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**The Social Impacts of seasonal migration on left-behind
children: An exploratory study from Lifuka, Tonga.**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
**Masters of Social Sciences
In Demography**
at
The University of Waikato
by
Lupe Moala-Tupou



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2016

Abstract

There is a dearth of knowledge about the social impacts of seasonal migration on children left behind in Tonga and Pacific countries more generally. The economic benefits of remittances on families have been studied quite extensively but the social costs and benefits have not been the subject of much inquiry. This exploratory study in a Tongan village setting seeks to better understand children who are left behind and who are being affected by lengthy absences of older family members when they are employed as seasonal workers in the horticulture and viticulture industries of New Zealand and Australia.

Three main questions are addressed. Firstly, how do community leaders, teachers, parents and the children themselves perceive the impacts on the children left behind by older family members when they are working overseas? Social impacts on children are examined with reference to health, education, social and religious participation. Secondly, how do the social impacts vary by gender and age of the children? Finally, what, if any, coping strategies are used or are being planned to mitigate the social impacts of seasonal migration overseas on teenage children? The data that was collected to address these questions came from three major sources: i) informal *talanoa*, ii) semi-structured interviews iii) and focus group discussions held in Lifuka, Ha'apai, Tonga.

This study revealed that children left behind in Tonga experience both positive and negative impacts on their education, health, social and religious participation when their mother/father or older siblings are working overseas. Seasonal workers' earnings raise household incomes and assist with paying children's school fees and other financial needs at school, improving access to health and church services through the purchasing of cars for transportation, and providing new clothes for children especially for special occasions.

Children affected by migration faced several challenges including suffering from loneliness, fear and sadness as a result of the absence of parents and sometimes experienced abuse in the communities. There can also be problems with diet, school performance, and permission to participate in social activities, especially young girls going out at night. Girls and boys face different challenges as a result of the absence of parents and older siblings, as do younger children. The main coping strategy is accessing support from teachers and other community leaders, but there needs to be more research on both impacts and strategies before definitive conclusions can be drawn.

Acknowledgements

O Lord my God, I cried out to you, and you healed me. Psalms 30:2

Fakafeta'i 'Eiki 'i he me'a kotoa pe!

All glory to God forever and ever. Amen!

Only my name appears on the cover of this thesis, but in no way does it truly reflect the amount of support I have received in its production. There are no words that could adequately describe my overwhelming appreciation to the many people who have contributed to this thesis.

First and foremost, I would like to express my respect, genuine appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to Emeritus Professor Richard (Dick) Bedford of the University of Waikato. Thank you so much for your love, generosity, invaluable and constructive advice, encouragement, tireless support, openness, and enthusiasm to help me since day one. From the: selection of my topic, development of research proposal, submission of ethics application, and refinement of thesis write-up through to the final stage. You have walked extra miles to assist me and that is why I have managed to complete it. Nobody can do what you can. From the bottom of my heart, I say a HUGE MALO 'AUPITO Dick, for showing me the light shine so bright at the end of the tunnel and putting a smile on my face. Your dedication really touched my heart and I appreciate all that you have done for me. I am truly blessed from God for knowing and working with you. I pray for God's protection and guidance upon you and your lovely family. You will never be forgotten in my life and in my little family. 'Ofa lahi atu Dick!

To my supervisor, Dr Matthew Roskruge. I am sincerely grateful for your support, advice, guidance, kindness and love throughout this time. A BIG Thank you so much for being my supervisor and for your patience and understanding every time I sought for your help at each step and especially for the last check and formatting my thesis. Again, I appreciate all that you have taught me throughout this time, Malo 'aupito mo e 'ofa atu.

Heartfelt thanks to Dr John Paterson for helping me especially with my ethics application. Your experience as a former ethics committee Chairperson helped me pass through the process much easier. I wish you well in your life John. Much ‘ofas to you and your wife. I would also like to express my thanks to the Chairperson of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science Ethics Committee in 2015, Dr Ruth Walker, for your help and advice while trying to complete my ethics application.

To my friendly family at NIDEA: You all have created an atmosphere where I always felt most welcome. To name a few, Dr John Ryks, Associate Professor Tahu Kukutai, Associate Professor Polly Atatoa-Carr, Moana Rarere and Brenda Hall. Special thanks to you all for supporting me. To Moana and Tahu: I will never forget your smiling faces, and the great effort, kindness and help you both gave me that enabled me to complete this endeavour. To this beautiful lady, Brenda Hall: Thank you very much for all you have done for me. You are so kind Brenda. I hope you will still be here when I return soon. My best regards, love to you all at NIDEA.

To my subject librarian, Jillene Bydder: I cannot thank you enough for your offer to fix my reference list and the in-text citation. I salute you Jillene. Also, to librarian Karen Buckley: I am thankful for your help. To Jim Fulton, Malo ‘aupito for your proficient proofreading services of this thesis.

May I also extend my appreciation to the New Zealand Aid Scholarship for financially supporting this study, and also Deonne Taylor and Rachael Elliot for your support and help. My heartfelt thanks also goes to the Ministry of Education in Tonga for giving me the opportunity to take this study. I am also much indebted to the many participants who took part in this study for their story and support me. Their stories provided the basis for the research. Fakamālō atu ki a Sefita Hauoli, Dr Halahingano Rohorua ‘i he tokoni kotoa pe na’ a mou fai mai.

A special *fakamālō* to my two colleagues at NIDEA, Sione Lolohea and Tas Barsdell, for helping me to construct my maps and everything since the beginning. I wish both of you the best this year. Other friends and colleagues who also provided invaluable assistance in many ways, include Sela Teisina, Sangata Kaufononga, Lily Fangupo,

Fina Puniani, Letisia Afu, Wenefe Balbalin, Jenny Taufu, Lu'isa Samani Lapao'o,
'Ana Fekau, Losana Latu.

Last but not least, my family! To my mother Lavinia Longo Moala: I have struggled for this because of you. Thank you mom for continuously praying for me. Not forgetting my two brothers in the United States, Samiu and Hifonga, many thanks for always supporting me. Fonga, Malo lahi for privately funding me during my first degree. I wouldn't have gone this far if it wasn't for you! You helped open up the door for a future. To my brother in Australia, 'Isileli: Thank you so much for your help and financial support since I arrived in New Zealand. To the rest of my siblings and their family: 'Unaloto, Ma'ata, 'Aiona, Sepa, Siaosi, Malo lahi e poupou mo e lotu ma'aku. I must also give thanks to my husband's family: For helping and supporting us, especially Kaloni, Helu, Line and their family for sometimes looking after Sipele in Auckland.

And...to my husband, my best friend and mate Gerard Tupou: Malo e 'ofa lahi, tokoni mo e poupou kotoa pe ma'aku. To my only beautiful daughter Sipele: You are the main reason why I have completed this thesis; to pave the way so that you too will have a prosperous future. You always make me smile, especially when you accompany mommy in the office at night. Thank you for all the support. I love you both to the moon and beyond.

May God bless you all!!

Lupe Moala-Tupou

DEDICATION

*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my beloved father, **Ualeni Paea Moala**. I always love you dad although you're no longer with me. Rest in God's peace!*

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Seasonal migration programs for unskilled workers in the Pacific countries have been introduced by New Zealand and Australia since the mid-2000s as a way to relieve labour shortages in host countries and aid development in source countries. The development benefits are argued to occur through seasonal migration programs providing employment and comparatively high incomes for people with below-average incomes and education levels. Some of the wages are transferred back to the source country, allowing resources to be put back into communities and improving the socio-economic outcomes of the families who remain.

While the economic benefits of the programs have been widely publicised, the social impacts are often neglected. One of the social impacts which has attracted particularly little attention is the socio-economic cost faced by children who are left behind when an older member of the family is away for a period of up to seven months working in an overseas country. It is not uncommon for a parent, and occasionally both parents, to take part in a seasonal migration program. However, the impact of this on the children who remain in the source country has received little or no attention.

There is anecdotal evidence of children experiencing significant hardship when a parent or parents migrate to New Zealand and Australia and leave their children behind. While some children cope well with having a parent absent from home and manage well with the regular remittances from their parents, the lack of parental support may result in others leaving the education system, struggling to participate in social and community activities or being exposed to economic hardship due to lack of parental support.

The Pacific Island Kingdom of Tonga is a nation which is actively participating as a source country for seasonal workers employed in Australia and New Zealand. Seasonal migration is a major contributor to the Tongan economy, with over \$30 million pa'anga (approximately \$20 million New Zealand dollars) in remittances

added to the Tongan economy annually. Relative poverty is common in Tonga, particularly in rural areas and isolated islands such as Lifuka Island, and these programs are argued to be a catalyst for improving the socio-economic outcomes of those who live in these islands.

The nature of island life creates push factors that trigger migration from places like Vava'u, Ha'apai, 'Eua and the Niuas to Tongatapu (the most populated and urbanised island), and also to overseas countries, particularly to New Zealand and Australia. Temporary migration from Tonga for employment in the horticulture and viticulture industries in New Zealand and Australia is now common through the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) programme (New Zealand) and Seasonal Worker Program (SWP, Australia). This thesis examines how seasonal migration affects the children who have been left behind while their father/mother or older siblings participate in the seasonal working schemes.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand how children who live on Lifuka, an Island with a population of approximately 3,000 located in the Ha'apai group of northern Tonga, are affected in terms of education, health, religious participation and social participation when older family members take part in Seasonal Migration Work Schemes (SWS) offered by New Zealand and Australia.

Since the establishment of the New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme in 2007 and Australia's Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme (PSWPS) in 2008 (the Seasonal Worker Program since 2012), over 14,000 Tongans had taken part in the seasonal migration schemes by May 2015. Many of these participants are parents or older siblings, and it is now common in Tonga to meet children who have experience with older family members being away from the home. However, while the experience is common, the impacts of seasonal migration on children have attracted little attention from both researchers and policy makers.

Many Tongans believe children are a gift from God and have an important role in Tongan community and society. Many school principals, community leaders and parents have identified the social problems, which are the result of seasonal work schemes, for children in Lifuka (see discussion in Chapter 6), but only a few research studies have examined this issue in a Pacific Island context. For Tonga to have positive socio-economic outcomes and truly benefit from the economic returns of seasonal migration, it is essential for us to understand and mitigate any adverse impacts on children which the programs may create.

To understand impacts of seasonal migration on children, this thesis analysed in-depth interviews conducted with 16 children from Lifuka Island. The interviews provide new insights and a more detailed understanding of the challenges facing children of parents who take part in seasonal work schemes. To further explore and describe the impacts of seasonal migration on children's health, education, religious participation and social participation, the researcher conducted interviews with ten community leaders and conducted two focus groups with young people enrolled in one of the Lifuka Island high schools.

By learning how children and community leaders viewed problems faced by children left behind, this thesis provides a distinctive perspective on both impacts and benefits of the schemes. This study also provided coping strategies to mitigate the social impacts of seasonal work schemes on teenage children at the household level.

Statement of the problem

In Tonga, there have recently been concerns raised about seasonal migration's effects on children left behind, such as schooling, health, and religious and social participation. In addition, an increasing number of children are left behind while their parents migrate, or are sent back to Tonga from overseas. This is placing increasing strain on family members remaining in Tonga who are providing care for these children (Morton, 1996). This may result in social and cultural strain on families and communities, weakening social cohesion and causing socio-economic concerns for the families affected. The importance of children to a society and the gap in our

understanding of the impacts on children from the schemes is what motivated me to discuss with children their experiences.

Research objectives

The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of the social impacts on children aged between 13 and 16 years as a result of the absences of older family members while they take part in seasonal migration to New Zealand or Australia. Older family members include both parents and older siblings, recognising the role that all older family members play in Tongan households.

Within this overarching aim, there are three main objectives:

- i. To identify the social impacts which are experienced by children who remain in Tonga, when older family members take part in seasonal migration.
- ii. To explore the role of socio-economic and demographic factors (such as age and gender) on these social impacts.
- iii. To describe what, if any, coping strategies are used or the planning done to mitigate the social impacts of the SWS on teenage children at the household level.

When considering social impacts, four themes will be investigated:

- Health;
- Education;
- Social participation;
- Religious participation.

The reason for examining these themes is to gain a better understanding of both the nature of the impacts and the different adjustments families make in order to reduce the effects of seasonal migration on those left behind in the Islands, especially the children whose parents or siblings are often absent for lengthy periods each year.

Importance of this study

Children in Tonga are often left behind when parents, guardians and elder siblings migrate for work. This means that many children in Tonga experience temporary loss of elder members of the family to seasonal migration. Bedford et al. (2009) notes that there is little recent research on the impacts of migration on those left behind in the islands, especially the children whose fathers (and mothers) are often absent for lengthy periods each year. There is also a lack of understanding as to whether the impact differs depending on whether the absentee family member is a mother, father or sibling. This study will therefore address an important gap in the understanding of the social impact of seasonal migration on people in Tonga.

In addition, my position as a Tongan woman and migrant has prompted my interest in investigating the impact of seasonal migration on children, particularly in terms of health, education, social participation and religious participation. This research will provide useful information to assist policy makers to identify the impacts of seasonal migration on children left behind in Tonga, as well as providing some insights into the wider socio-economic impacts of the SWS on Tonga more generally.

Working definitions of terms used within the research

Children

“Children” usually refers to individuals under the age of 18. In this report, children refers to the specific age group of 13-16 years of age, and this definition will be used throughout the paper.

Left behind

The term “left behind” is used differently by different scholars. However, in this context, left-behind children refers to those children whose father and/or mother, and/or older siblings have migrated for work overseas, while the children have remained at home.

Migration

When a person or people move from his/her original place of living to a new place, this is identified as migration. The United Nations (1998), in its Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, revision 1, defines a migrant as “any person who changes his or her country of usual residence” (as cited in Rossi, 2008, p. 7).

Migration can be permanent, if a person never returns to his or her place of origin, or long term, if a person moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.

A short-term migrant is defined as a person moving to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least three months but less than a year (12 months), and this is often the status of a person who moves from one region to another in accordance with the seasons (Rossi, 2008). However, if a person moves to a new country for purposes of recreation, holidays, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment, or religious pilgrimages, he or she is not considered a migrant (UN, 1998, as cited in Rossi, 2008, p. 7).

Seasonal migration

Bedford, Bedford and Ho (2009) suggest that seasonal migration, which usually involves migrants moving for less than 12 months, is a persistent form of circular migration between high-income and low-income countries (p. 14).

Thesis structure

This chapter has provided an introduction to the research topic, background to the study, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, and some definitions of key terms used in the thesis.

An overview of both the Kingdom of Tonga and Lifuka Island is presented in Chapter 2. It gives some basic demographic and socio-economic information alongside details of the seasonal migration situation in Lifuka. Issues covered in this chapter include the geographical location and the description of Tonga, brief history of the country,

the main economic structure, religion, education, and a description of the study area, Lifuka.

Chapter 3 provides a review of the literature on seasonal migration with particular reference to the New Zealand and Australian seasonal working schemes. It examines the concept of seasonal migration and its impacts on children, and also outlines the coping strategies used to reduce the consequences. This chapter identifies some of the key failings of seasonal migration in the past and considers the ways that authors have suggested seasonal migration be managed to avoid these failings and promote successful outcomes in the future. This chapter also reviews the literature that has emerged on seasonal migration and development, thus establishing the need for further research into the potential of temporary migration, which is one of the aims of this thesis.

Chapter 4 presents the methodological framework of the study. It covers issues such as methods used in data collection and the analysis of the data. It discusses the methodological argument from the interpretivist perspective. The chapter also includes a description of how research with children as informants was undertaken in Tonga.

Chapter 5 discusses the main results of the field inquiry. It presents an analysis of the impacts of seasonal migration on children's education, health, religious and social participation and the coping strategies adopted to reduce the problems that emerged. Chapter 6, the final chapter, contains a summary of the thesis and some concluding remarks.

Chapter Two: Study Context

Introduction

In order to understand the seasonal migration situation in Tonga, it is important to understand the country and the background to the issues involved. To provide context, this chapter presents some spatial, cultural, economic and political dimensions of Tonga, the Ha'apai group, Lifuka Island and the specific community that was studied.

Brief description of Tonga

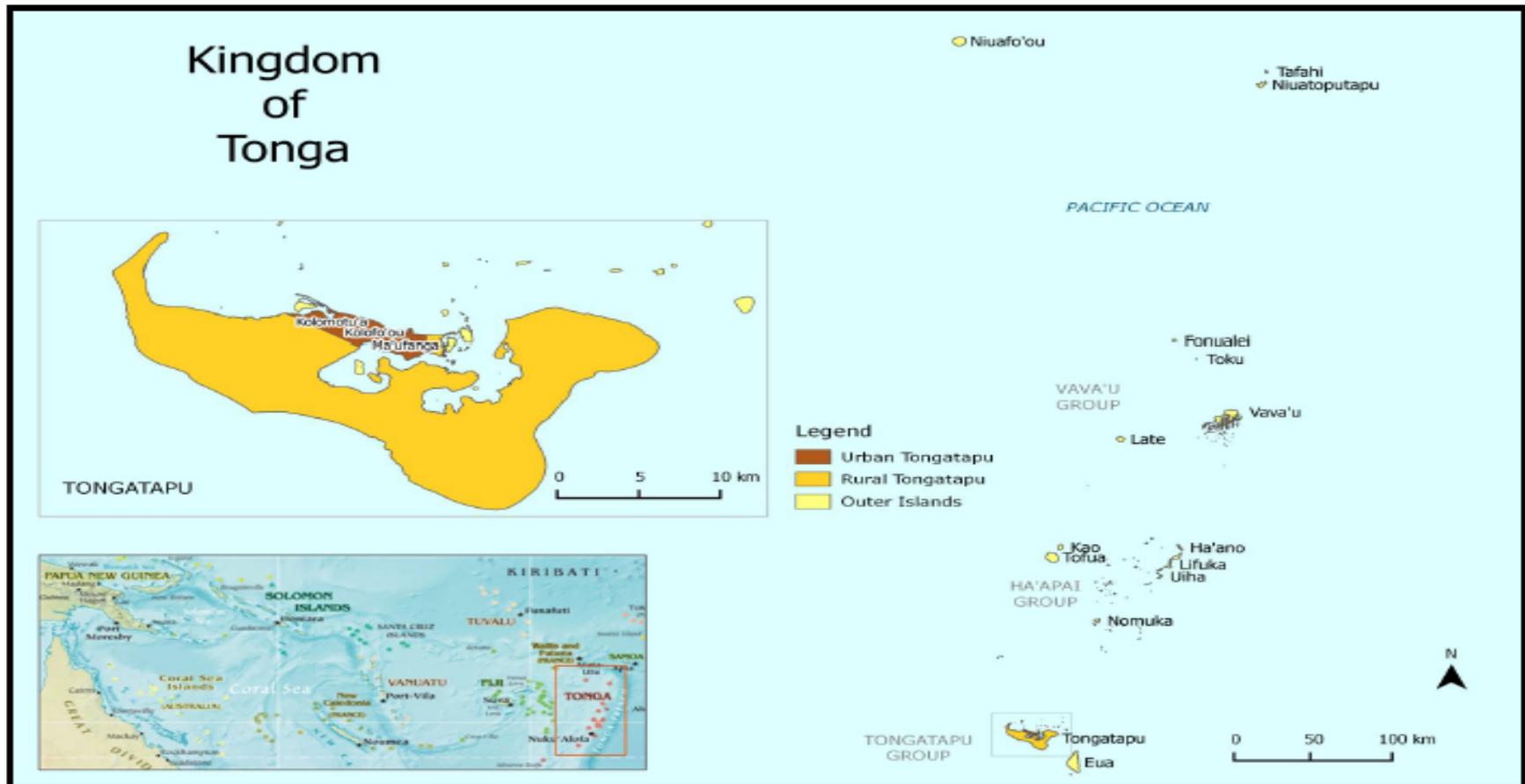
Located in the Pacific, Tonga is the last remaining Polynesian Kingdom, a constitutional monarchy since its constitution was promulgated in 1875 (James, 1994). Tonga (Figure 1) is a small nation with a land area of 650km² spread across 171 islands in the central Pacific Ocean to the east of Fiji Islands. Because of the hospitality offered to Captain James Cook on his first visit to Tonga in 1773, Cook named these the “Friendly Isles” (Campbell, 2001a).

There are five main administrative districts: the Tongatapu group in the south, the Ha'apai group in the centre (Figure 2), the Vava'u group further north, the two Niua groups situated in the far north of the Vava'u group closer to Samoa, and the 'Eua group to the east of the Tongatapu group. The islands run roughly north–south in two parallel chains; the western islands are volcanic and the eastern ones are coralline encircled by reefs.

