers on when the remaining 19 houses (at the time) would be built. Further, one of the people living in the church hall wished just to know whether and where the anticipated land allocation would be in 'Atataa Si'i to at least allow her to plant some food in that area to live off while awaiting progress on a house. A reported lack of transparency or communication on plans resulted in people feeling distressed, unproductive and in a state of limbo.
- The splitting of 'Atataa's population between those with accommodation in 'Atataa Si'i and those without, has created real challenges for village level governance, including increased costs, inefficiencies and limiting the effectiveness of support that roles like the Town Officer role can provide villagers.
- The naming of relocated villages, like 'Atataa Si'i and Mango-'Eua have an interesting relevance and the researchers think, an interesting impact on the experience of those who move, and the expectations of those outside of the relocated population. As discussed in the case study, Mango-'Eua suggests an expectation of joining, an integration of populations which, as highlighted in the Mango-'Eua case study had potentially stoked the fire of push back in those from Mango struggling with challenges to their self-identities. For 'Atataa, the noble of the adjacent village had proposed a name relative to that village, with pushback from the Prince reportedly who refused the name as 'Atataa is still there'. Psychologically, there must be an impact on those relocated, and the perceptions and expectations of others based on naming, and there would be value in exploring this (including with the impacts of other historic examples, in Tonga and Samoa)
- Over a year after the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption and subsequent relocations, there were obvious **psychological impacts** for those relocated, with one person so disturbed she apologised that she is unable to speak about her experience. One spoke of emotional, mental or spiritual challenges – not just about the trauma of the relocation event but memories of their previous home - that may have contributed to a high number of deaths

in her family in the months following the event. In different talanoa, people in Tonga and Samoa, but particularly Tonga, spoke of the overemphasis on the physical and not the psychological impacts of mobility and is clearly an area that needs targeted investigation and attention.

- **The diaspora continue to have a role to play in direct and indirect resilience.** In this example, tapping into the Tongan diaspora via social media (facilitated by her daughter) offered a new market for the sale of traditional goods created by those relocated from 'Atataa. This provided critical **income continuance** as well as non-financial benefits, such as being able to continue to practice cultural skills and play the role of family wealth creator, **contributing to contextual well-being**. This use of digital markets was not widespread at the time, and some of the older folks the researchers engaged in 'Atataa and other villages did not have the means or knowledge to leverage less traditional routes to sell their wares. Investment in income and cultural continuance should be prioritised to lessen harm following relocation, and lessons like this in income adaptation should be shared and scaled up.



Left: Sivah, relocated from 'Atataa, residing in 'Atataa Si'i, showing one of her ta'ovala she had crafted from string in the absence of pandanus plants.

Right: Tapenesi, relocated from 'Atataa, residing with others (though not family) in a church hall in Nuku'alofa a year+ since relocation



Lora Vaoleti surveying 'Atataa Si'i alongside Town Officer, Tevita Sikula.

CASE STUDY 4 - SAMOA

THE WOMEN OF LALOMANU

CONTEXT

The destructive Samoa tsunami in September 2009 claimed nearly 150 lives in Samoa and destroyed homes and property particularly on the south, southwestern and eastern coasts of Upolu.

Following the tsunami, several villages previously residing at the coastal end of their village land retreated inland to limit their exposure to future tsunami risk. One of these is the village of Lalomanu which has a population of just over 700 people and sits within the district of Aleipata Itupa i Luga. It is understood that while the village was mostly relocated inland and upland, some have migrated back to the coast for improved access to the resources of the sea, proximity to the main road and other amenities.

In July 2023, the research team was received by a large group of villagers in Lalomanu for both a workshop with women from the village and a separate workshop with local youth. Around 30 women took part in the session, and a similar number of youth. An 'ava ceremony was held prior to the sessions led by the village matai.

The following provides an overview of some of the insights from the women's workshop, however a range of more general topics regarding women and well-being, women and decision-making is captured as part of a separate research (See: *Immovable Women*). This case study is focused predominantly on the impacts of mobility following relocation, with the benefit of close to 15 years' experience since the relocation event. The findings from the youth engagement at Lalomanu, as well as other youth workshops in Samoa and Tonga, is included in the *youth and the future* section of the Tonga and Samoa Synthesis Report.

CHALLENGES OF MOBILITY – SHELTER, FOOD AND WATER AND TRANSPORT

Most of the women present had firsthand experience with relocation following the 2009 tsunami. The group was asked to reflect on what their challenges were – initially and after a year or two and what kind of support was or would have been most helpful.

Initial support priorities were consistent – food, housing, water and transportation. Transport came up frequently with those in Lalomanu. This was down to the nature of their relocation that took them away from the main road and further from places such as schools and shops, as well as far from places where they could sell handicrafts. They lamented the fact they while they had roads built inland up to their relocated village, they have no cars

“The children have a far distance to walk for school and it is hard for them”.

Access to fresh water, or even sufficient water storage came up frequently and a few also spoke to the current struggles of those in Lalomanu with low water availability and low water pressure and as a result, the women reported poor hygiene was an ongoing issue since they moved. Many also spoke of the need for work or income as soon as possible following the relocation.

A year or two down the track, the priority support needs were similar but emphasised further – particularly the need for stable/adapted income.

Considering what life is like now, all of the women described concerns about changed income and income opportunities and financial struggles. One woman shared how she missed her small business selling her crafts and wares at the main road. Now, she and her young children spend time outside the supermarket doors, attempting to sell trinkets.

Many spoke on the need for more transportation options, and better water and electricity access – some households were said to have neither or that it is too expensive to afford. One group spoke of the need for shops in the high lands where they relocated so they don't need to travel so far. Another group shared that following the tsunami each family was given WST\$ 18,000 for rebuilding materials though this only covered the cost of an open house without walls.

DISTANCE AND DISLOCATION

The women in the workshop reflected on what life was like before they relocated in land following the tsunami.

"Everyone was happier back then – we lived closer together, all houses were within walking distance. And we were closer to the ocean, we could have fun with the kids in the sea, we could fish easily. We had lots of different ways to earn an income [then]."

Distance was a common theme when talking about impacts. The increased distance between houses in their relocated location, indirectly, people referenced a social distance as a result. Distance from the main road and the onward connections that represented, and distance from the ocean as a resource but also as a means of family, social and spiritual connection.

