

Urban Youth in the Pacific

Increasing resilience and reducing risk
for involvement in crime and violence



MATALA

In this LIFE I say I'm living
My every beat and EVERY breath
Strikes as a constant clear reminder
to LIVE before my death.
I am fearless against daily struggles
Communicate with the pain
We are all in this TOGETHER
One twisted and unified vein.
Let your DREAMS explode into color
Shades of hope, love and UNITY
To paint and weave your canvas
Of your UNIQUE Identity.
For in this life that we ALL are living
In every beat there is a choice
Life is a SONG for us to join in
You're not alone, harmonize,
use your VOICE.

Matala is Tongan for 'flower' (noun) or 'to bloom' (verb). This definition reflects the potential and resilience of Pacific youth and the need to nurture and support their growth from the roots. When written in another form, namely, 'Fakamatala' it means 'to explain or clarify' representing the importance of having the voice of youth present in discussions about youth issues. In other Pacific languages matala also has other significant meanings. In Uvean it means 'to tell' and in Samoan 'opening'.

Front cover image and accompanying poem by
Minaira K. Fifita, ON THE SPOT (Inc)
Acrylic on Canvas
March 2011, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

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Foreword

Youth involvement in urban crime and violence in the Pacific is a topic that has received increased attention over the last few years. Tasked by the Forum Region Security Committee (FRSC), this is the first study to focus exclusively on the issue regionally and we welcome it as a contribution to policy and programme development.

This report is timely not only in terms of addressing this emerging regional issue, but also because 2011 is the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Many of today's Pacific leaders were youth when PIF was founded as the South Pacific Forum in 1971. Now is the moment for these leaders to reflect back on their own time as youth and to consider how young people can be better supported to prevent their involvement in crime and violence, and lead productive and responsible lives.

The *Leaders' Vision* in the *Pacific Plan* states that "the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all of its people can lead free and worthwhile lives." Even with the relatively narrow UN definition of youth as 15 to 24 year olds, youth make up a substantial 20 percent of the Pacific population. They have the potential to drive economic development, lead on good governance, and perpetuate cultural practices. However, this potential is not being harnessed. As this study notes, the socio-economic and political marginalization of youth have consistently been identified as one of the underlying factors which contribute to the adoption of negative behaviours. In short, unless youth are given the opportunities to participate more actively in society, the *Leaders' Vision* cannot be fulfilled.

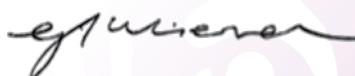
The Framework in this study developed by the research team for identifying risk and resilience factors that shape whether youth will become involved in crime and violence or not, is a useful tool to understanding the complex context in which young people develop into adults. Together with the concrete recommendations, the study gives stakeholders a range of options to tackle the issue of youth crime and violence. Although far from complete we trust readers will at least find the study a useful reference and a stimulating starting point for further ideas and approaches to tackle youth crime and violence. Resources will have to be mobilized, but the high return on investment in youth in the long term in terms of development gains and cost savings has been proven time and time again.

The study is the result of both the evolving strategic partnership between the UNDP and PIFS, and of an effective partnership with financial and technical support from UNESCO, UNICEF, SPC, Pacific Youth Council, ILO and UNFPA as multi-lateral, regional intergovernmental and civil society organizations. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the cooperation extended by governments and civil society for the research done in each urban centre. Your participation in the initial research and feedback workshops were indispensable for this study.

Lastly and importantly to the young people who participated in this study; thank you for your inputs. We hope that this report faithfully captures your voice, situation and needs on the issue of youth crime and violence.



Tuiloma Neroni Slade
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Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat



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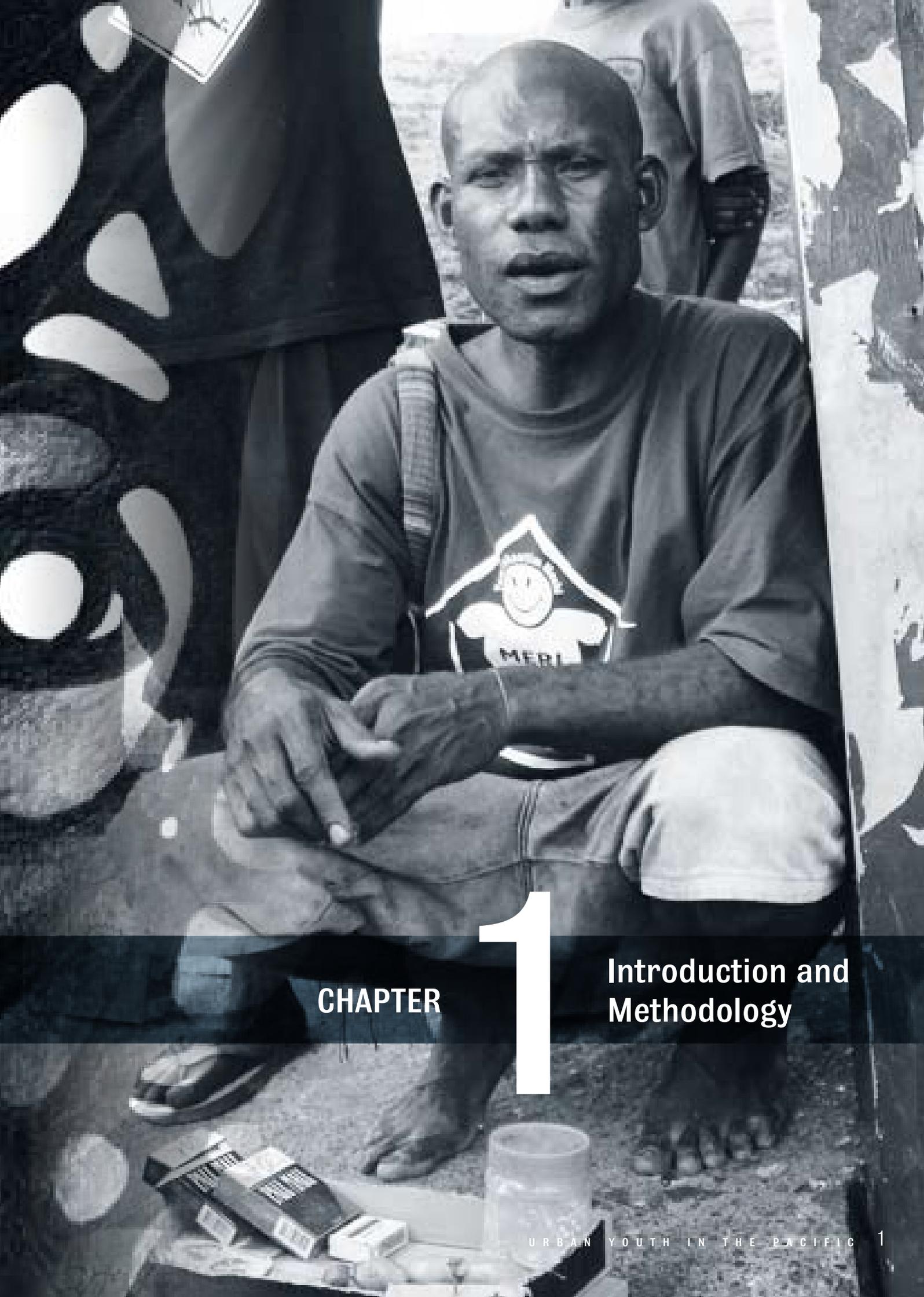
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Acronyms

ABC	Accelerated Boot Camp (RMI)	OIYP	Oxfam International Youth Partnerships (PNG)
ADB	Asian Development Bank	PICP	Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development	PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
CBC	Community Based Corrections (PNG)	PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	PNG	Papua New Guinea
CMI	College of the Marshall Islands (RMI)	PYC	Pacific Youth Council
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific	RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (Solomon Islands)
CSO	Civil Society Organization	REP	Rapid Employment Project (Solomon Islands)
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme	RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
FBO	Faith Based Organization	RPNGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary
FEMM	Forum Economic Ministers Meeting	RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
FRSC	Forum Regional Security Committee	SGBV	sexual and gender based violence
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia	SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
FSMYC	Federated States of Micronesia Youth Councils	SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
GNI	Gross National Income	SVSG	Samoa Victim Support Group
HDI	Human Development Index	T3	Trades, Training and Testing Program (FSM)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome	TALAVOU	Towards a Legacy of Achievement, Versatility and Opportunity through Unity (Samoa)
HSA	Department of Health and Social Affairs (FSM)	TNCWC	Tongan National Centre for Women and Children
ILO	International Labour Organization	TNYC	Tonga National Youth Congress
I-YEL	Young Emerging Leaders Programme (Tonga)	TVET	Technical and Vocation Education and Training
LNG	Liquid Natural Gas (PNG)	UN	United Nations
MDG	Millennium Development Goals	UNDP-PC	United Nations Development Programme - Pacific Centre
MIEPI	Marshall Islands Epidemiology and Prevention Initiatives (RMI)	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
MIYC	Marshall Islands National Youth Congress (RMI)	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
MOTEYS	Ministry of Training, Employment, Youth and Sports (Tonga)	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MWYCFA	Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Family Affairs (Solomon Islands)	US	United States
NCDC	National Capital District Commission (PNG)	UYEP	Urban Youth Employment Project
NGO	Non-governmental Organization	WAM	<i>Waan Aelon in Majel</i> (Canoes of the Marshall Islands)
NJJC	National Juvenile Justice Committee (PNG)	WCCC	Women and Children Crisis Centre (Tonga)
NSC-NYP	National Steering Committee for the National Youth Policy (Solomon Islands)	WIBDI	Women in Business Development Inc (Samoa)
NTC	National Training Council (RMI)	WUTMI	Women United Together Marshall Islands
NYC	National Youth Council/ Congress/ Commission	YEP	Youth Employment Programme (PNG)
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development	YLM	<i>Yumi Lukautim Mosbi</i> (You and Me Looking After Port Moresby)





CHAPTER

1

**Introduction and
Methodology**

1

Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Youth in the Pacific: Great Potential or Cause for Concern?

Rationale for the Study

In 2008 the member states of the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC)¹ formally acknowledged the involvement of a minority but increasing number of urban youth in crime and violence as a security risk in the Pacific region.²

Despite this concern, research confirmed that the majority of Pacific youth are contributing positively to society. As a significant portion of the total population, young people have great potential as they transition to adulthood to drive economic development and contribute to society. However, more can be done to support them in fulfilling this potential. Worldwide the socio-economic and political marginalization of youth have consistently been identified as one of the underlying factors which contribute to young people adopting negative behaviours and prevent them from contributing more to society.

Like any other region in the world, the Pacific has its own unique cultures, geography and demographics. For this reason, while valuable lessons about youth involvement in crime and violence can be drawn from other regions, solutions for addressing this issue needs to come from within the region.

This report is the first regional report that focuses exclusively on Pacific young people involvement in crime and violence. As part of this initiative it also examines a number of key issues from a regional perspective that have received scant attention to date including the gender aspects of youth crime and violence, the role of young people in domestic and sexual violence, and groups or gangs of young people involved in anti-social behaviour.

Objective and Aims

In response to concerns about youth involvement in crime and violence in the Pacific raised by the FRSC, the objective of this research is to provide policy and programming options for Pacific national governments and other stakeholders in the region to prevent young people becoming involved in crime and violence and to fulfill their potential as productive citizens.

To achieve this, the key aims of the research were to:

- Identify factors that put young people at risk of becoming involved in crime and violence;
- Gain an understanding of the dynamics of criminality, violence and conflict;
- Identify factors that contribute to the resilience of young people so that they do not become involved in crime and violence;
- Identify what keeps young people involved in cycles of crime and violence, and appropriate responses that restore responsible and positive behaviour;

“Sometimes I do wish that some of the choices I picked for some opportunities could be changed, to make life for me and my family easier now that we go through hard times. Also to go back in time and grab the opportunities that I’ve turned down for better education and to help out in many ways in contributing to make our life situation a lot easier for me and my family”

Young woman

¹ FRSC’s annual meeting draws together representatives from Forum member countries, representatives of all the Regional Law Enforcement Secretariats such as OCO, PIDC, PILON and PICP as well as representatives of other CROP agencies such as SPREP, SPC and FFA, and is the principal regional forum on political security and governance issues.

² Pacific in this study refers to the Pacific islands countries of the Pacific Islands Forum. This excludes Australia and New Zealand as non-island countries.

- Explore the gender dimensions of youth crime and violence; and,
- Identify selected ongoing policies and activities relevant to youth crime and violence, including examples of good practice.

The primary target audience of the report is national governments of the region who are members of the FRSC. However, the report aims to provide valuable information and guidance for other stakeholders working with young people in the Pacific region.