Because Tonga lies within the southeast trade wind zone of the South Pacific, its climate is tropical. Tonga's climate is favourable to agricultural production and allows people to live comfortably without costly heating or winter clothing. The soil on the low-lying coral islands is porous, being a shallow layer of red volcanic ash, devoid of quartz but containing broken-down limestone particles. The clay soil of Tongatapu is very fertile and requires few inputs to produce high crop yields. The soils of 'Eua and Vava'u are sandy and less fertile than those of Tongatapu, but still support some cropping (Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources, 2001). As most of the islands are coral or volcanic in origin, Tonga has no commercial mineral

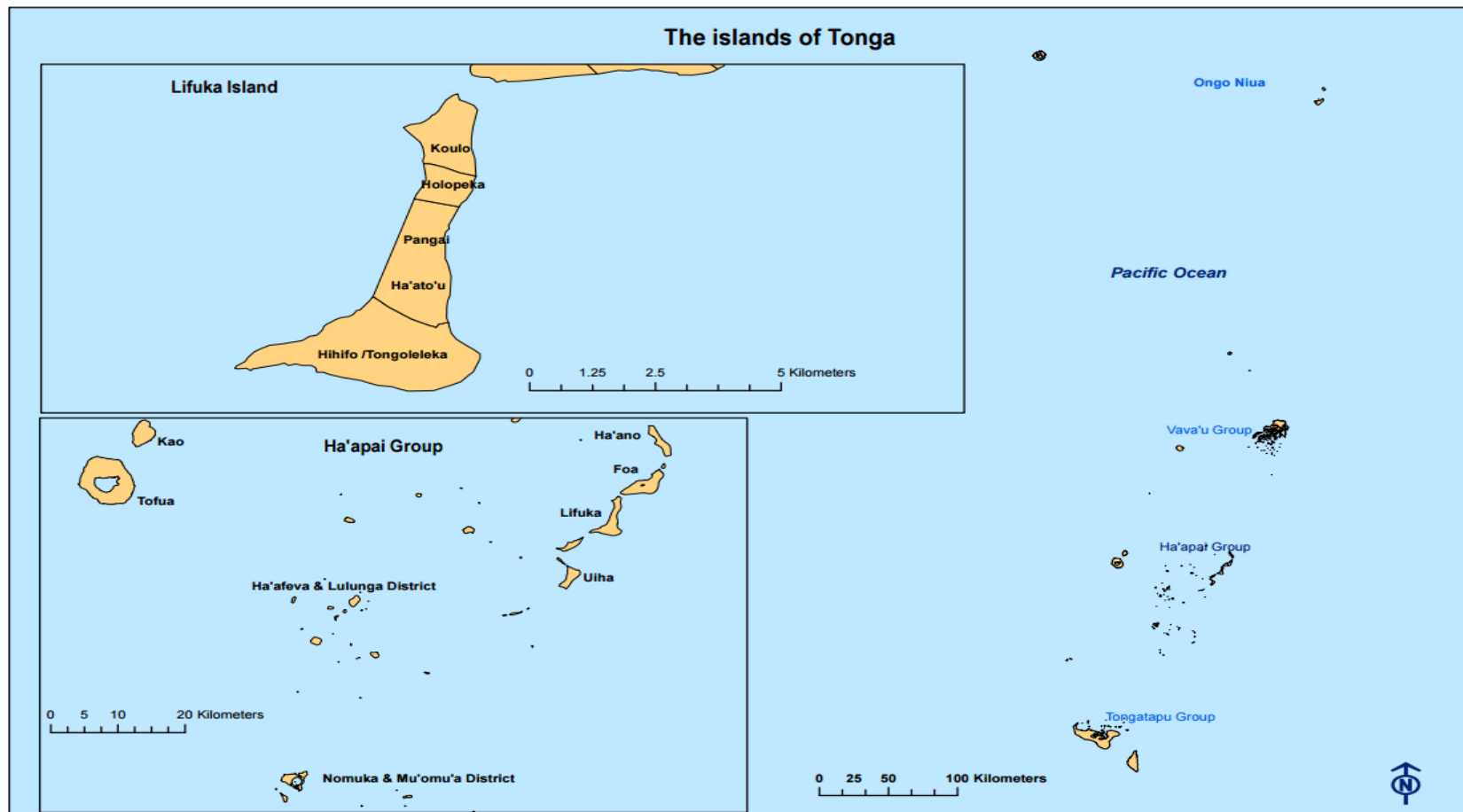
resources and the nation's wealth is derived from the people, the land and the sea. There are few lakes or streams in Tonga; only Tofua, Vava'u, Nomuka, and Niuafu'ou have lakes, and there are creeks on 'Eua and one stream on Niuatoputapu. The other islands rely on wells and the storage of rainwater to maintain a water supply for usage

Figure 1: Map of Tonga



Source: Adopted from Tonga Census 2011, Tonga Statistics department (2014).

Figure 2: Map of Ha'apai Group

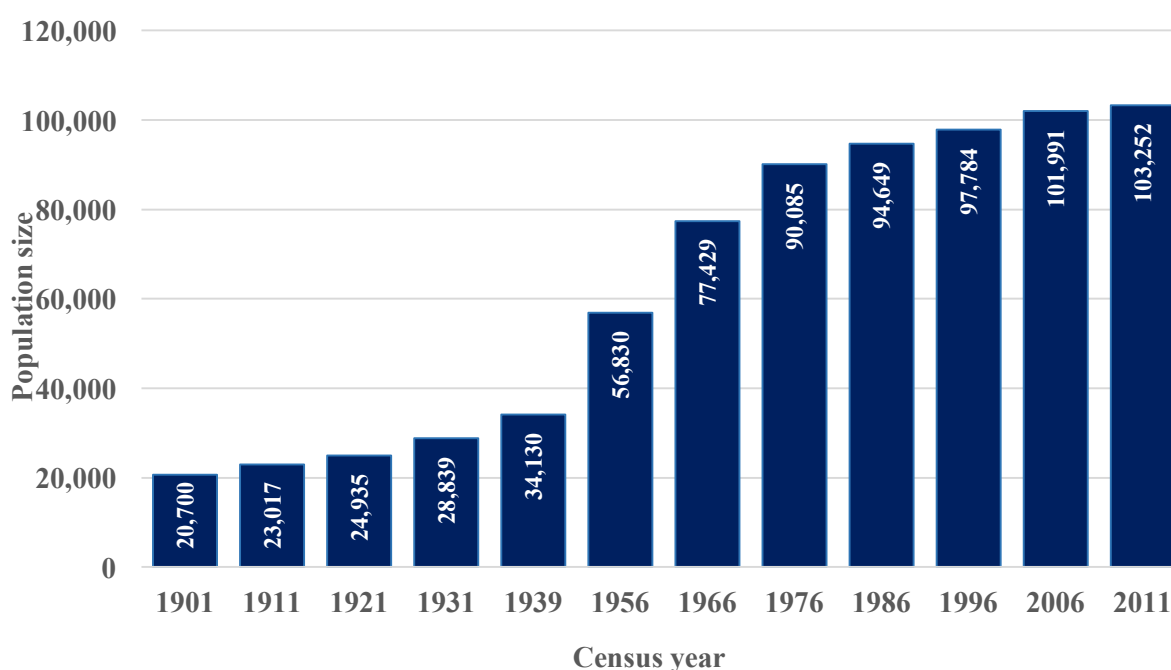


Source: Barsdel & Lolohea, NIDEA department: University of Waikato

Demographic characteristics

Tonga's Statistics Department carried out a national population census in 2011, updating the previous 2006 population census data. The 2011 census shows Tonga's population in November 2011 reached 103,252 people, comprised of 51,979 males and 51,273 females. Compared to the previous census in 2006, the Tongan population has grown by 1.2 percent, or 1,261 people. The population of Tonga has increased substantially since 1901 when the first census was conducted and the population was only 20,700 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Total population of Tonga, 1901–2011

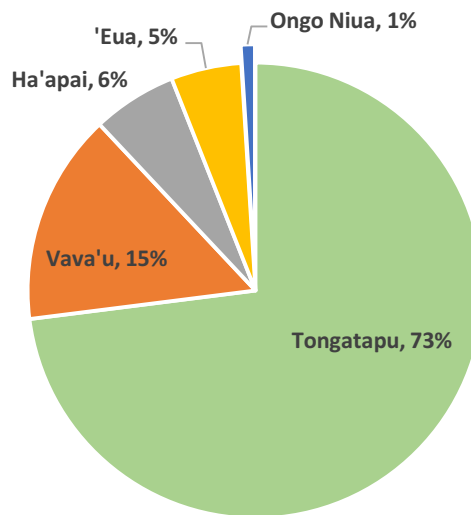


(Source: Tonga Statistics Department, 2014)

Before 2006, the Tongan census had been conducted every 10 years, and the most recent census in 2011 marks a shift in the pattern of enumerations. Based on the population change between 2006 and 2011, Tonga has experienced an average annual growth rate of 0.4 percent, equivalent to approximately 420 additional people per year. In 2011, the average population density was 159 people for each square kilometre, but this differs widely amongst divisions and districts. The densest urban area is Tongatapu, with 290 people/km², while the least dense area is Ongo Niua with 18 people/km².

Figure 4 displays the distribution pattern of Tonga's population. Tongatapu (the largest island) contains the largest concentration of the Kingdom's population (73%). Vava'u (15%) follows, with Ha'apai (6%) standing next on the list. 'Eua (5%) follows next, and then Ongo Niua (two Niuas), which are located in the far north, supporting only one percent of the population.

Figure 4: Tonga's population distribution pattern



(Source: Tonga Statistics Department, 2014)

When comparing the 2011 and 2006 censuses, Ha'apai and Niuas had 7% and 2% of the population respectively in 2006. While both have declined as a percentage of the overall population over this period, Ha'apai has experienced the greatest decline (Tonga Statistics Department, 2014). Tongatapu is the beneficiary of the decline of these outer regions, with Tongatapu increasing as a proportion from 71% in 2006 to 73% in 2011, hinting at increased urbanisation and internal migration within Tonga.

Tonga has a comparatively young population, with a median age of 21 years. More than one-third (37%) of the population is 15 years or younger, and only 8% are 60 years and older. The current total fertility rate of 3.9 in 2011 declined from 4.2 in 2006, with 2,896 births in 2011 estimated. In 2010, the overall life expectancy at birth for Tongans averaged 70 years, with women living to an average of 73 years and men 67 years (Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2010).

Brief political history of Tonga

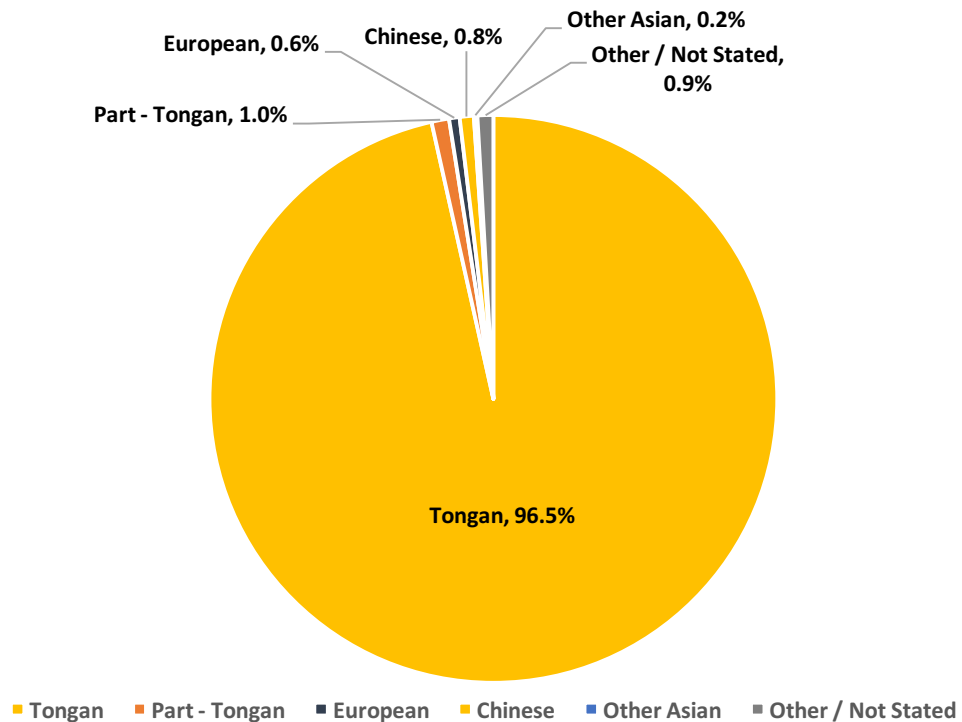
Tonga, officially known as the Kingdom of Tonga (pule'anga fakatu'i 'a Tonga), is a constitutional monarchy with a king as the head of state and is a unique political system in the South Pacific region. It is the only Pacific Island state never to be formally colonised by any other nation state. Tonga was a British protectorate from 1900 until 1970 and the lives and culture of Tongans have been greatly affected by missionaries, traders and, over time, European settlers. The head of government from January 2015 has been a prime minister, who was elected by the members of the Legislative Assembly and appointed by the monarch. The prime minister selects a cabinet who are then appointed by the monarch. He may nominate up to four ministers from outside the Legislative Assembly and, on appointment, they become members of the Legislative Assembly.

The constitution of Tonga sets out the structure of government and there are three main clusters of powers and duties comprising the executive, legislature and the judiciary. Since the democratic elections in 2010, the cabinet has been the highest executive authority in government chaired by the prime minister. The members of cabinet are made of ministers chosen by the prime minister from the Legislative Assembly, which consists of 26 elected members. Nine of the Legislative Assembly are elected by and from among the country's 33 hereditary nobles, while the other 17 are elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage (women received the vote in 1960) in a general election, which must take place at intervals of no longer than four years.

Language, ethnicity and religion

Tonga has a very homogenous population, with almost 97% (99,641) of Tongan origin and only 1% (1,069) of part-Tongan origin, as shown in Figure 5. Less than 2% of the population is of an ethnic origin other than Tongan or part-Tongan. The percentage of other ethnic origins is slightly higher in Tonga's urban area, where 5% are not Tongan or are part-Tongan. Amongst the non-Tongans, 2% are of Chinese origin, 1% of European origin, and 0.4% are other Asians (Tonga Statistics Department, 2014).

Figure 5: Tonga's population by ethnic origin (in % of total population), Tonga, 2011

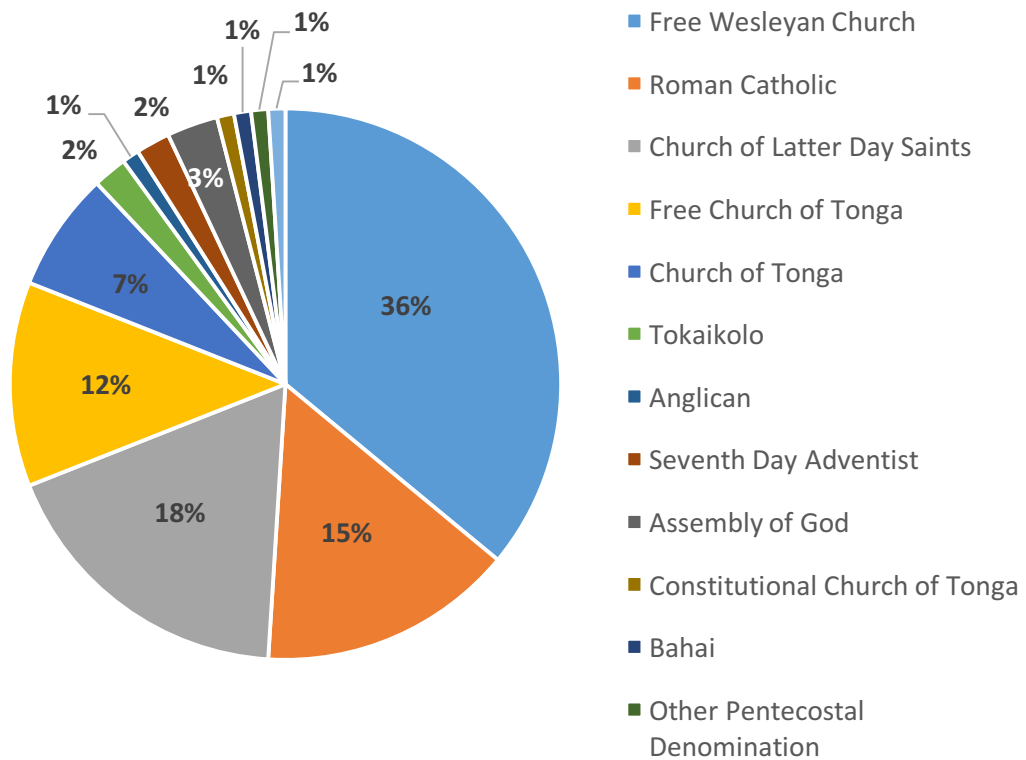


(Source: Tonga Statistics Department, 2014)

Although Tonga consists of many islands, only one dialect is spoken throughout the Kingdom. English is taught in the schools and is also widely spoken in the main towns. It is the main language of government and commerce. According to the 1996 census, over 99 per cent of the population was literate in the Tongan language and around 70 per cent in English language (Tonga Statistics Department, 2008).

Religion is very important in Tonga. Based on the Tonga census of 2011, almost all of the population identify as Christian, with Methodism as the dominant denomination in Tonga. Just over a third (36% or 36,592 members) of the total population affiliated with the Free Wesleyan Church. The Church of Latter Day Saints is the second largest, with 18,554 members (18 percent of the population) followed by the Roman Catholic Church with 15% (15,441 members). The Free Church of Tonga has 12% (11,863 members), and the Church of Tonga with 7% (6,935 members). The remaining faiths altogether had less than 3% of the population as members. Figure 6 breaks down religious affiliation.

Figure 6: Population by religion, 2011



(Source: Tonga Statistics Department, 2014)

In the Tongan way of life, church has a profound influence on communities' everyday life. Most Tongans attend church services at least weekly, and other social activities and obligations linked with the church are an important part of life in most families. However, the people of Tonga are free to choose which church they will join and it is not unusual for family members to attend different churches.

Economy

Tonga has been classified by The World Bank as a lower middle-income economy. In 2009, the Gross National Income per capita was US\$2,561. In 2009, Tonga's economy contracted by 0.4%, mainly as a result of the impact of the global financial crisis (GFC) on remittances of emigrant Tongans. The decline in remittances, coupled with the impact of the GFC on prices for local commodities, resulted in government revenues falling in successive years (Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2010)

The current Tongan economy is based on the primary sector, cash earnings (squash, fishing, and forestry) and informal agriculture (Asian Development Bank, 2013, as cited in Cave & Koloto, 2015), light manufacturing, and tourism industry. These key sectors help to boost economic growth, which is necessary to address hardship and ensure reasonably equitable sharing of wealth. The economy is traditionally redistributive in Tongan society, based on three core values: ‘ofa (love), faka’apa’apa (respect) and fuakavenga (responsibility). Family groups rely on traditional economic cooperation to raise money for important occasions such as weddings, funerals, birthdays, graduation and so forth. Tongans who migrate overseas through seasonal working schemes, Pacific Access Category, or seeking a better way of life remit money frequently to the family members left behind in Tonga. Nevertheless, strong family and community ties are still a dominant cultural and societal trait today (Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2010).

Tonga’s ability to sustain economic growth is constrained by its relatively small endowment of land and natural resources, vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change, substantial dependence on imports, relative isolation from major markets, and the high cost of public administration and infrastructure, particularly transportation and communication (Asian Development Bank, 2006a: Asian Development Bank, 2006b). In addition to domestic production, international donors, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and other donors, play a key role in Tonga’s development. Aid to Tonga has increased over the past few years, with official development assistance received rising from USD39 million in 2009, to USD70 million in 2010, to USD94 million in 2011. Tonga’s aid-to-GNI ratio averaged out at around 17% from 2009 to 2011; this is an 86% increase on the average across the period 2000 to 2002 (Herbert, 2013).

Education

The legal framework for the full development of Tongan children is provided by the Ministry of Education Act in 2013. Every child in Tonga has the right to receive a quality education; every child has the right to access educational and vocational information and guidance. Lastly, educational and vocational information is made available in the Tongan language and the English language (Ministry of Education and Training, 2013b). The Act also prescribes the main functions of the Ministry to provide both equitable access and high quality universal basic education for all children in Tonga between ages 4 to age 18. The Ministry is also responsible for improving access to high quality post-basic education and training in Tonga, and for ensuring effective administration of education and training so that the quality of educational performance is enhanced by providing quality teachers, through pre-service and in-service training.

School enrolment data shows that 98% of children in the age group 6–14 years (compulsory school age) were enrolled in schools in 2011. School enrolment rates declined rapidly after the age of 15, and about 15% of 16 year-olds were not attending school. Data on educational attainment show that in 2011, approximately 9% of the population had only a primary level education. More than 75% of the population aged 15 and older had a secondary level education, and about 17% of the population aged 15 and older had a tertiary level education (Tonga Statistics Department, 2014).

The level of education is higher in the urban areas than in rural areas. However, compared to 2006, educational attainment levels had improved more in rural areas than urban areas due to greater scope for improvement in rural areas. For instance, the proportion of the population aged 15 and older with a secondary education qualification was 33% for females and 29% for males (Tonga Statistics Department, 2014).

Children's ability to read and write in both Tongan and English is measured through reading and writing simple sentences. Using this measure, almost everyone older than 10 years of age is literate in Tongan. Literacy in English is almost as high as Tongan language skills for those aged 10–34 years. The literacy rate of 15–25 year-olds was 99%, with no differences between genders observed.

English literacy gradually declines as age increases (Tonga Statistics Department, 2014).

Health

The quality and availability of health services in communities is a key factor impacting on the welfare of children, youth and women. Tonga enjoys a high standard of healthcare compared to some of its Pacific neighbours, and it is estimated that 100 percent of the population have health facilities within one hour of travelling time (WPRO, 2004). While there is still considerable knowledge and use of traditional medicine in Tongan society (Whistler, 1992), most Tongans have accepted and make use of modern medical facilities. Medical services other than those required to obtain a visa are provided free of charge to the public in the hospital (Kaitani & McMurray, 2006). Local people who can afford to pay for medicines live healthier lives, while others who have low incomes are often not able to pay for some pharmaceuticals, especially with private clinic fees. Remittances from migrants living abroad, especially family members who stayed overseas or are taking part in the seasonal working schemes, support the medical needs of most families in Tonga.

