

Development in a World of Disorder: Tourism, COVID-19 and the Adaptivity of South Pacific People

Professor Regina Scheyvens & Dr Apisalome Movono

WITH

Danita Strickland, Patricia Bibi, Apakuki Tasere, Georgie Hills, Norah Rihai
& Fiona Teama



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Development in a World of Disorder: Tourism, COVID-19 and the Adaptivity of South Pacific People

Regina Scheyvens and Apisalome Movono

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Massey authors:

Scheyvens, Regina

Movono, Apisalome

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Rationale

This research about the impacts of economic slowdown caused by COVID-19 on the wellbeing of tourism-dependent communities in the Pacific emerged from concerns shared by Dr Apisalome Movono and Professor Regina Scheyvens – tourism and development researchers in the Institute of Development Studies at Massey University. Both scholars had previously researched how tourism could contribute to sustainable development of communities in the Pacific and they felt compelled to now examine COVID-19's effects on people who were highly reliant on tourism income. By Easter 2020, most international flights to the region had ceased and tens of thousands of tourism sector jobs were threatened. Anecdotally, the researchers had heard that some people were adapting quite well to life without international tourists by growing their own food and bartering, for example, but they were also aware of others who were really struggling. They thus started to design a research project that would allow them to understand the complex realities of the impacts of the pandemic on those people whose livelihoods were largely based on tourism, and how they were adapting. The focus was on communities in tourism-dependent areas, as other entities in the region were already running separate surveys on businesses impacted by the slowdown.

The researchers approached a specialist in Indigenous entrepreneurship and co-director of Te Au Rangahau – Māori Business and Leadership Centre at Massey University, Dr Jason Mika (Jason), to see if he was interested in being an advisor to the project. He expressed enthusiasm for the research topic, but suggested that the project be expanded to include Aotearoa New Zealand. The research project “The re-development of tourism in Aotearoa and the Pacific post-pandemic: Seeking sustainable, self-determined Indigenous development” led by Api, Regina and Jason, was born.

Our broader research project focuses on Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Aotearoa, countries that depend on tourism for thousands of jobs and between 10 and 70% of their gross domestic product (GDP). It seeks to put Aotearoa and the South Pacific at the forefront of developing future tourism in a way that benefits both people and planet. This report focuses on the South Pacific component of the research (not including Aotearoa) – see Map 1.

Research questions & ethics

This research asks the following questions:

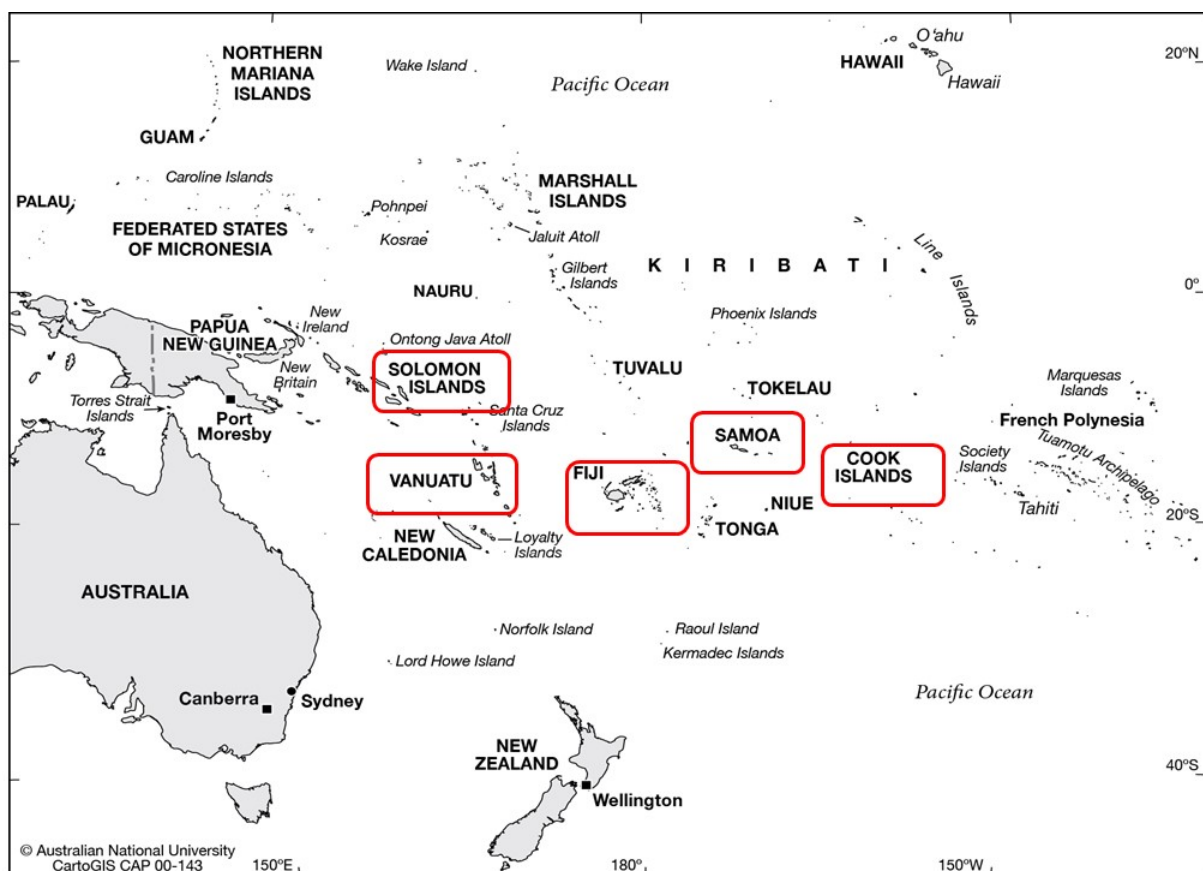
1. How has COVID-19 impacted on Indigenous people involved in tourism in the South Pacific?
2. How have Indigenous peoples involved in tourism in the South Pacific responded to the pandemic?
3. How could more sustainable, resilient forms of tourism be developed post-pandemic to support Indigenous wellbeing in the South Pacific?

An in-house ethics review process took place in the Development Studies programme in early June, leading to submission of a low risk ethics notification to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. On 16 June 2020 the researchers were informed that the research project had been listed as low risk, with the Ethics Notification Number: 4000022718. The information sheet with these details is provided in Appendix 1.