1.2 Scope and Definitions

Structure of the Report

This chapter introduces the topic and outlines the research methodology, including an introduction to the Risk and Resilience Framework as the conceptual framework developed for this study. This is followed by the Pacific Overview and Regional Recommendations chapter that highlights seven key issues related to youth crime and violence in the Pacific and outlines regional recommendations for each issue. Chapters Three to Eight present the findings from each of the Urban Centre Case Studies with specific recommendations at the end of each chapter.

Each case study includes a summary of the case study findings, the *National Context* which describes the circumstances that young people grow up in, and looks at the different types of crimes and violence that young people engage in and are also a victim of in each urban centre. This is followed by *Institutional Responses in Support of Youth* which outlines political institutions, government policy, youth institutions and justice institutions that work to support youth, especially on crime and violence issues. The next section, *Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience*, analyses the numerous and interwoven risk and resilience factors that influence urban Pacific youth. *Conclusions and Recommendations* wrap up each case study with concrete suggestions for policy and programmes specific to that urban centre or country to prevent young people becoming involved in crime and violence and to fulfill their potential as productive citizens. Recommendations that are common to all urban centres are in the Pacific Overview and Regional Recommendations chapter.

*“I am
very fortunate to
be alive and breathing
and still my blood is warm,
cause of the hardship I
have encountered”*

Young man



Geographical Scope of Study

In order to achieve representational coverage of the three sub-regions of the Pacific, urban centres in two countries from Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia were selected. The study covers six Pacific nations, namely: Majuro in the Marshall Islands; Weno and Kolonia in the Federated States of Micronesia; Nuku'alofa in Tonga; Apia in Samoa; Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea; and, Honiara in the Solomon Islands.

Definition of Youth

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly defines youth as individuals aged between 15 and 24.³ According to this definition, youth comprises 18 percent of the world's population or more than one billion people, with 85 percent in developing countries. Definitions are often based on age in order to provide a degree of objectivity.

However, to a large extent, youth is a socially constructed concept and has less to do with age than with status and behaviour. The concept of youth is intrinsically linked with the idea of transition from childhood to adulthood – from a phase of life in which the individual needs protection, sheltering and guidance to one of self-determination, maturity and accountability of decision-making. In the Pacific, youth may be individuals who are unmarried, financially dependent, not working or even whose parents are still alive. Under this definition, youth might be in their 30s and 40s.

Definitions of youth in each country are set by the country's national youth policy. These definitions range from ages 12 to 34 depending on the country. Most countries define young people in conflict with the law as aged 17 or 18 years and older. Youth under this age are referred to as 'juveniles', and are treated differently than adult offenders.⁴ For the purpose of this study, the UN definition is used and youth data is based upon this definition unless stated otherwise.

Definition of Crime and Violence

Two criteria are used to define crime for this study. First, any action against the laws of the country is considered to be a crime even though the types of laws that cover a single action vary from country to country. For example domestic violence may be covered by assault laws or specific domestic violence laws. Second, there are a limited number of examples of actions that by international human rights standards are considered to be crimes but are not illegal in a number of countries. People acknowledged the existence of these actions but some people considered them not to be crimes due to the socio-political context and the fact that they are not against the law.

"I think that this issue occurs because these young people are either being neglected at home, hanging out with the wrong crowd or have nothing else that is better to do because they are not in school or involved in any productive activity"

Young woman

"As for me, I usually get into fight when I'm drunk. I think alcohol is one contributor toward young people to get involve in a fight. Put as a normal person I hate fighting and making trouble"

Young man

³ This definition was made during preparations for the International Youth Year (1985), and endorsed by the UN General Assembly through A/36/215 and resolution 36/28, 1981.

⁴ Even though each country has a definition of juvenile for legal purposes, not all countries have a formal separate body of laws, systems or recommendations for juvenile crimes. Tonga for example defines juveniles and children in its Criminal Offences Act but has no special juvenile offenders act.

⁵ A rights-based approach was adopted to include actions that are not necessarily illegal in some PICs. The former UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children (VaC) highlights a direct relationship between corporal punishment and all forms of violence in societies: "Multiplied many times over, VaC robs a society of its potential for development." Furthermore, the study states that VaC "perpetuates poverty, illiteracy and early mortality; the physical, emotional and psychological scars of violence rob children of their chance to fulfill their potential." To address the acceptance of corporal punishment is a key strategy for reducing and preventing all forms of violence in societies.

Typical examples of these crimes were intra-family violence, such as marital rape and the use of violence against children. A rights-based approach was used for this study so these actions are considered to be crimes even though they may not be illegal in certain target countries.⁵

The World Health Organization's definition of violence is used for this report:

*The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.*⁶

1.3 Methodology

Primary Qualitative Sources

Members of the initial research team spent approximately one week in each of the six countries conducting interviews with stakeholders. Follow up telephone interviews were held with a number of stakeholders to gather further information.

A semi-structured interview questionnaire, including an introductory script, was developed prior to the research missions based on the terms of reference. The questionnaire asked stakeholders for: their definitions of youth and violence; impressions of risk and resilience factors; and perceptions of prevalent forms of crimes and violence. Stakeholders were also urged to suggest appropriate responses to reduce youth crime and violence. The research team interviewed traditional leaders, national and local government officials, overseas government aid agencies, multilateral agencies, civil society actors including women's organizations, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and church leaders. Focus groups and individual or small group interviews with male and female young people were conducted. This included interviews with youth leaders and 'role models', and young people who have been in conflict with the law or who are marginalized.

After the first draft was completed, the research team returned to each urban centre to conduct feedback workshops together with further interviews and focus group discussions. The aim of the feedback workshops was to verify the accuracy of the findings, gather further information and seek any new perspectives on the topic. The gendered dimensions of youth crime and violence were discussed in special sessions in the feedback workshops. In total over 140 stakeholder interviews, 35 focus group discussions and six feedback workshops were held.

Secondary Sources

Statistics, programme reports, policy documents, research reports, academic papers and newspaper articles were reviewed. Statistics on crime and violence resulting in a conviction were collected from police and correctional services where available. Studies on violence, family health and safety, and mental health provided statistics on crime and violence regardless of whether the perpetrator was convicted of the crime. A full list of secondary sources is provided in the reference section at the end of each chapter.

Previous Key Research on Pacific Youth Crime and Violence

This study is the first regional study examining specifically the issue of urban youth involvement in crime and violence. However, there have been a number of other regional studies in the last decade that have recognized the issue as part of a wider study.

⁶ WHO 1996.



The Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific studied four countries in Melanesia in 2004 for a synopsis entitled *Masculinity, Mental Health & Violence*, which identified “the lack of opportunity for young people to participate in modern society” as the most common feature in the four country case studies. Education and employment were noted as central issues, but it emphasized that improved education alone is not enough, as lack of opportunity included the fact that even high school graduates are unable to find work.⁷

In 2005, the *State of the Pacific Youth* report identified a growing concern region-wide about the involvement of disaffected youth in crime and political unrest. The report emphasized that young people themselves are not a direct cause of conflict, but rather it is the combined interaction between lack of socio-economic opportunities for youth; identity politics; insufficient inclusive engagement; educational focus on administrative work; stagnating economies resulting in hardship; conflict between traditional and modern cultures; and, lack of youth voice in social dialogue, which can lead to young people adopting negative or destructive behaviour such as crime and violence. The report highlighted the need to focus on addressing the underlying causes of youth crime and involvement in unrest rather than symptoms.⁸

In a 2006 policy paper entitled *Addressing the Youth Challenge* the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) identified lack of opportunities and rural-urban migration as “contributing or main factors for rising crime, in particular among young men.”⁹

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre (UNDP-PC) initiated three multi-stakeholder consultations in partnership with the University of the South Pacific, FemLINK Pacific and the Pacific People’s Building Peace Network/Citizens Constitutional Forum in 2007. The consultations identified unemployed and alienated youth as one of seven issues that resonate as causes for actual and potential conflict across the Pacific region. Furthermore, they highlighted how unemployed young men have been mobilized by leaders in conflict situations and in political unrest in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands and recommended conducting research into youth, unemployment and conflict in the Pacific.¹⁰

In 2008, PIFS’ analysis of conflict in four countries, namely, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Samoa and Vanuatu, also identified the need to address the issue of youth involvement in crime and civil unrest as part of a long-term conflict prevention strategy. It reported that in the four countries, the ‘generation gap’, combined with a lack of prospects of formal employment and substance

7 FSPi 2004: 9.

8 UNICEF, SPC and UNFPA 2005.

9 SPC 2006.

10 Naidu 2007.

abuse, led to problems in both rural and urban areas, with a rise in crime and other negative behaviour in urban areas in particular.¹¹

In 2008, the issue of marginalized youth affected by insufficient employment and social engagement opportunities was identified as part of PIFS' research on criminal deportees, which noted that the issue of criminal deportees relates to the broader issue facing all countries in the Pacific around young people at risk of crime. The report also noted that a collaborative approach between government, law enforcement and social agencies was needed to address the issue of offending young people in general, for example through counseling and rehabilitation programmes.¹²

UN-Habitat in 2009 touched upon youth marginalization and crime as part of its regional *Asia and Pacific Urbanization and Poverty Report*. In its Pacific Islands chapter, it noted "strong associations between crime and a lack of employment, lowered self-esteem and frustrated ambitions of urban youth" as well as "strong links, throughout the Pacific, between youth unemployment, poverty, household violence and crime."¹³

Limitations of Study

While the research teams were welcomed by partner organizations and agencies in each country visited, they were limited by scheduling constraints. Only one week was allotted for the initial country visit and not all relevant stakeholders were available nor could telephone interviews be arranged. The second mission to each country for the feedback workshops and follow up interviews in-country enabled confirmation, correction and improvement of the initial findings but only one week was scheduled for this in each country.

The availability of up-to-date quantitative data on key issues such as crime, population and livelihoods varied from country to country making consistency of data and findings across country case studies impossible.

Lack of data on the roles of young women in crime and violence was an issue. There are two main reasons for this lack of data. First, police interviewed for this study acknowledged that women are less likely to be arrested for crimes such as assault, and drunk and disorderly behaviour than men - even if the action is the same, so there are fewer records of criminal actions by women. Second, women are more likely to contribute to crime and violence in different ways to men with more roles in planning, logistics, and keeping watch.

Perceptions of crime and violence vary across the region. Some aspects of crime and violence were more difficult to research than others; domestic violence was rarely volunteered as a prevalent violent crime in some countries, despite recognition from stakeholders that domestic violence was common, a social concern, and against the law. The researchers prompted stakeholders with questions about these acts, but risk factors that increased the probability of an individual perpetrating domestic violence were difficult to uncover for two main reasons. First, perpetrators of these crimes were rarely prosecuted so it was difficult to locate and interview offenders. Second, detailed discussions of these forms of crime are considered private or taboo in many of the countries and stakeholders commonly downplayed their occurrence and severity.

Ethical Safeguards

Strict confidentiality was maintained for all consultations. Individuals under the age of 18 were interviewed in groups and were asked no personal questions. They were only invited

¹¹ PIFS 2008a.

¹² PIFS 2008b.

¹³ UNESCAP and UN-HABITAT 2009.

to comment generally about their ideas of success and factors driving negative behaviour. Groups were also invited to share their own suggestions for crime prevention policies. Young people under 18 years old were instructed to not answer questions if they did not feel comfortable. This approach was based upon a Save the Children's good practice toolkit.¹⁴ Young people above 18 years old were interviewed individually, but were not asked personal questions.

1.4 Risk and Resilience Factors

Youth as a Developmental Period

Youth in the Pacific face both risk and resilience factors in the immediate family, community and wider national and regional environments and these have a strong influence on whether they become involved in crime and violence or contribute to society as responsible and law-abiding citizens. Youth, by definition, have less knowledge and life experience than adults. In order to become successful adults, they must have the opportunity to learn the necessary skills in an environment in which their well-being is protected by their parents, their communities, and the state. It is widely accepted that young people require this special care and protection up to a certain age, and international human rights instruments reflect this understanding.¹⁵

“Some youths do these crimes to express how they really feel inside. Most youths that are involved with thefts and other crimes grew up in a very violent and harsh environment and communities which contribute to how they are behaving. In order for these crimes to come to an end with our younger generation, we need to offer them a safer and caring society”

Young woman

In addition to having less life experience, young people do not complete their neurological development until their mid 20s. Scientific imaging has demonstrated that the parts of the brain associated with impulse control, regulation of emotions, risk assessment and moral reasoning are last to develop. Thus young people do not have the same ability as adults to resist impulses and risk-taking behaviour. They also cannot fully appreciate the effects of their behaviours on others, which would require insight for which they do not have full capacity. This is part of normal young people neural development. Additionally, behaviour-altering substances, such as alcohol and drugs, have an increased and longer-lasting effect on young brains.¹⁶ For these reasons young people generally have less control over their reactions to risk factors present in their environments and so allowances need to be made for this fact. A nurturing environment and guidance to help young people control impulses and emotions will lessen the probability of their involvement in crime, while peer pressure, negative emotions, and substance abuse might influence young people to become involved in crime and violence - more so than those factors would for an adult.¹⁷ That said obviously adults also make incorrect decisions and some lack the ability to make wise decisions consistently.