"Families were happier being closer to the beach, our houses were cleaner and nicer, we had a sense of belonging."

Two groups of women spoke on a feeling of loss having relocated – despite moving within their village land, they still felt they had lost a sense of belonging to family land. The change was considered stark from what was a familiar environment down by the beach to what now is (still) considered less familiar, 15 years after the event.

A few benefits were mentioned, including it being quieter and more peaceful being where they are now, less noise from cars and the main road. A few also said that it is good to be closer to the plantations they grow in land.

FINANCE AND VIOLENCE

Particularly regarding the impacts of financial pressures, several women were brave in sharing their stories.

"Not having much money causes more fights, my relationship with my husband is not as good."

A number of woman shared that domestic violence levels are higher within their homes since relocating. One of the hopes they held for the future was for better law enforcement to prevent violence against women.

Despite the many challenges articulated, many still felt they do not want to move back down to the beach given fears of another tsunami.

REMEMBERING THE LOST ONES

Right outside the new village hall where the workshops took place was a special burial plot for family lost in the 2009 tsunami. Surrounded by beautiful gardens and honoured with marble tombs and headstones the memories of those lost in the tsunami is ever present. Within the hall are art pieces and other memorials, including a large woven fan with a wave on it and the name of lost family members.

Policy implications

- Relocation inland for those of Lalomanu, at least according to a large sample of women from that village, has controlled for one risk, and delivered a range of other social challenges. Financial hardships stemming from a disruption in their typical approach to generating income (e.g., access to tourists and those passing by the coast, as well as distance to transport options to reach town) has limited their capacity to realise a similar standard of living in their new location. Some have resorted to selling cheap goods, like car air fresheners and cotton buds, outside supermarkets. Financial hardships have led to many challenges, including reported increased rates of family violence.
- Water and electricity insecurity are also major ongoing concerns for those in the village, with risks such hygiene raised by the group. A lack of water may be contributing to people's ability to clean their houses properly, having an impact in people's sense of pride in their property (as a comparison was drawn between their current and previous houses which were described as cleaner and more beautiful). A lack of services and transport has impacted or risks impacting health as well as education outcomes as children travel far distances on foot to school and most families do not have access to cars (and are too far now from public transport options). Resettlement planning needs to account for more than housing, and options such as staging resettlement to allow for income adaptation or to provide sufficient time for services connection may be an option in future.

- The physical arrangement of housing in the new inland location was a surprising matter raised by some women – specifically the distance between houses in their new location compared to how things were in their original setting by the coast. This social distance may have been seen as challenging for a number of reasons, including contributing to weakened social connection and possibly, the researchers’ judgement, more shielding of family matters that could enable the more prevalent family violence the women spoke of. In a visualisation held with an older woman in Samoa, her future vision involved a happy community set up where everyone was involved in the other’s lives, people walked by each other’s house constantly, people made passing conversation, made eye contact. This made her happy and feel safe. Considerations should be made about the ‘right’ configuration of housing in the reestablishment of housing that accounts for social and cultural norms and contributors to well-being.



Women’s workshop Lalomanu, and art piece dedicated to lost family in the 2009 tsunami.

CASE STUDY 5 - TONGA

PATANGATA

CONTEXT

Patangata is a settlement on a narrow sand spit in eastern Nuku'alofa, an area known to be particularly exposed to climate change hazards. Those settled in this area are largely relocated from other island groups in Tonga, reportedly Vava'u in particular (talanoa, a couple in Patangata, April 2023). In other talanoa in Tonga, several people have raised concerns about the settlement of this area, that despite known risks, the government approved settlement and housing.

During recent tropical cyclones (for example, Tropical Cyclone Harold and Tropical Cyclone Gita), reports suggest sea surges passed right through houses on the spit, reaching waist levels and leaving people 'swimming in their living rooms' (Matangi Tonga, 2020). Despite its hazard exposure and despite recurrent damage to their properties, families continue to settle in the area for a range of reasons, including access to fishing grounds for subsistence and income, and having no other options but to remain. This case study is centred on a talanoa with a couple that researchers met in Patangata in April 2023. There are also some additional details provided by a participant from *Survey One* who resides with her family in Patangata.

EXISTING ON AND FROM THE SEA

When the researchers visited Patangata, a couple were out on their porch working. The wife was sitting on a plastic chair beating some ngatu cloth over a wooden horse with her ike. Her husband sat a few metres away on the concrete sorting and rolling dried hiapo.

She makes ngatu to sell for some income. She shared a bit about her background.

"I'm not originally from here, I moved here in the 1990's to be with my husband who is from here, he's a fisherman. A lot of the people here came from Vava'u, they settled here, they weren't originally from here."

She spoke of how her husband fishes and by selling his catch they can buy food as well as the raw material needed for her to make ngatu. Beyond what their house is sitting on, they don't have land to grow food. The land is dry and dusty and just a narrow, sealed road separates their house from the sea.

"We don't have land here, but we do have the sea. And when we are here we can get money every day."

During the day her husband fishes and collects shellfish, and at night he dives for feke (octopus). They earn no less than TOP\$500 per week from selling the husband's catch, selling from the roadside at Patangata rather than at the local market.

"We used to sell in the market in town, but since COVID and the tsunami we just sell from here in the village – people come to us as they know it will be fresh. It's good because we save money this way. But now other people from other villages come to sell their fish here now too."

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND INTERVENTION AFTER THE HUNGA TONGA-HUNGA HA'APAI ERUPTION AND TSUNAMI

The couple we spoke with shared how government representatives came to Patangata the day after the tsunami to do a survey, to count the people present in each home and assess support needs. The couple believed it wasn't a good process in the sense that many people left straight after the tsunami to temporarily stay with family, making the survey inaccurate in its capture of impact or need. Their family was given a lump sum of TOP\$500 as a support payment. The Church of Tonga in the USA provided support to the community, funding new mattresses.

Following the tsunami, the government also put a rule in place saying that they were not allowed to fish, with concerns that the fishing grounds may be contaminated.

With no other option for income, the couple shared that they had to fish, first eating their catch themselves. When they didn't get sick from consuming it, they continued to fish and began selling their catch again.

KNOWING THE RISK, STAYING ANYWAY

The couple share how the tsunami swept through the whole house. The wife was staying with family inland at the time. The husband recalls the day emotionally.