In addition to fundamental ethical considerations such as informed consent, this research is committed to the Pacific research principles laid out by the Pacific Research and Policy Centre at Massey University (Appendix 2), namely:

- Respect for relationships
- Respect for knowledge holders
- Reciprocity
- Holism
- Using research to do good.

Map 1: Case study locations



Source: <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/maponline/base-maps/southwest-pacific>

Note: Targetted countries (excluding Aotearoa) outlined in red.

Methods

Two main research methods were used in the June-September 2020 data collection phase of the project – an online survey, and in-person interviews or talanoa (more fluid conversation and sharing of ideas) - in six locations where tourism was important to the local economy in five countries.

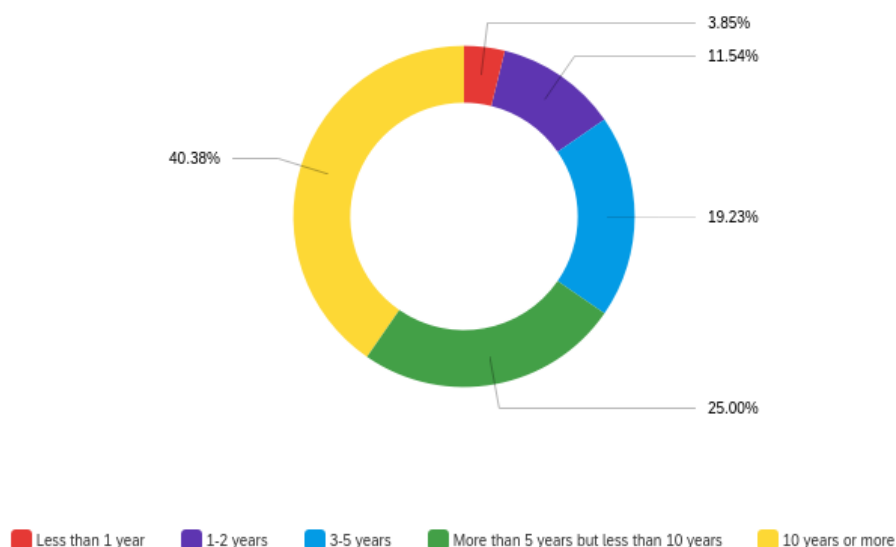
Online survey

The purpose of the online survey was to have a quick means of accessing the views of a variety of people in different Pacific countries who had been impacted by the decline in tourism since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It asked questions about the economic impacts of the pandemic on individuals, their households and on tourism-related businesses, as well as about how it had impacted various aspects of people's wellbeing. The online survey was distributed using email lists of contacts of the researchers as well as tourism-related social media sites (e.g. Facebook groups).

106 people completed the survey: they will be referred to in this report as 'respondents'. Key demographic information on this group follows:

- 59% male; 37% female; 4% prefer to self-identify
- 60% were between the ages of 20 and 49; 40% were over 50
- The majority of respondents were from Fiji, with good groups of respondents also from Samoa, Cook Islands and Solomon Islands, and a few from Niue, 'other', or based in Aotearoa.
- Many of the respondents were, or had been, long-term tourism industry employees: see Figure 1.
- 27% of respondents owned a tourism business, 58% are/were employees, and 15% were neither (anyone living in tourism-dependent communities was encouraged to fill out the survey).
- 58% of respondents are/were involved in large-scale accommodation (hotels/resorts), with good groups of others from aviation, ground transportation, smaller accommodation, tour operators, and 'other'.

Figure 1: Respondents' length of time employed in the tourism sector



Interviews & talanoa

As the researchers were unable to travel to the Pacific to collect qualitative data themselves due to the pandemic, creative solutions were required to source such information about the experiences of tourism-dependent communities during a time when no international tourism was possible. The solutions were:

- Api continued his long-term ethnographic research with the community at Vatuolalai by making regular contact and talanoa via phone, Viber, Google chats and other video calling platforms from the onset of the pandemic to date. This was done to gauge societal changes occurring as a result of border lockdowns, the subsequent closure of the hotels and the many issues faced by community members.
- Api and Regina recruited RAs (Research Associates) in six tourism-dependent locations across five South Pacific countries to conduct interviews/talanoa. Some of the RAs had direct experience working in the tourism industry while others lived in or near to tourism-dependent communities. All had prior research experience.

The RAs were all briefed via Zoom about the research, ethics, their role, and benefits for them from taking part in the research. They were asked to do interviews (semi-structured conversations with individuals or pairs, following the questions below) or talanoa in two communities impacted by the downturn in tourism (e.g. villages adjacent to resorts, or those used to run cultural tours for cruise ship passengers).

That they should seek out the voices of workers/former workers, women and elders in the communities was emphasised. The RAs were asked to follow appropriate cultural protocols (e.g. in Fiji, organising sevusevu) as required, and providing kai/refreshments for those taking part. Further Zoom meetings with a number of RAs present were organised in August and September to check on progress and enable the RAs to present their initial findings.

The RA interviews/talanoa with participants centred around the following areas of enquiry:

1. Please explain impacts of the slowdown in tourism on your family and community
2. Please explain ways in which you have coped/adapted to the loss of income and other changes caused by COVID-19
3. Please explain how the slowdown in tourism and the adaptations you made have influenced wellbeing in your family and community (both positive and negative impacts on health, economic wellbeing, cultural and social wellbeing)
4. What aspirations do you have for development of your family and community in the future?
5. What type of tourism development would you like to see here in the future to meet your aspirations?

Those who participated in the interviews/talanoa will be referred to in this report as 'participants'. The RAs were at liberty to select participants based on their prior relationships and experience, and to decide whether individual interviews or group talanoa were most appropriate given the cultural context and other factors. Some RAs conducted a series of individual interviews, while others did a group talanoa with tourism employees/former employees. One RA conducted a group talanoa with women from an affected community, followed by individual interviews with elders. Three of the RAs focused on the experiences of people from one community, while other RAs sought voices of participants from two to five communities. All RAs provided written summary notes and quotations to the research team; those who received permission to take photographs and/or audio record the interviews also provided us with these digital files.

Direct economic impact on communities

This section draws on the survey data to give an overview of the extent of the economic impact on communities. The interview data regarding reduction in incomes and associated stress and tensions at household level is discussed in the wellbeing section below.