The health system is organised into four districts, each with management authorities and delegated responsibilities. The major hospital in Nuku'alofa (199 beds) can treat most conditions, other than those requiring advanced surgery and high-tech equipment. A new wing was opened in March 2006, and further renovations are planned to modernise the hospital and improve the standard of care that can be offered. 'Eua, Ha'apai and Vava'u each have a central hospital with 18, 25 and 61 beds respectively, along with health centres to serve outlying areas, while the two atolls of the Niua each have a health centre offering maternal and child health care (Kaitani & McMurray, 2006).

Urbanisation

Internal migration in Tonga has occurred progressively, as young adults as well as whole families relocated from outer islands to the main island of Tongatapu, where the capital Nuku'alofa is located (Taufatofua, 2011). This movement has been prompted by economic disparity, natural disasters, increasing population,

and shortages of land. Differentials in wages, employment, and education opportunities encouraged Tongans to shift from the outer to the main islands, smaller to larger towns, and rural islands to the urban capital (Small & Dixon, 2004). The continuous redistribution of population from rural to urban areas has resulted in growth of urban areas, especially to the main urban area, Nuku'alofa, on Tongatapu (Kaitani & McMurray, 2006).

The uneven distribution of the population makes it difficult to provide equal access to services and development funding throughout the outer islands, while putting pressure on the services in Nuku'alofa. Increasing budgetary allocations are required to provide infrastructure, such as roads, water, sanitation, rubbish removal, electricity and other services for the burgeoning urban population. Urbanisation has also impacted on the cost of living. As more people move away from subsistence living and into the cash economy, the increasing demand for consumer goods and foodstuffs has pushed up the cost of living in Nuku'alofa. Urbanisation also is associated with the emergence of social problems including high rates of unemployment, poverty, landlessness, drug abuse and crime (Connell & Lea, 2002, as cited in Kaitani & McMurray, 2006).

International migration

Due to differences in economic development and social conditions between Pacific countries like Tonga and neighbouring developed countries, Pacific Island nations often have considerable international migration. Since the 1970s, international migration to access diverse educational and employment opportunities that are not available in Tonga has offset most of the country's natural population increase. This has allowed for better management of the balance between population and resources. In 2010, 55% of ethnic Tongans lived abroad, the majority in New Zealand (50,000) with smaller numbers distributed in Australia, North America, Asia, and elsewhere (Small, 2011).

Migration usually involves a change of a person's usual residential address but for many Tongans moving overseas the right to live in another country permanently is not easy to achieve. Due to high wages and greater availability of jobs in overseas countries, many perceived emigration as the only solution to overcoming socio-economic problems at home. Because of this, some Tongan migrants have stayed

abroad permanently while some return home. In the 2011 census, some facts were identified which provided an indication of the level of international migration based on the residence one and five years prior to the 2011 census and birth place. It was found that about three percent (2,695 people) of the population aged one year and older had been living overseas one year prior to the 2011 census. Four percent of the population (3,806 people) five years and older had been living overseas five years prior to the 2011 census and 5% of the population at the time of the 2011 census (4,647 people) had been born overseas (Tonga Statistics Department, 2014).

The principal overseas migration destinations for Tongans are New Zealand and the United States, with some migration from New Zealand to Australia. However, in the context of seasonal migration, New Zealand and Australia are the two major destinations offering opportunities for temporary work on farms for Tongan people and other Pacific Islanders every year. For instance, RSE work started in 2007/2008 when there were 805 Tongan workers, which increased in 2012/2013 to 1538 seasonal workers in New Zealand. This helps in reducing the level of poverty by improving access to better health services, better education, increasing family income and so forth, which will be discussed in a later chapter. In addition, migration also can have severe consequences at the family level, with women and children often remaining behind to manage families and thereby risking economic and social hardship if they are left without a reliable income received from migrants.

The temporary migration schemes

Seasonal migration remains an important contributor to economic and social development in Pacific Island countries. In particular, it has made a major contribution to their welfare. Under New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employers (RSE) scheme and Australia's Seasonal Worker Program, poor residents of Pacific Island nations are prioritised for selection for seasonal work on farms.

The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Program

In New Zealand, the managed seasonal work scheme is known as the RSE–Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) work policy. It was foreshadowed by the Prime Minister (Helen Clark) at the meeting of the Pacific Forum in Fiji in 2006 and commenced operations on April 30, 2007 (Maclellan, 2008). This scheme currently facilitates temporary entry of up to 9,000 Pacific Island nationals from Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to work in 111 horticulture and viticulture enterprises. During the 2014/15 financial year there was a total of 1,563 Tongans employed in New Zealand for less than 12 months. This is to meet seasonal labour shortages by recruiting overseas workers when there are not enough New Zealand workers available to meet the demand for temporary labour.

Inter-Agency Understandings (IAUs) were developed with five “kick-start” Pacific states including Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, Kiribati and Tuvalu. Prior to a worker being involved in the scheme, some information is provided to those heading overseas to forewarn them of the impacts of leaving their family members behind (Gibson et al., 2008). In an interview conducted as part of this research project with the local Tongan government representatives responsible for "pastoral care" of Tongan RSE workers, the respondent said there were some questions regarding the number of children, who is responsible for looking after them while the worker is away, and the age group of the children left behind. If the children are very young and there are more than 6 of them, then advice is given to stay behind with the family. Sometimes, an approval for such workers to take part is given if there is no other source of income for the family.

In order for New Zealand employers in the horticulture and viticulture industries to recruit workers from Tonga, they must apply to become Recognised Seasonal Employers (RSE) in New Zealand and then apply for an Approval to Recruit (ATR) seasonal workers. Every worker should have an employment offer linked to an ATR, and then they can apply for a Seasonal Work Visa. It requires supplying a passport, a temporary entry chest x-ray certificate (used to screen for tuberculosis), a medical certificate, police clearance, and their return air ticket (Gibson et al., 2008).

Employers are required to pay half of the return airfare for every worker. It is compulsory for all workers to attend a pre-departure orientation before leaving for New Zealand. This is to ensure workers are aware about life in New Zealand including information covering matters such as climate, clothing and footwear requirements, taxation, insurance, remitting and budget advice, and emergency contact information. In following years, employers can then request the same workers to return again in the next season.

The minimum age for participation in the Recognised Seasonal Schemes is 18 for men, three years younger than the minimum age for recruiting women (21 years). There are some distinctive features of Tonga's recruitment system. The IAU sets out two recruitment options for New Zealand employers wishing to recruit from Tonga. The first option, which is noted in the IAU as preferred by the Tongan Ministry of Labour, Commerce and Industries (hereafter referred to as the Tongan Labour Ministry), is for the employer to recruit from a "work-ready" pool of Tongan nationals pre-screened and selected by the Tongan Labour Ministry.

The second option is for the New Zealand employer to recruit directly, after informing the Tongan Labour Ministry. However, the Tongan government has changed the approach to the selection of seasonal workers. As the Minister of Internal Affairs (MIA) Hon. Fe'ao Vakata reported in Parliament on the 2nd of September, 2015, "contracted agencies can recruit workers from the community but town and the district officers will finalise it. This is to ensure good, reliable and trustworthy workers are recruited and are expected to return to Tonga" (Parliament 2, 2015). Cabinet also agreed that electorate MPs can also decide on those selected.

Only 73 of the 816 Tongan RSE workers (9 percent) recruited by May 22, 2008 were female, with only 3 out of the 305 Tongan RSE workers arriving in New Zealand in 2007 being women. Women doing work packing fruit towards the end of the season appears to be the only reason for an increase in female participation in early 2008. Table 1 shows the annual numbers of workers from Tonga to have worked in New Zealand, starting from 2007/2008 to 2014/2015.

Table 1: Total RSE Tongan workers 2007/2008-2014/2015

YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION
2007/2008	805
2008/2009	1,355
2009/2010	1,142
2010/2011	1,411
2011/2012	1,398
2012/2013	1,573
2013/2014	1,538
2014/2015	1,563

(Source: Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2015)

All Pacific Forum countries are eligible to participate in this scheme (Fiji was declined access to the scheme after the December 2006 military coup and was re-admitted in March 2014 because of the restoration of democracy in the country). Although the RSE scheme has offered only temporary job opportunities for Tongan people, some workers absconded from the employer before the end of the contract and stayed on in New Zealand. Tonga has the highest number of RSE absconders in both New Zealand and Australia.

Australia's Seasonal Worker Program

Australia launched its Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot scheme in August 2008. This pilot became a full programme in 2012 (the Seasonal Worker Program or SWP), initially with a quota of 2,500 short-term working visas and now operates as an uncapped scheme. Like the RSE, it aims to alleviate labour shortages in the horticultural industry by providing opportunities for seasonal work for people from Pacific countries including Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, Kiribati and Tuvalu. Small numbers from Timor Leste are also employed in Australia's SWP.

Tonga provided 1,883 workers for the 2014/2015 fiscal year (ending May 2015) to Australia for employment in the horticulture industry and is the largest supplier

of labour under the SWP. Table 2 data shows the total breakdown of the 4,579 workers since 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 as of May 31, 2015.

Table 2: Total SWP Tongan workers 2012/2013-2014/2015

YEAR	GENDER	TOTAL POPULATION
2012/2013	Female	138
	Male	1061
		<u>1199</u>
2013/2014	Female	175
	Male	1322
		<u>1497</u>
2014/2015	Female	240
	Male	1643
		<u>1883</u>

(Source: Australia Government Department of Employment, 2015)

The pilot consisted of two phases: November 2008 to June 2009, 100 visas were allocated; July 2009 to June 2012, the remaining visas were allocated. 56 of the 100 visas available in phase 1 were taken up by 50 Tongan workers who arrived in February 2009 and 6 ni-Vanuatu workers who arrived in April 2009, to take part in the working scheme. Only 214 of the available 2400 visas were issued in the second phase between July 2009 and February 2011. The majority of these went to Tongans. The main activities the workers do are harvesting citrus fruits, harvesting almonds, and pruning grape vines.

Due to the increasing number of reported absconding labourers in Australia, the Tongan government is changing the way workers are selected, after it estimated several hundred had absconded since the scheme began. In support of this, the Internal Affairs Minister, Hon. Vakata, says one contractor told him that 74 of his workers had disappeared before their contracts finished. He estimated of 1400 Tongans in total across Australia, about 300 choose to remain in Australia illegally (Radio New Zealand, 2015). Hon. Vakata has also required Tongan town and the district officers to finalise the lists of recruits the agents want to employ in

Australia and New Zealand. This is to ensure good, reliable and trustworthy workers are recruited who are expected to return to Tonga after work instead of becoming overstayers.

The Ha'apai group and Lifuka Island

Ha'apai comprises a group of islands, islets, reefs and shoals with an area of 109.30 square kilometres. The archipelago is located in the central part of the Kingdom of Tonga and lies 204 kilometres north of Tongatapu and 130 kilometres south of Vava'u. There are seventeen islands in Ha'apai, which are populated with 6,616 people (Tonga Statistics Department, 2014), compared to 2006 when the total population was 7,570 (Tonga Statistics Department, 2008). The two main islands in Ha'apai are Lifuka and Foa Island.

Lifuka Island (Figure 2) is where Pangai is located. It is the lowest lying island in Tonga, divided into five main villages, which are Tongoleleka, Ha'ato'u, Pangai, Holopeka and Koulo. Pangai is the administrative capital of the Ha'apai Group between Ha'ato'u and Koulo. The domestic airport in Ha'apai is found on Lifuka Island in the village of Koulo.

Education, health and religion

There are three main government primary schools in Lifuka, which are located in Pangai, Hihifo and Koulo, with another primary school owned by the Tokaikolo 'ia Kalaisi church. The government primary schools are free to children who want to enrol, whereas in the church primary school students must pay only the registration fees.

The only government-funded high school in Lifuka is named Ha'apai High School, which is located in Pangai. The other five secondary schools are run by different churches including Catholic, Latter Day Saints, Free Church of Tonga, Tokaikolo 'ia Kalaisi Church and the Free Wesleyan Church. At the secondary level, students must pay their school fees and examination fees, and they may also be required to pay other fees such as school day donations, mufti day and so on. The University of the South Pacific extension centre located in Pangai is the only

tertiary level education facility in Lifuka, but is not free and cost is a barrier for some residents.

The only health centre in Lifuka is the single hospital located in Hihifo (aka Tongoleleka) called Niu'ui. Local people are free to visit the doctors for any health needs unless it involves a medical certificate, in which case fees need to be paid. Although modern medicine is now common in Lifuka, people still rely on Tongan traditional medicine, which sometimes is more effective than the modern medicine that is offered in the hospital. Occasionally, patients are referred to the hospital in the main island due to lack of medical equipment and medicine for treatment.

As noted earlier, religion is a very important part of Tongan society. Local people offer money to the church as well as sharing food with the church members. Sunday in Tonga is celebrated as a strict Sabbath, preserved so in the constitution, and despite some voices in opposition, the Sunday ban on work and trading activity is not likely to be abolished soon. No trade is allowed on Sunday, except essential services, after special approval by the Minister of Police. Those who break the law risk a fine or imprisonment.

Population and housing

According to 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Ha'apai has a total population of 6,616 (3406 males and 3210 females). The percentage of Tonga's population living in Ha'apai was 6% in 2011, showing a decline compared to 7% in 2006 (Tonga Statistics Department, 2014). While the average population density in Ha'apai is 61 people per square kilometre, this varies widely by division. As stated in the Census of 2011, the largest decline in population density has been in Ha'apai (by 13 people per square kilometre).

Based on the question regarding place of residence in 2010 (one year prior to the census), there was a net loss of 43 people to Ha'apai (from 522 to 479). Between the 2006 and 2011 censuses, the percentage of the population born and still residing in Tongatapu increased by 2% and decreased by 4% in Vava'u and 5% in Ha'apai. Except for Tongatapu, all other divisions had a net loss of population.

Lifuka Island had a total population of 2,410 in 2011, which had declined by 557 from the total population of 2,967 in 2006. Based on the information given by the Census of Population and Housing (2011), Pangai's population of 1,211 includes Ha'ato'u. Hihifo (Tongoleleka) has a population of 844, while Koulo's total population was 214. The smallest community was Holopeka, with a population of 14.

There has been out-migration from Lifuka to Tongatapu, and the search for better education and job opportunities are the main factors that account for the population decline (Taufatofua, 2011). For instance, most families from Lifuka migrate to the main island of Tongatapu to attend tertiary institutes such as the teacher's training college, Queen Salote nursing school, and technical institutes, due to lack of higher education at home. Another pull factor is the job opportunities available in the main island that attract members of most families to emigrate to Tongatapu, to improve their standard of living due to insufficient work available on Lifuka.

Socio-economic characteristics

Livelihood levels are lowest in the Ha'apai Group, where 20% of households depend upon subsistence rather than cash earnings or wages (Cave & Koloto, 2015). The livelihood of Lifuka Island relies on traditional handicrafts mostly, from pandanus harvesting and processing of fine mats, animal husbandry, subsistence horticulture, and fishing as well as subsistence farming. The local people sell fine mats to other islands such as Tongatapu, and also overseas. Those who get the chance to become employed by the government or private companies are able to support the family financially.

Small-scale informal sector economic activities such as owning small shops (fa le Koloa) bring income for some families who run their own business. There are limited resources in Lifuka to employ its local people and remittances play a major role in providing for family needs and wants.

In addition, to overcome the economic hardship, the locals emigrate overseas to find a better life. The role of remittances in Lifuka is improving the living standard of most families who have members overseas. An estimated 150,000

Tongans live in New Zealand, Australia, and the US – this is around 1.5 times the size of the population in Tonga (Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2010). Remittances play a key role in supporting the Tongan people, making up a total of 21% of total income of Tongan households in 2009. They also play a key role in poverty alleviation.

A quantitative analysis by Brown et al. (2014) calculated that the poverty rate in Tonga would have been 62% without migration and remittances in comparison with the observed 32%. The remittances received by the people of Lifuka were mainly from family members who were living permanently in overseas countries and those who were involved in seasonal work schemes offered by New Zealand and Australia.

As we have seen so far, a range of factors has contributed immensely to the high level of parental migration in search of greener pastures in other countries like New Zealand and Australia. When either of the mother or the father migrate, they leave children at home under the supervision of other family members or relatives. Living in the absence of one or both biological parents, children go through a lot of experiences to survive and at the same time adopt various coping strategies. Understanding the experiences and strategies adopted by children when their father/mother are absent working overseas is an important part of ensuring good outcomes from seasonal migration.

Chapter Three: Review of Literature

Introduction

Temporary international migration is often a family livelihood event that affects both migrant and the left-behind members of the family. In the absence of key family members working overseas such as father or mother, families remaining at home will unavoidably experience some degree of displacement, disruption and changes in caregiving arrangements, especially for young children.

Most existing research focuses on the importance of remittances as a benefit from migration, and findings frequently suggest that the remittances received could support the family left behind by minimising economic risk and overcoming capital constraints. However, there is little research on the negative social impacts of migration on those left behind in the Pacific Islands, particularly the children whose fathers (and mothers) or older siblings are often absent for lengthy periods each year working overseas under RSE scheme and or SWP schemes. This paper reports for the first time on “the social impact of seasonal migration on the children left behind in Lifuka.”

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly review some research that has been conducted in relation to seasonal migration impacts on children. In particular, it focuses on children’s education, health, religion and social participation. The primary focus is on the findings contained in journal articles, media releases, master’s theses, evaluations, research reports, and electronic journals and books written since 1990. The discussion is organised in three main sections, dealing with, respectively, migration and children, temporary migration in a global context and seasonal migration in a Pacific context.

Migration and children

The implications of migration for children, whether across international boundaries or between different parts of a country, have received relatively little attention in the policy literature on population change (Cortes, 2007). Migration can affect children positively and negatively, depending on whether they are

migrating with parents (children of migrants) or migrating alone, being left behind by one or both migrating parents, and the effect on their living environment.

The term “affected children” is used to refer to children and young people less than 18 years of age. In this context, children are seen to be the most affected by migration when one or both parents migrate, or when older siblings in the family leave them behind (Whitehead & Hashim, 2005). According to Bryant (2005), who studied the impact of migration on the children left behind in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, children who grow up in the company of their migrating parents have better life conditions. At the same time, he argues that parents who have left their children behind usually do send more than enough remittances to their children to support them and cover their expenses.

Alternatively, Yeoh and Lam (2007), who have also conducted research on the impact of migration on the children left behind in the Philippines, found that beyond the economic benefits and the better lives of the children left behind, the migration of the parent causes physical dislocation and social disruption as well as affecting the relationship between the children and their migrant parents. A 2009 study by Schapiro, a consultant for United Nations Development Programme, found that the constant absence of a family member, either father/mother or siblings, dislocated a child’s growth and schooling (Schapiro, 2009). She argued that migration causes transformation of family roles. For instance, if a mother migrates, the daughter takes up the responsibilities of a mother such as domestic chores and plays a part in supporting the household. This often occurs when parents are away in a seasonal work programme across borders in search for better sources of income to improve the family’s standard of living.

Temporary migration and children: A global context

Migration—both international and internal—has been increasing dramatically in recent decades. The International Organization for Migration (2014) estimates that there are approximately 232 million and 740 million international and internal migrants respectively in the world today. Over 54 per cent of the world’s population live in urban areas and the number of people living in cities is expected to almost double to reach some 6.3 billion in 2050 (International Organization for

Migration, 2014). Both internal and international migration will make major contributions to this increasing urbanisation of the global population.

People migrate for a very wide range of reasons including the search for better economic situations, to escape civil strife, persecution, and environmental disasters. It has been common to characterise the reasons encouraging an individual to migrate as either “push” or “pull” factors (Pedraza, 1991). For example, Tongan seasonal workers are attracted by job opportunities in New Zealand (a pull factor), while lack of job opportunities in Tonga act as a push factor.

Lam et al., (2013) suggests that “international labour migration has become a vital component in not only driving economic development for many Asian countries but also in transforming traditional roles of parenting and caregiving practices for millions of children of migrant workers” (as cited in Wickramage et al., 2015, p. 2). The movement of Asian temporary labour to the Middle East usually involves mostly low-skilled female domestic workers without formal qualifications (International Organization for Migration, 2011, as cited in Wickramage et al., 2015). Their absences, often for long periods, can have major implications for their children.

Migrants labelled as low skilled are often involved in temporary employment in industries such as horticulture or viticulture. For instance, several thousand men and women from Pacific and Asian countries work in New Zealand’s RSE schemes and the Australian’s SWP. Similar schemes operate in Canada and parts of Europe resulting in separation of family members for several months each year and potential disruption to the lives of the children left behind especially. Although seasonal migrants earn higher incomes through the schemes than they would earn at home, and these earnings can improve the standard of living for the family, there are potentially negative implications. In particular, changes in home life and household duties being managed by one parent may limit the ability of the family to participate in social and religious activities.

Children's health

In the developing world, having one parent or both away for long periods in temporary work is now part of the normal experience of childhood for many children. Wickramage et al. (2015) have studied the mental and physical health of left-behind children of Asian labour migrants and argue that despite the importance of temporary migration for economic development in source areas, the health impacts are a neglected policy issue. Similarly, Bedford et al. (2009), Antnam (2012), Adhikari et al. (2014) and Siriwardhana et al. (2015), have stressed that the impact of parental migration on the health and wellbeing of the children left behind is an almost unexplored topic.

Sexual abuse and incest

A report by Pinto-Jayawardena (2006) says, "Child abuse in Sri Lanka is acknowledged to be an increasingly serious problem" (p. 19). There are up to 1 million Sri Lankan children affected when their mothers migrate in search of work. When mothers migrate, the young daughters become the substitute for the mother and can be subjected to sexual abuse, rape and incest by the fathers and male relatives. Evidence in support of this position can be found in the evaluation from the Health and Family Life Education programme, which indicated that 18 percent of the respondent children (average age of 14.7 years) experienced forced sex (UNICEF, 2009). D'emilio et al. (2007) claim that the vulnerability to abuse increasingly occurs when children are left behind while the female caregiver migrates in search of a job. This abuse occurs to satisfy males' sexual needs for the long period of time when mothers are absent from home (Perera & Rathnayaka, 2013).