A Risk and Resilience Approach

A number of studies on young people refer to the reasons behind youth crime and violence as root causes.¹⁸ However, this approach was avoided in this study due to the connotation that such root causes directly 'cause' negative behaviour. It was evident from the field research

¹⁴ Ibid: 53.

¹⁵ The most prominent international instrument on the issue is the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

¹⁶ Beckman 2004; Steinberg 2009.

¹⁷ Solar, Shoenberg, and Schindler 2009.

¹⁸ HM Government 2008; Howell and Decker 1999.

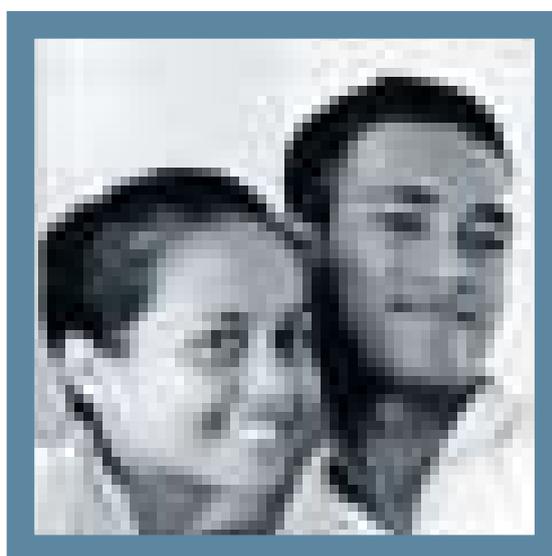
that such factors only increase the probability of negative behaviour and that there is no direct causal relationship between a root cause and negative behaviour.

Instead of identifying causal issues, a risk and resilience approach is used. Children growing up are exposed to numerous and complex risk and resilience factors in their home and community. These factors shape the child's sense of self-worth, determine strong or weak self-esteem, influence their values and approach to life, and either equip them (or not) with the skills and confidence to navigate through difficult times.

Some of the commonly identified resilience factors in the six countries visited were: connections to role models; opportunities to participate in community activities; good communication with parents and wider family; good advice and mentoring; and, useful life-skills. Some of the commonly identified risk factors were: lack of meaningful activity and employment opportunities; substance abuse and/or violence in the household and wider environment; disengagement and lack of participation in decision making; and, poor quality and/or irrelevant education. What was found lacking in the region was a holistic look at risk and resilience factors in each country and resources available to tip the balance in favour of resilience factors. This study endeavours to fill this gap and view the issue holistically.

A young person exposed to numerous risk factors may not become involved in crime and violence due to a strong inborn sense of values or purpose; or exposure to resilience factors that counter the risk factors. Interviews with active and successful young people throughout the region demonstrated numerous such examples and to assume otherwise would be disempowering for young people. Conversely, young people who grew up in an environment with strong resilience factors may become involved in crime and violence due to a weak sense of value or purpose, or exposure to risk factors which overwhelm resilience factors.

The Pacific Youth Risk and Resilience Framework (Figure 1.1) graphically illustrates which risk and resilience factors are most influential at different stages of childhood and youth development. Other regions around the world may display different sets of risk and resilience factors. While each country in the Pacific has its own unique risk and resilience factors that either increase or decrease the probability of youth engagement in crime and violence, there are also commonalities across the region. The figure is designed to reflect the cultural and environmental circumstances of the Pacific region. While the basic concept of risk and resilience factors was developed early on in the study, the framework contents were filled as risk and resilience factors for Pacific youth emerged from the interviews with young people and other stakeholders. Finally, the Framework is a simplification to facilitate understanding of the complex relationship between risk and resilience factors on a young person's life. What is important to understand is that stakeholders should be aiming to reduce the influence of risk factors and increase the influence of resilience factors in young people's lives to reduce the probability of their involvement in crime and violence.



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CHAPTER

2

Pacific Overview
and Regional
Recommendations

2

Chapter Two: Pacific Overview and Regional Recommendations

2.1 Introduction

There is a minority but increasing number of young people involved in crime and violence in the Pacific. Worldwide the socio-economic and political marginalization of youth have consistently been identified as one of the underlying factors which contribute to young people adopting negative behaviours, including involvement in crime and violence. Youth make up 20 percent of the population of the Pacific and an even greater percentage in urban areas in all sub-regions.¹⁹ Beyond the region, studies have linked high youth populations with increased probability of conflict especially when combined with other factors such as unemployment, economic hardship, political instability and social deterioration (see In-Focus 2.1). These factors are evident to varying degrees throughout the region.

The transition from childhood to adulthood in Pacific urban centres is strewn with challenges common throughout the world. However, there are some unique challenges specific to the Pacific including issues centred around culture and traditional structures, high rates of emigration and urban migration, and limited local employment opportunities in relatively small and narrow economies. Young people growing up in the Pacific are exposed to numerous and complex risk and resilience factors in their home and community.

Due to this, youth involvement in crime and violence must be tackled holistically and in an integrated manner. Prevention over the long term happens in the home, school and wider community starting from prior to birth - and this long term approach needs to be at the forefront of efforts for prevention. Young people who are already at-risk or in conflict with the law need support from a range of stakeholders, not only the justice system. This includes support from traditional mechanisms and civil society. While there is variation across the Pacific, the study found commonalities across the region in regard to risk and resilience factors, youth crime and violence trends, and opportunities for more effective interventions.

The findings and recommendations presented in this chapter, need to be viewed with sensitivity to the local context and culture. Please note that recommendations specific to each urban centre can be found at the end of each case study chapter.

*"It was
a Friday afternoon
a friend and I were
walking back home and we
got jumped for something
we didn't even do"*

Young man

2.2 Pacific Overview

The regional findings and recommendations are divided into seven issues as below.

1. Maximizing Regional Approaches
2. Strengthening National Policies and Coordination
3. Promoting Youth Voice and Participation
4. Improving Institutional Responses to Youth Crime
5. Aligning and Improving Education Outcomes
6. Generating Employment and Meaningful Activities
7. Tackling Social Issues

Issue One: Maximizing Regional Approaches

At the regional level, the 2005 *Pacific Plan* endorsed by Pacific Leaders, provides the overarching framework which is intended to guide regional action in support of Pacific priorities. The Leaders' Vision in the *Pacific Plan* states that "the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all of its people can lead free and worthwhile lives." Pacific Forum Leaders agreed in the *Pacific Plan* to "promote and protect... youth" and noted that the "enhanced involvement of youth" is key for sustainable development.²⁰

¹⁹ United Nations Population Division 2009.
²⁰ PIFS 2007:2-3.

At the 2009 Cairns Forum “Prioritising national actions to mainstream youth issues into the national development agenda” was made a priority. The Annex to the Pacific Plan Annual Progress Report for 2010 notes the activities for young people in response to this priority for some countries including Samoa as well as regional organizations such as SPC and the University of the South Pacific. Notably several youth policies, implementation plans and frameworks from Nauru, Niue and Palau were launched.²¹

The Pacific Youth Strategy 2006-2010, which was endorsed at the Second Conference of Youth Ministers of the Pacific Community in 2005, provides more detailed guidance on Pacific priorities for youth development. The Strategy is comprised of seven components, namely: 1) Accessing integrated education; 2) Nurturing sustainable livelihoods; 3) Promoting healthy lifestyles; 4) Building stronger communities; 5) Strengthening institutional capacity; 6) Youth and identities; and 7) Research information and data on youth. Two components make direct reference to youth violence:

- Under Component Three on “Promoting Health Lifestyles” the component identifies “The need to protect young people from STIs including HIV, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, *and all forms of sexual violence and abuse.*”
- Under Component Four on “Building stronger communities” the component “...advocates promoting the leadership capabilities of young people and improving their self-esteem through *life-skills education* so they can confidently use their energy for productive activities that *promote a culture of peace and non-violence and avoid deviant antisocial and risky behaviour. Special community-based crime prevention and restorative justice programmes for young people are included to address the increasing concern of juvenile criminality among the 15–24 age group.*”

A new *Pacific Youth Strategy* will be developed in late 2011 providing an opportunity to make further improvements. In this context, it is important that the next Strategy include a baseline and measurable indicators, in order to assess progress over time.

In 2011 the Regional Working Group for Advancing Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in the Pacific Region was established to advocate for women’s leadership, political participation and involvement in decision-making on peace, security and governance issues. The leadership roles of young women in peace-building and security has received scant attention to date and would be worth exploring.

At the regional level despite the fact that policy commitments have been made, regional meetings and/or regional bodies have been inconsistent in addressing youth issues. At the 2009 Pacific Forum Leaders meeting for example, only one item focused on youth.²² Regional ministerial meetings have also been inconsistent in reference to youth issues. This is a concern as youth development is a cross-cutting issue which requires a whole-of-government approach and this should be reflected regionally as well. For example, youth unemployment is a key driver of youth crime and violence, but it needs to be tackled by Finance and Trade Ministers, who meet annually at the Forum Economic Ministers’ Meeting.

In-Focus 2.1: The Youth Bulge and Conflict

Youth make up almost 20 percent or two million people of the population of the Pacific islands. This population is expected to grow to 2.6 million by 2030 and to 2.8 million by 2050. Pacific island countries with a median age of 21 are young compared to Pacific metropolitan and rim countries such as New Zealand (36.6), United States (36.6), Australia (37.8), France (40.1) and Japan (44.7).ⁱ The percentage of youth in urban populations is even higher than the national averages due to urban migration of young people.

Studies of countries in conflict in the 1990s linked so called ‘youth bulges’ or a large percentage of youth in a given population with conflict.ⁱⁱ However, more recent sophisticated quantitative analysis has shown that the relationship between youth bulges and conflict is complex. Current research shows that when large youth populations are combined with other factors such as high youth unemployment, economic hardship, political instability and social deterioration, conflict has a greater chance of breaking out. In some studies, low rates of secondary education are closely associated with social unrest led by youth.ⁱⁱⁱ These conditions exist in varying degrees throughout the region. Youth bulges are also linked to youth crime as can be seen by the fact that male youth between the ages of 15 and 34 perpetrate more than three-quarters of all recorded violent crime worldwide and are a threat for the recurrence of violence in post-conflict situations.^{iv}

i United Nations Population Division 2009.

ii Goldstone 1991; Fuller and Pitts 1990.

iii Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2007; Urdal and Hoelscher. 2009.

iv Curtain 2004: 42.

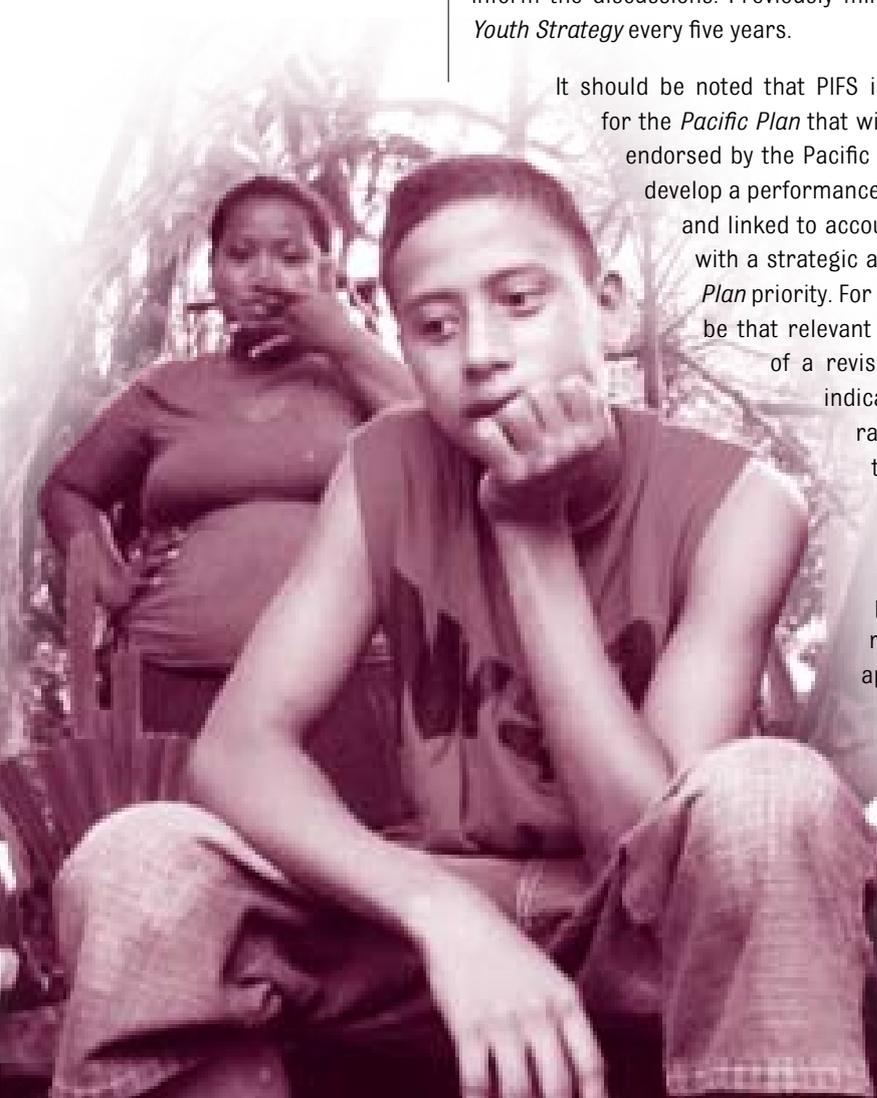
21 PIFS 2010.