The survey revealed that there were a large range of dependencies on tourism income among respondents. Some lived in households where all of their income came from tourism. Examples included people from the two Fijian villages whose households received their share of lease payments from a nearby resort and had several family members employed by the resorts. Similarly, in Vanuatu, people from one of the communities studied had received much of their income from three to four cruise ships per week. These households and communities were heavily impacted by the reduction in tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Other respondents were from households with more diverse livelihoods such as having members who were government employees, receiving international remittances, or who owned businesses not directly impacted by the reduction in tourists.

While the degree of dependency on tourism differed greatly across respondents' households, Figure 2 reveals that, overall, reliance on tourism income was large. Almost 60% of respondents were from households that relied on tourism for over 50% of their income.

Almost half of the respondents retained their jobs in tourism at the time of the survey, but most had their terms (e.g. hours and wages) reduced. The other half of the respondents had lost their jobs, either temporarily or permanently (Figure 3). Beyond the end of the survey, the researchers were told that more people had lost their jobs due to a resurgence of COVID-19 in some source markets, resulting in plans for re-opening tourist flights to the Pacific being continually delayed.

Figure 2: Percentage of income from tourism prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in respondents' households

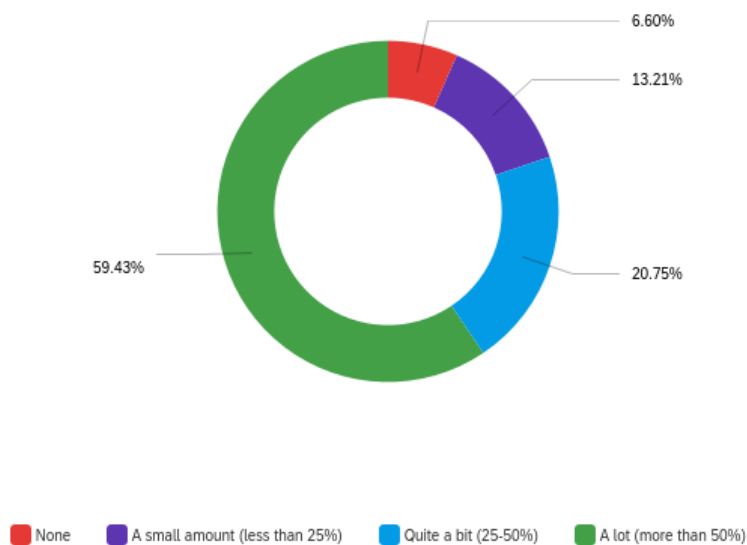
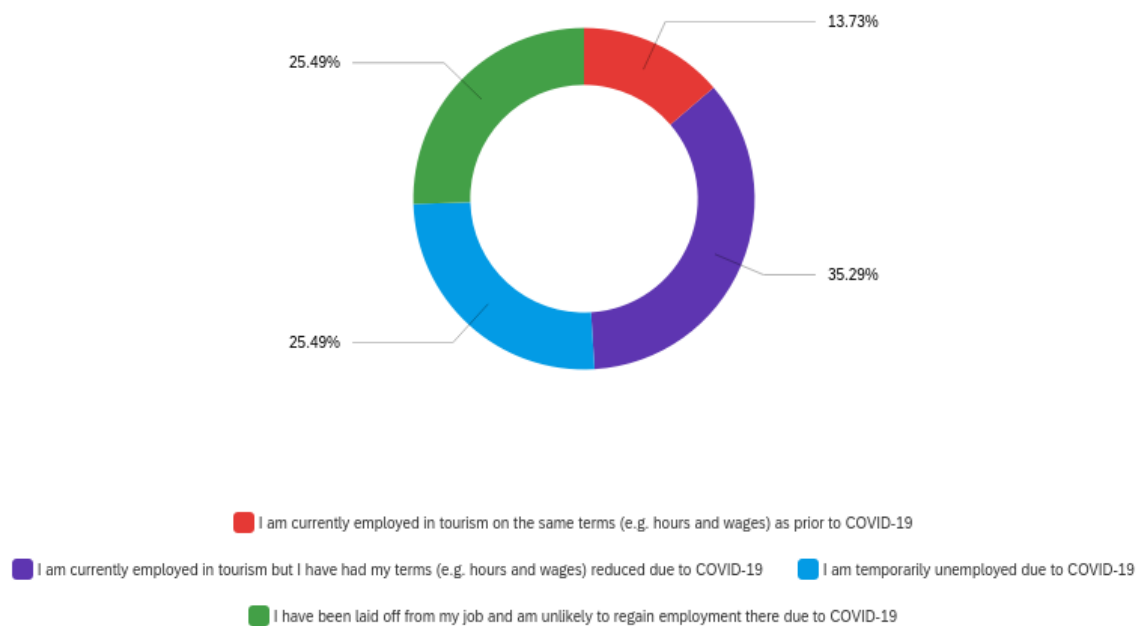


Figure 3: Job status of respondents when they completed the survey (July-September 2020)



Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 has led to drastic drops in household income. Around 73% of respondents reported that their households had experienced a ‘major decline’ in income, while another 16% stated that their households experienced a ‘moderate decline’ in income (Figure 4). In total, almost 90% of respondents lived in households facing significant reductions in income. Owners of tourism-related businesses faced particular financial strain (Figure 5). Almost 85% of them experienced a major decline in earnings, losing three-quarters or more of their usual income.