This point is also supported Nana's (2008) findings for situations where women migrate and the men lose their wives for lengthy periods. Some men find it hard because of the loss of their wives as sexual partners and their inability to afford to pay for professional sexual services; therefore, some of them turned to their daughters. In a similar manner, International Organization for Migration (2008a, cited in Cappelloni, 2011), found that some girls left behind in Asian countries were "more vulnerable to sexual abuse by male members of an extended household or from within the community" (p. 29). Moreover, in a 2002 study of

22 reported incest cases, in 11 cases (50% of all cases) the mother was away in Middle East, pointing to the significance of mother migration as a contributory factor to trends in incest in Sri Lanka (Silva et al., 2002).

Psychosocial health

Children left behind suffer from a wide range of psychosocial problems due to the absence of a parent from the normal life at home. The most common psychosocial problems are feelings of abandonment, loss, sickness, sadness, despondence, despair and anger, lack of trust, low self-esteem, and inability to concentrate at school (Bakker et al., 2011). It is important to note that in the process of children growing up, family structure, care and discipline from both parents is of great significance to the development of children's emotions and formation of desirable behaviour. This was emphasised by Lu (2011) in her research based on the left-behind children in rural China. The left-behind children faced problems in their lives because of the lack of parental protection, care, discipline and the communication and contact between parents and their children. These problems were most evident when children were left behind over long periods of time while parents are taking part in temporary employment across the border.

In the setting of Jamaica, D'oemillo et al. (2007) found that the immediate psychosocial effects on children affected by migration range from feelings of being neglected to being obliged to act as a parent to their own parent, in taking on such responsibilities of the absent parents. The left-behind children in Jamaica live their entire lives struggling with different feelings of rejection, abandonment and loss, as observed by researchers in social work (D'oemillo et al., 2007).

Research findings by (UNICEF, 2011), on *Impact of Labour Migration on "Children Left Behind" in Tajikistan*, highlight the link between healthcare and household income, testifying to the huge role played by remittances in smoothing access to healthcare for migrant households. Remittances increase household income; at the same time, access to health care will be easier for sick children and other household members. However, from several interviews in the study, it became clear that the strong link between the remittances and access to health services and medication only applied to those who had money to meet their health needs. Most medications are very expensive and are only available for those who

have enough remittances to access the health services and medications when children and other family members are sick. Other studies (Cortes, 2007; Mala, 2008) have shown that remittances are a primary source of income and increase access to healthcare services among both left-behind older parents and children, especially for those in poor households, where remittances represent a primary source of income for the family (as cited in Adhikari et al., 2014)

According to Dungo and Jampaklay (2013), mothers often found it difficult to leave because of children's reluctance. The girls took longer to recover from the emotional trauma of maternal departure; the boys managed to cope with maternal absence by spending more time with friends. Girls were made to help around the house by cooking, cleaning and doing the laundry, or attended church activities, such as Bible study and singing in the choir. The boys were less helpful because computer games occupied free time. In addition, a study by Adhikari et al. (2014) indicated that the children left behind suffered from mental problems associated with the earlier migration of mothers, which underlines the need for effective strategies to prevent the mental problems caused by migration on children.

In contrast, some left-behind children are affected emotionally when the father migrates. This sometimes shows how strong the relationship is of a father to his daughter. In some situations, a daughter had a very close relationship with her father. In other cases, daughters missed the father especially if the daughter is the only girl child or the only child in the family where there is no one to talk to, just the two parents, for instance. In support of this, Graham and Jordan (2011) give examples of negative outcomes for the left-behind children when fathers migrate, based on a study conducted by the CHAMPSEA in Indonesia and Thailand. They said that the children of migrant fathers are more prone to poor psychological well-being (emotional and conduct disorders, respectively) as compared to children of non-migrant parents (as cited in Hoang et al., 2015; Wickramage et al., 2015).

Lu (2011) conducted a study in rural China on the left-behind children. The author pointed out that some left-behind children's behaviour and characters became polarised due lack of parental protection, especially the father's role in protecting

the family, which caused some left-behind children to become awkward, introverted, silent, pessimistic and solitary, and feeling humiliated with a lack of self-esteem. Left-behind children, in such cases, have more likelihood of becoming frightened and anxious. Elsewhere, in a study in Mexico, the father's absence was associated with behavioural problems of the children left at home. About 61% of children left behind suffered from psychological problems and felt abandoned (UNICEF, 2009).

Another study by Bakker et al. (2009) looking at migration and the impact on children in the Caribbean, asserts that migrant parents, in many cases, try to compensate for parental absence by sending a significant amount of material resources in the form of remittances or barrels with clothing and footwear for their children who have been left at home while they are away. In Belize, this kind of compensation caused children left at home to become addicted to receiving material goods, leading to a loss of moral values and deterioration of love and respect for their absent parents (Claudette, 1994, as cited in Bakker et al., 2009). At the same time, some children will commit crime and violence, especially if the remittances from their parents overseas are interrupted.

Children's nutrition

Due to high rates of labour migration from the low-to-middle-income countries that are also major source countries for migrants, it is particularly important to explore the consequences of parental migration, both positive and negative, on child nutrition. It is vital during the early childhood years to access adequate nutrition to ensure healthy growth, proper organ formation and function, a strong immune system, and neurological and cognitive development (Hoseini, 2015). When a child faces malnutrition, it impacts cognitive function and contributes to poverty through impeding individuals' ability to lead productive lives (de Onis et al., 2012). Food and Agricultural Organization (2011) has discovered that two billion people in the world suffer from various forms of malnutrition. Consequently, malnutrition is a primary cause of death of 2.6 million children each year – a third of child deaths globally (Black et al., 2008; UNICEF, 2011).

As noted earlier, international remittances have become an important source of income for many households in the developing world. At the time parents send

remittances to the remaining children at home, the effects on children may be twofold. Firstly, the increased income received by those left behind may allow them to buy healthy food and other goods to satisfy the nutritional needs of the body. Secondly, the absence of parents and older siblings may change the time and task allocations of those remaining within the household; for instance, a daughter may do domestic chores like cleaning up the house and cooking as a result of parental migration, which leads to a lack of available time to prepare food and/or to care for the child's nutritional needs (Wickramage et al., 2015). A review of the literature identified only a few studies that examined nutritional outcomes on the children left behind. De Brauw and Mu (2011) found that in households in rural China where a parent migrates, children aged between seven to twelve years are more likely to be underweight; however, this result does not hold if a non-parent adult member of the household migrates (as cited in Langworthy, 2011. p. 4).

Cameron and Lim (2007) found that absence of a parent in the household usually has a negative effect on short-term child nutrition in Thailand. Nevertheless, they argued that household remittances over US\$200 per annum can help to minimise the negative effect on child nutrition. A study by Wickramage et al. (2015) in Sri Lanka showed that almost one third (30%) of left-behind children between 6–59 months of age were underweight or severely underweight, compared to 17.7 per cent of non-migrant children (Jayatissa, 2009). Furthermore, evidence from previous economic crises in Liberia suggests that negative income shocks push poor families to consume cheaper, less nutritious food, which results in weight loss and malnutrition, especially among young children and pregnant women (UNICEF 2009).

Contrary to the above, it has been recognised by some researchers and from anecdotal knowledge that children living with both parents have improved health outcomes, because they are fully supported by the parents. Also, in the view of Yeoh and Lam (2007), some parents who do not send money back home to support the remaining children cause them to face malnutrition and other risks in their effort to survive. Similarly, a study on the health of left-behind children in a nationally representative study from Sri Lanka indicates that left-behind children

are shown to have a higher levels of nutritional deficits compared to non-migrant children (Wickramage et al., 2015).

In a similar study, Frank and Hummer (2002), found that Mexican migrant and non-migrant households identified that membership in a migrant-sending household reduced the risk of low birth weight, mostly because the receipt of remittances being sent home enhanced maternal nutrition. Other positive effects of migration on the health of remaining children have been documented in other contexts as well. Antón (2010) finds a positive effect of remittances on short-term and middle-term nutritional status of children in Ecuador as measured by weight-for-height and weight-for-age. Kanaiaupuni and Donato (1999) show a positive effect of migration and remittances on infant survival in Mexico in the longer term (as cited in Antman, 2012).

Education

The education of children left behind is affected by the migration of one or both parents and these effects are often mixed up in different contexts. Several of studies in Bangladesh have shown that a large proportion of the migrants' remittances sent by parents are used for the children's education, which generally is seen to be a positive impact (Asfar, 2003; Owusu, 2011; Kuhn, 2006). This was also found in Jampaklay's (2006) study on children left behind in Thailand and Hugo's (2002) study on the impact of migration on Indonesian families (cited in Yeoh & Lam, 2007). The study by Kuhn (2006) in Bangladesh further showed that the emigration of fathers and male siblings commonly resulted in improvements in the education of children left behind in some rural areas. He concluded that the outmigration of fathers and brothers had substantial and predominantly positive impacts on the pace of schooling of children, both boys and girls, left behind in Matlab. However, the migration of sisters had no effect on their siblings' education, while cases of migrant mothers were still too rare to warrant further study. While a parent's migration sometimes provides better education for the Bangladeshi children, Siddiqui (2003) argued that out-migration of mothers causes children to suffer in their education (cited in Yeoh & Lam, 2007).

Hugo (2002) found that most children with parents who migrated are put into private schools to obtain the best of education as compared to children with non-migrants (as cited in Owusu, 2011). Hugo (2002) argued that during the elementary years, children of migrants perform better at school and received higher grades and more school awards compared with children of non-migrants (as cited in Yeoh & Lam, 2007). In contrast, Battistella and Conaco (1998) stated that Filipino children of migrants did worse academically in relation to non-migrants' children. Similarly, especially in the case of mothers in Sri Lanka, the children of mothers perform worse in their education than for those with mothers not working overseas. Battistella and Conaco (1998) conducted a study involving primary school aged (9–15 years) Filipino children with either parent working overseas. They found that children who had parents working overseas had lower school grades and ranked lower in class than did children for whom neither parent was overseas.

In support of the above issues on mothers, Rohorua and Gibson, (2009) found that Tongan children who had a mother absent from home were identified as being at risk of poorer school performance compared to children who have a father absent from the home, potentially due to the maternal role in ensuring children complete their homework and in managing problems with teachers and classmates. This finding is consistent with other studies such as that of Save the Children (2006) in Sri Lanka, particularly in poorer performance (as cited in Yeoh & Lam, 2007). According to Gamburd (2005), the children of migrant mothers tended to drop out of school to seek a job or help with household chores. To support the above literature, a recent UNICEF/ International Organization for Migration survey in Guatemala found that the school dropout rate among children 10-14 years of age from migrant households was around 10 percent in the first half of 2009, while the dropout rate among adolescents was around 12 percent (International Organization for Migration /UNICEF 2009).

In Mexico, according to reports given out by the media, the main reason why children left behind do poorly in schools is due to the absence of parents (Yeoh & Lam, 2007). A headmistress interviewed on National Public Radio (2006) explained that as many as 15 percent of children in a class were left behind. These

children faced problems as they often dropped out of school or commit crime in their parent's absence (cited in Yeoh & Lam, 2007). Similarly, in the Caribbean, it is well recognised that lack of parental presence and guidance has various effects on the academic performance of children left behind. The main concerns are for children between the ages of 11 and 13 years old who are transitioning from primary to secondary school, as they are deemed more likely to be involved in fights at school, or dropping out from school due to the difficulties of coping or having to care for younger siblings (Bakker, 2009). Ye and Murray (2005) also reported that schoolteachers found a decline in school performance (especially their examination results) for the left-behind children due to their parent's absence.

Specifically focusing on fathers, Antman (2012) finds a negative effect of paternal migration on study hours for boys within the first year after the migration took place, when it might be too early to expect a positive effect from remittances to outweigh the social cost of the father's absence from the home. In contrast, Antman (2011c) finds a positive effect of paternal migration on ultimate educational attainment for girls, an inherently longer-term outcome when migration may be expected to yield greater positive effects (as cited in Antman, 2012). Booth (1995) stresses "the importance of a father's role as disciplinarian and figurehead when interpreting the detrimental effects of paternal labour migration on the school readiness of children in Swaziland" (as cited in Iqbal, & Mozmi, 2014, p. 498).

When parents migrate, there will generally be a lack of efficient communication and contact between parents and children in supporting them to succeed in their studies. The children left behind often miss the guidance in their schoolwork from their parents. In support of the claims above, a study of left-behind children in rural China indicated that the concentration levels of children at school dropped as a result of the children missing their migrant parents (Lv, 2007; Ye & Murray, 2005). Lv (2007) reported that the most significant difficulties faced by those left behind are the lack of supervision and distraction due to missing their parents while they are away.

Social participation

The migration of one or both parents or family members may affect their children's social participation in different ways. Battistella and Conaco (1998, as cited in Yeoh & Lam, 2007) found that those who had poorer social adjustment and suffered most from impeded social and psychological development were the Filipino children with absent mothers. A 2003 Philippines study, in contrast, showed that the children in the survey had generally adjusted well socially, had strong social support and got along well with other family members—a result that was not very different from families of non-migrants. Similar findings in the Sri Lanka study also reported that children left behind had positive relationships with their caregivers and that minority ethnic groups had stronger extended family ties when mothers migrated. Nonetheless, this study also reaffirmed Jampaklay's (2006) findings in Thailand that “a mother's love was often irreplaceable, even by the best caregivers, as more negative effects on the children left behind by mothers could be observed” (as cited in Yeoh & Lam, 2007, p. 131).

Additionally, in a study by Lu (2011) on the left-behind children in 10 villages in China, there was no significant difference between left-behind children and not-left-behind children in the people they associated with. However, their relationship with their migrant parents became looser, but the relationship with closely related actors, such as classmates, guardians and teachers, was strengthened. Due to parents' migration, left-behind children tended to confide in friends, making contacts and relationships, “as they were reluctant to tell their guardians what is on their minds as they may then worry about them” (Ye & Murray, 2005, as cited in Lu, 2011, p. 48).

In general, some left-behind children have been forced to stay at home for safety reasons and this has limited their interactions. In addition, some left-behind children had to give a hand on the farm or do housework in their spare time. Hence, the sphere for social intercourse was narrowed (Lu, 2011). By contrast, Ye and Murray (2005) found that due to the inadequacy of their guardians' supervision and lack of discipline, some left-behind children got involved with undesirable people, and later developed into problematic children. Ye and Murray

(2005) claim that the children cared for by grandparents were more likely to fall into this category (as cited in Lu, 2011).

Xiang's (2005) review of studies on children left behind in China showed children developed behaviours at two extremes under the care of their grandparents. Children left behind were either withdrawn or too violent as their grandparents either spoiled or neglected them. In Mexico, children left behind were also reportedly lacking in confidence without their parents and were less respectful of grandparents, uncles or teachers (National Public Radio, 2006, as cited in Lu, 2011).

Similarly, Lv (2007) found that left-behind children establish more frequent communication and contact with their guardians than with their migrant parents. They had more chance of interacting with community members such as shop assistants than the children from families with both parents at home. Eventually, they place trust in and give more attention to their friends, who may provide more support to their life, study and emotional well-being. This interaction brings benefits to their socialisation and well-being, but without sufficient discipline left-behind children will be easily susceptible to becoming criminals and a diversity of harmful habits (Lv, 2007 as cited in Lu, 2011).

Another impact of parental migration on the left-behind children's social participation is the transferring of the task of caring for them onto other relatives, often female, such as aunts or grandmothers (Lam et al., 2013) This occurs when one or both parents migrate for a lengthy period of time, and the remaining children cannot find enough time to participate in the communities' activities due to many responsibilities occupying them. On the other hand, responsibilities of the parents are being taken over by those left behind, and this also affects the social life of the children, where they cannot find free time for socialisation with friends or the wider community, which leads to social participation breakdown.

Religious participation

Compared with the extensive research on the effects of migration on child health, schooling, and social participation highlighted above, much less is known about

effects on religious participation for children left behind. The children left behind faced a very hard time in relation to their religious participation when one or both parents migrated overseas. Migration can bring benefits to those remaining in terms of remittances, but the most important loss faced by the left behind is in participating church activities due to the absence of parents for periods of time.

A study by UNICEF Moldova (2008), *“The impact of parental deprivation on the development of children left behind by Moldovan migrants,”* shows the influence parental migration has on children’s participation in church. Some children in Moldova mentioned that church is a community service and a place where they can reflect and meditate in peace. The children who are living with their parents think that church is a place that supports them morally and helps them to overcome difficult situations at school and within the family. Migrants’ children attended church, praying to God for the health of their parents who went abroad and to obtain good results in their exam.

However, the remaining children consulted said that most children do not go to church, despite there being two factors why migrants’ children are interested in church. First, due to these children becoming sad and isolated, the church is there to give them spiritual wellbeing and solutions to the problems overwhelming them. Second, the children go to church services to thank their religious grandparents for their advice, in whose care they were left. In some communities the church minister used their sermon session to urge parents not to migrate.

Seasonal migration and children: Pacific Context

Due to the limited availability of wage-earning opportunities in the Pacific Island states, migration is very significant, especially in Polynesia, primarily as a response to uneven economic and social development (Connell & Brown, 2005). Households and communities in the Pacific are increasingly likely to have some of their most productive members regularly absent due to growing opportunities for seasonal work overseas, mostly in New Zealand and Australia (Halahingano et al., 2009). Temporary or circular migration programs are seen as a way of enabling poorer, less-skilled workers to benefit from the higher incomes to be earned abroad as part of a triple-win, whereby migrants, the sending country, and

the receiving country all benefit (Gibson et al., 2014). There are different types of migration but seasonal migration has long been a source of income in many Pacific countries, as they heavily rely on remittances as a source of national income.

The SWP and RSE Schemes have delivered tangible development impacts in Pacific Island states (see, for example, Bedford, 2013; Gibson et al., 2008; Gibson & McKenzie, 2010). Indeed, there are many examples of community development projects that have made a difference to the lives of families and communities. Seasonal workers' earnings have enabled families to improve their living standards as well as enabling communities to establish important services such as water and electricity that deliver wider benefits to everyone (Bailey, 2014; Gibson et al., 2008). Generally, the available literature shows that seasonal migration has had a mix of influences on both sending countries and those remaining at home.

Seasonal migration impacts on children

The RSE scheme was designed to contribute to New Zealand's foreign policy in the Pacific with the (then) New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, Winston Peters stating "first and foremost the RSE scheme will help alleviate poverty directly by providing jobs for rural and outer island workers who often lack income-generating work. The earnings they send home will support families, help pay for education of their children and health, and sometimes provide capital for those wanting to start a small business" (Gibson et al., 2008, p. 1). One of the real positives of the RSE scheme is the fact that most Pacific states give priority to poorer members of their communities, and those living in rural areas, meaning that the pro-poor, bottom-up focus the New Zealand government was aiming for is succeeding (as cited in Cameron, 2011).

In terms of financial outcomes, workers' savings have been used to pay for school fees for their children left behind, renovate or build new homes, purchase land, buy vehicles and start or expand business ventures at home. On the other hand, migrant workers also reported gaining new skills, such as improved time management, improved English, and better financial management skills, which may be transferred on their return. By the time they return home, these skills are

used to support the children's education through helping out in their homework, budgeting incomes for the needs of the children in terms of their health services and education and also for the community functions such as church obligations, known as "*misinale*" in Tonga.

Although seasonal migrants earn higher incomes through the schemes, it has already been shown that changes in home life and household duties being managed by one parent only, or just by the children left behind if both parents are absent, may limit the ability of the family to participate in social and religious activities. Children of Kiribati, for example, grow up in a communal environment under the supervision of their extended family. The father is the authority figure as a guardian and role model and responsible for introducing and advising children on the way of life in the society. Absence of fathers leads to lack of parental control, potentially adding to wider social problems. This is particularly problematic for adolescent children with regard to such things as alcohol consumption and abuse, unwanted pregnancies and the rise in sexually transmitted diseases, especially in South Tarawa (Bedford, Bedford, & Ho, 2009; Borovnik, 2005b).

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on the impact of migration on the everyday lives of left-behind children. Attention has been drawn to children's health, education, and social and religious participation. A lesson learned from the review is that there is little recent research on the impacts of migration on those left behind in the islands, especially those whose fathers and mothers are often away every year. Parental migration poses a serious question for future research on the topic. Who should take responsibility for taking care of the children? Most research claims that grandparents or a parent's relatives cared for them. Others query if it is healthier for grandparents to be looking after the children. Research needs to strongly address this matter to help in reducing problems faced by those left behind. Grandparents are known, but they may be very accommodating of their grandchildren's wishes, meaning that there is lack of discipline at home. Children left behind often tend to act inappropriately and are not respectful of their guidance.

The research points to both positive and negative effects of migration on children's education, with researchers typically arguing that remittances (positive) or parental absence (negative) balance each other out over time. In this context, it is useful to keep in mind the time gone since the migration period, since effects may be more heavily weighted toward costs to families in the short term, with returns coming later on. Another caveat, as discussed earlier, is that children left behind perform poorly with low grades while parents are away. The research should also examine characteristics of the people who are looking after the children, especially with regard to their studies, to ensure the grandparents are fit and educated and can support them in their schoolwork.