"It was a very sad time, seeing women trying to climb onto the roof [to safety]"

They tell us how every king tide the sea reaches the inside of the house as well. We ask them if they think about moving, given the hazards they face.

"We don't want to move like the Mango people. We are fisher people, we don't want to work in a plantation."

They also share how they have spent their hard-earned money on their house.

"If we had to move we would be starting from scratch... and how do we make money [to start from scratch] if we are not by the sea?"

The wife thinks a while, then shares

"We could move, I'm sure the government will tell us to move, but I'm telling you now, my heart is here."

In a response to *Survey One* from this research where participants were asked about their recent and planned mobility, as well as how climate change may be feeding into their decision making, one respondent from Patangata shared her story in free text comments (translated from Tongan)

"Forgive me, I feel I need to explain my responses. Though I've said I have not moved and do not plan to move, it is because I cannot move, not because I don't realise the risk of living [in Patangata]. I do not have the [financial] means to move, but I am also the eldest in the family. I need to stay to look after my parents, as well as my younger siblings who are not married."

Policy implications

- The decision was made to allow formal settlement of the Patangata area, with development ongoing (the researchers noted several new builds on poles, reportedly aid-funded). The area was hard hit during the recent tsunami however it continues to be affected by sea flooding during king tides. Strong consideration should be had for future development in this area, as well as future decision-making around areas of formal settlement given progressive climate impacts. Further, given the clear exposure of Patangata to climate impacts, and the lack of resources preventing some residents from relocating despite risks, planning should be done to identify alternate locations for resettlement in the medium to long term, including consideration of current resident's means of income/need to retain access to some fishing grounds.

- Following the eruption and tsunami, the government took steps to assess needs and impacts, however, reportedly calculating this based on people present the day following while many had temporarily situated themselves with family inland. The government also put in place rules for those in their area not to fish given the risk of water contamination (Patangata has been known to be the rubbish dump of Tongatapu). The couple the researchers spoke to reported they had no choice but to continue to fish soon after the event given no income alternative, risking theirs and the health of others. Income support to assist the efficacy of future rules or policies following sudden environmental events could be considered.



L to R: Couple in Patangata, making ngatu. Infrastructure works in Patangata. New houses on stilts in Patangata

CASE STUDY 6 - TONGA

TONGATAPU, ONE

CONTEXT

In the first half of 2023, the research team ran a survey to assess recent and planned mobility in a sample of the Tongan and Samoan populations. This survey also covered destination preferences (internal and overseas) – See *The Mobility Willing and the Steadfast Stayers – Survey One*. Those who suggested they had moved in the last five years in part or because of the impacts of climate change, and/or suggested they plan to move in the coming five years because of the impacts of climate change were contacted for a follow up talanoa.

In early November 2023, the research team spoke with seven people in Tonga and Samoa who shared their story and plans for climate-related mobility. This case study shares some of the insights from one of those talanoa. Particularly in considering contributors to scale and pattern, household level food insecurity as a result of climate change, and challenges with land access (particularly for relocating) is highlighted in this brief case study.

BACKGROUND

Sione (name changed) is from Ha’afeva, Ha’apai. He moved to Halaleva in Tongatapu around 30 years ago. It was hard fitting into a new community. It was hard leaving family behind who are buried in Ha’apai.

He has 13 children that he cares for, with ages ranging from 13 – 31 years. One lives overseas in Japan, the rest live in Tonga. In Survey One (*The Mobility Willing and the Steadfast Stayers*) Sione suggested plans of moving in the coming five years, with climate change reported as one of the contributing factors in that decision.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AN IMPETUS

Sione shared that on his current plantation plants are getting harder and harder to grow. Output is low and seasonal changes are getting harder to predict.

“The old ways of knowing when to grow different things, it’s all changing.”

He spoke on trying instead to grow food around his house, like banana and taro but it is not sufficient to feed the family nor to earn any income.

He mentions that yams are particularly important – with festivities in December centring around the gifting and eating of yam. The yams now die before December. The researchers spoke with Sione on the impact on culture in the absence of yams. Sione and family tried using different machines to help with the planting and cultivation of yam and manioke but the weather is making it harder and harder to grow.

People are trying to grow different crops now, he says. Beyond that, fishing has been impacted, saying ‘fishing is all over the place now’.

DECISION MAKING – ALTERNATE FOOD GROWING LAND AND A LONGER-TERM PLAN

The researchers asked what Sione is planning given these challenges. He says that would like some land in Mata ki ‘Eua (a relatively elevated area of Tongatapu) to move to, but he would need to buy that land. He needs to save money to be able to do that and given his issues growing crops he could sell, and in sufficient work opportunities in Tonga this is looking like it a plan out of reach if he stays in Tonga. The area around there is mostly owned by the government he says.

For now, he's negotiated with a noble in a slightly more elevated part of Tongatapu to lease 8 acres of land to grow food there. It cost him TOP\$1000 for a 20-year lease. He will see how that goes. At the same time, he and his wife have decided they will aim to move to New Zealand in the coming years. There they will have more work opportunities he says, and more importantly, the children will have access to education opportunities not available in Tonga. He says he wants more 'life opportunities' for them all.

He says the decision to move was with him and his wife, family overseas did not or have not yet provided input.

We discuss the connection between the recently leased land, and the plan to ultimately move to New Zealand for a 'better life'. Sione reiterates that the main reason to leave for New Zealand is to provide his children the opportunity for further education. His plan is to travel to New Zealand, get set up with accommodation, then bring over his wife and children. But the plan is to return to Tonga in about 10 years to retire, he is clear he does not wish to stay in New Zealand permanently.

"It's restful here, fiemalie Tonga".

ADAPTATION SUPPORT AND CHOICE

The researchers explore the decisions Sione and his wife have faced so far and we pick up on a possible lack of choice in their decisions, including to move onwards to New Zealand. It's concluded that adaptation costs provide a ceiling to how much Sione feels they can plan on remaining in Tonga. Without access to sufficient income to relocate the family home to a more elevated area in Tonga, and with the added effort and perhaps cost of growing food in a changing climate there appears a strain on choice for him and his family.

The researchers asked whether adaptation support would shift his overseas mobility plans. He says it probably would. TOP\$10,000 would motivate, or enable, him and his family to stay.

