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**The Asset-Based Community Development  
(ABCD) approach in action:  
An analysis of the work of two NGOs in Samoa**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

Over decades, top-down development approaches have failed to deliver real and sustainable development outcomes for the masses in developing countries, thus providing an impetus for exploring alternative development approaches. The asset-based community development (ABCD) approach is said to offer not only a ‘people-centred’ but also a ‘citizen-driven’ approach. This thesis investigates two locally-based NGOs in Samoa, Tagiilima Handicrafts Association (THA) and Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI) to ascertain whether they use ABCD to promote locally-driven development. Both NGOs administer village-based income generating-projects. The thesis explores in particular how local people access and control existing local assets; including traditional skills and knowledge (social and cultural assets) and natural resources (environmental assets), into useful products and commodities. Using a qualitative method, the researcher collected data through in-depth semi structured interviews with grassroots members, Heads of NGOs and other key stakeholders, and a focus group discussion with community members only.

The results show that participants have improved their livelihoods as evident in financial outcomes, along with their ability to meet cultural and religious obligations. Although most participants had not heard of the ABCD framework, in essence its principles are embedded and reflected in the practices of the organisations being studied. Overall, unlike traditional development interventions, the ABCD approach provides a model that is empowering and can create sustainable outcomes for rural people if used well. Nevertheless, concerns were raised by a minority of participants regarding the issue of the ‘middle-man role’ which can have a disempowering effect on village-based producers.

Three major conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, the use of an asset-based approach offers tremendous potential for Samoans as a strategy to enhance locally-driven community development. Second, NGOs and donor-led projects must find their place and utilise the existing traditional structures, systems and values within a village-setting if they wish to be effective. Thirdly, strengthening collaborations and networks with key development partners is critical for the success of NGOs. The absence of any official (or otherwise substantive) study on the long term effects of donor funding through the work of NGOs on grassroots rural development in Samoa makes this research and its findings timely.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
ACEO	Assistant-Chief Executive Officer
ACP	African Caribbean and Pacific
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AUA	Apia Urban Area
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BNPL	Basic Needs Poverty Line
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CD	Community Development
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSSP	Samoa Civil Society Support Program
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DFID	Department for International Development
DP	Development Program
ED	Executive Director
EDD	Externally-Driven Development
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOS	Government of Samoa
GROs	Grassroots Organizations
GRSOs	Grassroots Support Organizations
ICTP	In-Country Training Program
LDD	Locally-Driven Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSFP	NGO Support Fund Program
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
NWU	North West Upolu

ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Office of Economic Cooperation Development
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PACP	Pacific, African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries
PCD	People-Centred Development Approach
P4D	Partnership for Development
PIC	Pacific Island Countries
PD	Paris Declaration
PDE	Paris Declaration Evaluation
PSSF	Private Sector Support Facility
SAME	Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters
SBEC	Small Business Enterprise Centre Samoa
SDS	Strategy for Development of Samoa
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
SNHDR	Samoa National Human Development Report
SROS	The Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa
SUNGO	Samoa Umbrella for Non-Government Organizations
THA	Tagiilima Handicrafts Association
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States of America Aid and International Development
VAGST	Value Added Goods and Services Tax
VCO	Virgin Coconut Oil
WB	World Bank
WIBDI	Women in Business Development Incorporated Society

## GLOSSARY & SAMOAN SAYINGS

<i>Aia:</i>	influence or interference by an outside party
<i>Aiga:</i>	extended family, kin group, social unit
<i>Aseta:</i>	another translation of the term asset in Samoa
<i>Aia tatau:</i>	human rights
<i>Atiinae:</i>	Samoa translation of the term of development
<i>Atigi mai le sami :</i>	sea shells
<i>Atigi-popo:</i>	coconut shells/husks
<i>Faa-le-natura:</i>	natural environment
<i>Faa-le-mafaufau:</i>	state of human assets or head knowledge
<i>Faa-matai:</i>	traditional leadership system (chiefly system in Samoan)
<i>FaaSamoa:</i>	Samoa custom, Samoa way of life
<i>faa-le-aganuu:</i>	traditional Samoa skills and knowledge
<i>Fua o le laueleele ma le sami:</i>	fruits of the land and sea
<i>Fale:</i>	house, often implying structure of traditional materials
<i>Faipule district:</i>	legislative district (defined as official statistical district)
<i>Faipule:</i>	as a council of chiefs to advise the highest ranking chief
<i>Fale-lalaga:</i>	Group of weavers/weavers program within a village or community
<i>Fono:</i>	village council of matai
<i>Ie-sae:</i>	Samoa traditional finemat (finest quality mat)
<i>Lalaga:</i>	process or act of weaving
<i>Laufala:</i>	pandanus leaves used for weaving
<i>Komiti o Tina:</i>	Women's Committees within a community or village setting
<i>Meataulima:</i>	traditional Samoa handicrafts
<i>Matai:</i>	title-holder, chief (chosen by members of the aiga)
<i>Measina:</i>	refers to the traditional Samoa arts and crafts (handicrafts) including ie-sae or ie-Samoa (finemat)
<i>Oa:</i>	a deeper and a more meaningful Samoa translation and interpretation of the term asset in the Samoa context
<i>O le oa o loo i tatou laufanua:</i>	treasures are hidden in, on and buried in the land
<i>Pulega a nuu ma faipule:</i>	District heads and village leaders
<i>Samoa ole atunuu uma ona tofi:</i>	Samoa is an already defined society
<i>Siosiomaga:</i>	environment or surroundings
<i>Tomai ma agava'a:</i>	traditional skills, knowledge
<i>Tala:</i>	Samoa currency or dollars
<i>Umia ma puleaina:</i>	accessing and controlling