As more women begin to migrate worldwide, more attention needs to be given to how migration affects husbands and daughters. There is no shortage of research on remittances where migrants send money home while working overseas. Remittances help in buying food for the left-behind family; on the other hand, when the remittances stop there will be not enough food for the family, which leads to malnutrition. Data limitations may also be at the heart of the more limited research into the effects of migration on health outcomes for children. There needs to be future research relating to the wellbeing of the left behind and to maximising opportunities for the transfer of knowledge and skills when they return home. Not only that, but there is far too little evidence on the social impacts of seasonal migration on children's social and religious participation globally and in the Pacific.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

Methodology and methods are sometimes used as though they were synonymous, but they are two different concepts. In social research, Sarantakos (2013) defines research methodology as the theory of methods (p.473). According to Silverman (2010), methodology refers to the selections we make about cases to study, methods of data collection and forms of data analysis, particularly in planning and executing a research study. It is how a researcher goes about studying any phenomenon. On the other hand, Kitchin and Tate (2000, p. 6) defined methods as, “a coherent set of rules and procedures which can be used to investigate a phenomenon or situation within a framework dictated by epistemological and ontological ideas.” Methods and methodology provide the basis for how the research should be conducted by using appropriate techniques in order to accomplish concrete results.

The nature of the research aims determines which research methods are most appropriate to use. The overall aim of this study is to make a contribution to knowledge on left-behind children, with a specific focus on Lifuka Island, by exploring various aspects to understand their experiences when older family members are engaged in seasonal migration in New Zealand and Australia. This study focuses on children aged 13-16, and employs qualitative methods.

The preceding chapters stressed the social impact of seasonal migration on the children left behind, at the international and Pacific regional levels. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the nature of the research and methodology used, beginning with my personal background and interest in the selected research topic, followed by an explanation of why qualitative research methods were found to be the most suitable research methods to utilise in my research. Then the preliminary preparations before the actual data collection process are discussed including selection of informants, access to informants, the research site, participants selected and sampling technique, and the research process.

During the research, I utilised semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and informal interviews as my methods of data collection. A brief review of these is followed by a discussion on analysis and interpretation of the data. Lastly, the various ethical issues and limitations of this study are reviewed.

Personal background and interest in this research

Being a secondary teacher serving the Tonga government for four years, I realised that young children who remain in Lifuka when older family members emigrate to Australia or New Zealand through seasonal working schemes appeared more likely than their peers to suffer from social problems. In recent years, there has been a small but increasing number of students who are left behind with older family members due to an increasing number of workers taking part in seasonal work schemes. Offshore seasonal migration is an alternative solution that can provide employment opportunities for unemployed locals and a source of income for many families such as those from Ha'apai. This helps to alleviate the negative impact of poverty on young children. Currently, there is a keen interest in how the people of Lifuka, and Tonga more generally, cope with any negative impacts of seasonal migration on those left behind, particularly children, and how strategies may help alleviate these impacts and improve student outcomes in terms of education, health, social and religious participation.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Australia's SWP and New Zealand's RSE are the only formal circular migration policies that offer Tongans a chance to work in a country overseas for less than 12 months every year. Since the implementation of the temporary migration schemes, there has been no effective plan introduced by government to minimise the impacts encountered by the migrants' families who remain at home. Examples of these impacts include migrants having sexual affairs, absconding and becoming illegal overstayers, and no longer providing support to the family, financial or otherwise.

From a teacher's perspective, I was motivated to conduct this research so that the current experiences of children could be better understood, and issues that often remain informal could be introduced into academic discourse. I hope that this research is useful for decision makers and can help minimise negative social

impacts of the seasonal work schemes. Finally, I am Lifuka born, allowing me to produce as an insider the first piece of literature based on the life stories of children left behind in my community while older family members are absent working overseas.

Qualitative Research

The present study is an exploratory and descriptive qualitative study of the health, education and social and religious participation of children left behind when adults migrate for work overseas. Sarantakos (2013) discussed qualitative inquiry as one of the main methodologies in the social sciences. The author also defined qualitative methods as “methods of social research based principally on theoretical and methodological principles of interpretivism, focusing among other things on words, meanings, pictures and objects and, as expressed in paradigms such as symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and ethno-methodology” (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 475). Greig et al. (2013) argued that qualitative approaches are particularly suitable for doing research with children and young people. In support of this, firstly, a researcher who works with children and young people is already operating in a real-life, naturalistic setting.

McCracken (1988) claims qualitative approaches are the most useful and powerful when they are used to discover how respondents see the world. As mentioned above, the aim of this research is to study the experiences, attitudes and expectations of left-behind children in Lifuka, and to obtain an in-depth understanding of their worlds in terms of their education performance, health, and social and religious participation in the local setting. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) suggest that qualitative methods have been increasingly accepted as providing valuable information for health researchers, and one of the main themes of this research is to examine the health of the children left in Lifuka while older family members are employed as seasonal workers overseas.

Qualitative research methods enable researchers to get access to the respondents' life stories and collect rich and potentially complex data (Campbell, 2001b), particularly when researchers used unscripted and open-ended questions. Bryaman (2004) adds that this approach offers the researcher an opportunity to explore in detail precisely what goes on in the setting being investigated and

provides detailed information about the social world, allowing the researcher to make sense of particular behaviours and subjects' responses to these.

When doing research on children, it must be recognised that some “may experience real or potential harm and require special safeguards to ensure that their welfare and rights are protected” (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 2). However, Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) advocate that the flexibility of qualitative research methods ensures they can be appropriate for researching the “vulnerable.” To avoid any harm to the informants, the researcher sometimes has to change direction with vulnerable groups, particularly when sensitive questions are raised and “the unstructured nature of qualitative research offers the prospect of flexibility” (Bryman, 2004, p. 282).

One of the benefits of qualitative methods, According to Greig et al. (2013), is that children represent an excellent source of rich descriptions in words and pictures that capture their experiences and understandings, rather than the cold, abstract findings that often derive from numerical analysis. In other words, at times a single comment from a child's perspective will convey much more meaning about the impact of research than a whole array of figures in a statistical report (Greig et al., 2013).

Given that this study is based on a small number of respondents, qualitative research methods are the most appropriate for collecting data (Sarantakos, 2005). Haste et al. (2001) examined over 800 United Kingdom psychologists regarding future trends in research, and found that most expected research to move increasingly from laboratory to real-world settings and a holistic interest in well-being. Research conducted in natural settings is a central feature of qualitative approaches (cited in Greig et al., 2013).

Data sources and collection

The information gathered for the study came mainly from left-behind children in Lifuka, parents and leaders. I used informal *talanoa* with the community leaders, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews as the basis of methods for collecting the data for the study. Vaioleti (2006) clarified the concept of *talanoa* as being referred to as a “conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or

thinking, whether formal or informal” (p. 23). These conversations I had with community leaders, principals, teachers and parents took the form of informal *talanoa*—a traditional Tongan form of discourse in which customary practices of respect ensure protocols for the safety of participants are observed. I also obtained information from published and unpublished articles, journals, textbooks, official documents and other literature related to the study.

Sampling technique

I used a non-probability sampling technique (Sarantakos, 2005) to select the respondents for the study. In the field, with the help of the various parents in the communities, I purposively selected children with migrant parents who were prepared to partake in the study. By using a snowball sampling technique (Sarantakos, 2005) and referrals from community leaders as well as through the researcher's personal contacts, a sample of children was identified. In this sampling technique, an informant migrant parent is interviewed and asked to suggest other children with migrant parents for interviewing.

The same procedure was adopted to select the parents. This is because left-behind teenagers and parents in the various communities normally know each other due to the group migration pattern and small population in the study area. The weakness of using a snowball sampling technique is that it is difficult to control for possible selection bias due to similar socio-demographic characteristics in small social groupings. However, I ensured that respondents in the communities did not come from the same household to avoid selecting like-minded people for the study, which could undermine getting a range of views from respondents.

Selection of informants

Since the purpose of the study was to describe and interpret themes in the informants' lived world on the topic, and not to study a representative sample of the population, a small but carefully chosen sample is important for the purpose of data collection. In this study, the target population is children in the Lifuka Island of Tonga who are aged between 13 and 16 years and who have parents or older siblings who have migrated in the previous 12 months. It also included some parents and community leaders who have the responsibility to care for the children at school, and the village they lived in.

I chose a sample of 16 children for the semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs). In addition to this, two focus group discussions (FGDs) comprising five children left behind each were organised for both boys and girls at different times. Thus, 10 children were selected for the FGD in the study. The other informants were 10 community leaders. Table 3 shows the sample involved in each method in detail.

Table 3: Selected informants

Method	Participants
Informal Interviews	3 (secondary school principals) 1 (senior mistress) 1 (teacher, wife of migrant) 1 (wife of church bishop, migrant, husband of migrant) 1 (husband of migrant) 3 (mothers)
Semi-structured interviews	16 (left-behind children)
Focus group discussion	10 left-behind children (5 each group)

Access and recruitment of participants

Before conducting the research, I chose Lifuka as the research site and took the following factors into account. At first, the field should be geographically suitable. Parents and community leaders there are a considerable distance from the main areas of economic expansion, and the community is known to contain a number of left-behind children. Secondly, it should be easy to get access to the targeted groups. Almost every child who experienced being left behind attended Ha'apai High School in Pangai on Lifuka. The research setting included the area surrounding the school and where the community leaders lived. These areas are near my hometown, and are well known to me, which promoted my credibility as a researcher and trust within the school and the community. It also gave me easy access to the target groups.

Lifuka Island heavily relies on primary industries and remittances. Incomes earned on the island are low, and most of the children's parents have worked at some stage in Tonga's urban areas to earn a better living. Increasing numbers of

parents have taken the opportunity to become seasonal workers in overseas countries.

Although I am a secondary teacher in Ha'apai, and had the help of my friends who are the teachers of the schools, there were still some difficulties in arranging to meet all school principals because of their significant responsibilities: they were preparing for the distribution of their mid-year reports the week following my field visit. Before the interviews and the focus group discussions were organised, I visited Ha'apai High School the day after my arrival to have a short *talanoa* with some of the teachers about possible respondents. At the same time, I introduced the purpose of my study to the school's principal and the relevant staff, and offered them the opportunity to participate in the study. They showed great curiosity about and interest in my research, and gave me permission to conduct the research at an arranged time.

A formal letter containing details of the research was given to them after gaining their consent to conduct the informal interviews. After running the *talanoa* session at Ha'apai High School, I visited two other schools following the same procedure. The next group was the parents who were visited at their homes, and I followed the same procedure as for the teachers. The rationale for including parents and community leaders was to facilitate understanding of children's experiences of being left behind and to obtain a diverse range of experiences and perceptions about the impact of seasonal worker migration on children's education, health, and social and religious participation. The main reason for conducting the informal interviews first was to gain insights which could inform the gathering of information from left-behind children.

While conducting the informal *talanoa* in those schools and homes, I discovered that the majority of the affected left-behind children studied at Ha'apai High School. I then went and visited parents of identified children first to explain my research and gain their consent to approach the children. This visit to their homes was necessary to establish trust in the study. They all agreed that their child could participate in the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. At the same time, they allowed me to conduct the interview of the teenagers at school, due to too many distractions in homes. Only one parent, whose daughter attended a different school, gave me an exact date to conduct the interview at home.

From there, I went and visited school principals for their consent to conduct the interviews with the children at school. All of these school principals knew me and gave me the opportunity to do my research. The principal of Ha'apai High School gave me a room to use for the interviews and the focus group discussions. I also was given a chance to use the principal's office for the research. Children were informed about the research with help of the principal and the senior mistress in the school hall. When I introduced myself, most of students were interested in me when they learned of my overseas experiences and because I was a teacher before in Lifuka.

Left-behind children are the key actors, as the research aimed to understand their frames of reference. I clearly talked about the research aims and the would-be employment of research methods to these children. They were also told that data collection was anonymous and there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and participation was completely voluntary. It was explained to them that participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reasons. Students who had any questions with regards to the research were given the answers. I ensured everyone present understood what the research was about. The students were given a day to think about whether they would decide to take part in my research.

Data collection processes

After permission for the research was granted by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Research Ethics committee on the 24th June, 2015 and the Research Ethics Committee in the Ministry of Education in Tonga on the 6th July, 2015 (see Appendix One), I started asking some of my friends in Hamilton, including my former principal at the same high school where I worked in Tonga, about potential participants. Data collection in Tonga has involved the use of a range of different methods, employed from 11th of July to the 12th of August, 2015.

Semi-structured interviews

Kvale (1996) points out that a qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.

Additionally, he claims that the interview has the potential to draw the researcher and the informant into a relationship as co-producers of knowledge, given the special form of conversation that evolves between researcher and participant (Kvale 1996). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main method for collecting data, because they allowed participants to bring up new ideas in their own way without the formality of a set of questions which are asked in a particular order. The use of the semi-structured interviews assists in eliciting understanding of the types of experiences respondents have as they present their life situations in their own words.

Prior to my fieldwork, I prepared an interview guide (see Appendix Two) for the potential 16 participants, which covered the main issues and themes I was interested in discussing with participants. These questions were open for change and could be asked in any order; questions concerning their experiences of being left behind were not put forward immediately to avoid pressure on the children. According to De Vaus (2002), the best way to do an interview is to start with some basic factual questions about the participant, as these are usually easy to answer. However, all topics in the interview guide were discussed. The questions covered four main issues relating to the impacts of seasonal migration by older family members (see appendices). These questions were concerned with the children's family life, as well as their life at school and in the community.

Focus group discussions

Gatrell and Elliot (2015) defined a focus group as a collection of a small number of people or participants, usually between 6 and 12, that meets to discuss a topic of mutual interest with the help of a moderator or facilitator (p. 110). The focus group discussion employed involved the participants sharing their experiences and thoughts about the four themes of the study with the researchers. Issues raised in the semi-structured interviews were also explored in the focus groups to get a wider range of perspectives on the social impacts of seasonal migration.

To minimise the power inequalities between the students and me as a researcher, I also paid attention to the place where I interviewed them. The research setting needs to be considered with particular care, awareness and sensitivity in research with children. The students need to feel free to share information with the

researcher in a safe environment. I chose the school's conference room, with the permission given by the parents and the principal of the school, as the interview place. This room was equipped with its own furniture and the children were not allowed to enter this room without permission. This was the best place to conduct the research in the school as it is located next to the offices of the principal, senior mistress and senior tutor—an area where there is no noise.

Prior to starting the focus group discussions, participants were asked to complete the Tongan form of promising in an agreement, such as kissing the bible to promise God that they will never tell anyone outside the group about information shared in the focus group. This is the most powerful Tongan method, especially with teenagers, as they understand what happens when they disobey God. Care and thought was taken to ensure this was a culturally appropriate approach.

To avoid feeling intimidated or uncomfortable because of different experiences, gender or power relations, the participants were grouped with age as a consideration, encouraging free and equal participation in the discussion. For example, a child who is thirteen years old might feel too intimidated to discuss issues with a child who is about sixteen years old because of the wider age difference. During the focus group discussion, children were encouraged to say whatever they wanted to say about the topics. I interviewed the two groups in turns without their teachers being present: children may perceive the teacher as an authority figure, and consequently may answer research questions in a way that tries to please the teachers for fear of their reaction if they say something the teachers do not like or agree with.

Informal interviews

As they were informal, they were unstructured and were guided by the research objectives and the four social impact themes. Morrison et al. (2002) state that *talanoa* is an applicable research method for Pacific researchers because relationships are paramount for most Pacific activities. Vaioleti (2006, p. 25) also claims that *talanoa* “removes the distance between researcher and participant, and provides research participants with a human face they can relate to.” *Talanoa* was one of the methods that was employed to collect information from the participants.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important not only in the process of planning and conducting a research project, but also in evaluating and analysing the data collected in the field. Researchers need to keep in mind that while they are interviewing people, they are in fact entering their private worlds (Silverman, 2010). Reasonably, this raises several ethical issues that should be addressed by the researchers during and after the research had been conducted. Creswell (2009) states that the researchers need to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the participants. Silverman (2010) lists several issues that researchers should be aware of before, during, and after the research had been conducted. Some of the issues are discussed below.

Informed consent

Obtaining informed consent entails giving as much information as possible about the research so that prospective participants can make a well-considered decision whether or not to take part in the project (Silverman, 2010). For instance, the researcher should inform the participants of the research aims, methods used in the research, and the risks involved in the procedures. Participants also need to be advised that they have the right to refuse to answer specific questions or to terminate their participation in the research at any time. Before embarking on any fieldwork, I sought and obtained ethical approval for the research from the appropriate committees in both the University of Waikato and Tonga government.

When I visited the school principals, parents and other community leaders (although they were already very kind to me because I was a secondary teacher in one of the schools and a woman of Lifuka), I introduced myself and an information sheet was also provided, which introduced the research topic and the purpose of the interviews and indicated the rights of my participants to withdraw before or during the interviewing process. This ensured that the participants were carefully informed and that they understood the purpose of my interviews and their rights as participants in this study.

When I introduced the research to seek informed consent from the potential participants, I emphasised that participation was totally voluntary and they had the

right to refuse to be involved if they wished. They could also withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reasons. I also emphasised for the participants that only the semi-structured interviews and informal interviews were to be recorded and they had the right to stop the researcher from recording the conversation. They showed high interest in my overseas experience, and they felt honoured to be taking part in my research project.

The majority of my participants did not bother to keep their copy of consent forms due to the trust built between us as Tongan people of Lifuka. They either really wanted to help, or they were just keen to experience what it was like to participate in a university study. Although the formal letters were not seen as necessary by my participants due to the trust built between us as Tongan people of Lifuka, informed consent was still obtained orally in both the Tongan and English languages. Each participant and I signed the consent form prior to the interview.

Given this project involved children as key actors, the researcher sought approval for them to be involved in the research from both the parent(s) and children through verbal conversation, followed by giving them the information sheet and the consent form to be signed separately by parents and their children. While some of the children might have perceived me to be something of a role model, for the children's parents or guardians, I was considered to be an absolute outsider in their family. Although the informed consent from the guardians was sought, I tried to let these guardians know much more about the research in spite of great differences in terms of background, education level, and lifestyle between us. Therefore, building a relationship to achieve mutual trust with the teenagers, children's parents and guardians in the following days was necessary. Helping parents, guardians and teachers know more about the experiences of left-behind children contributes to finding a cooperative way to minimise the impact of parents' absence.

Privacy and confidentiality

The confidentiality requirement inherent in most research involving human subjects means that researchers need to ensure that the data collected from respondents remains confidential, along with their identity, unless the respondents have consented to their names being disclosed (Silverman, 2010). Given that the target group for the research was children whose parents were absent overseas as

seasonal workers, their situations were quite sensitive and required special safeguarding. Confidentiality was really important to them and the protection of the participants in this research became essential.

Although I was very careful to ensure the confidentiality of my respondents during the research process, some children still had some doubts about me. To build a good relationship with these children and win their trust, I often sought opportunities to chat with them. I also shared some of my stories, my happy moments and fun stories or some sad issues. My openness gave them more confidence and they became open to talk with me gradually. I also clarified that after the research, all data collected, both on paper and in electronic recordings, were kept in a safe and secure environment. These included a locked cupboard in my office at the university, and a password-protected file in my laptop.

Token of appreciation

In my view, giving small gifts to the participants was in expression of appreciation for their support with my research. After conducting the semi-structured, informal interviews and focus group discussion, a *me'a'ofa*¹ was paid to each participant. The 26 children who were involved in the semi-structured and focus group discussion received \$5 pa'anga each. The community leaders were given \$10 pa'anga each after the informal interviews. The *me'a'ofa* were given to participants to acknowledge their support and cooperation in my research.

The researcher's role

Before conducting interviews with participants, I was very aware of how my privileged role as a researcher might be perceived, especially by those who are vulnerable. Children are potentially more vulnerable to the unequal power relationships between them and adult researchers (Punch, 2001). Therefore, I tried to take cognizance of my relative position as a researcher to research participants.

Being well aware of my own Tongan culture, as a Tongan woman and researcher is an advantage in this study, as it eased my relationship with the participants. I was able to relate to my participants and knew when and how to react during the

¹ gift

interviews, which enabled me to collect more information from them. Moreover, because I am a Tongan who is bilingual in both Tongan and English languages, I found the interviewing to be a real privilege. I conducted the interviews in Tongan with those who could not converse in English. For those interviewed in Tongan, data were transcribed and translated afterwards. Similarly, a researcher must have a vocabulary and conceptions that relate to the children's conception of their world (Fraser et al., 2004). When I started to conduct the interview with children I always tried to empower them by listening very carefully to what they said and not being judgemental about their comments. I think this approach helped to minimise the obvious power differentials.

Being a researcher from a university overseas also had advantages and disadvantages. I had to acknowledge that very few participants would openly share their experiences with me initially, because they were afraid that their contribution might not be enough and not conform to what I was hoping to hear. This applied especially to the parents I interviewed. For example, one mother expressed her fear that her contribution might not be suitable and adequate for this study as she is not a well-educated mother. I ensured that there were specific support people available to assist when respondents were nervous or unhappy in the interviews. For instance, when conducting the semi-structured interviews with children, there were two participants who became quite emotional and cried while telling me of their experiences. The senior mistress was able to provide support for these two girls.

I sensed that the majority of my child participants felt comfortable and were able to share their experiences of being left behind, probably because I was a Tongan woman. Only a few felt uncomfortable about sharing some of their experiences; even though I explained the privacy of their information given, they thought I would tell their stories to the teachers or their parents. Some asked me not to include some of their sayings in my thesis while others felt doubtful about sharing their true feelings and experiences because they thought I would know if they were lying. From that point, those participants murmured their answers at times, feeling ashamed unless someone else might hear them. I sometimes thought that if I were from a different nationality, they may be more open about giving information about their experiences as left-behind children.