Policy implications

- **Food insecurity in this case was one of the first drivers of relocation** of planting land and efforts to identify an area more elevated to build a house.
- Adaptation is costing the average farmer in Tonga already. Sione spent TOP\$1000 on leasing land to replant in an attempt to 'beat' the impacts of climate change. He wishes to also relocate their family home from the current low-lying area to the elevated area of Mata ki 'Eua. He would need to buy this land but given he cannot currently grow enough food to sell, and work options are limited in Tonga, he and his family are turning to overseas mobility to New Zealand. When asked, it seemed **further adaptation support would keep him and his family Tonga**, at least until a time when he, his wife and/or his children (truly) chose to leave. It is positive that there appears to be land easy enough to lease still for food growing, for those who can afford the lease.
- **Overseas mobility, especially for parents with children, is often not intended to be permanent.** Even for those who reported that climate change impacts were a factor in their mobility, many reported plans to return to Tonga in approximately 10 years once their children are set up with education and/or work. Those the researchers spoke to reported that they don't necessarily want to go overseas but are obligated to be there for their children. Many people the researchers spoke to are actively planning home builds or relocations (in higher land or inland) in order to have a property to return to.

CASE STUDY 7 - TONGA

TONGATAPU, TWO

CONTEXT

In the first half of 2023, the research team ran a survey to assess recent and planned mobility in a sample of the Tongan and Samoan populations. This survey also covered destination preferences (internal and overseas) – See The Mobility Willing and the Steadfast Stayers – Survey One. Those who suggested they had moved in the last five years in part or because of the impacts of climate change, and/or suggested they plan to move in the coming few years because of the impacts of climate change were contacted for a follow up talanoa.

In early November 2023, the research team spoke with seven people in Tonga and Samoa who shared their story and plans for climate-related mobility. This case study shares some of the insights from one of those talanoa. Particularly in considering contributors to scale and pattern, land loss and access to new land as well as resources to rebuild is covered in this brief case study.

BACKGROUND

Luke (name changed) is a pastor in his church, his wife a teacher. They have eight children ranging from primary school age up to a 21- and 22-year-old who currently live in Oamaru, New Zealand. They live in Malie, a coastal village in Tonga. The land they live on is not theirs – given her work, they are able to live on school land. They have lived there for 19 years and there is a small community of people around who are close and support each other. It's safe, it's convenient, the kids have a place to play. With these positives, they've noticed some changes recently. The land was an old landfill, and it was filled in 40 years ago. They feel like the land is sinking, and at the same time the sea feels like it is getting closer.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

When they first moved to Malie they report there were no issues with sea inundation or erosion. Now, it is common for the sea to come into their property. Every cyclone they all have to evacuate their house and shelter in one of the school buildings further in from the coast.

They save money and whenever they can – about once per year – they buy solid rock to pour into the water's edge by the house they stay in to try to fend off the progressive erosion. The sea is right outside the house now, "it's right there".

PLANS TO MOVE, DESIRES TO RETURN

They have found some land in Veitongo, it is family land they can use. But the land is bare and they need to build a house. It will take them about five years to save enough to start to build. They say they are trying their best to move to Veitongo and build so that they have somewhere in Tonga to come back to. They share this in the context of early thinking on moving overseas. They have applied for an education scholarship for one of their children – if that is successful, they will all move to New Zealand.

"We don't necessarily want to move to New Zealand but if our children go, we must go. The only reason we want to go is for the children. We've already discussed this as [an immediate] family. We must take full responsibility to care for them until they graduate."

Even though there are challenges in Tonga, including environmentally, life overseas is seen as difficult in a different way.

"Tonga is more relaxed - you can do whatever you want. You can go to the bush, you can plant food, you don't need to spend money. Overseas, you need to plan for everything."

THE ROLE OF OVERSEAS VISITS

Both husband and wife share that when they travel to visit places like New Zealand they always travel with their children. These visits ('if immigration lets us, it is a blessing') they see as critical to helping their children understand the New Zealand culture. Their children are exposed to routines and work schedules, and they see these visits as critical to support their adaptation when/if they move over more permanently.

THOUGHTS ON MOBILITY AT SCALE IN TONGA AND CURRENT GAPS

Given the contribution of climate change to their own near- and medium-term mobility, Luke and his wife were invited to consider what this could mean at scale for Tonga, and what should be prioritised at a country level. They believe that Tonga's leaders need a vision, and that there is a need for different stakeholders – including within villages but also between villages and government - to work together a lot better. Their hope is that the support of government towards adaptation – like slowing the progress of erosion – needs to be more fair or equitable. They shared a belief that support is often accessed on a who-you-know basis.

They volunteered a suggestion, that the relevant government departments – including MEIDECC – should go into each community, talk with them face-to-face, assess their needs and risks and prioritise support between and within villages from there. They also felt like efforts need to be better coordinated to relocate key infrastructure – like schools - to take people out of harms way.

Policy implications

- This couple shared a story, similar to another case study, where they have secured (or identified) land in a more climate-proof area but they have neither the immediate resources to start building, nor the means to raise enough money any time soon through paid work in Tonga. This lack of adaptation resources, for buying land, or seemingly more common, for the building of a house once a family has secured land (including family land) appears to be a factor in considering overseas mobility to access work to then secure land/housing in Tonga.
- Similar to another case study ('Tongatapu one'), this couple plans to move to New Zealand, and eventually return to Tonga – to the land and hopefully a house on family land in Veitongo - once their children are established. Overseas mobility of parents is to fulfil their obligations as parents, but it is not seen as or intended to be permanent – they are actively investing in a location to return home to.
- This couple spoke of a conscious choice to take their children with them whenever they are granted visiting visas to New Zealand for the explicit purpose of socialising them to New Zealand culture, and particularly work culture. Their two eldest are in the South Island of New Zealand currently and no doubt had a slightly easier time integrating given previous visits as children. It is worth considering the broader and longer-term benefits of Pacific family visiting New Zealand, and with an eye to potentially higher scale climate mobility, assessing the barriers Pacific people face now to visiting likely destination countries like New Zealand.
- Finally, in considering their planned climate-related mobility and retreat from the coast, and a possibility of others (at scale) facing similar, the couple shared their opinion that while they save up and spend their own money on efforts to address land erosion, the distribution of government support lacks transparency and that they hope that efforts can be more deliberate, coordinated and location-specific. They wished for villages to have options for a face-to-face with the relevant government agencies about their specific climate concerns and needs so that investment can be done with a better understanding of the breadth and nature of everyone's challenges.