Figure 4: Impact of COVID-19 on respondents’ household income

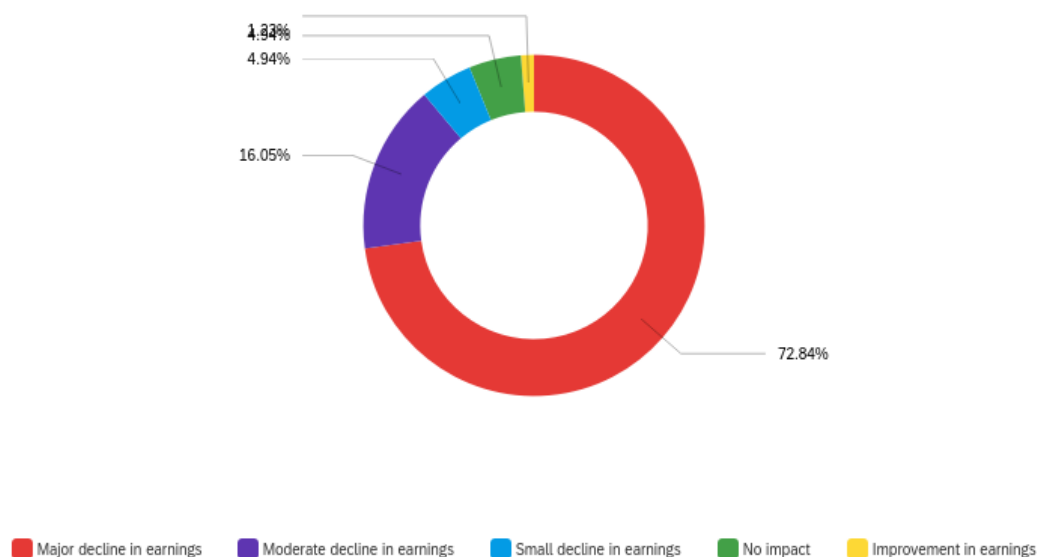
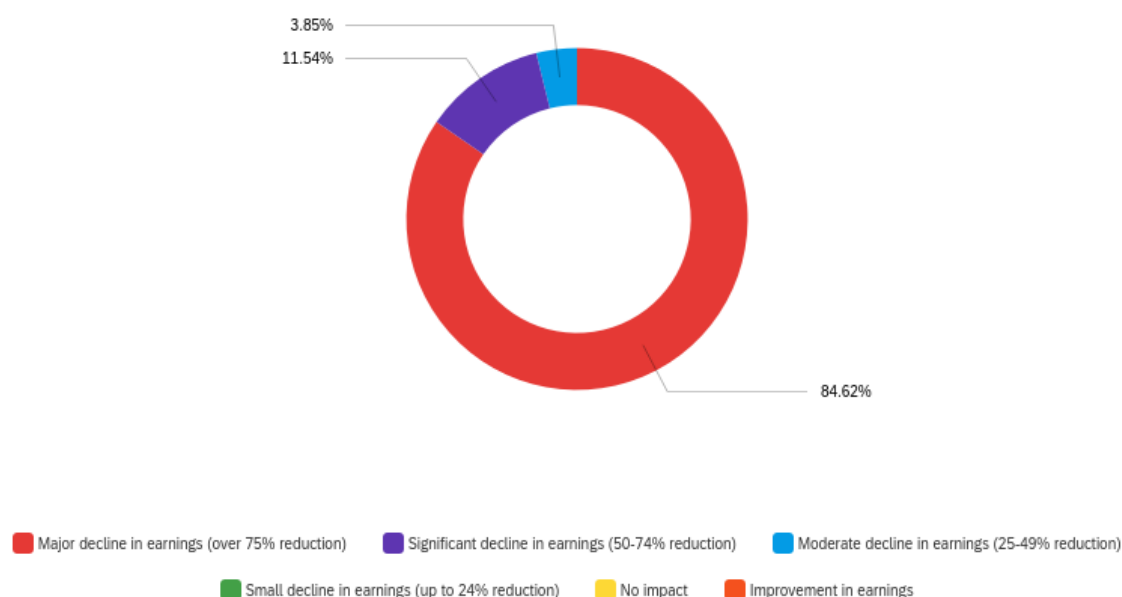


Figure 5: Financial impact of COVID-19 on businesses



Adaptations to the loss of income

As a matter of necessity, people in households who have lost a lot of income due to the decline in tourist numbers arising from COVID-19 have come up with a range of strategies to meet their needs. The survey and interview/talanoa findings strongly corroborate one another, showing a wide range of new economic strategies adopted by households: some involve earning cash, while others are based on utilizing the land and sea to grow and harvest food.

Figure 6 shows that over half of the respondents were growing food for the household and 15% were fishing for the household. The RAs reported that they consider these figures representative of what is happening across the study countries.. Respondents talked about using the natural abundance of the land and sea to provide food, with food being shared and bartered. Some participants in the interviews/talanoa specifically noted that ‘No one is going hungry’, and this seemed to be due to a number of factors: (1) people had access to customary land on which to grow food; (2) customary systems meant that neighbours, clan members, and members of church communities helped to provide for those who were more vulnerable; (3) there was still sufficient knowledge within communities to teach younger members who had lost jobs about how to grow food and fish – essentially, knowledge and skills of those who had toiled the land in the past were being passed on, re-learned and given a chance to survive. This is evident in the quotes below, and others that appear under the section on Social Wellbeing later in this report.

Like our family, everyone else has gone back to the land... For some things, I've had to relearn skills that have been not been used for years, skills in planting and especially in fishing. ...I am very happy with the plantation of mixed crops I have now and feeling confident we will be ok moving forward in these times of uncertainty... [Interview - Samoa, young male who lost his hotel employment]

Figure 6: Economic strategies that respondents' households have used to adapt to pressures of COVID-19

[NB respondents could tick as many as were relevant]