22 Ibid 2010. Pacific Plan Priorities from the 2009 Cairns Forum: theme B; item vi. “Prioritising national youth actions to mainstream youth issues in to national development agenda.”



Poor quality and lack of relevant education is also linked to youth crime and violence. A good example of regional policy is the *Pacific Education Development Framework 2009-2015* endorsed by the Forum Education Ministers Meeting. The Framework recognizes youth as a cross cutting theme and the link between marginalization and education. The mechanism to track progress by governments is also incorporated into the Framework. Emulating this approach all Pacific Islands Forum meeting agenda's should consider youth development as a standing agenda item.

Even where regional action on youth issues has been endorsed by leaders, implementation has been variable and monitoring is limited. For example, there is no obligation or mechanism for ministers to report back on progress in implementing the *Pacific Youth Strategy*. Reporting back to Forum Leaders on progress by governments, agencies of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific or CROP agencies and development partners on supporting youth development is generally poor. Youth are not mentioned in the *Pacific Plan Annual Progress Reports* from 2008 and 2009. It is essential that *Pacific Plan Annual Progress Reports* track progress on this issue, and that members are supported to provide data to the Forum Secretariat to this end. Consideration could also be given to holding a biennial meeting for regional ministers in charge of youth affairs to provide an opportunity for ministers to report back on their own national progress in implementing both the *Pacific Youth Strategy* and the *Pacific Plan*. These types of mechanisms could be included in the upcoming *Pacific Youth Strategy* itself. It could also be an important venue to facilitate an exchange of ideas and approaches between governments. The meeting should have structures in place to allow youth organizations and the voices of young people to directly inform the discussions. Previously ministers have come together to endorse the *Pacific Youth Strategy* every five years.



It should be noted that PIFS is currently developing a performance framework for the *Pacific Plan* that will address some of these concerns. While yet to be endorsed by the Pacific Plan Action Committee, the current approach is to develop a performance framework based on existing regional frameworks and linked to accountable regional meetings that can provide leaders with a strategic assessment of progress against the relevant *Pacific Plan* priority. For example, in the case of youth, the expectation would be that relevant ministers or officials would track implementation of a revised *Pacific Youth Strategy* complete with relevant indicators of success on an annual basis providing a ranking and short statement to other leaders on how the youth priority under the *Pacific Plan* is tracking in their country. This approach would ensure that all priorities under the *Pacific Plan* related to youth are tracked, and that leaders can clearly see where progress has been made or where greater effort is required across the region. This is a commendable approach that the Action Committee should endorse.

While Pacific Governments must take the lead in working together regionally to support youth initiatives, at the same time, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are also active at the regional level, and are deserving of support

and attention. CSOs sometimes have greater expertise in handling certain aspects of youth issues such as substance abuse rehabilitation, community outreach, dialogue, advocacy, cultural activities, and reintegration of deportees. CSOs are also usually cost effective in implementing programmes. Partnerships between government and CSOs were seen to be the most effective and sustainable in achieving positive impact. These kinds of partnerships based on trust and accountability can be further strengthened and expended in the region. Forums that bring government and CSO stakeholders together at the national and regional level for developing cooperation and coordination on youth issues are useful and should be further developed. PIFS CSO dialogue under the Political Governance and Security Programme allows CSOs to provide input to, and receive feedback on, security issues from the members of the FRSC and ultimately the Forum Leaders. The Pacific Youth Council should be included in the dialogue to adequately represent the voice of young people. CSOs that work on similar issues such as domestic and sexual violence or substance abuse can benefit from south-to-south cross learning in the region to develop CSO capacity and networks.

Most notably, the Pacific Youth Council (PYC) is a regional, non-government, voluntary association of National Youth Councils established in 1996 to strengthen Pacific National Youth Councils and promote a regional identity for Pacific youth. There are ten existing councils/congress, and a number of further countries are looking to establish councils. PYC aims, among other goals, to unite youth organizations in the Pacific and to promote a global understanding of issues affecting young people of the Pacific. PYC focuses on developing the capacity of National Youth Councils to effectively implement their roles and functions, and engage with their governments on developing string youth policies. PYC also provides support to countries which are attempting to establish national youth councils.

Recommendations

Mainstream youth issues as a cross cutting theme into all regional development structures and institutions.

- The concerns of youth should be made a standing agenda item on the Forum Leaders meeting and all Forum Ministerial meetings including Education and Finance.
- A biennial Regional Youth Meeting should be convened at the Ministerial level with the participation of youth organizations to track progress in implementing the *Pacific Youth Strategy* and facilitate ideas and experience.
- Progress in implementing the *Pacific Youth Strategy* and other international, regional and national youth commitments should be reflected in *Pacific Plan* reporting.
- The new *Pacific Youth Strategy 2015* should be developed in a participatory manner, be adequately funded, and include specific measurable indicators. Any references to youth crime and violence issues emerging from the participatory process need to be closely followed up with a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.
- The Pacific Youth Council should be supported by governments, regional organizations and development partners to effectively represent the views of National Youth Councils (NYCs) and young people in regional forums.
- Pacific Regional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security should advocate for young women's leadership, political participation and involvement in decision-making on peace, security and governance issues.
- Fill the PIFS Non-State Actor officer position as soon as possible to enhance PIFS engagement with youth focused CSOs.

- Develop the capacity of national youth councils to adapt good practice approaches to tackling youth crime and violence.
- Pacific Youth Council should be included in the PIFS CSO Dialogue to represent youth issues.

Issue Two: Strengthening National Policies and Coordination

On a national level, all of the six Pacific Island countries in this report have national development plans, but most do not address youth as a cross-cutting issue. This is a key shortcoming as youth issues need to be tackled through a whole-of-government and integrated strategy which includes not only the youth ministry but also the ministries responsible for financial planning, justice, education, police, correctional services and security, health and, employment. Mainstreaming youth issues in national development plans will also increase the chances for youth issues to attract sufficient funding in the national budget – otherwise, national youth ministries are notoriously under-funded. Parliaments should consider referring ‘youth issues’ to a specific parliamentary committee to ensure budgetary support and to ensure that legislative and policy issues relevant to young people are given proper consideration.

Most countries also have national youth policies or strategies in place. Solomon Islands, FSM, PNG and Samoa all identify key issues related to youth crime and violence, or youth justice as part of this policy or strategy. However, most of the youth policies do not include strong mechanisms for measuring, tracking and evaluating progress.

As noted earlier, it is also essential that adequate funding is allocated in national budgets and that qualified staff are employed to ensure meaningful progress is made. Currently, Governments are not investing in young people sufficiently as a preventive approach, which is leading to greater costs and delays in achieving national development goals in the long term. Investing in youth has proven to be an effective strategy for achieving development goals in countries such as Mauritius, Botswana and Malaysia.²³

The study found that national coordination mechanisms for implementing youth policies were also found to be poorly developed and implemented in some countries. In the area of youth crime and violence for example, there is often no cooperation between the Ministry of Justice, which handles juvenile and youth offenders, and the Ministry dealing with general youth affairs. It is important that government agencies coordinate better with each other. In countries with different levels of government, such as FSM, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, coordination becomes both more complex but also more important. As part of this coordination, interventions by both national and international stakeholders need to be aligned with national policy and done in coordination with the relevant government agency.

At a more operational level, in order to better track progress and to effectively target vulnerable or ‘at-risk’ groups, it is essential that accurate and up-to-date data on youth issues, including crime and violence data, is collected. Nearly every country that was studied lacked data, which has hampered the effective design and evaluation of interventions. Notably, data which is collected by governments (i.e. through the census) should be disaggregated by age group, as well as by sex. Statistics collected by justice sector organizations, such as the police, prosecution services, courts and correctional facilities, also need to be better maintained and disaggregated.

²³ See for example PRB 2010.

Recommendations

Adopt committed whole-of-government approaches to tackle youth crime and violence.

- Adopt Whole-of-Government and integrated approaches to address youth crime and violence.
- Mainstream issues related to youth crime and violence in national development plans and national budgets.
- Review global best practices for tackling youth crime and violence globally and for achieving development goals through investment in youth.
- Ensure adequate funding for implementation of national policies and programmes on youth.
- Include effective tracking, reporting and oversight mechanisms in national youth policies and sufficient resources to undertake evaluations.
- Identify or establish a specific Parliamentary committee to consider policy, legislation and budgeting to tackle youth development issues, including crime and violence.
- Improve multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms at the national level to bring together government agencies, civil society, private sector and development partners.
- Design interventions that align with the national youth policies and coordinate with the government in the design and implementation.
- Improve data collection on youth issues (including crime and violence, domestic violence, and youth unemployment) and ensure that the data is disaggregated by sex and age.
- Ensure that policies clearly recognize and address the gender specific needs and realities of young men and women.

Issue Three: Promoting Youth Voice and Participation

From the research it is apparent that there are only limited opportunities for young men and women to participate in national and regional decision-making processes in the Pacific. This may be due to traditional structures and cultural practices which preference older people (men in particular), as well as a lack of awareness amongst young people of how to most effectively participate in such decision-making forums. Civic education aims to impart to citizens the knowledge and skills that are needed for effective participation, operation and oversight in the government but it is still relatively limited in the region, although some promising initiatives are being trialed which integrate civic education in the school curriculum. A few pilot activities are focused on promoting civic awareness amongst young people and/or empowering youth leadership. For example, the Commonwealth Youth Programme (South Pacific Centre) works with governments, youth ministries, and national youth networks in the 14 Commonwealth member countries of the Pacific to advocate for the effective participation of young men and women in the development processes and for social transformation.

To date, young people are extremely under-represented in national parliaments, and young women in particular have almost no representation at all. Very limited opportunities have been provided in most countries for young people to engage in political activity. In this context, it is interesting that there has as yet been no advocacy for reserved seats for young people in Pacific parliaments.²⁴ Nonetheless, National Youth Parliaments in Tonga,

²⁴ Countries such as Rwanda and Uganda lead in regard to designated seats in parliament for young people.

Samoa, Solomon Islands and Marshall Islands have all had positive feedback. Such Youth Parliaments provide a practical mechanism for exposing young people to national political forums and involving them in discussions over important national issues.

In countries with local governance structures, to date there has been only limited proactive outreach to young people. In a few local councils, special youth committees have been set up, but it is not clear that these committees have been properly utilized to bring young people into local decision-making processes. More effort should be made by national and local governments to create space for young people at local levels to engage in the decision-making processes that affect their lives, including in schools and in relation to the environment. CSOs are often at the forefront of this work and can assist governments in broadening youth participation. This is evident through the work of National Youth Councils (NYCs).

To their credit, NYCs have been spearheading efforts in many countries to try and raise the profile of youth issues and give young people a platform which they can use to express their views to their leaders. However, NYCs often struggle for funding and for a seat at the policy table with government. Specific efforts need to be made to strengthen the capacity of NYCs to operate effectively. In particular, noting the benefits of peer-support and youth-to-youth learning, consideration could also be given to supporting NYCs to develop mentoring programmes. These would support young people to develop their leadership and advocacy skills, including advocating for policy change to tackle youth crime and violence. Special effort needs to be made to reach out to young women, who often face the double burden of age and gender discrimination when they attempt to engage in leadership activities.

Recommendations

Foster the participation of young people in decision-making

- Support the expansion or establishment of National Youth Parliaments in cooperation and close engagement with national legislatures, noting the imperative to have a gender balanced representation.
- Strengthen and support NYCs to better advocate with national governments and other CSOs on youth development and crime and violence issues.
- Explore options for integrating the participation of young people into local decision making at the community, district and provisional levels.
- Support interventions for building peace and preventing violence and crime initiated by young people.
- Facilitate a space for inter-generational dialogue between younger and older people to reach a common understanding of culture and cooperation on decision making.