CASE STUDY 8 - TONGA

HA'APAI

CONTEXT

Ha'apai island group is dispersed over an impressive 13,000 square km of ocean and is one of the most climate-exposed island groups in Tonga, with the main island of Ha'apai and the administrative hub – Lifuka – having a maximum elevation point above mean sea level of 17 metres (SPC, 2013). Lifuka hosts approximately 40% of Ha'apai's population (SPC, 2013). A recent study by SPC (2021) found that approximately 40m of coast had eroded in the space of ~40 years, a measure reiterated through observations of those the researchers engaged on a fieldwork visit to Ha'apai in November 2023.

Ha'apai island group has already seen climate related mobility at a family level, with families in areas such as Hihifo being allocated government land inland to allow them to retreat from the encroaching sea. The researchers were informed that some families have moved to Tongatapu following significant loss of their land to the sea, and one family at least relocated to New Zealand for the same reason. Overall, the perception was that mobility is still predominantly for education and work opportunities in Tongatapu or overseas. The Governor of Ha'apai shared that the population has been steadily dropping in recent decades, accelerated by a severe tropical cyclone in 1961 and continuing since then, though as mentioned, mostly driven by people's desire to access education and income opportunities.

Ha'apai has also seen the relocation of the population of Mango to Tongatapu then 'Eua following the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption.

BACKGROUND

During the researcher's fieldtrip in November 2023, the team was grateful to meet with the Governor of Ha'apai, Dr Pita Taufatofua for a relatively long talanoa. The team also spoke with three people identified through their participation in Survey One (See: *The Mobility Willing and the Steadfast Stayers*). These people indicated either a desire or plan to move due to the impacts of climate change, or an openness for a general follow up talanoa to share some of their perspectives and experiences.

This case study is centred therefore on Ha'apai as a location, drawing on a range of inputs.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN HA'APAI

There appeared to be alignment on the impacts of climate change on food supply and size in Ha'apai, including smaller fish catches, smaller yams and the steep increases in price in these items in particular (including a reported tripling in the price of fish).

Some referenced changes to their family land as measures of local impacts of climate change

"Where I grew up, around Hihifo where our land is, where the high-water mark is, is where we used to have our umu. I think about 40m has eroded from that coastline since the 1980's"

The hospital has been relocated inland, and the original sits vacant teetering close to the new coastline. This hospital has cultural significance as the place of birth of King Tupou I. A large church in Hihifo was also mentioned in illustrating change

"The old church in Hihifo - when the water reaches the high water mark the water is knocking at the door. [The church] will be there until it becomes underwater."

FEAR AND LOVE

Some of the people the researchers spoke to described this parallel feeling of love and fear living in Ha'apai. The love was expressed effusively (*"I love Ha'apai very, very much"*), tearfully even, describing the ancestral connection of their family to the land. The emotion was particularly apparent on discussions about future mobility plans, with one particular woman expressing a feeling of guilt for speaking frankly about the possibility of leaving. Others described a very close community *"We all know and look after each other... we know every car here"* and a feeling of peace and relaxation in Ha'apai, particularly when contrasted with life in Tongatapu *"In Tongatapu you can't relax, you have to sleep with one eye on your crop so people don't steal. Noone steals here"*. One man shared an example of going down to the beach when the fishermen arrive and just asking for fish *"I will say 'give me some 'ofa and they'll throw me fish for free'"*.

In terms of fear, one woman shared her anxiety

"The land is getting smaller and smaller... I'm fearful when I'm here – the sea is on both sides, I see erosion on both sides... the fear has been there since before the tsunami, there's nowhere to escape, nowhere to run... I'm getting too old to run!"

In contrast, one man we spoke with expressed a feeling of safety in Ha'apai

"No one does drugs in Ha'apai, you see the prisoners in Ha'apai and none of them are from Ha'apai. It's peaceful here. COVID got here last too, [I] feel safe."

HA'APAIN IDENTITY/PSCHE AND MOBILITY PLANNING (OR NOT)

Most of those the researchers spoke to described a unique pride at being from Ha'apai. The Governor shared

"Whether here or overseas, they are proud to be Ha'apain, they will find opportunities to bring it up. As a Ha'apain, when I talk to someone from Tongatapu I'm very proud, I emphasise to you that I'm from Ha'apai. It's more than emotional. Tonga was run from here; this is where modern Tonga started."

Others spoke about the Ha'apain psyche as it relates to mobility or disaster planning. When asking the Governor about any explicit conversations being had at the highest levels about pre-planning relocation, the Governor shared that there was not, and added *"I think it will be like Mango – something will happen, and we will have to react"*.

Some believed that it is hard for Ha'apains to think about the future 'until something hits it'. One person shared that churches and NGOs do encourage disaster preparation for example, asking people to keep 72 hrs worth of water and food but that 'Tongans don't instigate' this. A few expressed that it is the Tongan nature to deal with things when they happen.

Foa island (connected via bridge to Lifuka island) is relatively elevated and was a destination for shelter during several recent severe tropical cyclones. During Tropical Cyclone Ian, one woman described people being stuck in Foa, including those out in their plantations. Some sheltered in church halls there and then stayed with extended family in Foa until return travel to Lifuka was possible. Even with Foa hosting people during disasters, there is apparently no concerted effort to prepare the hall/s or people for future hosting responsibilities.

Others spoke about the impacts of tropical cyclones on their properties in the past, losing rooves, sharing *"if it is not too damaged, we just carry on"*.

There seemed to be a particular pride associated with Ha'apain resourcefulness – resourcefulness was mentioned often - which appeared to be connected somewhat to a resistance to prepare for disasters. A pride in being able to recover in the face of destruction like they have many times over.

At a government level, it is important to note that the main barrier to investing in planning for possible future relocation was identified by the Governor as financial, adding that those struggling now to continue to live a subsistence lifestyle in some of Ha'apai's outer islands want to stay despite these challenges *"they love it there, they don't want to move"*.