Data analysis and interpretations

Silverman (2010) suggests that data analysis is aimed at interpreting meanings and deriving deeper understandings from a set of data. The fieldwork data provided rich stories about the everyday life experiences and views of left-behind children and community leaders. Data from the interviews as well as the focus groups were transcribed into English by the researcher. This was important, because, according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), researchers who take time to transcribe their own interviews will benefit from learning more about the interview style and are also reminded of the social and emotional context during the interview. The data from this study is analysed using categorising and coding methodology. The sorting and categorising of data is important, as it helps to identify and also compare and contrast events, concepts and opinions provided by participants. It also helps researchers to contextualise personal experiences and shared understanding, drawing on these to help interpret the analysis.

The methods of analysis were adapted according to the methods of data collection.

For the informal *talanoa* interviews, I approached community leaders, one-on-one and introduced my research topic. From there, I allowed the respondents to share their stories, and at certain times, prompted them with further questions to keep the conversation on topic. These interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and this enabled the researcher to capture the respondents' answers in their own words and keep the conversation flowing more freely. These stories were then coded by grouping their responses according to the common issues and themes that were frequently raised, going from the general to the specific. The issues and themes included:

- general understanding of the issue of the effects of seasonal migration on children left behind;
- the impacts (positive and negative) of seasonal migration on children;
- length of time that migrants are away;
- responsibility for looking after migrants' children at home and abroad;
- strategies to alleviate the issues faced by left-behind children.

For the semi-structured interviews, I grouped the responses to particular questions in the interview schedule and then extracted from these grouped responses the main points that were raised by respondents. The data from the semi-structured interviews were grouped by themes that were determined by the interview schedule questions. The responses were grouped in terms of:

- Household characteristics e.g., household size.
- Work status of any family members.
- Relationship to seasonal migrants.
- Guardianship.
- The changes or impacts that seasonal worker migration have had on respondents.

At the end of the interviews, I allowed respondents an opportunity to add further information that may not have been covered from earlier questions. Most respondents raised solutions to help them to deal with the issues that are raised when their family members are abroad on the seasonal migration schemes. These responses were grouped according to the aims of my research:

- To identify the social impacts which are experienced by children who remain in Tonga when older family members take part in seasonal migration.
- To explore the role of socio-economic and demographic factors (such as age and gender) on these social impacts.
- To describe what, if any, coping strategies are used or planning done to mitigate the social impacts of the SWS on teenage children at the household level.

From the focus group discussions, the responses made by the respondents were also grouped accordingly to each questions in the interview schedules by themes on the situations experienced by the children left-behind before and after the older family members were working overseas. They have raised the issues they faced and the changes in the roles of demographic characteristics due to older family members being away. Children left behind also discussed how to overcome the problems that they had shared. Extracts from their stories are quoted in the presentation of the findings in Chapter 5. I used quotes most importantly to show

the real stories shared from left-behind children and the community leaders. The main issues raised in relation to impacts of seasonal migration on left-behind children are contained in these quotes.

All the data collected was in the Tongan language, requiring translation into the English language. As translation was undertaken by the researcher, who has English as a second language, special care was required to ensure the words used captured accurately the meanings of those whose words I was translating.

Challenges and limitations of the research

Although being a native of the research area was generally an advantage in carrying out this research, it also had some disadvantages. For instance, during the interviews the participants expected me to know answers to the questions I was asking them. This created some challenges during the data gathering process. Probably the main challenge was negotiating times when I could meet with very busy principals and teachers, especially as the time I was in the field was a very busy reporting time in the schools.

There were also challenges in the focus groups, which are probably reasonably common in qualitative research. There were some participants who were much more talkative during the whole process than others. In these contexts I tried to engage the shy children on a favourite topic and give them time to express their perspectives. I was always reminding the children that talking around the topics was necessary.

While talking with some students whose parents were overseas, there was sometimes reluctance in giving information on where their parents were. This was common among students whose parents were residing abroad illegally. Even though they were informed that this research would not have any consequences on their parents' residence abroad, they were a bit reluctant in giving this information. One difficult situation encountered was where a parent was overseas illegally and had taken a new partner and was raising another family there. Surprisingly, some students whose parents were legally residing abroad felt comfortable about talking about other relationships their parents had overseas.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the research approach adopted for this study, including recruitment and sampling, the data collection process, data analysis methods, ethical issues and some challenges faced in the research. Left-behind children and teachers, guardians, parents and other people interviewed were key informants to help explore the social impact experiences of left-behind children in rural Lifuka Island, due to parents or older siblings' migration through the seasonal migration schemes offered by New Zealand and Australia. In the next two chapters the stories collected in the field are discussed with reference to the objectives and the research question for this study.

Chapter Five: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings from the field research carried out on Lifuka Island. The discussion is in three parts. The first section elaborates on the general understandings and experiences of seasonal worker migration amongst the various groups of participants in the research. The second section examines arrangements for looking after the children while their parent(s) were away. The final section explores the impact seasonal worker migration has on children left behind in terms of their education, health, and social and religious involvement.

General understanding and experience on seasonal worker migration

Almost all participants stated that seasonal worker migration is associated with both positive and negative impacts; only one respondent claimed that the Australian and New Zealand schemes had no negative effects on families. One respondent did not support local people taking part in seasonal worker schemes. One mother, who was both a former migrant and the wife of a migrant worker, responded that it is good for a parent to migrate, but for only one parent to migrate at a time, and not both in the same season. Another mother stated that her husband would not be involved in the seasonal worker schemes due to the negative social impacts on the family that would arise if she was maintaining the household alone.

As a teacher said:

When I looked at migrants as fruit pickers and packers in overseas countries, first of all, it has negative and positive impacts but I trusted the positive side because of what I have observed in most families who have a member overseas. The money received from migrants helped the family in general. For example, paying for children's school fees and other financial needs for school, donations for the *misinale*², it bought new vehicle for the family (Peta, personal communication, July, 2015)³.

² An offering of money to church paid annually, different from a weekly tithe.

³ The names cited in this thesis are pseudonyms in order to keep the identities of my informants confidential.

While interviewing one of the respondents on her general understanding of seasonal worker migration, she explained it as a blessing to her family, as her husband is involved in the scheme, and as he does not have a job here the income is very helpful for the family. She also highlighted various reasons for her opinion.

I think it is a blessing from above and it's one of the best opportunities for my husband. We haven't seen any negative impacts in my family. Firstly, my children understand the main reason their father left prior to his date of departure is to earn money to help us as well, as they are mature enough to withstand it, where my youngest son is in Form 5. Second, look at this house; it was built with the support of my husband's pay after Cyclone Ian in early January 2014 destroyed our house. Thirdly, he really helps me to fulfil different functions that we must do such as *misinale* for church, financial needs for children's schooling and for family daily needs. Lastly, there's no change in the children's way of life as they acted the same attitudes when their father were here, also my husband got a job instead of being a subsistence farmer since we married (Lani, informal interview, July, 2015).

A Principal/church leader commented:

I don't support seasonal worker migration at all because of what I had experienced on the negative impacts on children left behind at school, in church and the community. I believed the money received by the overseas workers couldn't accommodate the long period of time the left-behind suffered from the migrant being away (Seno, informal interview, July, 2015).

However, a wife of a migrant also known as a seasonal worker for five years now cried when she commented:

I think the benefits and costs of seasonal worker migration are depending from who is migrating (individually). The most significant aspect a seasonal worker must think of the reason why she or he went overseas for work. Secondly, always look back to the rest of the family and how they struggle in life most importantly *ke manatu'i 'a 'api 'oku tau masiva*⁴. At last, it will be good to work overseas either the father or myself but not for us both to travel at one time. After Cyclone Ian destroyed our home in 2014, I worked in New Zealand that time while my husband worked in Australia, I returned from work straight after the cyclone without my contract ending. From my real eyes and the experiences I went through when I arrived home, I must ensure that we never left home together same time (Tuna, informal interview, July, 2015).

⁴ A common piece of advice from elders in the Tongan community applied to someone who travels to a new place, especially for study and work, is to always look back and be mindful that we are poor.

Another wife of a migrant shared her experiences and understanding as follows:

I thank God for bringing back my husband, a father to our two children. My children are very lucky because their father returned unlike others, they never return. I do not know if he already met a lady in Australia in his first trip. Who knows if his second travel in the programme will be his last time with us? It's better for me to eat cassava with a cup of water filled with happy than with meat full of tears.... Therefore, I do not want him again to travel on seasonal schemes (Meki, informal interview, July, 2015).

The informal *talanoa* were similar in style to unstructured interviews (see Chapter 4). Participants were free to say anything based on their understanding of seasonal worker migration. The findings reveal how different participants described their own perceptions and feelings of how their students, children and family are impacted on by seasonal worker migration. The opinions of the principals are important, as they are responsible for taking care of children while they are at school a large portion of their day. One principal did not support seasonal worker migration. However, she commented that seasonal worker migration generally improves the standard of living and relieves poverty.

A mother commented that the balance of negative and positive impacts will depend on the people involved. Another mother stated that she does not support her husband travelling again, otherwise he might find another partner and her children will have no father.

I asked the left-behind children whether they observed any changes in the household when the father, mother or older siblings leave home for several months. Most of them admitted that there were huge differences in the family. Some of them have to take up the burden of housework and farm work, which eventually takes up most of their out-of-school study time. Substitution from education/leisure to house/farm work for children left behind was a common theme. For example, girls may be given tasks traditionally given to males, going against traditional Tongan cultural norms. On the positive side, some respondents said that there are lots of improvements in the family with the help of remittances sent from overseas.

Afu (15 years old) said:

When my brother is here he is responsible for helping my father with the farm work. When he left, I have to do his work such as going with my father to the bush help him with the farm work such as weeding the plantation.... [Also, she said, she is responsible for feeding the pigs. This girl also stated, she has to cook dinner when mom is busy and sometimes she felt tired and fell asleep without completing her homework]. On the other hand, we now have sofa inside the living room brought by my brother when he works overseas and a box of food and other things for our family sent from New Zealand (Afu, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

Sieli (14 years old) added:

I have to go to the farm and grow crops for the family while my eldest brother is away. I am also responsible for shifting around our horses and cows in the bush almost twice a week after school. I'm afraid to attend some of the youth activities because some of the boys bully me during the programme. I sometimes think of staying home until my brother comes back because they never do that to me when my older brother is here (Sieli, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

Adding to this, participants explained the changes in the family associated with the extended family. Lala (15 years old) claimed:

When my father went overseas and became an overstayer, lots of changes happened in my family. Firstly, my mother smacks me most of the times, our aunty interferes with our family causing problems to argue with my mother. I felt unhappy most of the times to hear stories came from relatives and different people gossiping about us in regarding to my father having absconded from seasonal work (Lala, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

Few of the participants said there are no changes in the household while migrants are away in New Zealand and Australia. Participants' perception of changes will be discussed further in later sections.

Who migrates and for how long?

While conducting the semi-structured interviews of 16 left-behind children, the children were asked which of their family members had migrated. Only one child had more than one family member migrate (four family members) while the other fifteen children had only a single family member absent at any one time.

Table 4: Migrant relationship to respondent

Relationship to respondent	Number of migrants	Proportions
Brother	12	75%
Father	5	31%
Mother	1	6%
Sister	1	6%

As can be seen in Table 4, twelve of the children had a brother who had migrated, five had a father who had migrated, one had a mother and one had a sister who had migrated.

One of the issues raised by the respondents was the length of time migrants left children at home. They were concerned about the long period of time the father/mother is away from home, when there is a lack of parental support and guidance. The informants all strongly believed those left behind may do well in life but were concerned about the length of time children are left home unattended by the father/mother or older siblings.

A principal/church leader said:

My concern is the length of time that migrants were away from home because it might come to a time children might say to their father for instance, where were you? Why you never look after us? Especially when children are punished due to problem encounters. The length of absence from home is also a fact that causes most migrants to run away and become overstayers, due to more times socialising in the place where they are working (Seno, informal interview, July, 2015).

However, a respondent stated a different view:

Six months is too long for me because I can't do my role as a teacher the best I should do, especially when my youngest daughter was admitted 3 times in the hospital within the 6 months, when I have to take casual leave from work to spend time with her in the hospital. This happened because the two kids were being looked after by their grandparents and aunties during the week while I concentrated in my work. Once their father arrived until now she hasn't got sick which reveals the impacts of long period of time the father left (Mele, informal interview, July, 2015).

The majority of leaders were concerned about guardianship and supervision of children when a parent or sibling left to take part in a seasonal migration scheme.

Care for children at home, from a distance

For parents, leaving their child behind was a continuous source of worry and uncertainty. However, parents continued to take part in the scheme in the hope the financial support would improve the outcomes for their children. Almost every informant in the study was apprehensive about how children would be looked after at home and how migrants care for their children from a distance.

Traditionally, left-behind children were cared for by one of the extended family members (primarily grandparents). However, respondents identified increasing instances of care being provided by older siblings or the parent who stayed. This was identified as a cause of issues for children, as part of the family structure was missing.

Table 5 below shows that the majority of the left-behind children are looked after by their parents, which suggests that it is older siblings who are migrating. The next largest group were looked after by their mother alone. There is only one participant who said that grandparent is taking care of them, while the last participant had his father taking care of him when the mother worked on seasonal schemes.

Table 5: Responsible for care at home

Responsible for left behind children	Proportions
parent	56%
mother	31%
father	6%
grandparent	6%

As one of the principals said:

A student of mine suffered with boils in her head and took a long time to recover. The student was left with the father while the mother went on a seasonal worker programme to Australia. I'm sure this student was not looked after well at home as a result of the health situation because the father cannot act in all the roles of a mother such as looking after this girl's hair or maybe the father was busy at the farm. In the end, this girl migrated to the other island where the mother from, due to mother never returning home (Seno, informal interview, 2015).

A mother also commented on how she cares for her children at home and from a distance: she used phone calls as the fastest way to talk to them, followed by social media such as Facebook. She explained:

When I'm here with my children, I always ensured that they have food to eat especially for breakfast before school and lunch, supervised them to do their homework every night before our *Fakafamili*⁵. At the time I went to New Zealand for work, I always called my husband and children on the phone every week, although the international call was very expensive which cost me sometimes a total \$40 dollars per week but that is how I care for my husband and especially my kids. Every time I talk with my kids I always asked how they are with their academic performance, remind them that I will bring over what they want on my return, this is to comfort them as a way to avoid problems occurring. Their father and his family acted on my behalf in fully supporting my kids in their schoolwork, health situation, and participation in social and religious activities (Tuna, informal interview, July, 2015).

In addition, a child stated:

When my father left, after one month then he called. I felt abandoned, lonely, and sad because he doesn't care about us as the rumour went around that he had affair with another lady (Tupu, semi-structured interview, July, 2015).

The experiences of the informants clearly show that whenever there is a lack of parental protection and care either at home or from abroad, the family members remaining at home are affected. This is especially true for teenagers, who are vulnerable to problems. As Tuna said, she called her family every week to see how things were going, asked about their studies, how they were doing and passed on her love to show her kids that their mother really cares for them. As soon as the parents or older family members fail to show how they care for children and younger siblings, children will be affected. For instance, Tupu said when her father did not call them for more than one month, she was feeling very lonely and sad when she heard from the mother. The social impacts of seasonal worker migration on children who are left behind from the study are presented in the last section.

The impacts of seasonal migration on the left-behind

The data gathered from the interviews shows that absences of parents or older siblings on seasonal work have both advantages and disadvantages for children

⁵ A family prayer.

remaining on the island. The impacts are reviewed with reference to the four themes discussed in Chapter 2: education, health, social impacts and religious participation.

Education

The majority of the participants claimed the most positive effect of family members participating in seasonal migration on their education was the increase in finances to contribute to the costs of schooling in Tonga. Specific items mentioned include school fees, examinations fees, school day mufti, computer technology, lunches, uniform and stationery.

Suia (13 years old) shared how his financial needs at school were paid, a result of his father being away on seasonal work.

The money sent from my father was used to pay for my school needs such as for my school fees and the mufti day. My mother bought me a new pair of sandals as a gift from him from New Zealand to wear to school when my father remits money from overseas. This avoids my suspension from school (Siua, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

In support of this, a school principal commented as follows on the positive impacts of seasonal worker migration:

I support local parents taking part in seasonal worker migration because it helps them financially, especially for young children's financial needs at school. It is well understood that when children are fully involved with their studies, especially the left-behind children, they are happy, active in the class because the remittances sent from the father or mother pay fees for school, examinations fees and other needs in their studies (Sela, informal interview, July, 2015).

The discussions in Focus Group 2 also supported what Siua said earlier:

The good thing when my father is away on seasonal work, he sends money home which helps my mother to donate money during the concert at school day, otherwise they announce my name in school for not paying (FGDs 2, August, 2015).

Lolo (15 years old) added that one of the main positive effects he received from his father when he returned was a laptop to support his studies:

My father went overseas and when he returned he bought me a laptop as a gift on his return to help with my studies. I used the laptop to type my assignment assigned by the teacher. Also, my father bought me stationery when he returned home which I really like for my study (Lolo, informal interview, July, 2015).

Hea (13 years old) stated that because his mother could not find a paid job on Lifuka, the seasonal schemes created the opportunity to provide money for school lunch:

Because my mother doesn't have a job in here, the main income in the family is from my brother who works overseas. The money helps to buy me lunch at school (Hea, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

To add to what Hea had said, Peta commented:

An advantage I observed with the left-behind children is that they can afford to wear proper clean uniform to school and I'm sure it is because the family received income from workers in New Zealand and Australia. While doing the uniform inspection once every week I recognized these specific students with proper clean uniform and also a lunch provided from home. This is my fourth year here, I was so happy with the changes in those students and that's the benefit of working overseas in the seasonal migration programme.... I hope they succeed in their studies (Peta, informal interview, July, 2015).

The community leaders have observed other benefits of seasonal worker migration on children at home. As Moli explained:

From my own view, it is common in Tonga if someone '*alu 'o toli i muli* (went overseas as a picker), that person and his or her family had a main source of income. The remittances sent from abroad not only pay the school fees but also were used to buy a new vehicle mainly for children's mode of transportation to school. Not only for taking the children to school but then to ensure that they attend school on time and return home on time. This mode of transportation also eases the accessibility to extra classes run in school, for instance, night, Saturday and holiday classes (Moli, informal interview, July, 2015).

Mele added his perspective on the advantages received by the migrants and their families when he commented:

Some of the money received by the family left behind was used to show appreciation to teachers who run the extra miles in helping their children academically. This appreciation can be either monetary or food that the child's family presented for teachers to show appreciation for the opportunity offered to conduct extra classes apart from normal school hours so students may receive better results especially in their exams (Mele, informal interview, 2015)

It is common in Tonga nowadays for teachers to run extra classes in their own time to help students succeed in their studies. Hence, seasonal worker migration brought several advantages to workers and their families but most importantly to young children's schooling.

On the other side of the coin, the majority of the participants also identified various negative impacts on the teenagers left behind. For example, children have

poorer performance academically, drop out from school at an early stage, and run away from school because there is no strong supportive supervision towards their studies at home.

Tupu (13 years old) said:

When my father went overseas for work I feel like I don't want to study because I want him to be here with me to support me with my studies such as tutoring me. At the same time, they [my parents] mostly argued on the phone which affected my brain where most of the times it is hard to concentrate in my studies at home and also in my exams (Tupu, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

A teacher added:

I believed in order for students to succeed in their studies they should be supported from home first. For example, a left-behind student by his mother had many problems in his studies. At first he failed to do his Internal Assessment for the Tongan subject, which is a Tongan handicraft, was absent from school most of the times, had lack of concentration in the class, failed to complete his homework and exams. A meeting was called with parents to discuss these issues and to find ways to reduce problems but the father of this particular student failed to come. This shows that there's lack of support at home as I experienced some parents with problem children didn't make it to any call from school regarding their children (Sela, informal interview, July, 2015).

One of the common negative impacts of seasonal worker migration on children left-behind is when they drop out from school at an early stage. Evidence of this was shared by one of the principals in the study.

I approached a mother in regards to her sons (F3, F4) recorded as outstanding absentees—she explained to me that their father went overseas as a fruit picker while she looked after the two sons. Their father failed to return after working overseas. At the time, I couldn't afford to pay their school fees ... they dropped out from school mostly to grow crops for subsistence and were involved in a *tongue*⁶ to earn money.... I was so surprised to hear that unexpected story from the mother but it indicates how it affects the children's studies (Moli, informal interview, July, 2015).

Some of the affected children missed classes while attending school, others were absent from school and the extra classes that were run at school; more adverse was the change in children's attitudes towards their studies. A teacher commented:

I was shocked when this student slept in my class, daydreaming and looking like she's lonely, hardly talking which is not her normal attitude inside the class. I found out in the end that the mother went on seasonal schemes and I'm sure that this is the reason why this student's attitude changed (Seno, informal interview, July, 2015).

⁶ A group of people who work together especially in agriculture

As Loto (16 years old) stated:

My brother used to drop me off and pick me up from school especially the night classes. When he left I have to walk to night classes earlier during the day in order to make sure I will be at school on time. Although, he sent money to help my studies I do miss him for driving me to school and picking me up at the end. Sometimes, I felt tired of walking, sometimes I didn't do my study in the night. However, I am doing some of my brother's farm and housework such as going to the bush to collect coconuts and crops for subsistence. Those additional roles are given to me because I was the only one older child at home at that time (Loto, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

During the focus group discussions, one of the participants also noted:

When my brother failed to send over some money to my parents, I didn't get lunch money. My family is poor and my parents are both unemployed. We heavily rely on remittance sent by migrants.... Since my brother left I have to take up his responsibilities in the family such as helping my father with the farm work. Most of the time the responsibilities on my shoulders are too much for me, I get tired easily and therefore, it's very hard for me to concentrate and do my studies as I feel sleepy (FGDs 2, August, 2015).