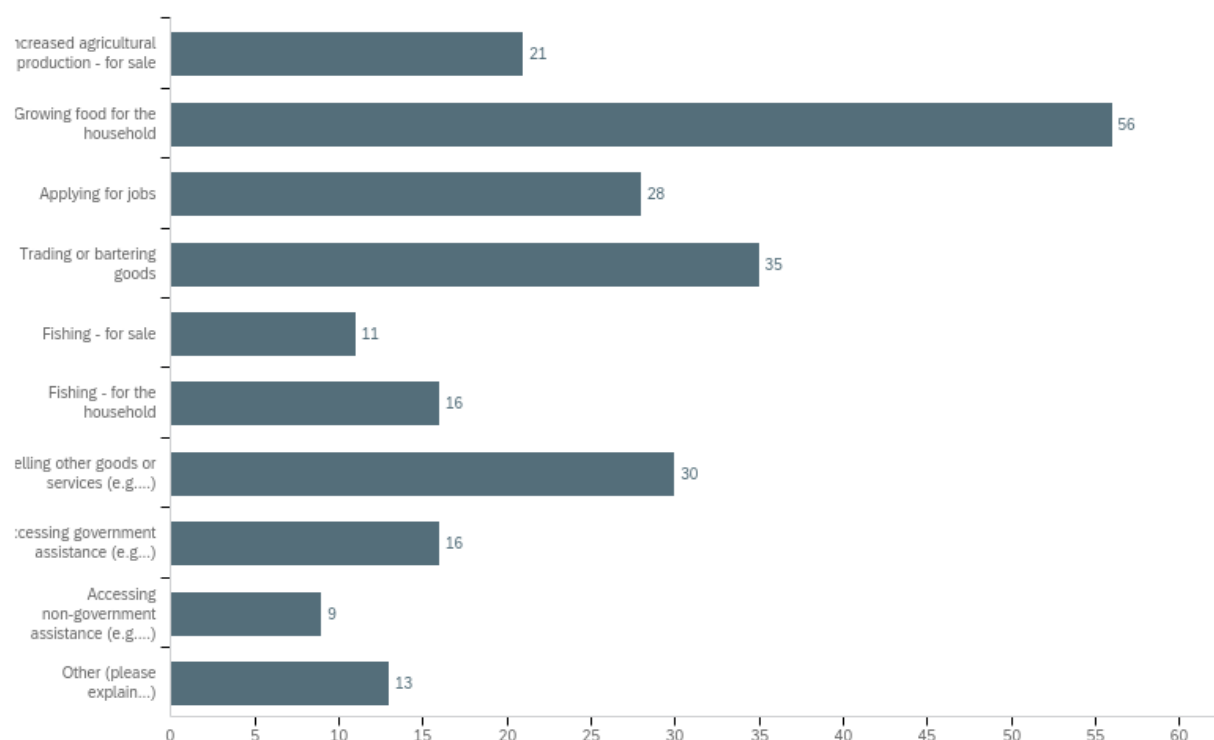


Figure 6 suggests that, in the absence of cash, bartering was reinstated as a popular means of acquiring goods and services (see also <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/08/two-piglets-for-a-kayak-fiji-returns-to-barter-system-as-covid-19-hits-economy>). Respondents also stated that there was giving and gifting to fellow community members on the basis of goodwill.

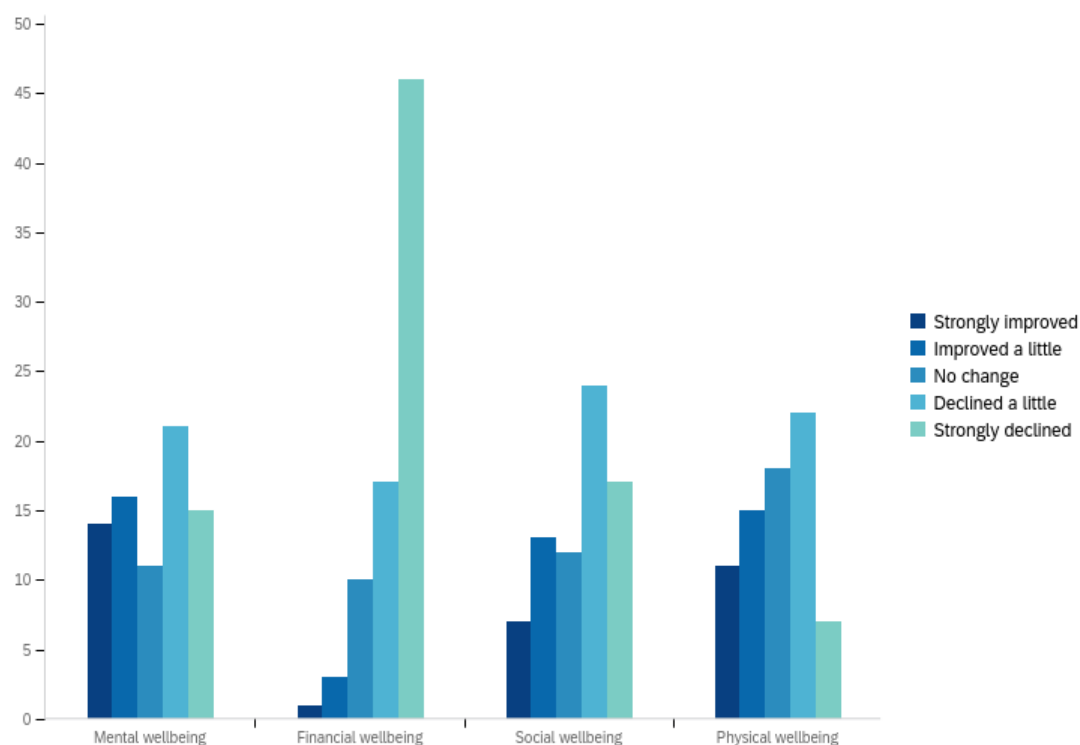
Further, Figure 6 indicates that people engaged in a wide range of initiatives to earn cash, from selling products from their farms (fruit, root crops, other vegetables, cocoa, pigs and chickens) and the sea (a wide range of fish and shellfish), to starting small businesses. Examples shared by interviews include women in Solomon Islands planting flowers to sell on the roadside and making doughnuts for their husbands to sell at the market. In Fiji, some former tourism employees were cooking food to sell; one youth group had gained a contract to provide catering for a rugby club. Others were cutting grass and doing home renovations in exchange for groceries and other essential items. A number of people started their own canteens/small convenience stores but struggled with competition from larger stores. In Samoa, one respondent explained that they bred pigs and grew coconuts as a source of income, while keeping their taro, yam and banana plantation to meet the family's needs and for their *tautua* [service] for the church minister on Sundays and to help with village obligations.

Impacts on wellbeing

The main findings on the impacts of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of respondents' households are captured in Figure 7.

Figure 7: How COVID-19 has impacted aspects of wellbeing of respondents' families, households & communities

Impact of COVID-19 on Wellbeing



Four aspects of wellbeing were studied: financial, social, mental and physical. In terms of financial wellbeing, given the impacts on household income noted earlier and the loss of jobs in tourism and shut downs of many tourism-related businesses, it was not surprising to see a very clear trend where most people's financial wellbeing had declined, and for many it had 'strongly declined'. However, for social, mental and physical wellbeing the results were more split, with more people showing declines in these aspects of wellbeing but quite a number actually showing improvements. This was revealed by some open-ended questions in the survey and data from interviews/talanoa, which will be looked at next; both negative and positive responses to financial, social, physical and mental wellbeing will be considered in turn.