Issue Four: Improving Institutional Responses to Youth Crime

At the regional level, the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) meeting is held once a year in June and is the principal regional forum on political, governance and security issues. Youth crime and violence has been on the meeting agenda as a regional security concern since 2008 when this report was tasked. Also housed at PIFS is the Pacific Islands Forum Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence, that was established in 2010 to guide implementation of the Forum's 2009 mandate from leaders to raise awareness of the seriousness of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), its impact on the Pacific, and to establish the issue of SGBV firmly on the political agendas of Forum members.

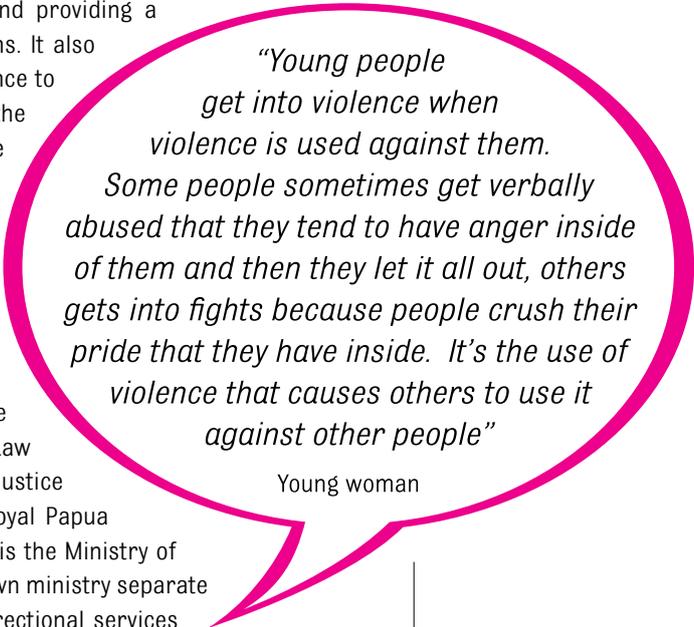
The Pacific Islands Chief of Police (PICP) is a regional non-profit organization made up of police services in the Pacific that works to enhance and improve policing and communication in the Pacific by promoting and providing a voice on law enforcement and social policy concerns. It also provides a forum to share information and intelligence to counter transnational crime in the region. 'Youth in the Pacific' was the theme of the 38th PICP conference held in 2009 in Port Moresby. At the conference the Secretariat was directed to complete a stock take of youth programmes in the region. Youth crime issues were also discussed at the 2010 conference in Brisbane.

At a national level in each country the Ministry of Justice or its equivalent is the main institution in the justice sector. For example, in Papua New Guinea the Law and Justice Sector overarches the Department of Justice and Attorney General, Correctional Services, and Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. In Solomon Islands there is the Ministry of Police and Justice, while in Tonga police have their own ministry separate from the Ministry of Justice. All countries have correctional services and well established court systems.

In the formal justice system in RMI, FSM and Tonga there are no specific acts that outline the handling of young offenders leaving them susceptible to not receiving adequate support for rehabilitation. That said, FSM is currently developing such legislation and has produced a Justice Sector Children's Handbook. The handling of juveniles in detention is problematic in Tonga, RMI and FSM due to insufficient facilities. Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Samoa all have separate facilities for male juvenile offenders but in Samoa female juveniles share facilities with adult offenders.

There are examples of traditional and formal justice systems operating in cooperation such as in FSM, Solomon Islands, Samoa, and Tonga (after the 2006 riots), but there is room for creating more formal links between the two systems to build on the comparative advantages of each system. Traditional justice systems were shown to be most effective and least susceptible to abuse when applied to cases of juvenile petty crime as part of a rehabilitation process. In places like the Solomon Islands traditional or customary justice is preferred over the national system.²⁵ Creating links or incorporating traditional systems into the national system and formally recognizing the powers of village elders and leaders to handle justice was suggested in consultations.

The types of crime that young people are mainly involved with are theft, breaking and entering, drunk and disorderly behaviour, public nuisance, and assault (including domestic violence and sexual assault). Levels of crime and violence are highest in Port Moresby where young people are more likely to be involved in serious gang violence, armed assault and sexual violent crime. Gender differences exist in the way that young men and women perpetrate crime (See In-Focus 2.2). Groups of young people engaging in anti-social behaviour were found in all urban centres studied for this report. They are involved in group fights, petty



“Young people get into violence when violence is used against them. Some people sometimes get verbally abused that they tend to have anger inside of them and then they let it all out, others gets into fights because people crush their pride that they have inside. It's the use of violence that causes others to use it against other people”

Young woman

²⁵ "Solomon Islanders want formalized customary justice: survey," 2011.



crime and substance abuse. Although not leaders of the unrest, young people were the main participants in the riots in Nuku'alofa in 2006 and the 'Tensions' in Honiara from 1998 to 2003, and the 2006 riot. Drug related crimes such as possession and usage of illicit substances and underage drinking are a serious issue throughout the region. Homebrew and other locally made substances are particularly common in Port Moresby and Honiara. Recidivism rates were not available and while it was acknowledged that there were repeat offenders, there was little understanding on how to address the issue.

Domestic violence is still a widespread problem in the region. Young men are often the perpetrators and young women the victims of this crime. Although there has been some improvement in preventing and responding to domestic violence, there is still much room for improvement. To tackle domestic violence a number of police departments have adopted 'No-drop' policies and have established domestic violence units in a number of urban centres such as Nuku'alofa and Honiara. The policy means that once an incident has been recorded, follow up investigation and prosecution continues even if the victim wants to remove the charges. Sexual and gender based violence is still underreported and support services for victims are lacking across the region, although CSOs are providing improved services in places like Apia, Majuro and Nuku'alofa.

Cooperation between communities and police needs to be further developed. In Port Moresby the Yumi Lukautim Mosbi (YLM) or You and Me Looking After Port Moresby project promotes cooperation between local young people and police in crime prevention. Cooperation between government justice sector institutions and civil society in particular Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) as service providers in juvenile rehabilitation and provision of skills training was shown to be effective in urban centres such as Port Moresby, Majuro, and Kolonia but are not as widespread and developed as it could be.

The work of FBOs is particularly valuable due to the influence of religion in communities and the lives of young people. As reported in the case studies, involvement in churches or

other religious structures was regarded to be a resilience factor for young people. FBOs offer a faith-based framework that provides youth with guidance on ethics, opportunities for peer mentorship, meaningful activities (including prayer meetings, Sunday Schools, service activities and bible studies), and occasions for nurturing leadership. In the course of research many young people who were formally in conflict with the law had transformed their lives for the positive by involvement with FBOs. However, it should be noted that certain churches do not allow young people to participate in church youth activities if they are known to have engaged in behaviour against the beliefs of the church such as substance abuse, pre-marital sexual activities or committing criminal offences. In consultations some young people reported that they felt alienated by such attitudes and that it was not helpful for getting young people back on the right track. That said the overall role of FBOs is vital for reducing the probability of involvement in crime and violence for many youth. FBOs can work independently of the government justice structures such as City Mission in Port Moresby or in partnership such as with the Wesleyan Church in Tonga. Both approaches can be effective but in smaller states a close working relationship based on referrals from the justice sector to FBOs was seen to be more effective.

Recommendations

Improve justice sector responses to youth at-risk and youth crime

- Establish youth crime and violence as a standing agenda item at the FRSC.
- Member states should continue to task PIFS to provide policy research and development to support them to better tackle youth crime and violence at the regional and national level. Donors should resource such initiatives. The economic cost of crime and violence, and the female roles in crime and violence are two areas that could be further researched.
- Encourage the Pacific Islands Forum Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence to take up discussions on youth as perpetrators and victims of SGBV.
- Encourage PICP to continue to take up youth crime as a regional security issue and facilitate cooperation amongst members on the issue.
- Develop and enact legislation specifically for youth offenders where such legislation does not exist.
- Further develop formal networks between government and civil society service providers to improve coordination and rehabilitation of youth offenders.
- Provide adequate and segregated facilities for young people who are in detention.
- Improve the handling of young female offenders through an increased awareness of the roles that young women play in crime and violence, and their motivations.
- Undertake studies of rates of recidivism and best practices to tackle the issue.
- Acknowledge, cooperate with, and provide support to CSOs working on domestic and sexual and gender-based violence for both victims and perpetrators.
- Adopt no-drop policies for reports of domestic violence to police, combined with related police training and the establishment of proper follow up procedures for perpetrators and referrals for support to victim/survivors.
- Improve counseling services for youth-at-risk by justice sector and civil society staff.
- Acknowledge the leading role that CSOs and FBOs are playing in both preventing youth crime and violence and rehabilitating those who are in conflict with the law and provide them with further support.
- Promote further cooperation between CSOs, FBOs and government structures for effective programming on youth crime and violence issues

In-Focus 2.2: Youth Gender Differences in the Perpetration of Crime and Violence

Research suggests that young men and women engage in crime and violence differently. However it is difficult to track these differences when significant data does not exist, is not available or data has not been disaggregated by sex.

Throughout the study stakeholders suggested that crimes committed by females were usually “less visible” and not considered a social threat due to the fact that most charges did not fall under violent acts. Crimes by women were seen as more opportunistic crimes such as larceny, theft as a servant, and embezzlement rather than violent crimes that are predominantly carried out by males. However, due to lack of reporting and taboos around discussing violence in the domestic spheres, the degree to which women commit violent acts such as emotional abuse, assault and neglect against children and other vulnerable populations such as the elderly could not be determined in this study. Men were seen to be more likely to perpetrate sexually based offences with women and girls the most likely victims, thereby leading to more deep trauma and loss of potential for women and girls.

In general, crimes committed by young women were not seen to be breaking the law but rather breaking expected gender roles. This was evident in the field research when a range of stakeholders explained different scenarios - as an example when young women were apprehended by police for being drunk and disorderly they are reprimanded but rarely charged. However young men, if caught by police for the same conduct would be detained and often charged. This may happen for a number of reasons, including lack of female correctional facilities or other socio-political expectations of women.

Differences in the roles of young men and women in crime were also perceived by participants in the feedback workshops sessions. Stakeholders reported that young men were usually the main perpetrators, while young women played a more supportive role such as assisting with planning crimes, harbouring criminals and aiding usually for personal gain. As another example, participants mentioned that in the case of breaking and entering, young men would often physically trespass with intent to steal valuables whilst young women would often be the recipients of the stolen goods for personal use or to resell.

Self-reported perceptions of young women concluded that they are often more supervised by their parent or guardians. They have more restrictions on “hanging out” in particular at night and are often expected to be assisting with household chores. This would indicate that social control agents were more prominent amongst young women than young men possibly impacting on their participation in crime and violence. There is clearly a lack of data on the gender aspects of crime and violence in the Pacific which needs to be addressed.

Issue Five: Aligning and Improving Education Outcomes

The Pacific Education Development Framework 2009-2015 endorsed by the Forum Education Ministers is the key regional policy document. It recognizes the importance of engaging with marginalized young people to prevent anti-social behaviour including crime and violence. Moreover, the importance of aligning Technical and Vocation Education and Training (TVET) outcomes with job markets is also acknowledged.

Access to basic education is an ongoing challenge, particularly in Port Moresby and Honiara. In these urban centres places available for students are limited resulting in many young people missing out on basic and higher education. Even in countries such as Tonga and FSM where education is “free” some families facing economic hardship struggle to pay for related costs such as transport and uniforms, causing young people to drop out of schools. Other causes for dropping out of school include irrelevancy of studies, teenage pregnancy, peer pressure, and poor prospects of employment after graduation. Poor quality of basic education due to challenges such as uncommitted teachers was an issue raised in consultations in all urban centres.

In the region education generally prepares young people for office work and there is not enough attention to vocational and technical skills training. In some countries, especially in Polynesia and Micronesia, there is a stigma attached to vocational trades. Generally office work is seen as more lucrative and acceptable.

This image problem that vocational and agricultural careers have, combined with a lack of facilities and human resources for teaching trade skills, has resulted in restricting

employment opportunities for young people in urban areas. Fortunately there has been a shift of emphasis in some countries. For example, in Tonga the National Strategic Planning Framework spells out plans to increase the performance and relevancy of TVET to meet the challenges of maintaining and developing services and infrastructure locally and internationally. In Port Moresby, the PNG LNG Project Construction Training Centre was recently established to meet the needs of the LNG project. There needs to be more alignment of educational outcomes with job market demands such as this.

Life skills, including those which help young people make informed decisions, communicate and express themselves effectively, manage anger, and develop stress coping mechanisms, need to be further integrated into the formal education system. Teaching of entrepreneurial skills, civic education, and financial literacy need to be mainstreamed into the formal curriculum. Second chance education is not available or easily accessible in all urban centres, limiting the chance of self development by school dropouts including young mothers and young offenders. These are some areas where CSOs and FBOs, have been leading however cooperative approaches between the formal education system and CSOs/FBOs can be enhanced to further technical capacity.

