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The Effect of Migration on Development in Tuvalu: A Case Study of PAC Migrants and their Families

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University, New Zealand

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2009
ABSTRACT

International migration and development have been traditionally treated as separate policy portfolios; however, today the two are increasingly viewed as interlinked. While the development status of a country could determine migration flows, migration can, in turn, contribute positively to national development, including economic, social and cultural progress. Consequently, if migration is not well managed, it can pose development challenges to a country’s development and progress. Therefore, partnership through greater networking between countries of origin and destination is needed to fully utilise the development potential of migration.

For Tuvalu, migration has remained a vital ingredient for economic development and more importantly, the welfare of its people. The implementation of New Zealand’s Pacific Access Category (PAC) scheme in 2002 offered for the first time a formal migration opportunity for permanent or long-term migration of Tuvaluans. The PAC scheme allows 75 Tuvaluans per year to apply for permanent residence to work and live in New Zealand, provided they meet the scheme’s conditions. The goal of this research is to investigate, more than five years after PAC’s implementation, the ways in which long-term migration of Tuvaluans, through the PAC scheme, has benefited Tuvalu. To give a broader perspective on the issues explored in this study, the views of Tuvaluan leaders, as significant players in traditional Tuvaluan society, are included, in addition to the perspective of migrants’ families in Tuvalu and the migrants themselves in New Zealand.

Combining transnationalist and developmental approaches as a theoretical framework, this thesis explores how Tuvalu’s mobile and immobile populations, through articulation of transnationalism, enhance family welfare, and grassroots and national development. The eight weeks’ fieldwork in Tuvalu and Auckland demonstrated that the physical separation of Tuvaluans from one another through migration does not limit the richness of the interactions and connections between them. In fact, the existence of active networking between island community groups and other Tuvaluan associations in Auckland and in Tuvalu strengthens the Tuvaluan culture both abroad and at home, thus ensuring strong family and community coherence. Maintaining transnational networks and practices is identified as of great significance to grassroots and community-based development in Tuvalu. However, the benefits of long-term migration can only be sustained as long as island loyalty, or loto fenua, and family kinship stays intact across borders, and networking amongst families, communities and church remains active.
This thesis is dedicated to my three adorable children,

Papauta Kelsey, Simati Jnr. Loua, and Pie Makoi,

and in loving memory of my beloved grandparents, Pie and Paufi.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research could not have been completed without the willingness of Tuvaluan PAC migrants in Auckland and their families in Tuvalu to participate in this study. Their personal migration experiences provided deep understanding of the rationale behind long-term migration of Tuvaluans and the existence of strong connections and ties with their homeland. To all the families – my sincere appreciation and fakafetai lahi lahi to everyone! To government officials and leaders, elders of island communities and church leaders in Tuvalu who willingly agreed to be interviewed, your knowledge and wisdom enriched my insights on issues explored through this work and I am grateful for the opportunity. Fakafetai lahi to you all!

I wish to express my gratitude to the Director of Planning and Budget for providing office space and an Internet access during my fieldwork in Funafuti, Tuvalu. To my two lovely work colleagues in the Planning Department, thank you for sharing some of the latest research undertaken by the department. I am also grateful to the ladies at the Finance Headquarters for helping out with photocopying of additional interview forms.

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Last but not least, I would like to express my deepest love and gratitude for the emotional support and encouragement from my family during this two year journey. To my aunt Teagina, my parents Faaiu and Taketi and my in-laws Simati and Lafotua, thank you for always remembering me in your prayers. To my children Papauta and Simati, your companionship kept me grounded and I am grateful for having you two by my side. To my youngest son Pie, thanks for all the cute drawings that brighten me up when I am feeling down. And to my husband, Aunese, fakafetai lahi for having confidence in me; your encouragement and support throughout the years we spent apart earned recognition, and for that I am grateful.
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# APPREVIATIONS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AOSIS</td>
<td>Alliance of Small Island States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBT</td>
<td>Development Bank of Tuvalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EKT</td>
<td>Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>Falekaupule Trust Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPCC</td>
<td>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIRAB</td>
<td>Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUHEC</td>
<td>Massey University Human Ethic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBT</td>
<td>National Bank of Tuvalu</td>
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<tr>
<td>NELM</td>
<td>New Economics of Labour Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>Nauru Phosphate Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSSD</td>
<td>National Summit on Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>NZAID</td>
<td>New Zealand Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>Pacific Access Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSE</td>
<td>Recognised Seasonal Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIS</td>
<td>Small Island States</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPC</td>
<td>Secretarial of the Pacific Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIDS</td>
<td>Small Island Developing States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCS</td>
<td>Tuvalu Corporative Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEC</td>
<td>Tuvalu Electricity Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMC</td>
<td>Tuvalu Media Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMTI</td>
<td>Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNPF</td>
<td>Tuvalu National Provident Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPB</td>
<td>Tuvalu Philatelic Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTC</td>
<td>Tuvalu Telecommunication Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTF</td>
<td>Tuvalu Trust Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLH</td>
<td>Vaiaku Lagi Hotel</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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</table>
# TUVALUAN TERMS AND PHRASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahiga</td>
<td>Island community’s meeting hall, commonly used by the two northern islands in Tuvalu, Nanumea and Nanumaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu</td>
<td>The dominant church in Tuvalu, with 91% of the population having affiliation with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fagai</td>
<td>Daily or weekly supply of local food provided by the island community to the pastor of the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fakafetai lahi</td>
<td>Thank you very much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fakalavelave</td>
<td>Family’s traditional commitment to their community or extended family, such as, wedding and funeral where family members are required to contribute in a variety of ways to successfully implement such commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falekaupule</td>
<td>(i) the island community’s meeting hall (ii) the highest decision making body on the island, comprising of the island chief, heads of households and elders of the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenua o tagata</td>
<td>Isles of men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatele</td>
<td>Tuvalu’s traditional dance where a large group of people sit together in a circle, with a group of men beating a wooden box and a tin while the rest clap and sing as loud as they can, and a selected group of young men and women dance to the beat and words of the song.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initaviu</td>
<td>Interviewing someone about his/her views on certain issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiga</td>
<td>Family or relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaumalaga</td>
<td>Visiting or touring group visiting another island within Tuvalu or from outside Tuvalu to Tuvalu or vice versa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaupule</td>
<td>Executive arm of the Falekaupule – essentially the primary social institution and sovereign power in the islands of Tuvalu with the right to oversee local affairs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Mataniu**
A group of extended families

**Palagi**
An European or a ‘white’ person

**Pulaka**
A traditional root crop like a giant taro.

**Pule Kaupule**
The head of the *Kaupule*

**Sautala**
Informal chat between two people or more

**Sulu**
Sarong – a traditional garment that most Tuvaluans (men, women and youth) use as daily wear.

**Takitaki**
The leader

**Takitaki ote Lotu**
Church’s leader

**Takitaki ote Malo**
Government’s leader

**Te Nivaga**
Tuvalu’s only passenger and cargo ship received from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony’s fleet of vessels after vying for its independence

**Tufuga**
Traditional massager

**Ulusina ote Fenua**
Elders of the island.