Financial wellbeing

Negative impacts

Quotes from respondents and participants indicate the gravity of the financial pressure on many households, and the links between this and their social and mental wellbeing:

Financial struggles have caused us to exhaust all our resources. Stress of not having food to get by is depressing [Survey respondent]

Stress comes with no income and you only pay but don't receive income – [that] is very difficult and this promotes arguments and anger towards your immediate social structure [Survey respondent]

There's so many people in the house that were fighting over who's going to pay for this, who's going to pay for that [Interview – Cook Islands man]

The interviews/talanoa also revealed that there were additional pressures on those who had taken out loans in order to start their business. In Cook Islands, this included people who had mortgages to pay on holiday homes, which they had been renting to tourists, and now there was no income to help them to meet their obligations to the bank. Similarly, in Fiji, some were struggling to pay back loans on their minibuses, which were now standing idle. Business owners also reported on how a slowdown in trade resulted in less business for their suppliers:

Our shop is our main source of income...for all our family, church and village obligations. Since COVID-19 and the currently lockdown of our borders, my business has seen drastic changes. Obviously, reduced sales, therefore income. As you can understand, our business has relied greatly on our well positioned location close to a couple of beach fales and hotels and tourists come to our shop for reasonably cheaper alternatives to what they buy in hotels like water, snacks, handicrafts and others... We have had long standing partnerships with some of our local handicraft makers, like fans, lavalava, coconut shell bracelets and other jewellery... No one is buying those things as much, so... I know they too are suffering with their income. So you know, our suppliers both from Apia and in our community have been affected because we too are affected (Interview – Samoan female, Grocery shop owner)

Remittances from overseas relatives were helping a number of households in Cook Islands and Samoa, including that of a household of seven in which one woman, who had been the sole income earner, lost her job in tourism. She and her husband were at home trying to find other ways to support themselves and their five children. Some participants noted that, despite the challenging financial times they were in, they were still trying to find ways to contribute to the church and wider community which they felt strongly bound to, and remittances were helping with that:

We are committed to meeting our village and church obligations because we belong to this community, so despite a tight budget with reduced incomes, we are not letting these obligations slide. We... still contribute but as best we can. We are working within our means. Our families overseas are also helping, and we are always grateful for that but we also know, this pandemic is everywhere and so even they are affected so we don't ask too much [Interview - Samoan woman, tourism employee on reduced hours]

Positive impacts

Despite the financial hardships, some people noted that there were benefits emerging from the loss of income. In the survey, respondents pointed out improvements in household budgeting and financial management skills, and one noted 'A lot less wastage and more conscious spending'. Quotes from

interviews/talanoa corroborate these findings, with some in the Cook Islands suggesting that people were 'greedy' prior to feeling the effects of the pandemic. Other quotes follow:

We eat mainly from our plantations, catch our own fish, crab, clams, seaweed and all that's out there that doesn't need cash. We change the brand of toiletries that we've gotten used to, to a cheaper version that does the same thing [Interview – Fijian woman, business owner]

Due to very tight cash at hand for electricity and other necessary costs, we have been a lot more mindful in our use which is nice and I'm hoping that even with return of jobs, we will continue these good habits [Interview – Samoan man, previously employed in tourism]

We [older folk] can adjust to this current situation, only the young gang will find difficulties... As I look at those that grew up with 'luxuries' in life and had paying jobs, they are pretty much stuck now [Interview – Fijian elder]

Social wellbeing

Negative

Adjusting to significant loss of household income, along with restrictions on social gatherings (e.g. church, community celebrations, sports practices) in some countries, and having more family members at home more of the time, has led to tensions in many households:

It has stopped social gatherings which is essential in my community, and as for harmony in my household....it's driving me crazy being put on lockdown during this pandemic [Survey respondent]

There is family pressure and personal issues causing arguments [Interview - Solomon Islands woman]

Lack of engagement especially with the husband, and social problems like drinking illegal alcohol... made situations even worse [Interview – Solomon Islands woman whose husband had lost his tourism income]

Positive

While the negative social implications of COVID-19 were clear in a number of households, many people were effusive in their responses when talking about how they now had more time with family, especially children (this was the case particularly for women who worked in the tourism sector), more time for meeting religious and cultural obligations, and more time to look after others in the community:

Extended family harmony has improved particularly with checking welfare of others who may need help during this time [Survey respondent]

We've had more time with each other especially during the lockdown and with the curfews - in some ways creating stronger bonds [Survey respondent]

I feel staying during this pandemic has really helped alot especially with my kids. Now everything is in order. The spending of quality time with my family has been excellent and awesome [Survey respondent]

Those who participated in interviews and talanoa expanded on these themes:

We have so much more time to spend with families. We spend more time with the young ones and we can be more involved and aware of what they are up to. This is something that I truly feel is a blessing in disguise from this COVID-19 pandemic [Survey respondent]

Our communities have come together more I think - we always shared but this time without rushing in and out of homes to go to work, we actually have proper conversations with our neighbours like the old days. We take the time... to make sure neighbours and other extended families are ok, we visit each other more often. I am actually really thankful for that effect of COVID-19. God has his ways, I think it is also a message from God, to look back at our priorities in life and value family and neighbours, to care for each other... [Interview – Samoa female]

More people coming to church, more people attending village meetings, greater sense of community [Interview – Fijian male]

Everyone's so connected now, more connected now [Interview – Cook Island male]

Some respondents/participants stated that they observed a return to 'the good old days', when traditional ways and values were held to be important:

We are happy. It's back like the olden days [Survey respondent]

When the fisherman goes out fishing when they cook the fish, they share through the households of Muri. The people are planting and they go, they sell their own food in their own yard, and sometimes they come around and give you some of the fruits and vegetables [Interview – Cook Islands female]

Young people have been brought into line by COVID. They can't steal money from their parents anymore. There's nothing to steal. They could be out there raking rubbish and feeding the pigs and you know doing the dishes mopping the floor and things. I've seen... a lot of parents as well, you know going on the bike with their sons into the plantations.... [Interview – Cook Island male]

Mental wellbeing

Negative

The financial struggles and uncertainty brought upon by the pandemic, along with more crowded households due to people being out of work, created issues of anxiety and mental stress for some people:

Battling slight bouts of minor depression from time to time but nothing major [Survey respondent]

It's a constant worry where the money for the next meal for the family, the electricity supply will come from. It's even more worrying if someone gets sick
[Survey respondent]

The slowdown has impacted the family psychologically, financially... we don't know what to do. We are unable to meet family, community and church financial commitments [Interview – Fijian woman]