“Most fights maybe caused by jealousy, hatred and misunderstanding. Some fights occur because of being over stressed from work or school and tired and just urging to release it all on someone or something”

Young woman

Recommendations

Improve the relevance and quality of education outcomes

- PIFS should continue to track progress made by national governments on the solid foundation laid by the Pacific Education Development Framework 2009-2015 especially in regards to TVET and marginalized young people.
- Further mainstream life skills, civic education, financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills in to the formal education system. Carry out teaching training and create incentive structures for teachers to promote this.
- Improve the quality and accessibility of basic education as outlined in Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 by providing truly free education, engaging in teacher development, giving incentives to disadvantaged families, and providing adequate infrastructure.
- Raise public awareness of the importance of basic education in appropriate urban centres.
- Ensure that TVET curriculums are in line with emerging domestic and international job markets.
- Undertake campaigns that highlight the potential rewards of engaging in trade, vocational careers including in agriculture and fisheries.
- Provide opportunities for second-chance education for out of school youth and youth-at-risk. Education should be part of probation conditions for youth offenders where appropriate.

Issue Six: Generating Employment and Meaningful Activities

The youth unemployment rate across the region is 6.6 percent which is three times the adult rate.²⁶ However, this low rate is deceptive as it doesn't include the many young people who are underemployed with part-time work, low wages or engaged in subsistence agriculture. Youth populations have been growing at a faster rate than employment growth inducing a sense of frustration for the rising number of better educated young women and men searching for ways to utilize their skills beyond traditional agricultural and fishing activities.

"Having a good opportunity to work full time changes my situation for example instead of staying home and doing nothing can cause me to steal things and just be really frustrated with my life. But since I got a job I'm always looking out for the good of my family friends"

Young man

There is a gap between the supply and demand sides of youth employment. Basically, job market demands, both domestically and internationally, and the skills and knowledge that are being acquired by young people need to be better aligned. Moreover, there is a lack of information available to young people and policy makers about emerging job markets. Opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills and access capital are limited. The use pioneering financial tools such as mobile banking and micro-insurance are expanding in the region and in places like Samoa. However to be further effective these should be expanded and specifically target young people who are fast becoming more technology savvy. That said, initiatives led by the Chamber of Commerce and supported by private industry in Nuku'alofa and Port Moresby have been successful in igniting the entrepreneurial spirit in young people.

To date, there has been insufficient attention paid to youth employment, as an agenda item at the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting, despite the fact that youth can be a driver of national economic growth if their potential is utilized. Forum Economic Ministers should consider youth employment as a serious economic issue and initiate comprehensive policies and programmes for fostering youth employment at the FEMM.

At the national level, development plans generally have sections on employment but not always specifically on youth employment. As a positive example Tonga's *National Strategic Planning Framework* recognizes the importance of creating employment for young people to drive the economy. Government development plans in key industrial sectors also generally do not address the issue of youth employment.

International agreements between some Pacific island countries and New Zealand and Australia for horticulture and viticulture work have allowed many young people to migrate temporarily. Certainly, this trend has had positive effects on the inflow of remittances, with remittances to Tonga and Samoa being second and sixth highest in the world respectively as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2008²⁷, but it also bears its own burdens: for one, the expectations raised by higher salaries abroad have discouraged some young people from establishing their own farms or enterprises at home. Moreover, access to other Pacific Rim and Pacific metropolitan power job markets in Japan, France and the USA for

²⁶ ILO 2010.

²⁷ MPI 2010. Remittances to Tonga make up over one third of the GDP at 37.7 percent which is only behind Tajikistan as a share of GDP. In Tonga remittances half come from Oceania and almost half from North America. Remittances to Samoa account for more than one quarter of the GDP at 25.8 percent. In Samoa 73 percent of remittances come from Oceania and 27 percent from North America.

temporary or longer term work remains limited. Labour mobility within the region itself needs to be freed up to allow young people to better access employment opportunities in emerging markets and utilize their skills.

There have been regional initiatives to tackle youth employment. The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Youth Employment Programme (YEP) served young men and women in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu between 2008 and 2010 to improve employability and access to decent work. The programme enhanced and disseminated knowledge of how to better address the challenges faced by young people in securing decent wage and self-employment. It also strengthened the capacity of governments, employers' and workers' organizations as well as youth organizations to develop national and local policies and programmes to achieve decent work for youth. Furthermore, it facilitated greater access by young people to support services to wages and self-employment through new tools and methodologies adapted to national circumstances.

Religion, sports, cultural activities, training, volunteerism, and music were all seen to be meaningful activities outside of paid employment for young people that build resilience to crime and violence. However, the lack of opportunities and facilities, and the inability of some young people to relate to or be accepted by religious or cultural institutions mean that many young people do not engage. That said FBOs play a central role in the lives of many people in the region. Religious youth groups hold prayer meetings, study classes and engage in community services across the region.

Youth centres that form part of CSOs across the region, particularly in Micronesia in Weno, Kolonia and Majuro were effective in offering youth facilities for positive recreation and learning through the provision of musical equipment, sporting equipment, books, and spaces for drama. The centers were also a place to convey positive messages to young people. Training opportunities in modern and traditional skills were eagerly taken up by young people although demand far outweighs supply in the region. As an example in Majuro, *Waan Aelon in Majel* (WAM-Canoes of the Marshall Islands) teaches young people canoe building and navigating skills. In Kolonia, Micronesia Bound teach young people surviving in nature skills, traditional fishing and about substance abuse. In Nuku'alofa, young people learn and receive support for organic farming as part of a Tonga National Youth Congress project. Young people are also volunteering in neighbourhood watch programs in Port Moresby and as peer educators for adolescent health in Kolonia.

The lack of employment and meaningful activity is resulting in young people becoming frustrated and susceptible to negative peer pressure. It is also increasing the probability of involvement in gangs or groups of young people engaged in anti-social behaviour.

Recommendations

Develop targeted employment opportunities and meaningful activities for young people

- Youth employment should be taken up as a standing agenda item at the Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting (FEMM) by ministers.
- Include youth employment in national development plans and industrial sector plans of government agencies, especially in key growth industries.
- Develop regional and national youth employment action plans as a complementary

addition to the national youth policies.

- Develop regional comprehensive labour market information systems, establish regionally linked employment service centres, and promote job market knowledge sharing networks where governments, employers and workers share their experiences.²⁶
- Implement incentive programs to generate youth employment such as employment subsidies, work experience, entrepreneurship skills training, and public works programs.
- Expand access to finance and pioneering financial tools such as mobile banking and micro-insurance with targeted campaigns for young people for self employment.
- Track the results of ongoing mass short term youth employment programmes concentrating on infrastructure construction and maintenance underway in Port Moresby and Honiara and replicate if successful.
- Scale up successful programmes supporting youth entrepreneurship with the target participants not only being school children but also including out-of-school and other marginalized youth.
- Implement campaigns to remove any stigma associated with technical, vocational and agricultural careers.
- Advocate for metropolitan and Pacific Rim countries with aging populations to further open up job opportunities for youth in sectors such as agriculture, construction, nursing and care provision including destinations beyond the traditional Australia and New Zealand such as Japan, France and the USA. Also governments should work together to free up labour mobility within the region.
- Increase the opportunities for sports through providing facilities and organizing competitions which can also become a vehicle for conveying positive youth related messages.
- Include young people as volunteers in service initiatives including community safety initiatives and youth peer education programs with CSOs and FBOs.
- Mobilize communities, including former gang/group members together with CSOs, FBOs and government agencies to reach out to gangs/groups of young people and their families for necessary support.
- Expand or establish youth centers that keep young people engaged in healthy activities in a supervised environment. Services may include provision of recreation, access to information, counselling, youth health services, and a place to express themselves.

“When I was young my father used to punish me with sticks. The way discipline me was scary because if he doesn’t get the stick, he’ll just throw me against our house wall”

Young man

Issue Seven: Tackling Social Issues

There are a range of social issues in Pacific urban centres that increase the probability of young people’s involvement in crime and violence. Urban migration has resulted in the breakdown of the extended family across the region. When nuclear families move to urban centres, extended family members are often left behind in the rural village. Urban migration reduces young people’s access to relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles who would have traditionally acted as role models, mentors and confidantes. Suitable trusted alternative adult role models are scarce in urban settings. Young people often turn to peers for support and acceptance especially if they feel they do not fit in with their immediate family. If these peers are positive it can build resilience. However, association with

²⁶ The APYouthNet is an example. It is a knowledge sharing platform where young people, policy makers and other stakeholders exchange information on Youth Employment. The platform is facilitated by the ILO and driven by tripartite constituents from the Asia Pacific region who periodically review its strategic direction and decide on new features. See <http://ap-youthnet.ilo.gov.th/>.

negative peers can strongly increase the likelihood of involvement in crime and violence, even for those young people with many other resilience factors in their life. Young people need new positive and trusted role models in urban settings.

Nuclear family structures in urban centres place additional pressures on parents, as they often have numerous social obligations and/or are busy working. In Polynesia and Micronesia in particular, migration abroad for work by one or both parents is common. In this case children are often left in care of relatives. In consultations, across the region, young people wanted their parents to spend more time with them.

Young mothers need support and education to learn about good parenting skills, including how infant care is a critical phase in developing healthy children. The first six years strongly determines the formation of later character and the overall potential of a person. In Majuro, Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) a non-government organizations run a Parents as Teachers project to impart positive parenting skills to young parents. These types of programs need to be replicated across the region.

Some children are exposed to substance abuse, mainly alcohol, in the home and wider community, leading them to believe that such behaviour is acceptable. This increases the likelihood that they will abuse substances as well, either as children or later in life. Substance abuse by young people takes on many forms throughout the region. Police reported that the vast majority of crime and violence by young people is done when they are under the influence of a mood altering substance. Alcohol abuse is prevalent throughout the region. Homemade alcohol is popular in Port Moresby and Honiara. Marijuana is prevalent throughout the region particularly in Weno, Kolonia, Samoa, Port Moresby and Honiara. *Kava* or *sakau* is used in Polynesia, Solomon Islands, and in FSM. Though it was seen to be less linked to youth crime and violence, some young people reported feeling frustration at their parents frequently attending *kava/sakau* gatherings. Tobacco while a health issue, was not linked directly to involvement in crime and violence. Petrol and glue sniffing was reported to be a growing concern. Amphetamines and hallucinogens are becoming more common in the region which is also a concern. In Majuro MIEPI is collecting data on substance abuse by young people and this is proving to be a vital tool for effective policy and programme design.

Sexual and domestic violence is a widespread problem in the region. Children and young people are also exposed to violence in the home as victims or as witnesses, that causes them great trauma and in some cases reinforces that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems. Young people are both victims and perpetrators of violence. Young men are at times encouraged to engage in fights by

In-Focus 2.3: Criminal Deportees in the Pacific Islands

The issue of criminal deportees to Pacific Island Countries (PICs) has been the focus of many regional organizations, multi-lateral agencies and governments. Deportation as described by the International Organization for Migration refers to “the act of a State in removing a non-citizen from its territory after refusal of admission or termination of permission to remain.” According to studies^v in the region the three main deporting countries are the United States of America, New Zealand and Australia. In total it is unclear how many criminal deportees have arrived in PICs. However, a UNESCO study estimated that from 1998 to 2008 there were approximately 490 criminal deportees arriving into Samoa and Tonga.^{vi} Unfortunately, significant data was missing and/or withheld so it is difficult to ascertain the exact number arriving in those countries and also all over the Pacific Islands.

In terms of the deportees, what is known from research is that they are mainly young males (median age 28 years^{vii}) who have been charged with a wide range of criminal offences and in many instances have served time in prison and/or other detention facilities. For many of the deportees they have spent significant time abroad and have very little connection to the islands and the social and family networks that are so vital in the Pacific region. It has been reported that deportees face stigma and marginalization in their home countries particularly due to the lack of cultural understanding such as limited language skills.

It was also reported that criminal deportees find it difficult to attain employment to support themselves and/or family left abroad. Many face additional issues such as mental and/or physical disabilities which further marginalizes them from their communities. The rates of recidivism has not been fully researched nor the impact on communities. To date there is very limited services that aim to assist criminal deportees to reintegrate and resettle in their home countries.

Deportation of people with criminal histories is likely to continue in the future and effective responses are required to provide long-term resettlement of those who are returned to their country of origin. It is for this reason that decision-making procedures include the deportees, the effected communities and policy-makers to ensure a coordinated and effective response for those being repatriated for criminal offences.

v Pereira 2011; PIFS 2008.

vi Pereira 2011.

vii Hagan et al., 2008.

relatives or peers as a matter of honour. Expressions of masculinity are tied in with violent behaviours. Activities to encourage exploration on what it means to be a gender equitable man in the Pacific are required.