LAND AND RELOCATION

As mentioned in the context blurb, climate related mobility has already occurred in Ha'apai because of coastal erosion and other at-risk areas were identified by the Governor as needing relocation support. Those already relocated who were offered government land inland to relocate to include parts of Hihifo on the main island of Lifuka. Felemea on Uiha island have reportedly also moved inland away from the coast. The Governor described one family from Hihifo who relocated to Tongatapu saying all they had left of their land after erosion was a little strip of land *"How are they supposed to rebuild on that?"*. Those in Houmatoufua were identified as at risk – residing in an old guava plantation that was converted for residential building in the 1980s. A ruling was recently made by the government to prevent new development (or even investment in repairs) between the main Holopeka Rd and the coast. This area cuts across four villages. However given a lack of land to offer these people for relocation, the government did not go so far as to instruct people to leave those areas – they would have nowhere to go.

The Governor shared that land vacancy is high, saying most landowners live overseas in New Zealand, Australia, the USA or are in Tongatapu. As Governor, Dr Pita Taufatofua is responsible for land matters. He described people coming to him for land access and he has to ask them for their family tree, ask how they are linked, how they are connected to the land heir. Often these queries make no progress as at least a note from the heir is needed to facilitate a land use agreement.

When the heir can be contacted, the Governor shared that they have a tool in their toolkit to facilitate a land exchange and have done so a few times. The office of the Governor works with an heir to see what land in Tongatapu for example they may consider swapping for their land in Ha'apai. This land is then used to support internal relocation efforts. The exchange is reportedly as close to like-for-like size wise as possible.

HA'APAI AND ONWARDS MOBILITY – WHERE, WHY, HOW

Beyond local relocation within Ha'apai, onwards and overseas relocation was discussed with those the researchers met in Ha'apai.

One woman shared that financially, it is easier to go to Tongatapu first than moving immediately overseas. Tongatapu was seen as a helpful stepping stone to access income to afford overseas mobility. New Zealand was noted as the destination of choice due to proximity by this particular woman but that again was described as a stepping stone in her case. Ultimately she wished to move to the USA where her close family reside.

In terms of permanency, this women relayed a possible Ha'apain trait or perspective when it comes to mobility

"When you move you don't come back to Ha'apai – you keep moving, keep moving forever... 'alu 'aupito..."

Some described the influence of family and friends overseas. One woman shared that her older children overseas have been encouraging her and her aging husband to move to be with them so that they can take care of them. Their children tell her they feel bad they are busy working and can't check on them in Ha'apai. One male shared that he speaks to family and friends overseas daily, they share stories of their lives in New Zealand, Australia, USA and Canada, the good work and education opportunities, saying "they share information with us and help us".

On overseas mobility planning, one woman shared that she and her husband are speaking with her children (overseas). They will rely on her husband's pension and moving overseas will rely on the financial and in-kind support of relatives. She also shares that her church (the Church of the Latter Day Saints) will be there to support "like a family".

MOBILITY TRADE OFFS

In discussing mobility – to Tongatapu or abroad, trade-offs were volunteered. One said people who leave Ha’apai miss working the land and building beautiful houses, whereas in Tongatapu one has to share a small house. In saying that, in Tongatapu people have work and education opportunities, and the income earned affords options, including to move overseas.

One woman summarised her feelings on the trade offs:

“Life is about steps forward... [you] need to work hard for your kids... sometimes you need to suffer for your dreams.”

FOREIGN-OWNED BUSINESS AND SOCIAL/ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Concerns were raised in Ha’apai about foreign-run business and the impact it was having on economic opportunities for Tongans. One person shared their belief that non-ethnic Tongans monopolise retail in Ha’apai asking “what is left for Tongans anymore?”. Another raised concerns about the foreign export of fish resources with no benefit to the locals. Those engaged in Ha’apai did not believe that land leasing for food growing by non-ethnic Tongans (as described in Tongatapu) was occurring in Ha’apai, yet.

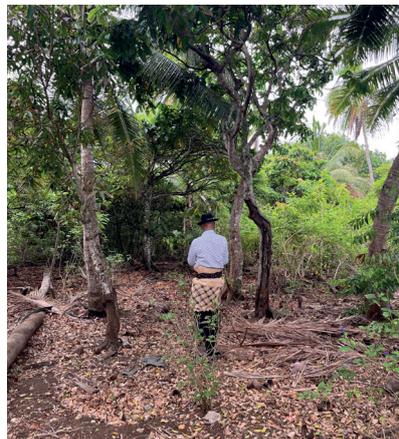
Policy implications

- While some the researchers spoke to didn’t believe there had been material climate impacts in Ha’apai, others expressed a level of anxiety about the closeness of the sea on both sides, as well as multiple reports of severe coastal erosion affecting and displacing some families. Based on a range of examples of relocation (within Ha’apai, within Tonga and overseas to New Zealand), climate change mobility is already underway in Ha’apai. Planning for more mobility at scale in the coming years, including for areas identified as particularly at-risk should be considered. Given what we have seen in areas of Tongatapu, food insecurity has triggered mobility planning and there were indications from people in Ha’apai that fish catch is down as is the size of e.g., root crops
- In saying that, the Governor of Ha’apai identified a clear practical barrier to stronger planning or supporting relocation for at risk or climate impacted communities – a lack of available land. While there is plenty of vacant land, this land is tied up by the landowners - Ha’apains who now live overseas “In New Zealand, Australia and the United States”. Leadership shared with the researchers that at risk areas have not been instructed to leave those at risk areas simply because there is no available land to offer them. There is an opportunity to raise awareness with the relevant diaspora on the need and potentially expand programs like the land exchange option shared by the Governor. Per a response in the Tongan diaspora survey, one participant shared that they would be happy to make their land available to others if it were needed.
- The Governor also highlighted other barriers to progressing more at scale relocation efforts for Ha’apai – financial barriers, and the desire of some to stay in place. The Governor gave the example of some of the communities living in Ha’apai’s outer islands – that they are struggling to maintain a subsistence lifestyle now but they still love it there and they want to stay.
- One women’s response in terms of her approach to mobility spoke to this impermanence that has come up frequently in other contexts. However, different to some of the patterns of mobility suggested by parents, this women spoke of a Ha’apain approach to mobility – ‘Ha’apains don’t come back – keep moving, keep moving forever, ‘alu ‘aupito’. Critical to understand the range of perspectives, and the possible sub-cultural influences on mobility approaches that could come from historical, cultural or other influences.