Positive

While the negative impacts on mental wellbeing are noted and expected, the resilience and embedded social systems of Pacific islanders' stand out through how they deliberately seek out ways to improve their situation. The data collected from the Pacific revealed some interesting insights about the optimism of many Pacific Island peoples and their ability to manage mental wellbeing despite the odds. They are not bystanders but are active participants in the change process and the quotes below demonstrate how mental wellbeing can improve as a result of people's appreciation for the social, spiritual and cultural gains that stem from a return to the land, family and being away from the tourism setting. Some people talked about enjoying their islands without tourists, as they would see their own people on the beaches, having fun. In addition, participants noted that their Christian faith gave them strength. The quotes to follow exemplify these points:

We've had so much more time together. It is good to be out in the open and getting dirty. I miss my friends at work and meeting different people every day but this is nice too; the quiet in the plantation allows us to relax while working. Less stress and this feels natural. [Interview – Samoan male who lost job as waiter]

The first 2 weeks after losing my job, I was lost! Fortunately, I often spoke to my mother, who was a woman of great faith, and she often told me to ask God for peace. That has been my source of strength and peace [Interview – young Fijian man]

I have to say we've been able to properly rest and recharge focus for a new day. ... I have really enjoyed down time with shortened opening hours so have also found time to do other hobbies like learning a new skill like making elei [stencil printing on fabric] or caring for my garden which has been neglected over the years
[Interview - Samoan businesswoman]

Physical wellbeing

Negative

The negative comments about physical wellbeing from participants referred to a) their concerns about COVID-19 reaching their islands and affecting their children or elderly people, and b) restrictions from travelling to New Zealand for medical care (from Cook Islands people especially). One woman, for example, noted that her husband could no longer travel to specialist appointments in Auckland:

...we now have to think about doing our own part and looking after our health and eating well. ...Our food is our medicine... We've just got to be extra vigilant, extra careful about our health and just do some research, how we can sustain good health [Interview – Cook Islands woman]

Positive

The findings of this study highlight how people perceive an improvement in physical well-being as they move back to the land, engaging in more physical activities related to farming, fishing and doing work around the house. Respondents and participants alluded to an improvement in physical wellbeing also because their diets are now healthier, meals prepared better, and are not rushed for convenience as was the case when people worked in tourism:

[We] take time to look after our health and wellbeing - more time for fitness/walking/exercise - better nutrition and spending more time together as a family. Made us look at the positive side of things [Survey respondent]

I personally feel I've never been so physically fit this whole time I've been on the island because I've had the time to go and work out and what not and have a run and stuff because usually I would be knee deep with guests right now...[Survey respondent]

*Washing of hands really help in the reduced occurrences of other health issues.
[Interview – Vanuatu]*

Renewal

One of the most fascinating themes to emerge from this study is how Pacific peoples are reflecting on and reimagining tourism by taking the opportunity to embrace the challenges presented by COVID-19 as a way of rejuvenating their relationships with each other, their culture and the land. People have described the impacts of COVID-19 as a “blessing”, a “silver lining”, and a “wake up call”, ushering in opportunities for renewal. Often, perceptions of grassroots communities are not taken seriously but we argue that policy and decision makers should understand their coping and adaptation strategies and how they could be supported, as well as being receptive to ideas they have for renewal. This is based on the findings which show that Pacific peoples are trying to improve their situation in the face of COVID-19 and do not see themselves merely as victims, and they are also engaged in a dynamic process of thinking, reflection and change:

At the beginning of this, just seeing [the] beach just completely dead, you're like: 'What are we without these people [tourists]?' ...And then over time you see the locals taking their families to the beach, you know, people are spending time with their families and stuff and then everyone's back in the taro patches and cleaning their yards and it's - I think it's become a moment of self-reflection [Interview – Cook Islands male]

I have worked in the Tourism Industry for the past 10 years and this is a much welcome break to concentrate and complete certain tasks/projects that were pending at home. This break has given us a "new breath of life". We have since analysed and pondered on what are the most important things in life apart from money. We have strengthened our relationships with friends and family, worked together, laughed and enjoyed each other's company. We have strengthened our spiritual life and have never felt better after moving back to the village [Interview – Fijian female business owner]

I know this sounds a bit mean but I think this was a good thing...that opened people's eyes to what really, you know, what's really important, you know... we just started to realize that money wasn't everything [Interview – Cook Islands male]

This time to me is about restoring and renewing things, relationships and giving our environmental time to restore and breathe again before it gets busy because I'm optimistic we will come out of this. People want to travel [Interview – Cook Islands female]

Future aspirations for family, community and tourism

A central part of any discussions for reimagining tourism in the Pacific are its people. People who provide a warm welcome to tourists, wait tables, clean bathrooms and drive taxis are often taken for granted by holidaymakers and decisionmakers alike. Yet those workers, and their extended families, are reliant on tourism and are going to be impacted by future shocks. As such, it was considered highly important that in our research we gathered Pacific people's views about what they, their families and communities want from tourism in the future.

Many indicated a desire for better terms, wages and working conditions for tourism employees, along with more local ownership of tourism. Some suggested that more locally-owned businesses would be good, and that they should expand into products for more niche markets that built on their existing strengths e.g. eco-tours, cultural tours, tropical garden tours and agri-tourism. While certain people wanted less tourism, others felt that a way of lessening the burden on over-touristed areas and to spread the benefits was to develop tourism in outer islands, new locations, and promote off-season tourism.