A small percentage of criminal deportees (In-Focus 2.3) bring an element of sophistication to crime into the region but the vast majority endure discrimination and lack support in their reintegration in what is mostly a new and vastly different cultural context to what they have experienced. This increases the likelihood of isolation from society and engagement in criminal and anti-social behaviours. Resettlement of deportees into society will require the participation of governments, CSOs and FBOs to ensure their full reintegration into communities

Recommendations

Tackle risk factors in society that are negatively influencing young people

- Build the capacities of families to adjust to new models of positive parenting based on local cultural and social norms.
- Build the capacity of communities to directly tackle substance abuse within their own community.
- Ensure that gender perspectives are reflected in all initiatives to tackle social issues.
- Review substance laws and enforcement procedures with a view to reducing abuse and better enforcement of laws.
- Develop learning modules to be taught at primary and high schools to prevent substance abuse.
- Implement dialogue and carry out advocacy on modern definitions of masculinity in the Pacific, especially men involved in crime and violence to find non-violent identities.
- Implement reintegration and resettlement structures for criminal deportees.



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CHAPTER

3

Kolonia and Weno,
Federated States
of Micronesia

3

Chapter Three: Kolonia and Weno, Federated States of Micronesia

3.1 Introduction

This Urban Centre Case Study discusses youth crime and violence in Kolonia, Pohnpei and Weno, Chuuk. The research team conducted focus groups discussions and interviews in Kolonia and Weno. Consultations included young people, government actors and civil society organizations which provided the main basis for the findings. Additionally, a desk review of available reports and statistics was conducted. This case study includes a set of specific national recommendations for consideration by policy-makers, as well as community stakeholders and the donor community.

Just as the nation itself is young, having emerged from United States trusteeship to independence in 1986, the population of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is also young with an average age of 18.9 years old.²⁹ The *National Youth Policy 2004-2010* defines young people as between 15 and 34 years of age.³⁰ In the formal justice system, juveniles are defined as young people aged 17 and younger. Within the community context, a more flexible definition is often used; youth are considered to be young people who are not married and are still financially dependent, with no clearly set age limit.

In FSM cultural and societal changes in family structures, insufficient education and employment opportunities, limited access to community activities and the easy access to alcohol and/or drugs have all combined to create an environment that can at times put young people at risk. The lifestyle choices and environment that young people face today are very different from those of just two generations ago. The society as a whole has shifted from a reliance on subsistence agriculture and fishing to a cash economy where the biggest formal sector employer is the Government. Social and family structures have also changed leaving young people with less support than previous generations.

Despite the range of challenges many young people are grappling with, it is encouraging that most young people continue to contribute positively to their communities. Nonetheless, some young people are still struggling to adapt and a minority, in particular young men, have become involved in crime. Serious crime is not common, but misdemeanours that are frequently committed by young people include theft, vandalism, drunk and disorderly conduct, and breaking and entering. Of concern is the fact that many young men and women are also exposed to violence, whether in the public or domestic sphere. This interaction between young people and violence undermines their capacity to effectively contribute to their communities and to grow into healthy, engaged and contributing citizens.

3.2 National Context

FSM comprises four states, each with its own language and culture and each presenting youth with a unique setting. FSM is ranked as a Medium Human Development country at number 103 out of 169 countries according to UNDP's 2010 Human Development Index.³¹ FSM's human development ranking has not risen since 2005, despite a seven percent rise in the regional index over the same period, indicating persistent stagnancy in development.³² However, poverty is not pervasive in FSM and there is debate about the applicability of the term itself. 'Hardship', is the term used in local development circles in FSM as it implies inadequate access to basic services, opportunities to participate in socio-economic life, and to meet basic needs. In this sense, hardship is relatively widespread.³³

29 SBOC 2008.

30 HSA 2005.

31 UNDP 2010a.

32 UNDP 2010b. Regional index refers to East Asia and the Pacific.

33 SBOC 2008 and UNDP 2010.

The last National Census, which was undertaken in 2000, found that the total population of FSM is 107,000³⁴ of which 38 percent (or 41,000 people) fall within the FSM definition of youth (Figure 3.1).³⁵ The FSM population is young, with an average age of just 18.9 years. The annual growth rate has slowed to approximately 0.3 percent as of 2000.³⁶ High birth rates are countered by high out-migration rates, resulting in a minimal growth rate. Approximately, over half the total population live in the State of Chuuk and one third in the State of Pohnpei.³⁷ Chuuk is by far the most densely populated state with 1,094 persons per square mile.³⁸

“Us Chuukese love our families, we want a better life for everyone in our family, it is our way”

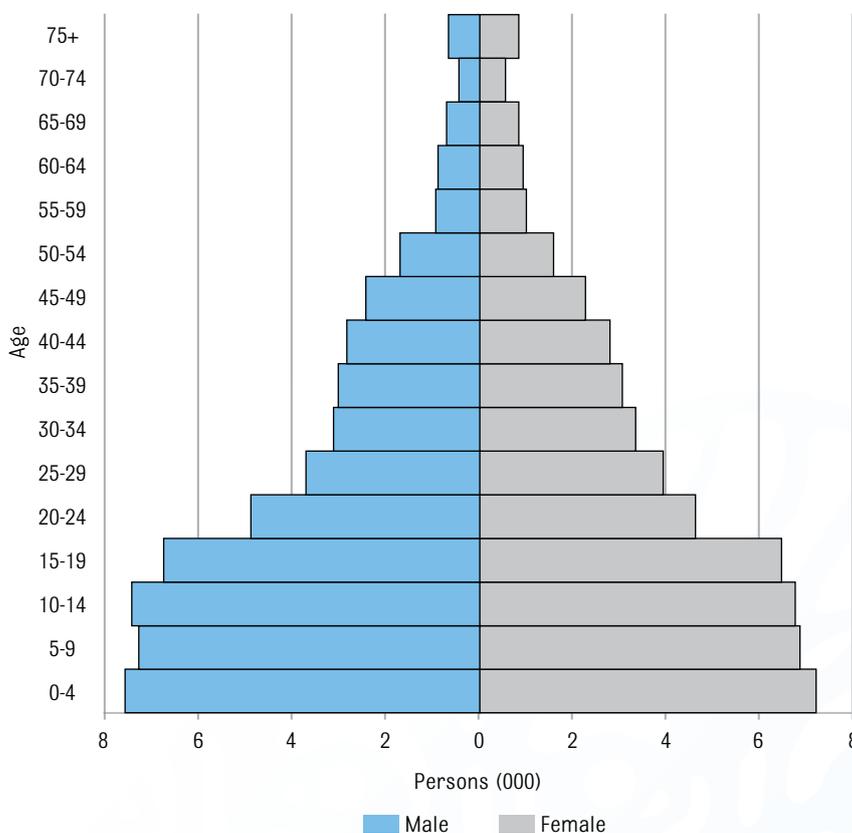
Young woman

In 2000, the FSM primary school enrolment rate was 92 percent and the literacy rate for young people aged between 15 and 24 was 95 percent, with gender parity across both figures. Compulsory education is up to grade eight (age 14); with grades nine to twelve non-compulsory and competitive testing required to advance. High school enrolment was 72 percent, but Pohnpei’s enrolment was the lowest at only 58 percent. The female high school enrolment rate at 77 percent was eight percent higher than the male rate.³⁹

There are relatively high proportions of young people in Pohnpei and Chuuk who are sexually active. However, the low levels of condom use and numerous partners put young people at risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies⁴⁰. Statistics from 2002 showed that 19 percent of all births were by teenage mothers in Pohnpei, followed by 13 percent in Yap, and 10 percent in Chuuk.⁴¹ This trend of high teenage pregnancies impacts on many young people’s options, in particular young women who end their formal education to the detriment of future employment options.

The rates of youth suicide in Pohnpei and Chuuk are a serious concern. According to a 2002 study on ‘Youth Suicide and Social Change in Micronesia’, suicide rates in Micronesia are generally high - mainly men in the age group of 15 to 24 years. Out of the four states, Chuuk has the highest incidence of suicide, with 1 in 40 Chuukese young men committing suicide.⁴² During the period of 2008-2009 there were 31 suicide cases of which 11 were attempted suicide and 20 were successful.⁴³

Figure 3.1: FSM Population Pyramid



Source: SB0C 2008

34 SB0C 2008.
 35 HSA 2005.
 36 SB0C 2008.
 37 Government of the FSM 2010b.
 38 SB0C 2008.
 39 SB0C 2000.
 40 UNFPA 2007.
 41 Johnson 2002.
 42 Rubinstein 2002.
 43 SAMHP 2010.

There is no formal or cultural discrimination against women entering the workforce. The number of women employed in the formal sector almost doubled between 1996 and 2000. On average women's incomes are 87 percent of men's incomes across all sectors. An equal number of men and women are employed in the informal sector.⁴⁴ Domestic violence is believed to be widespread and a growing social problem. In 2009, FSM adopted a National Policy on Disability to increase awareness and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. Young people living with disabilities, particularly young women and girls who are often exposed to greater risks of physical and sexual exploitation will see this national policy as supporting their needs.⁴⁵

3.3 Young People as Victims and Perpetrators

Young people have massive potential to contribute to society and this needs to be harnessed for the benefit of national social, economic and cultural development. However, young men and women face a range of challenges in accessing support and services – from government, their communities and at times, their families. Better support and services would empower them to achieve their potential and effectively engage in society as productive and engaged community members.

One of the most pervasive and problematic challenges facing young people is the effect of crime and violence on their development. Both as perpetrators of crimes such as assault, theft and vandalism and at the same time as victims of crime, in particular, violence both inside and outside the home.

"I want to go to work in the U.S. for a few years to see how it is. I might then come back once I have lots of money"

Young man

"There is not much to do around here on the weekends. We know that drinking is bad but we drink to have fun"

Young man

Common Crimes

For both Pohnpei and Chuuk misdemeanours such as petty theft, breaking and entering, vandalism, drunk and disorderly behavior and possession of illegal substances are the most common crimes committed by young people according to government sources. The FSM Census (2000), showed 316 crimes committed by juveniles aged 17 years or younger, unfortunately this was not disaggregated by sex.⁴⁶ Justice officials stated that most thefts were for cash to obtain alcohol and/or other substances and/or luxury items such as electronics. Usually the young offender was under the influence of alcohol when arrested.

During consultations participants expressed that Weno (Chuuk) was regarded as having greater challenges than Kolonia (Pohnpei) in terms of young people and their involvement with crime and/or violence. However, limited statistics around crimes committed and prosecuted makes it difficult to quantitatively determine which of the states has higher challenges with young people and their involvement in crime and violence.

Assaults

During consultations participants, particularly young people, reported their awareness of assaults committed by and against young people. Assaults varied in their degree of physical harm and young people generally did not consider pinching, slapping, verbal threats, pushing/pulling as assault. On the other hand, punching, kicking, stomping, and using a

⁴⁴ Government of the FSM 2004.

⁴⁵ HSA 2006.

⁴⁶ SB0C 2001.



weapon such as a knife or makeshift weapons such as a wooden stick were considered assault by young people. However, it should be noted that both of the above definitions inflict physical and psychological harm on young people and should constitute assault.

Young women reported their knowledge of assaults both perpetrated by and upon other women. Feedback indicated that behaviours that would result in one woman physically assaulting another woman could arise from land tenure disputes, adulterous behaviour with a husband/partner, slander of their children and/or family and other forms of perceived improper behaviours. It was reported that cases involving women did not usually attract police attention. Anecdotal feedback indicates that even where law enforcement officials are called, they will usually request senior family members to mediate. Young men reported similar behaviours that resulted in physical assault but also added that intoxication caused by alcohol and/or other substance contributed to their involvement.

“I don’t like the gang culture in the U.S. It’s too violent. There are sometimes fights here but it is a peaceful place most of the time.”

Young man

Assaults were reported to be most violent in Chuuk where between July 1999 and July 2005, 353 people were treated in the Chuuk State Hospital for impalement injuries from metal darts. The darts are six to eight inch modified nails that are propelled by a slingshot or a forked piece of wood to which an elastic tube is attached. Locally, they are called Filipin. At least three fatalities occurred during this period. The age range of people treated was from 18 to 42 with a median age of 32 putting most of them under the FSM definition of youth.⁴⁷ This is an alarmingly high figure amongst a total population of 54,000 people in Chuuk. Under current Chuuk State Criminal Code a person can be charged with possession of a Filipin slingshot. Currently, it is understood that law enforcement agencies in Chuuk are trying to obtain funds to undertake preventative and awareness raising workshops for communities to address the use of slingshots. A justice official claimed that recently slingshots are also appearing in Kolonia and other parts of Pohnpei.

⁴⁷ Arsenal et al. 2005.