Health and food security

Some of the left-behind children felt life was better when an older brother went overseas. For example, Hea (13 years old) said:

I am so happy when my older brother sends money for mom to buy us food to eat and for my lunch. Most importantly, I am free from him smacking me mostly when he's here. I hope he is there forever so that I'm free (Hea, semi-structured interview, 2015).

At the same time, Moala (14 years old) added:

I liked it when my brother went overseas for about 6 months because I felt safe and comfortable staying home because there's no more drinking with a loud voice, arguing with mom and dad, fighting with other youths in the communities around. Sometimes he brought his friends home and ate our dinner and I end up hungry (Moala, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

During the Focus Group 1 discussion, one of the issues one participant mentioned in regard to access to health care in the hospital was as follows:

As you know the majority of the people in Lifuka doesn't have a vehicle except where a family member is working for the government. Now, it's becoming common that seasonal workers buy a car for his or her family in Lifuka that helps in taking children hospital for check-ups (FGDs, August, 2015).

Mele, a teacher, supports this:

My husband was involved in the SWP in 2014 for the first time and when he returned he bought us a car, which helps us a lot especially when our two girls are visiting the doctor. This is unlike before when I used to ask the neighbour for a ride to the hospital (Mele, informal interview, August, 2015).

However, negative impacts on the health of children left behind were also found. Several reported being affected in terms of feeling bored, unhappy, having low self-esteem, and feeling unsafe due to lack of parental protection. Some said they were sick many times because of the absence of food, being hungry and feeling tired.

Lala (15 years old) suffered from different health issues when the father left. He had not returned at the time of interview. One of the emotional problems she experienced was depression and isolation. She commented:

When my father went, I was happy but at the end he didn't return home. From the day he didn't come home, I was really sad and cried to hear the story from mom that she doesn't know whether he will return or not. Now I get sick easily because I miss him a lot. I feel isolated and less confident due to lack of parental protection at home as I am the oldest living with my younger siblings and mom now. I also get sad when my mother smacks me compared to when dad was here. I never faced any punishment from mom before, because I have a really close relationship with my dad (Lala, semi-structured interview, August 2015).

In addition, Sieli (14 years of age) explained how he was exposed to abuse and bullying due to the absence of his brother:

I am afraid of some of the older boys in the village because they try to bully me whenever we meet but when my older brother was here I was never afraid because we used to hang around where we go after school. At the same time, I also began to feel scared of the supernatural at home when my eldest brother went overseas (Sieli, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

A teacher saw the absence of a mother/father for a long period of time in season work overseas as the major reason for the problems faced by their kids at home:

It is not important to earn money while the children left-behind are suffering in their health. In one case a daughter had boils on her head when her mother went overseas while her father stayed back to look after her. It was in a very bad condition and I'm sure the absence of mother is the only reason for this situation. Her older sister was in Form 5 and she left and stayed in a different home, leaving no one at home to clean her younger sister's hair (Seno, informal interview, July, 2015).

Nua (13 years old) claimed his father being away is the reason why he gets hungry. He mentioned that his diet was different when his father was away:

My father is a fisherman; when he's here we always have good meals each a day such as fish and other seafood. Since he has been away we have started to eat imported food which is unhealthy. Sometimes I'm hungry because when he left, our crops were stolen from the farm and we could only buy food from the market when we had money. When I'm hungry I miss my father the most, especially the abundance of seafood at home. I sometimes feel dizzy, and have a headache, which causes me to be absent from school for up to 4 days (Nua, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

A wife of a migrant on the SWP mentioned experiences that support Nua's story:

My kids missed their father so much in different ways including the following. Firstly, when he's here we ate fish almost every day, our main source of food prior to his migration. Since he left we have missed eating fish; now we rely on export food such as chicken... that is not healthy and cost money for us. Second, when he failed to send the money on the expected day, it really touched my heart to see the kids are hungry and don't have breakfast and lunch for school. Third, it is more important for us to buy a phone card to call him rather than buying food to eat—at least the kids may talk with their dad (Meki, informal interview, July, 2015).

It is clear from these comments that seasonal migration affects the health of the children left behind in terms of nutrition and food security. As Meki said, even though they are poor, the father just went to the ocean and caught fish for the family and there is no hunger thanks to the plentiful marine resources, which provides food security.

The findings show that seasonal migration of older family members affects the wellbeing of the children left behind emotionally and physically, and in terms of their nutrition. As a result of the lack of parental protection and guidance, children are prone to feeling sad, being less confident and afraid, feeling bored and introverted. However, a few participants were happy when the older family members went overseas, especially older brothers who sometimes made life difficult for their younger siblings.

Social participation

Participation of left-behind children in social activities in the community is also affected when an older family member takes part in a seasonal work scheme. Parents often only allow children to take part in social activities under the supervision of older siblings, particularly at night. Some of the children were therefore unable to participate in some social activities where their older sibling

was unable to accompany them. This was particularly true where the father was very strict with letting their daughters engage in night-time activities, whereas the restriction was less obvious on boys. Some positive impacts were also discussed. Migrants sent money home to help in fundraising conducted by the community so as to help the family function in regards to social activities like reunions, birthdays and other activities.

Focus Group 2 discussed the benefits received when migrants went away on seasonal work:

The money remitted home by migrants helps the family's responsibilities in the community, especially through fundraising money to help the water systems for instance and so on (FGDs 2, August, 2015).

Focus Group 1 added:

Some families, when the father went overseas, found it much easier for children to attend functions held in the community, especially the girls. Most girls are closer to their mother than their father (FGDs 1, August, 2015).

When migrants go overseas, especially if it is the mother or father, social problems can occur for those children who lack supervision at home. A principal pointed out her concern in this way:

One day, the policemen reported that of my students was acting inappropriately in the community when he engaged in stealing from a shop in town. This left-behind boy sees stealing as a means for surviving because he can't get the things he needs from home. He also consumed alcohol, smoking and sniffing glue with other youth groups. Here, the remittances received from overseas work cannot compensate for how their children behave (Seno, informal interview, July, 2015).

Some parents are very strict with their children when it comes to participating in social activities, especially with regards to gender and age. As Lala (15 years old) said:

I hardly attend any social activities. Since I am the oldest I have to stay home and complete all work before I am allowed leave to attend the activities if time permits while my younger siblings are allowed to take part because they don't have much to do at home. Sometimes, mom doesn't trust me to go by myself otherwise (Lala, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

However, Naite (15 years old) had something different from Lala to say:

When my brother left, I didn't attend any of the social activities run in the village because my parents only allowed me go with my brother. For instance, youth week where sometimes they practice in the night. Another reason why I don't take part in the social activities in the village is because I felt tired and went to

sleep when they were practicing. This was because sometimes the activity clashes with our night study at school which is more important to me than the village activities (Naite, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

Only a few responses were given by the participants with regard to the impact of seasonal migration of older family members on their involvement in social activities in the village. The responses given by participants indicate the roles of demographic characteristics on these impacts. Restrictions in social participation were more evident for girls than for boys.

Age was also a factor. Lala (15 years old) must stay home to do all the work while the younger siblings attend the activities, mostly because her mother does not trust her. These impacts were felt because the older members of the family were away for lengthy periods of time, and lack of protection is an issue.

Religious participation

Involvement in religious activities is one of the most important commitments in life for the Tongan people, including the people of Lifuka. The flow of remittances from migrants helps churches through donations, including *Misinale*⁷ and *Li pa'anga kuata*⁸. Having remittances to pay these donations motivates left-behind children to attend church because they are not embarrassed by being unable to contribute.

Focus Group 1 observed that:

Because the family can donate money to church *Misinale*, this encourages us to attend the church services. On the other hand, if our family didn't, we might feel ashamed to participate in church activities (FGDs 1, August, 2015).

During Focus Group 2 discussions, one of the advantages of migration through seasonal working schemes that was raised was fulfilling the family obligations to church, such as preparing the feast for *Fakame* (White Sunday)⁹, supporting children left behind to take part in Sunday school, and attending church services.

⁷ Offering of money to church once a year

⁸ Offering of money to church in every quarter

⁹ Children's White Sunday in Tonga is every first Sunday of May, which involves young children from Sunday school and teenagers presenting memorised quotations from the Bible, as well as songs, action songs, dramas.

Migrants also accommodate for left-behind children's responsibilities for church, such as the youth fundraising for *Misinale*.

Focus Group 2 said:

On children's *Fakame* the money sent from abroad helps to buy new clothes and food for preparing the feast for the services on White Sunday. Not only that, but remittances provide money for church youth fundraising. For instance, collecting money for the Youth's *Misinale* as one of the main responsibilities of the youth (FGDs 2, August, 2015).

It seems that for some, seasonal migration improves religious participation of children. A teacher provides her story to support the points made above.

Where we live is far from the church we belong to. Once my husband returned, we bought a new car, and I was so happy that we managed to attend church services and take our daughters to join the *Fakame*. But before, most times we didn't make it to church services (Mele, informal interview, July, 2015).

In other cases, the children at home can be badly affected in terms of their involvement in religious activities. As one of the participants had said,

Most of the times I am thinking of my dad, I don't feel like going to Sunday school on Sunday. Another reason for not going is because a few girls used to gossip about me (Lala, semi-structured interview, 15 years old).

Focus Group 2 observed:

When father went for work overseas, we started to miss the church services and other activities because we weren't afraid of mom. When he returns we will go back to church pretending that we hadn't missed the church most of the time while he was away (FGDs 2, August, 2015).

A mother supported what had been said in the FGDs 2.

When her father was away for temporary work, she started to leave church services on Sunday even the *Lautohi faka-Sapate*¹⁰. The main reason was because she did whatever she wanted to because she's free while staying with me compared to her father who she always listened to and was afraid to annoy by staying away from church services (Meki, informal interview, July, 2015).

One of the participants in the semi-structured interviews had said,

I usually attend the church activities such as youth choir ... since my brother left there's no one to accompany me in the night so dad told me to stay home (Afu, August, 2015).

¹⁰ A Sunday school programme run in church for children after lunch.

Not only that, left-behind children sometimes have poor attendance in the *fakasiasi*¹¹ that runs every Friday morning before the classes start at school. One of the informants stated:

When parents are away overseas, children tend to change their normal attitudes in school. Sometimes they didn't turn up for the prayer session run by the church leaders as they do different things in this time (Peta, informal interview, July, 2015).

Seasonal worker migration has both positive and negative consequences for the left-behind children with regard to their participation in church activities. As most families in Lifuka are not working in the government, seasonal workers provided income for the family, especially to accommodate for families' responsibilities such as offering money to the church, providing new clothes and preparing the feast for the *Fakame*. They also provide money for youth fundraising for *Misinale*. Several commented that having parents overseas enabled children to miss church services and other activities. One participant did not want to attend Sunday school because he was missing his father overseas.

Differences in impacts by demographic characteristics

This section explores the relationship between impacts on children and demographic factors, particularly gender and age.

Gender

When children were asked during the semi-structured interviews how they feel when their parents or older siblings are absent overseas, the majority (94%) of participants including all girls and almost all the boys reported feeling emotional about their absent parents. Only one of the boys said that they did not have any particular positive or negative feelings linked with the absence of a parent. This suggests that there may be a small difference between girls and boys emotionally as a result of seasonal migration. However, when children were asked if they miss the absent older family member, 75% of the girls said "yes" while only 25% of the boys stated that they missed the migrants.

¹¹ Religious instruction programme.

One participant observed:

I missed my father because my brother and I always went with him for fishing, eating fish, going to the bush but most importantly we stayed all together happy as one family (Tupu, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

Many of the interviews suggested that girls have a more overtly emotional response to the absent migrant, whereas the boys are less overtly affected.

Another difference was observed when the fathers were absent. Mothers alone seemed to have fewer problems managing behaviour in girls compared to boys. Girls appeared to be more likely to respond with feelings of unhappiness, while boys were more likely to respond with violence or commit crimes in the absence of a father.

One of the principals mentioned in the informal *talanoa*:

... boys commit crime in the community as they are referred to me from the police station, while girls keep silent and look depressed in school (Seno, informal interview, July, 2015).

There are also gender differences when it comes to poor performance in the classroom. Boys perform less well, especially when their father is away and there is no older sibling at home. Taking over many of the responsibilities of a father may result in a reduction in time for homework, for instance, which can lead to poor results in exams. On the other hand, girls may also have to do men's work when the father leaves, especially when they are the oldest of the children. The shifting of roles is common when boys do girl's work such as cooking and washing. A left-behind boy mentioned:

... after school I must go to the farm to get cassava for the family because dad is away. As I am already tired after walking back home from school, another walk to the farm is tiring. After dinner I fell asleep while my sister did her homework (Nua, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

Age

Seasonal migration of older family members may conceivably have different effects on children, depending on the age of the child when the family member first left.

For instance, a wife of a migrant said:

When my husband first joined the seasonal worker scheme in 2010, my eldest child was 2 years old. That time she didn't seem to care when her father left. The last time he went was in 2014 when our daughter was 6 years and she had to get used to staying with me without the father (Tuna, informal interview, July, 2015).

A left-behind daughter said:

My father absconded after he left in January, 2014. At the time I was 14 years of age whereas my little sister was 4 years old. My little sister wasn't really affected because she's very close to my mom, and because she really didn't understand what was going on when he left. But for me, because I'm very close to him, it makes me sad most of the time he is away especially when mom smacks me which I never experience when he is here (Lala, semi-structured interviews August, 2015).

The evidence suggests that children in younger ages are not affected seriously by the seasonal migration compared to children who are in their teens.

Respondents' coping strategies

The data collected in the field suggested that there were several strategies that could be taken by church and community leaders when trying to minimise negative impacts of seasonal migration on children.

Voices of the community leaders

Teachers and principals provided strategies when dealing with offenses and punishment associated for the left-behind children. One of the principals said:

- When a teacher identifies a problematic student in the class, she/he tries her best to overcome that particular problem faced by the student.
- The next procedure is to send the student to the senior tutor and senior mistress.
- This is followed by a letter of information to notify the guardians of the problem and to seek an opportunity to talk with the senior tutor and senior mistress (Peta, informal interview, July, 2015).

A different participant explained how they minimised the problems that arose with regard to their studies:

The school conducted remedial classes in the holidays and on Saturday as well as night classes to help the students. Remedial classes were offered for students who were low performers inside the classroom. This one-hour extra class is conducted after school every day. Some teachers use holidays, Saturday and night classes to cover the syllabus, revision, and help students with Internal Assessments (Moli, semi-structured interview, July, 2015).

Seno noted that:

When the remaining children are affected emotionally, we get them to participate in some of the school activities such as netball and rugby, and traditional dances for the school day. They busy their time with activities like this without thinking of the parents overseas (Seno, semi-structured interview, July, 2015).

A different strategy, this time from an abandoned wife, offers another approach to helping the left-behind:

To reduce problems faced by my kids when I left or the father left, we used the family prayer session as time for us to *talanoa* with our kids. We explained everything; this is like 2 months earlier for them to understand the reason why we have to leave them behind.... Second, we asked what they wanted us to bring them when we return. I rang every week to speak to all of them, the father and the two kids. This is to send them my love and to show how I care for them. I especially want my two kids to feel that I'm at home with them even though they are left-behind (Tuna, informal interview, July, 2015).

Tuna also suggested that the man should be the person to take part in the schemes, not the mother:

I strongly believe, only the father and sons should take part seasonal worker programme for several reasons. Firstly, as a Tongan mother who is used to work in the plantation and has done man's work since I was in primary school, I ensure women are able to take over the man's responsibilities while they are away and for the benefits of the kids. When my husband left to work in Australia SWP, I took up his responsibilities such as working in the plantation, collecting coconuts in the bush and feeding pigs. At the same time I did my work as a mother making sure the kids were fully catered for with everything they needed (Tuna, informal interview, July, 2015).

Voices of the children left-behind

One of the questions asked during the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews sought the children's thoughts on what should be done to minimise the problems they faced when the older family members migrated for seasonal work. They came up with different ideas about how to solve their problems.

As Lala said:

In order for me to be happy as I grow up, the government of Tonga and Australia should search for my father in Australia and send him back here (Lala, semi-structured interview, August, 2015).

Focus Group 2 suggested a way to solve the problem they said:

We hope the employer will build a strong high fence with good security to reduce the chances that seasonal workers will have contacting with other ladies, for instance, which may lead to overstaying (FGDs, August, 2015).

There were two semi-structured interviewees who pointed out that the *fakafamili*¹² should occur more often, especially when problems are identified in children. Other suggestions included church leaders providing advice and pastoral care in order to comfort the affected children.

Focus Group 1 also commented that in church there should be a prayer session run by the church leaders, specifically aimed at praying for the wellbeing of children and their family members who are away working in Australia and New Zealand. They also suggested church leaders should pray for the affected families during church services, and also visit those families just to comfort them by way of *talanoa* and a prayer session.

Summary

In this chapter, the main findings from the interviews carried out in Tonga have been summarised with reference to some characteristics of the respondents, especially age and gender, and the four key dimensions of social impact: education, health, participation in social activities, and religious participation. Both the adults and the children interviewed identified a mix of positive and negative impacts, making it difficult to generalise about the social impacts of seasonal migration on teenagers left behind in the village. In the next chapter, the findings are examined in the wider context of some of the issues raised in the literature about the effects of reasonably lengthy absences by parents and older siblings on the children who are left at home.

¹² Family prayers conducted at home.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the findings from the previous chapter using the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 3 that include but are not limited to children's health, education, and social and religious participation. The evidence required to address the research questions outlined in the first chapter has been presented in Chapter 5. This chapter now addresses these questions with reference to how migration impacts on children left behind while the older members of the family are away working overseas, the role that age and gender play in mediating these social impacts and, finally, the coping strategies which are used or planned to mitigate the impacts of seasonal work on teenage children.

Seasonal worker migration and children

It is essential to have an understanding of how members of a community view major developments like managed seasonal labour migration schemes when attempting to assess the impacts of such schemes. These general perspectives are important, because they help frame the way individual members of a community respond to questions about the impacts of such schemes on their lives. For this reason, the voices of the community leaders are significant to this study.

One hundred percent of the participants considered that seasonal labour migration overseas had improved their way of living and provided benefits to their families and in different ways, most commonly through financial support for their children and the families. Given that the livelihood of most of the Ha'apai residents relies heavily on *lalanga* (weaving Tongan traditional handicraft), *toutai* (fishing), and operating small-scale trade stores the remittances from seasonal worker schemes play a major role in improving living standards. As mentioned by Lani in her interview, seasonal migration schemes are a blessing from above which provide benefits to left-behind families. A similar remark was made by a former New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, Winston Peters, when he observed that New Zealand's RSE scheme provides benefits for migrants' families left behind in terms of alleviating poverty by providing paid employment and contributing, through remittances, to alleviating poverty in rural communities in the Pacific.

However, these benefits can be very much influenced by specific events and situations and when Ha'apai was extensively damaged by Cyclone Ian during the main harvest season, while lots of workers were overseas, some respondents (like Tuna) were very upset when they recalled the problems faced by families in Lifuka, which was badly affected by the cyclone, while so many adult members were away. On the basis of this experience, she felt that both parents should never take part in seasonal work at the same time, especially if the children left behind are very young.

Battistella and Conaco (1998) found in their research that negative impacts of migration on children left behind were diminished if the mother stayed at home. As Lani said when interviewed in Lifuka, her family and children never experienced any negative problems when the father went away. This was helped by the fact that Lani's children were old enough to understand why taking part in the scheme was advantageous for the family, and because Lani can do most of the things, like fishing and working in the garden, that the man does. In Tonga, it is common for women to go fishing.

A major challenge some families faced when their father/partner was away was the fear that he might not return. There have been quite a few occasions where Tongan men have decided to stay on in New Zealand or Australia as overstayers. This creates major difficulties for families at home because their father/partner cannot return home at any stage without facing the risk of being banned from re-entering the country where he overstayed his visa. Meki disclosed in her interview that she did not support her husband taking part in the seasonal work schemes because she was concerned he might be tempted to overstay. This suggests that there needs to be a high level of trust surrounding the intentions of seasonal workers when they leave so that the family is not anxious about the possibility of losing their father/partner.

Teachers interviewed were concerned that long periods away on seasonal work had more negative impacts on the children that outweighed the positive benefits accompanying remittances. As a child of a migrant worker claimed, once their mother comes home he will stop her from returning to work no matter how much others want her to go back because he misses her too much when she is away (Siriwardhana et al., 2015).

Impacts on children's education

Seasonal migration has both negative and positive impacts on the education of children who stay behind in Tonga. Seasonal workers' earnings raise household incomes, creating a chance to pay for children's school fees, examinations fees and other financial needs, including school day, mufti day, feeding for sports, printing, photocopying and so forth. All the participants commented on the positive contribution remittances can make to paying school fees. This is supported in research findings reported in Bennett et al. (2013), Bakker (2009), Bedford et al. (2009), Antman (2012), Lam et al. (2013) and Gibson and McKenzie (2010). Findings from The World Bank's baseline survey in Tonga (Gibson & McKenzie, 2010) indicated that 85% of Tongan households were raising money to pay for their children's school fees. In addition, it was found that paying for school fees was the most important reason that households in Tonga give for seeking paid work. Participating in the seasonal worker schemes is thus very important, from an economic perspective because access to paid employment improves the living standard of the families and beyond into the extended families in the community.