Well, I like to see the people to not to be too greedy when it opens up and tourism comes back... I grew up working in a hotel when I was small and I hear the tourists talking and I've mixed with them because I'm the entertainment person. I hear what they say, and they say, '[it's a] beautiful island, I hope it doesn't become Hawaii'. They always say that. 'I hope you don't lose this'. But as the years went on as I'm growing up, it is changing, to become like a mini Hawaii [Interview – Cook Islands male]

There is a need to revisit how resorts are owned, so that local landowners can also share ownership of the resort and diversify products to suit locals as well as international tourists [Interview – Fijian male village leader]

Needs more control over tourism: numbers should be capped [Interview – Cook Islands female]

Would love to see tourists buying local food produced by mamas and papas - so it's spread out - the money is really out to everybody in the community or on the island [Interview – Cook Islands woman]

Others spoke about their concerns about the over-reliance on tourism, and the need to diversify beyond tourism. Some believed that skills they could build on in agriculture and handicrafts was the best way forward, whereas others said that this would not be adequate and that there was a need for trades training, higher education, and developing creative industries:

I think for the future of my family, I would like to see things more sustainable like pushing the skills of making traditional Samoan fine mats, traditional weaving. I believe these traditional roles especially for my girls, in the future, is an area I

would like to encourage my girls to explore. And things like sewing, cooking and others. These skills can serve you because you make things with your own hands and can sell yourself and they are not just for tourists. Our own people value them so when tourists don't come, we still have people here that will come and buy them [Interview – Samoan Female]

I'd like to return to university and finish my degree... This situation has made me realise how dependent this village is on tourism. I'd like to see... for every family to invest at least a member to work outside of the tourism sector. The village could encourage this by providing scholarships [Interview – Fijian young male]

I think I would like to see more small businesses in communities supporting each other and also supporting the big hotels and vice versa... also more community projects that promote sustainable livelihoods or development and maybe receive support from government to kickstart. I think there is great potential for collaborative community investment [Interview – Samoan Female]

Project website/sharing our findings

Working with Pacific peoples has influenced our quest to go beyond conventional academic publications when sharing the findings of this research. We want to ensure that benefits accrue to research participants in different ways, in forms that are most appropriate, effective, and meaningful for them. Findings generated by this study will be shared with researchers, government officials, tourism industry businesses, Indigenous organizations, and the general public via the following mediums:

- conferences, workshops and webinars on reimagining South Pacific tourism post-pandemic
- dedicated website containing our Pacific tourism and COVID-19 research findings and related resources, including:
 - o project blogs
 - o recordings of webinars
 - o academic papers
 - o project videos

Next steps

We are applying for funding to enable us to look in more detail into aspects of this broader study e.g.:

- the importance of government responses and donor support and which strategies were/are best at supporting communities during these challenging economic times
- follow-up interviews, and with a wider range of affected communities, to see how they are coping in the medium- and longer-term period
- research on best ways to build back tourism that is more aligned with Indigenous aspirations
- broader research on what helps Pacific peoples respond effectively to shocks such as the global pandemic, but also in relation to the other regular shocks they might face e.g. from cyclones, king tides, earthquakes, tsunamis, political instability, economic crises.

Appendix 1: Information sheet



The re-development of tourism in Aotearoa and the Pacific post-pandemic: Seeking sustainable, self-determined Indigenous development

Introduction

This research asks the following questions:

1. How has COVID19 impacted on Indigenous people involved in tourism in Aotearoa and the Pacific, and how have they responded to the pandemic?
2. How could more sustainable, self-determined forms of tourism be developed post-pandemic to support Indigenous wellbeing in Aotearoa and the Pacific?

The research is being conducted by a team of researchers from Massey University who have significant experience researching tourism among Pacific and Māori communities: Dr Apisalome Movono and Prof. Regina Scheyvens (Development Studies), and Dr Jason Mika (Te Au Rangahau – Māori Business and Leadership Centre, School of Management).

Project Description

This project seeks to put Aotearoa and the South Pacific at the forefront of developing future tourism in a way that benefits both people and planet. It will achieve this by exploring how Indigenous people involved in tourism have been impacted by COVID-19, but also how tourism can be re-imagined in more sustainable and equitable ways, specifically by building on Indigenous knowledge. The research focuses on Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Aotearoa, countries which depend on tourism for thousands of jobs and between 10 and 70% of their GDP. The knowledge generated by this study will be used to inform government officials, tourism industry businesses, Indigenous organisations and other relevant bodies about ways they can best support Indigenous development through tourism in the future.

Invitation

We are inviting you to participate as we would value drawing on your experience and insights to help build our understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted on Indigenous communities involved with the tourism sector, as well as how tourism can be re-imagined to better contribute to Indigenous wellbeing. You have either been asked to participate in:

- an online survey (this will take 5-10 minutes of your time)
- a key informant interview (30 minutes-1 hour) or,
- a group korero/talanoa (up to 2 hours).

Data Management

The information you provide will be kept confidential and stored safely. All data, including interview recordings and notes, will be stored in the research project's password-protected Dropbox site.

Participant's Rights

We would be delighted if you agreed to participate, but please be assured that you are under no obligation to do so. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project Contacts

If you have any questions about this research please contact the following investigators:

Api Movono
Mobile: +64 22 5101135
A.Movono@massey.ac.nz

Jason Mika
Mobile: +64 21 970421
j.p.mika@massey.ac.nz

Regina Scheyvens
Mobile: +64 21 2179481
R.A.Scheyvens@massey.ac.nz

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz. Ethics Notification Number: 4000022718



**PACIFIC RESEARCH
AND POLICY CENTRE**
PACIFIC KNOWLEDGE RESEARCH HUB

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UNIVERSITY**
TE KUNENGA KI PŌREHURUA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

PACIFIC RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

RESPECT FOR RELATIONSHIPS

Ensuring that cultural protocols and processes are followed throughout the research process. Respect for research participants is exercised and grounded in humility, the roles of gatekeepers and elders are appropriately acknowledged and confidentiality is respected.

RESPECT FOR KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS

Ensuring that Pacific knowledge, aspirations and wellbeing are integral to research design, research processes, outcomes and outputs. Both research partners and research participants are prioritised as knowledge holders and a participatory approach is adopted in seeking informed consent.

RECIPROCITY

Ensuring that reciprocity is an integral part of the research process and participants and communities benefit from the research. Reciprocity can encompass gifts, time and service and extends to accessible dissemination of research findings.

HOLISM

Ensuring the interconnected nature of the physical, social, environmental, cultural and spiritual aspects of research with Pasifika and Pacific communities is understood and acknowledged.

USING RESEARCH TO DO GOOD

Ensuring that the wellbeing of Pasifika and Pacific communities and their environment is of central importance in why and how research is conducted, at the same time as ensuring that the research is rigorous and scholarly. The goal of research beneficence applies to both the integrity of the research process and the potential research outcomes and impact.

Source: Meo-Sewabu, L., Hughes, E. and Stewart-Withers, R. (2017) *Pacific Research Guidelines and Protocols*. Pacific Research and Policy Centre, Massey University.

<https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/departments/centres-research/pacific-research-policy/doing-research.cfm>