- There were a range of responses to questions of preparation and planning for both sudden and slow onset mobility. There was alignment among all the researchers spoke to that there is a Ha’apai belief and pride in their own resourcefulness to get through difficult [environmental] events that could contribute to a level of resistance to planning ahead. The Governor himself commented on future climate change mobility “I think it will be like Mango. Something will happen and we will have to react”. Others commented on a more general Tongan psyche that is more reactive than proactive. Policies should consider the identity element (and possible blockers) to mobility planning and explore approaches that are aligned with people’s worldviews but still supports the minimisation of harm from future mobility events.
- Finally, trade-offs in mobility decision making was discussed with a few people in Ha’apai, including their reflections on other’s experiences. The general conclusion was that mobility is uncomfortable, challenging, stressful but that it is what is needed to be done for the good of one’s children “sometimes you have to suffer for your dreams.”



L–R: Hospital in Lifuka, Ha’apai, now closed up due to adjacent sea erosion . Women weaving, Tongaleleka, Ha’apai.



L-R: town land/residential plot for family in Tongaleleka/Hihifo, Ha’apai. Dr Timote Vaoleti in family plantation land in Ha’apai, including young sandalwood trees. Low-lying connecting road between Lifuka and Foa (Foa is relatively elevated land).

CASE STUDY 9 - SAMOA

LELATA

CONTEXT

Lelata village in Apia sits relatively low and adjacent to the Vasigano river - in an area known to be particularly at risk and frequently impacted by severe flooding. Participants engaged in Lelata report 119 people live there, and the majority of land is freehold (versus customary title).

Tropical Cyclone Evan in 2012 had devastating impacts for the 40 or so families living in Lelata, with loss of life, as well as the partial or complete destruction of homes and plantations. Subsequent flooding events, like in December 2020 has driven further need for village clean up, and home rebuilds and repairs.

During the wet season and flooding events, those in Lelata must cross the river on foot to access their homes. Some families report relocating temporarily during December to help their family avoid some of the worst flooding risks (Samoa Observer, 2023). Some infrastructure efforts have been implemented in an attempt to lessen the impacts of flooding on this community and others (e.g., the ongoing Vaisigano River wall, and river dredging), however there continues to be concerns raised in the media and in conversations held by the researchers on the need for more governmental support to secure the safety and livelihoods of those residing on that land.

BACKGROUND

In late February 2024, the researchers met with a family, led by James (name changed) a Matai and emergency services worker – and his wife Joy, a government employee who live in Lelata. James' family have been there for over four generations. They have four young girls, and James' brother has returned from Australia to live with them. The researchers sought to understand their experiences and perspectives, the impacts of these serious flooding events, as well as what steps they or others may be taking to mitigate the risk posed by the position of their land.

REBUILDING AND SPLITTING THE RISK

James shares how, despite the challenges, he has not considered moving from Lelata

"I've been living here since I was born. I have not thought about leaving or going anywhere, we just wanted to rebuild"

He shares how people in the village own their land so they don't want to leave their land for any period of time.

Following the destruction of Tropical Cyclone Evan, the family took ~10 years to rebuild their home - building only as they received money from brothers and sisters living in New Zealand. They received no financial support from the government for their rebuild. On rebuilding, they took care to ensure the foundations were built a lot higher in anticipation of further future flooding and they share that the higher foundations 'are working'.

"Our original house was covered by the flood waters – the breadfruit tree and other food did not make it... the foundations are now high up. We made our house stronger to combat floods and hurricanes, and made it bigger too"

Further, the family have bought land uphill in Momoe with the plan to go there to shelter should they need to. They have not yet built there but having somewhere else to go, uphill and inland, if they need it gives them peace of mind.

FUNDING APPLICATIONS AND FAILURE TO REBUILD, FOR SOME

They share that other families that had property destroyed in 2012 and in subsequent years have not fared as well as them. Four families were reportedly particularly affected by floods and though they attempted to go through a process of application for funding to rebuild, they never completed the process and never received the funding. James and his wife Joy are unsure where these families moved to on leaving Lelata but say that they do see them around town so assume they went to live in 'other places' around Apia.

Joy shares that other families have nowhere else to go, this is the only option they have whether they can rebuild or not. Some unable to rebuild have just had to 'make do'.

In a positive turn, James and family successfully applied for funding through the Green Climate Fund to build greenhouses and replant their vegetable plantations. These reportedly grow well, and they sell their excess produce for income.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

In conversation with a senior leader at the Ministry of Works, Transport and infrastructure, they confirmed that owners were not given compensation following river flooding, but if rebuilds happen on land needed by the government then those people are compensated fairly. They reported that the Ministry and the government as a whole has very limited resources to support all people and projects needed.

They went on to share challenges with the completion of resilience projects, including the Vaisigano River work, with supply chain cost blow outs, as well as general challenges with accessing Climate Finance citing time costs, red tape and compliance costs that become impractical at times. The river wall project is still in its early phase of construction and James reports that the wall does not extend the length of the river so some communities remain exposed. Two senior leaders in the Ministry of Works, Transport and infrastructure confirmed efforts are progressing to build a large dam upstream for flood mitigation purposes.

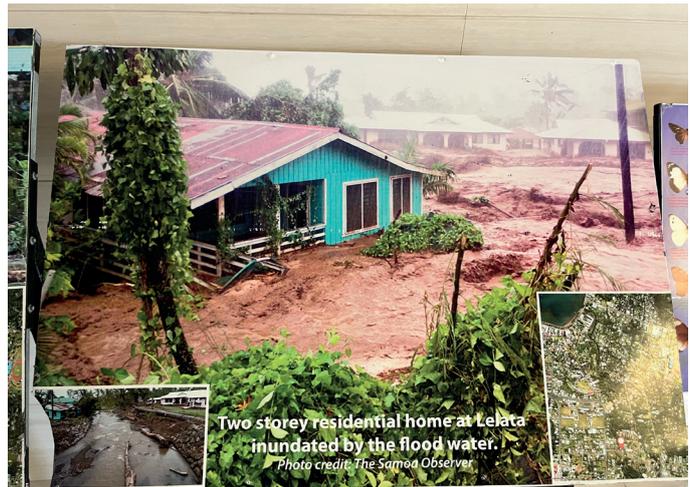
James and family share that the government does support information sharing and also helps with flood preparedness – practicing evacuations with sirens, and directions to evacuation centres. Their last practice was in November 2023. The village Mayor has a role of safety oversight for all in the village and also helps locals with things such as completing paperwork for funding.