Another impact of seasonal migration on children's studies is sending or bringing gifts home as a way of parents keeping strong their relationship with their children. However, while gifts are a token of love, they cannot in themselves address negative impacts on children of a parent's absence from home. One participant commented that his father, on his return, bought him a laptop which helped him with his studies. A similar finding was reported by Jingzhong and Lu (2011) with regard to ways migrant parents keep their connections with their children through gifts. Most parents buy school supplies and clothes to meet the immediate needs of a child, especially for school. Findings in the present study are consistent with those for the Caribbean reported by Bakker et al. (2009), where migrant parents, in many cases, try to compensate for their absence by sending significant amounts of clothing and footwear for their children who have been left at home while they are away.

Maintaining good relationships is one of the four pillars of Tongan society. In terms of schooling in Tonga, there will be teachers who are dedicated to helping students on a voluntary basis if they are willing to learn outside of normal school

hours, either at night or after school, on Saturdays or during holiday classes, whilst some open their homes for whoever may need help for their studies. Parents use the money sent by migrants to show appreciation of the support provided by these teachers by presenting them with food, money or other ways of showing gratitude, and for maintaining good relationships. Some teachers do not accept such gifts, whereas others do. As Mele pointed out, a major benefit of the money they get from overseas is that they can show their appreciation of teachers. This may not be something commented on in the wider literature on the impacts of seasonal migration on education of the children left behind, but it is important in Tonga.

In addition, teachers mentioned that as the children's guardians often had less authority when it came to exercising discipline, some of the left-behind children exhibited bad behaviour that had a negative influence on other children in the class. It was also hard to make contact with their parents to discuss what might be done to rectify this, as one of the principals pointed out.

Children also experience a decline in their academic performance due to the absence of older family members from home. Evidence provided by one school principal revealed that 94% of the 16 participants in the semi-structured interviews failed in their English mid-year examinations. This reveals the lack of tutoring and supervision of the children in their studies (Jingzhong & Lu, 2011). According to both teachers and children, some students failed to do their homework, because they were missing their father or mother while they were away, which resulted in less concentration on studies. Some of the left-behind children were absent from class for long periods as a result of the father's voice being lost from home in terms of parental control.

Another problem identified by one of the principals was that some students who are left-behind sleep and daydream during classes, because they have so much extra work to do in the absence of their father or an older sibling. This is similar to a finding by Wang (2013), based on his research on the left-behind children in rural China. Children may fail in the exams because of their more relaxed attitude toward their studies, not completing their homework, and failing to study regularly.

A major concern is when students drop out from school at an early stage and this can happen when left-behind children are failing to perform well in their classes or when there is not enough money available to pay school fees. As one mother reported, when the father of her two sons absconded in Australia, she could not pay for their financial needs at school, so they dropped out during their time in Form 3 and Form 4, taking part-time agricultural work to earn money for the family. This finding echoes those reported in the “Impact of labour migration on children left-behind in Tajikistan” (Unicef, 2011).

Impacts on children’s health

Most families in Tonga are low-income earners and remittances from seasonal migrants can have a positive impact on the health of family members. But the prolonged absences of parents also have emotional costs for the left-behind children. It was found in the interviews reported in Chapter 5 that the absence of parents resulted in harmful effects for some of the left-behind children.

The use of vehicles purchased with remittances enabled ready access to health care for children when they were sick. Consistent with this, Gibson and McKenzie (2010) noted that once the RSE workers returned home they bought household items including DVDs, bicycles and cars. These can result in significant improvements in a family’s standard of living. The use of bicycles as a major form of transport in Tonga is still common and in Ha’apai it is one of the main modes of local transportation. One respondent reported that whenever a family member was admitted to hospital, the father used the bicycle for carrying food and laundry almost three times a day.

Remittances can also ensure the family left behind have funds to purchase food when their fresh vegetables and fish are in short supply. This is especially important for the children whose bodies are not strong compared to adults. One of the participants reported that when his father went overseas, people were stealing their agricultural crops, and they relied on buying food from the market. Although their garden foods had gone, they still had access to food from the market or store to provide for the family. Antón (2010) reported a similar positive effect of remittances on the nutritional status of the children in Ecuador, as measured by weight-for-height and weight-for-age (as cited in Antman, 2012).

However, Gibson et al. (2011) found evidence in weight-for-age and height-for-age measures that supports the argument that migration of household family members can lead to worse diets and health outcomes for the children who have been left in Tonga. An important finding for the people of Tonga from their study was the more income Tongans receive, the more food they eat. It is widely known that there is a high incidence of obesity in Tonga, with up to 40% of the population believed to have Type 2 diabetes, which leads to shorter life expectancy. It is also claimed the main cause is the selling of cheap, fatty mutton flaps in Tonga, which are a very popular imported food (Watson & Treanor, 2016).

One of the participants pointed out that when the father was here they ate healthy food such as fish, but when he left they had to eat imported foods. Borovnik (2003, 2007) reported a similar finding from her research on migrant seafarers in Kiribati: if the migrant is a male, then the household at home started to eat imported food instead of eating fish and coconuts, which the adult men would provide for the family.

Reference has already been made to the negative effects prolonged absences of parents or older siblings can have on the psychological well-being of children who remain at home. Only one of the 16 children interviewed claimed that the absence of an older family member had no impact on him. The rest mentioned some emotional issues, especially when it was the mother who had migrated, or the father had absconded while overseas. As one of the school principals noted:

I get to know easily who is a left-behind student in the class especially if it is his mother who migrates. He mostly looks miserable, lonely, day dreaming inside the class which is not their normal attitude in class (Sela, informal interview, July, 2015).

Parrenas (2002) found that children seem to experience a lower psychological well-being effect when mothers migrate. In my study, I found there was not really much difference as far as psychological impacts on the left-behind between the absence of a mother or a father. While a significant aim for undertaking seasonal work is to obtain income for the family, absences of older siblings and parents can cause fear and sadness as a result of abuse by others in the community (and

sometimes in the family) when the migrant goes overseas. This finding was confirmed by an NGO representative, who observed that sometimes there is a lack of protection for the children of migrants, especially on the street. It was also noted that sometimes teachers abuse these children as well, which can lead to a depressed mental state on the part of the children (Unicef, 2011).

Impacts on children's social participation

The impacts of seasonal work schemes on children's involvement in community activities is an under-explored topic; most researchers focus on impacts on children's health and education without paying direct attention to community activities, where children start learning and experiencing the traditional ways of life and culture. However, the remittances from overseas seasonal workers help with the community's functions and activities. As Bedford et al. (2009) stated: "Equally in Tonga and Samoa, remittances are viewed as an important means of fulfilling family and social responsibilities" (p. 44). Similar findings are reported from the different context of Kiribati, where Borovnik (2005a, 2006) found almost all of the remittances were used to fulfil basic needs of food and to make contributions to obligatory community feasts (as cited in Bedford et al., 2009).

Children's participation in community activities can change significantly, especially if their parents are very strict with their children. Girls may be stopped by the father from attending social activities, especially if they are held at night. Sometimes, parents banned their children for their own safety but at the same time they are stopping their children from learning the ways of life, culture and customs of their Tongan community. By participating in social activities, children start to learn and experience culture, which can then be taught by the participants to younger siblings. Learning traditional Tongan dances is one of the advantages of taking part in the social activities. Sometimes when the father is absent undertaking seasonal work overseas, children, especially girls, may attend Christian youth programs, with the support of their mother with whom they have a very close relationship.

Children do not obey the non-migrant parent's rules, especially boys who often do not listen to their mother when the father is overseas. They tend to do whatever

they want; once they start mingling around with the youth in certain social activities, they can start to act in inappropriate ways which is against their parent's rules and sometimes even the law. Seno noted this in his interview, commenting on a boy in school who committed crime while his father was overseas on seasonal work. His mother found it hard to control her son. This is particularly problematic for adolescent children, where there are incidences of alcohol consumption and abuse due to lack of adequate parental supervision (Bedford et al., 2009).

When a brother migrates, parents can restrict their daughters from attending social activities, such as youth week programmes, because there is no one reliable to accompany girls in his absence. This is common in Tongan villages, where girls tend to stay inside the house at night unless they are accompanied by a brother who can provide support if needed. This shows how girls can be more vulnerable in village settings than men, especially in the absence of their parents. The literature relating to the impacts of seasonal migration on social participation of the left-behind children is sparse and there is scope for further research on this topic.

Impacts on children's religious participation

The major positive impact seasonal labour migration had on religious participation is through the role of remittances in helping the family left behind donate money for church functions like *misinale* and for specific activities such as children's White Sunday and church youth programmes. As one of the participants observed, purchasing new clothes for their children's White Sunday and preparing a feast for them after the service is very important for Tongans. Connell and Brown (2005, p. 35) have emphasized that: "In Tonga, most gifts to the church are sent to parents or close relatives to be given in the annual, highly competitive 'free-gifting' ceremony, the *misinale*." Normally, the amount given is announced during the *misinale* and is a measure of the status of the family in the community. Being able to attend the church services and Sunday school regularly is also very important in Tonga, and where remittances are used to purchase vehicles, these can be very useful for transporting children to church and to school.

If fathers are absent then some children tend to miss the church services, Sunday school and other activities related to religious participation. It was clear from the interviews that when the father or the head of the family is absent from home, attitudes amongst the children towards some activities, including religious participation, could change. As noted in the previous section, absence of fathers or older brothers could result in girls not being able to attend church youth meetings and other activities.

Children's gender and age

The age of the left-behind children had different implications, depending on whether the mother or father/older siblings were absent. Younger children experienced different issues from the older ones. The younger children were not really aware of the reasons for the absence of their parent(s) and the main effects on them could be health-related if there was a significant change in their diets. The older children, on the other hand, who did understand why their parent(s) were away, were faced with more challenges, especially if they had to pick up the work of the absent family members and, if they were girls, if they found their ability to participate in social and religious activities was compromised. Older children could also face more emotional challenges, especially if they were particularly attached to the absent family member and relied on their support with schoolwork and for relationships with other family members.

With regard to gender, girls tended to experience more negative impacts than boys as a result of absences of parents, especially if it is the mother who migrates. While boys have to pick up many more responsibilities when their fathers are absent, they tend to be less inclined to listen to their guardians, teachers at school and the church, and even the leaders in the communities. Similar findings to these can be found in research done on the impacts of labour migration on left-behind children in Tajikistan (Unicef, 2011).

Coping strategies

Through the interviews with children, their parents, teachers and community leaders, it was possible to identify several strategies for coping with problems

faced by the children when their parents or older siblings were absent working overseas. A common coping strategy employed by teachers, for example, was to call a meeting with parents to raise their awareness of the problems their children were facing at school given the absence of key member of the family. The teachers were prepared to run extra classes to help those students who were not performing well or who were struggling to find time to do their homework because of other duties.

One of the left-behind children whose father had overstayed in Australia wanted government support to find him and return him to Tonga, so that he can provide support for her and also to stop the stories about him as someone who had left his family. Other strategies suggested included monitoring the workers more closely while they were overseas to reduce the risk of their overstaying, as well as calling on community leaders and church leaders to maintain contact with workers while they were overseas.

Summary

The primary finding of this study is that there appears to be evidence of negative impacts in a range of dimension from SWS. This suggests there is a need for more research on coping strategies; this study has just highlighted some of the challenges facing children when their parents or older siblings are away for lengthy periods working overseas. The findings reported in Chapter 5 and discussed with reference to the literature in this chapter suggest that there is scope for a more ambitious longitudinal study, involving a sample of families over two or three years, to get a deeper understanding of the impacts of seasonal work on children. In this sense, the results reported in this study provide some suggestions as to key areas that might be explored in a more comprehensive inquiry into a topic that has tended to be ignored in the literature on seasonal labour migration in the Pacific.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Summary of objectives, theoretical perspective and methodology

The primary objective of this study was to complete a preliminary study of the ways in which Tongan children (aged 13-16) are impacted by seasonal migration overseas of their parents or older siblings. As a teacher from Lifuka, I was concerned about the ways children were impacted when older family members took part in seasonal migration. I was also interested in the way socio-economic and demographic factors (such as age and gender) influenced the impacts of lengthy absences of parents and older siblings on the children left behind. I was interested in seeing what coping strategies were used, or what planning was done to mitigate the social impacts of overseas seasonal employment on teenage children in their household contexts.

The research was designed as an exploratory qualitative study and was informed by a small international literature in the social sciences on the implications for family members left behind when parents or older siblings went overseas to work. Children are the key informants in the study, and 16 students aged between 13 and 16 years were selected for semi-structured interviews, with a further 10 children included in two focus groups. Information was also collected from community leaders, guardians, parents, teachers and church leaders in order to ensure that a range perspectives on the impacts of seasonal migration were obtained.

Main findings of the research on social impacts of seasonal migration on children

Education

Seasonal migration affected children's education in both positive and negative ways. Remittances ensured that the left-behind children had their financial needs associated with education covered, such as paying for school fees, donations for school day, school lunches, other school supplies and uniforms. All of the participants stated that one of the most positive impacts of seasonal work is paying for school fees. Remittances also help in paying teachers to provide

support for children who need extra help in their studies.

However, children who have been left behind are placed in a particularly vulnerable situation affecting their educational performance. Left-behind children are failing in exams and have incomplete homework, lack of concentration with schoolwork, are sleeping and daydreaming in the class, whilst some drop out from school at an earlier age. The research indicated that there was increased participation of left-behind children in both housework and farm work when their parents or older siblings migrated. The increased amount of work they had to do inevitably reduced the time and energy to devote to schoolwork. There were a few students who were engaging in inappropriate activities, such as crime. These negative problems are linked to a lack of tutoring and parental supervision.

Health

Remittances from seasonal workers provide sufficient food for the left-behind children and some children are happy when older siblings are away due to being bullied by them. Remittances also help when it comes to buying cars, which make visits to doctors and access to health easier. On the other hand, many children left behind suffer from depression, feelings of abandonment and low self-esteem that can result in behaviour problems such as engaging in violence and crime. In some cases these children face a permanent struggle against feelings of low self-worth, insecurity and neglect throughout their life during the ages of 13-16 years. They are at increased risk of needing substantial health and nutritional care.

Social participation

The study findings reveal the importance of remittances from overseas for community functions such as fundraising, cultural occasions like weddings, funerals, and youth week. The most common use of money in social activities in the community is for fundraising to support village activities that support children in the community. Another positive impact is when a strict father, for example, goes overseas, and children can attend village social activities if the mother is not as strict as the father. However, children can also be banned from attending social activities if an older brother is absent because they do not have a reliable person available to accompany them.

Religious participation

The biggest impact of seasonal migration on religious participation is through donations of money for church functions like *Misinale*, church youth concerts and feasts. These have a positive impact on children left behind, most of whom attend church services, Sunday school and other activities. However, a negative impact of migration of a parent on children staying at home can be the changing of attitudes to church activities. As participants commented, when their fathers were overseas, some daughters failed to attend church services and Sunday school.

Roles of gender and age on the impacts of seasonal migration

There are gender differences when fathers are absent, with some boys committing crimes, because the voice of the father is absent from home, and girls having an opportunity to participate in more social activities if their mothers are not as strict as their fathers. Younger children faced less emotional stress when their fathers left, compared with teenagers who understood better the challenges the family would face when their father or mother was overseas.

Strategies to reduce negative impacts faced by children

There are a few strategies that have been used to reduce the problems suffered by children. Firstly, the principal and teachers clarified that once they identified problematic students, they will become involved in assisting the family and providing extra support for the children if required. It was recognised that it was better for only one parent to be absent at any one time so that one of them was able to stay with the children. There were also suggestions made about how employers might monitor more effectively their workers to discourage those who wanted to overstay from failing to return home.

Areas suggested for future research

There is very little literature on the social impacts of seasonal migration on the left-behind children in Pacific countries participating in the seasonal work schemes in Australia and New Zealand. I would recommend further research to be carried out on the topic, especially on the impacts of seasonal migration on children's religious and social participation. As Connell and Brown (2005) have pointed out, one of the most common uses of the remittances is for church *Misinale*, which have a major part to play in the social life of the children,

families and in the communities.

There is also a need for research that documents any differences in the social impacts of seasonal migration to Australia on the one hand, or New Zealand on the other, on children in Tonga. There is a tendency for more workers to become overstayers in Australia and this has a very significant impact on wives and families back home. As the wife of a migrant said, “he will never take part again in the SWP, because he might go for good like SWP workers in the other village” (Meki, 2015). Finally, there needs to be further research to identify effective strategies to minimise negative impacts while maximising positive impacts of participation in seasonal work schemes on children.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Appendix One

Lupe Tupou
Dr Matthew Roskruge

NIDEA

24 June 2015

Dear Lupe

Re: FS2015-19 The Social Impacts of seasonal migration on left-behind children: An exploratory study from Lifuka, Tonga.

Thank you for sending me your amended application. Your changes are comprehensive and fully respond to the letter I sent earlier. I am happy to give you formal ethical approval.

I wish you well with your research.

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Kind regards,

Ruth Walker
Chair
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(Please address all replies to the Chief Executive Officer for Education and Training)
P O Box 61, Nuku'alofa, TONGA
Tel: (676) 23 511; Facsimile (676) 23 596; Email: director@tongaeducation.gov.to

Ref.: 43/1/1

6 July, 2015

Mrs. Lupe Moala-Tupou
New Zealand Aid Scholarship Recipient
1/36 Hogan Street
Hamilton 3216
NEW ZEALAND

Dear Mrs Moala-Tupou,

Application for a Research Permit to conduct research in Tonga towards a Masters in Social Science, focusing on The Social Impacts of seasonal migration on left-behind children: An exploratory study from Lifuka, Tonga.

Reference is made to your application for a Research Permit to conduct research in Tonga towards your Master's Degree and I am glad to advise that the Ministry has considered and approved your application.

Please note that this approval will be valid for two months, that is, from July to August, 2015. If your research will not be completed within this duration, you must request for an extension of your permit or if you want to defer it to a later date, you must also request approval for deferment.

The Ministry wishes you all the best and success with your research works.

Yours sincerely,

'Ana Veikoso I
for Acting Chief Executive Officer for Education and Training



Appendix Two

Semi-structured interview schedule

This schedule outlines some of the topics that I would like to discuss with you during our interview. While we conduct the interview you do not have to answer every question and you are welcome to raise any other issues that I did not cover in this schedule. I also like to hear from you about your own thoughts about the effects of migration of older siblings or parents to places like Australia and New Zealand on the left-behind children aged 13-16.

1. How many members in household?
2. Are any members of your family presently working in NZ or Australia on their Seasonal Migration Worker Schemes (SWS)?
3. If no members are presently absent, have any been away for such work during the past 12 months? If yes: who was away and for how long were they absent?
4. What is your relationship to the member of your household who is currently absent or who was absent in the past 12 months?
5. Who usually looks after you or acts as a parent for you?
6. Do you miss your parents /older siblings when they migrate to NZ or Australia? If your answer is yes, please give 3 things do you miss from the absence of parents or older siblings from home?
7. How do feel when a member of the family is absent overseas?
8. What are your responsibilities in the household?
9. Do you take on other responsibilities when family members are absent working overseas?
10. Please list three problems you face with regard to your religious participation when parents or older siblings are absent working in NZ or Australia?
11. Do you face any health problems while your parents or older siblings are absent working in NZ or Australia?
12. If yes, please list down three problems identified.

13. How often do your parents or older siblings migrate to NZ or Australia through Seasonal Worker Schemes?
14. How well do you do at school (how good are your school results)?
15. Have you ever been suspended from school?
16. Do absences of family members on the Seasonal Worker Schemes help or hinder your studies at school? Give three impacts of the schemes on your schoolwork.
17. Do you attend the Church Youth activities, for example, Sunday school, Youth Choir practice and so on?
18. Do you replace any roles your parents or older siblings in the family perform in social activities in the village when they are away?
If yes, what are the roles?
19. Do you face any problems while taking on their responsibilities in the village?
20. Does taking on these responsibilities affect your studies, religious participation, health, and social participation?
21. What changes happen in the household when your father or mother/older siblings leave home for several months? Give three.
22. Have you had problems because of parents or older siblings left home for at least seven months? If yes, please describe these problems to me
23. Anything else you would like to share about your experiences of the impacts of seasonal migration on children left behind?

Focus group schedule

This schedule outlines some of the topics that I would like to discuss with you during our focus group. While we conduct the focus group you do not have to answer every question and you are welcome to raise any other issues that we did not cover on this schedule. I also like to hear from you your own thoughts about the effects of migration of older siblings or parents on the left behind children aged 13-16.

These questions fall into two different themes.

A. Before migrating to New Zealand or Australia:

24. What were your roles in your family, school, church, and village?
25. Do you attend school, church, and village activities?
26. Do you have any family prayer every night where parents advise you in terms of discipline and so on?
27. What kind of skills have you learnt from your parents or older siblings?
28. Do you enjoy staying together with your parents and siblings?
29. Do you feel safe while they are around you?

B. Situations after migrating to New Zealand or Australia?

30. Do you take on other responsibilities when your parents or older siblings migrate to NZ and Australia?
31. Do you participate in every Sunday school activities such as Fakame (children's White Sunday)? If No, Please explain why you don't participate.
32. Do you sometimes absent yourself from the Youth activities? If your answer is YES, please explain 3 reasons why.
33. What coping strategies could be used to reduce the health impacts of absences by parents or older siblings on seasonal work overseas?
34. Are you involved in the village social activities in the village?

If no, please explain why?
35. Give 3 positive impacts of migration on your studies, social participation, health, and religious participation.
36. Give 3 negative impacts of migration on your studies, social participation, health, and religious participation.
37. What sorts of things could be done in the village to reduce the negative effects of seasonal migration on the children left behind?