HELPING WOMEN HELP OTHERS

Joy shared that a lot of the burden of flood and disaster preparation falls onto the women of the village as the men are out helping others in the village. Beyond preparation, women play an important role in helping others clean up after flood "*the government might help sometimes but we go and help others clean up*". She wishes for support programmes targeting women for the preparation, response and recovery role they already play.

Policy implications

- Delays and complexity in accessing funding for rebuilds or repairs reportedly was the ultimate reason for four families leaving Lelata following particularly severe flooding. Though participants report government support in completing complex 'intensive' paperwork requirements, there is an opportunity to look at ways to lessen both the burden of application and the delays in access.
- Women are bearing a lot of the burden of disaster preparation and response and should be considered for scaffolding support particularly in areas frequently and severely impacted by environmental and climate events.
- Rebuilding better has lessened exposure to subsequent flooding events. Funding for the rebuild came from the overseas diaspora (siblings).



Locked up (possibly freehold) land in Lelata. Image from major floods in Lelata (2012), photo exhibition, Samoa Government Buildings.

CASE STUDY 10 - SAMOA

SATITOA

CONTEXT

The destructive Samoa tsunami in September 2009 claimed nearly 150 lives in Samoa and destroyed homes and property particularly on the south, southwestern and eastern coasts of Upolu.

Following the tsunami, a number of villages previously residing at the coastal end of their village land retreated inland to limit their exposure to future tsunami risk. One of these was the village of Satitua – part of the larger district of Aleipata, shared with relatively larger villages such as Lalomanu.

Now, those the researchers met with report that around 10 families from their village have returned to stay by the coast – “mostly the young ones”, though the majority reside upland – approximately 35-40 families live in the relocated village. Some live between two homes – one by the coast, and one upland.

BACKGROUND

In late February 2024, the researchers met with a family living in the relocated village of Satitua, Aleipata. Present in the talanoa was Lemusu Lupe, a Matai and village Mayor, and some family members. His wife did not join the talanoa as she needed to keep a watchful eye on their store to ensure items were not taken by local youth. Lemusu Lupe inherited his Matai title from his father who passed following the 2009 tsunami. The two family members joining the talanoa lived overseas for some time before returning to Samoa to live.

The research team’s impression of the family was that they had embraced this new life, seemed content and spoke often of being very happy.

REBUILD, BUT HOW AND WHERE?

Family members who were in Apia at the time of the tsunami expressed an extreme level of anxiety and concern for the well-being of their family, particularly their elderly father.

Following the tsunami, decisions needed to be made about rebuilding, however the family was not initially aligned. They did know that they wanted to remain on their land and not move elsewhere. Most of the family agreed they wanted to move to higher ground. Their father however wanted the family to rebuild on the coast – the family had to argue with their father to rebuild on higher land for safety and the decision was made to move. An earthquake soon after the tsunami was further encouragement for those families who had initially intended to remain coastal.

They rebuilt on what was their plantation land. They broke in the land themselves and it was hard work. The land they use for their plantation is now further uphill. They appreciate that what was a dirt track to their plantation has now been tarsealed by the government and they can drive part of the way to their new plantation. The building on their old plantation site, that they used to use to feed the pigs has been converted to their kitchen. The government provided funding and provided support with the paperwork that required several steps of verification for e.g., the Minister, Chief, Pastor and the village Mayor. Funding of WST\$10,000 was allocated to each family to help with the rebuild. This could not cover the costs so the family relied on siblings overseas to fund the building of a bigger house, sufficient to care for their father who was still with them at the time.

The family shares that not all families in the village had large blocks of land inland like they did, and so they shared their land for others to use so that they could retreat upland and inland as well.

It took them around a year to rebuild and they were the first family of the village to do so. They all shared the first house they built then they built more houses. They built their little shop from the recycled materials of old damaged buildings. They still visit the location of their original home by the coast where just its foundation remains. They clean and sweep the foundation weekly.

When their father passed, he was buried upland in the newly established village.

A BETTER LIFE?

The family shares that they are very happy living where they are now. They find it easier – being closer to their food growing land, recalling that they could not grow much food when they lived by the coast. Edith shares that in the old village location they lived too close to each other – you could see families having domestic disputes, what they were eating for lunch or dinner. They have more space now.

They describe having lots of young people in the village and about 50 of the youth are picking fruit, mostly in New Zealand, sending money back to their parents in the village. They have a new school upland now too – they describe it as beautiful for the children. They like that the children are now safe being schooled away from the coast.

Though they used to be in the sea a lot, they don't go to the sea anymore. And even if they lived closer, they say fishing has changed – one needs a boat to get to the fish as the fish have migrated out to deeper waters because of the water temperature.

RELUCTANT ANCESTORS

A powerful, and highly personal story was shared with the researchers. Following the tsunami, a lot of the villager's ancestors bones were washed up from the old graveyard. They described how they gathered the bones, washed them and placed them on a bed 'like a funeral'.

When they went to put them back into their original graves with prayers, they described how the bones grew heavy "*very heavy, like the weight of a body*". They thought this might mean that they did not want to return to the old graves, but they told them that they must return – that they need to be there to look after the land.

Policy implications

- This case study provides a powerful glimpse into the strength of bonds people have with customary land, and more so, the inextricable linkages between ancestors (homed in the land) and the land itself. This story of returning the remains of ancestors to their original site of residence speaks to a duality of life in relocated communities – where areas are never fully left behind – also illustrated through the reported frequent visits down to the old coastal land to tidy around the old house foundations.
- Those in Satitua emphasised their gratitude for the new school built for their village children. This is contrasted with the ongoing challenges expressed by those in Lalomanu (both in women's and youth workshops) around the distance that needs to be travelled by children to reach school. Access to amenities is a clear priority for relocated communities. Further, the outsized benefits of a tarsealed road to access their migrated plantation land was also emphasized.
- Again, this case study highlighted the key role overseas diaspora play in closing funding gaps for both relocation costs and for rebuilding (in place). More coordinated and strategic engagement of the overseas diaspora, and a possible review of ways to ease administrative or transaction costs for diaspora in their direct support of climate resilience in Samoa (and Tonga) could be considered.



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