In Kolonia, youth reported fights between neighbourhood groups or clans, but there were no US-style gangs operating. That said, a number of government officials and donors expressed concern about the possibility of gangs forming in Pohnpei and cited the influx of criminal deportees from the United States as well as prevalent exposure to US culture as a possible cause of gang proliferation. Gangs styled on US gangs such as “Bloods” and “Crips” were reported to be already in existence in Chuuk.⁴⁸

Drug Related Crimes

Knowingly possessing an illegal substance constitutes a criminal act in Pohnpei and Chuuk States. Justice officials reported that possession of marijuana is the most common type of drug charge for young people in FSM. Although illegal, marijuana is grown and consumed locally throughout FSM. Recent quantitative data is unavailable with the latest studies done in 1997 (Hezel) and 2001 (UNICEF, for Pohnpei only). According to these studies, the highest usage of marijuana is in Chuuk, with young males usage of marijuana 15 times greater than young female usage. In 1997, 27 percent of men in Chuuk and 19 percent in Pohnpei in their twenties had used marijuana in the previous twelve months.⁴⁹ In 2001 one third of in-school youth and half of out-of-school youth had used marijuana at least once.⁵⁰ As with alcohol, both studies clearly show that out-of-school youth are more likely to use marijuana than in-school youth.

“During high school I was a group leader and we had an event. I was supposed to bring a case of soda so I asked my parents for some money but they said they didn’t have any. Later when I came back they were having a sakau party with their friends. I asked them where they got the money for the sakau and they got so angry that they chased me out of the house. But parents need to think about their children’s life as well. I was really disappointed by this experience. What is the use of custom and culture like this?”

Young man

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crime

During consultations for this report, violence in the home was frequently cited to be a serious problem by a range of interviewees. However, officials in the justice system advised that domestic violence is often seen as “part of the culture that just stays quietly within the home.” In interviews spousal violence between young men and women was the most commonly mentioned type of domestic violence. However, violence committed by parents on children is also an issue. During consultations, civil society leaders and government officials stated that instances of domestic violence are under-reported and there is limited information to understand the frequency or the seriousness of the issue. It was noted that young people were often direct victims and/or witnesses of violence in the home. A number of respondents said that such youth were more likely to drop out of school or to try to solve their own problems through violence.

A 2001 quantitative study by UNICEF showed that almost 60 percent of high school students had been deliberately injured in the previous twelve months. A median of approximately 26 percent of students had been deliberately injured by their father or mother and one in four by their boyfriend or girlfriend, supporting the analysis that young people are both victims and perpetrators of violence. Eight percent of high school students had been deliberately injured by a teacher and seven percent by police (Figure 3.2). The study also showed that

48 Magna Systems Incorporated 2009.

49 Ibid.

50 UNICEF 2001.

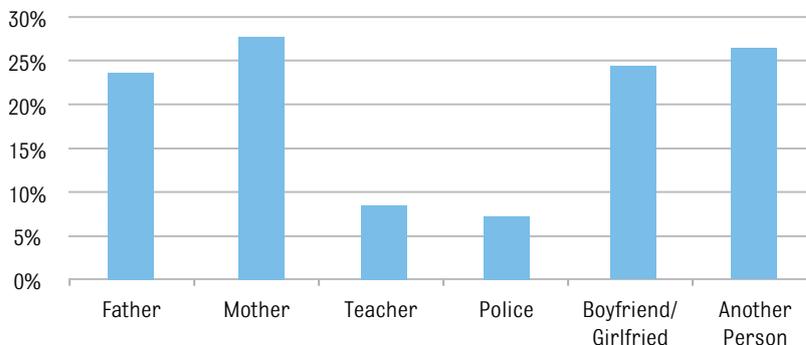
out-of-school youth were more likely to have been deliberately injured than high school students of the same age.⁵¹

Currently, there are no specific laws in Chuuk or Pohnpei which directly address domestic violence. Cases are treated under the Criminal Code as battery or assault. A draft National Domestic Violence Policy was considered at the '2010 National Women's Conference' and is expected to go to Cabinet in 2011. It is not clear however, whether this policy

specifically identified issues relevant to young people, including the special vulnerability and need for protection of young men and women in domestic violence from their parents and/or young people involved in abusive intimate-relationships. As of November 2010, a bill was under consideration by the Pohnpei Legislature emphasizing the importance of family, which would add a whole new chapter on family violence to the state legal code.⁵² Awareness of the issue was reported to be rising, albeit slowly, in communities in Pohnpei. In 2010 Chuuk State held the 'Conference on Domestic Violence' supported by the U.S National District Attorney Association alongside the Attorney General Office, Chuuk Women's Council and a number of other stakeholders to address the impact of violence on victims and the community and the importance of collaboration between law enforcement, the legal system and the community.

During consultations, justice officials also identified sexually-based offences as an issue specifically impacting on young men and women, both as victims and perpetrators. The 2001 UNICEF study showed that 45 percent of high school students had been pressured to have sex, with slightly more girls than boys.⁵³ The offences ranged from sexual coercion through authority, incest and rape. In a submission made to the Human Rights Council for the FSM Universal Periodic Review⁵⁴ it was reported that sexual abuse, especially child sexual abuse, was "grossly underreported" and surrounded by a "culture of silence and stigma."⁵⁵ Teachers sexually abusing students were also reported as "silent crimes."⁵⁶

Figure 3.2: Percentage of High Schools Students Deliberately Injured by Perpetrator



Source: UNICEF 2001

3.4 Institutional Responses in Support of Youth

At National and State level some initiatives are already in place which attempt to address the range of needs and challenges facing young people. The governments of Pohnpei and Chuuk have some policies and laws in place, but there are still major gaps which continue to impact on the ability of youth issues to be effectively tackled and youth to be supported to achieve their full potential.

51 UNICEF 2001.

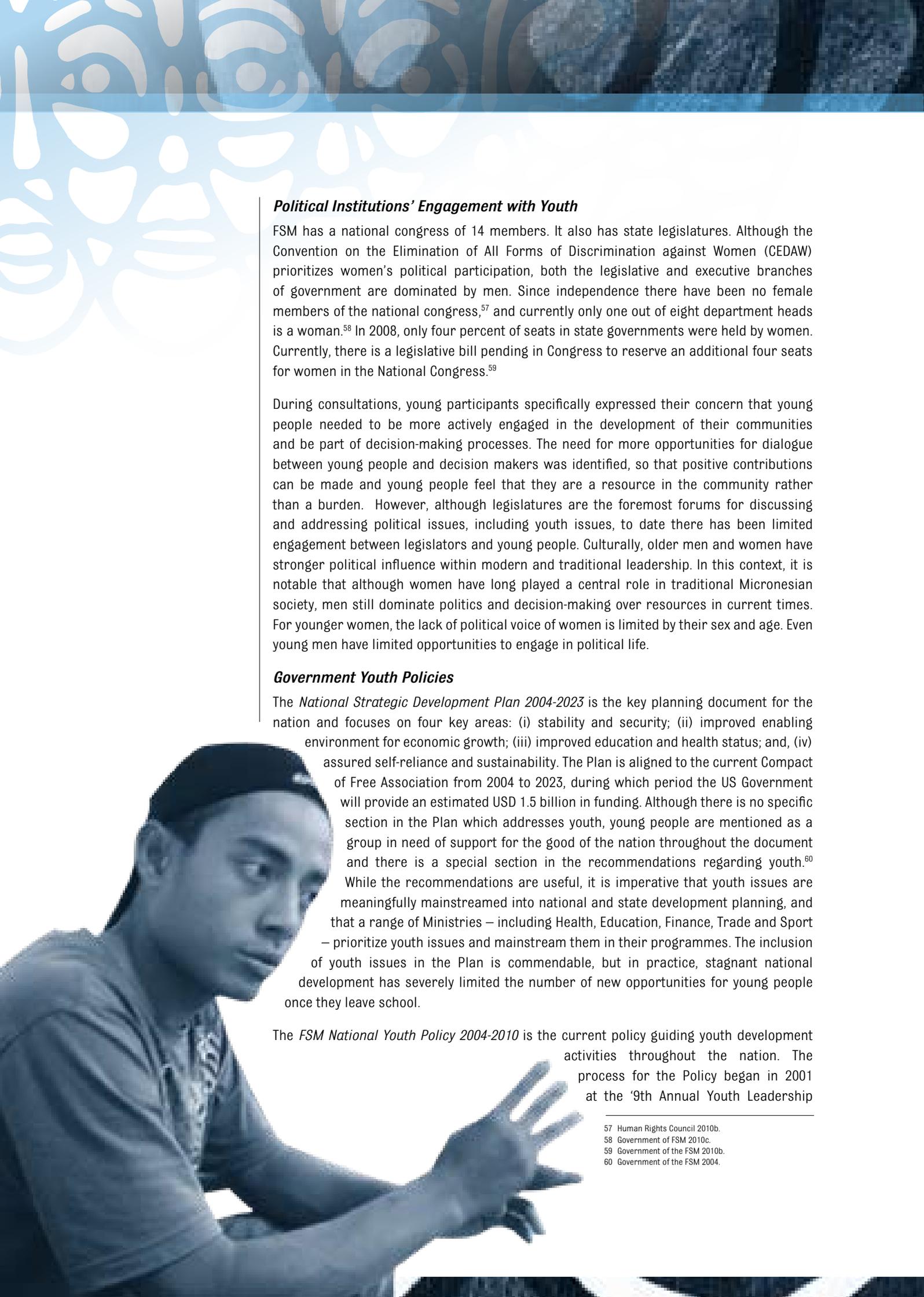
52 Human Rights Council 2010a, 'No-drop' policy means that if a case of domestic violence is reported to authorities, it must be pursued through to court even if the victim requests the case to be dropped.

53 UNICEF 2001.

54 The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years. It provides an opportunity for all States to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights. From OHCHR 2008.

55 Human Rights Council 2010b.

56 Angrelik 2010.



Political Institutions' Engagement with Youth

FSM has a national congress of 14 members. It also has state legislatures. Although the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) prioritizes women's political participation, both the legislative and executive branches of government are dominated by men. Since independence there have been no female members of the national congress,⁵⁷ and currently only one out of eight department heads is a woman.⁵⁸ In 2008, only four percent of seats in state governments were held by women. Currently, there is a legislative bill pending in Congress to reserve an additional four seats for women in the National Congress.⁵⁹

During consultations, young participants specifically expressed their concern that young people needed to be more actively engaged in the development of their communities and be part of decision-making processes. The need for more opportunities for dialogue between young people and decision makers was identified, so that positive contributions can be made and young people feel that they are a resource in the community rather than a burden. However, although legislatures are the foremost forums for discussing and addressing political issues, including youth issues, to date there has been limited engagement between legislators and young people. Culturally, older men and women have stronger political influence within modern and traditional leadership. In this context, it is notable that although women have long played a central role in traditional Micronesian society, men still dominate politics and decision-making over resources in current times. For younger women, the lack of political voice of women is limited by their sex and age. Even young men have limited opportunities to engage in political life.

Government Youth Policies

The *National Strategic Development Plan 2004-2023* is the key planning document for the nation and focuses on four key areas: (i) stability and security; (ii) improved enabling environment for economic growth; (iii) improved education and health status; and, (iv) assured self-reliance and sustainability. The Plan is aligned to the current Compact of Free Association from 2004 to 2023, during which period the US Government will provide an estimated USD 1.5 billion in funding. Although there is no specific section in the Plan which addresses youth, young people are mentioned as a group in need of support for the good of the nation throughout the document and there is a special section in the recommendations regarding youth.⁶⁰ While the recommendations are useful, it is imperative that youth issues are meaningfully mainstreamed into national and state development planning, and that a range of Ministries – including Health, Education, Finance, Trade and Sport – prioritize youth issues and mainstream them in their programmes. The inclusion of youth issues in the Plan is commendable, but in practice, stagnant national development has severely limited the number of new opportunities for young people once they leave school.

The *FSM National Youth Policy 2004-2010* is the current policy guiding youth development activities throughout the nation. The process for the Policy began in 2001 at the '9th Annual Youth Leadership

57 Human Rights Council 2010b.

58 Government of FSM 2010c.

59 Government of the FSM 2010b.

60 Government of the FSM 2004.

Conference' in Yap and was only finalized in 2005 when it was ratified by the National Congress, paving the way for actual implementation.⁶¹ The policy expired at the end of 2010. It is unfortunate that sufficient preparatory work was not undertaken to enable a seamless transition to the next *National Youth Policy*. However, it is understood that work is underway to review progress and update the Policy.

The current Policy covers nine key goals that were developed in consultations with a range of key stakeholder (Table 3.1). For each key area there are clear strategies, intended outcomes and responsible agencies listed. There are target groups of “at-risk” youth including; school drop-outs, substance abusers, and youth in hardship and violent households, juvenile offenders and victims of crime.

Table 3.1 Key Issues and Actions in National Youth Policy

Key Issue	Action
Youth and Education	Promote more suitable non-formal and informal educational initiatives.
Youth and Health	Strengthen health education and promotional programs aimed at addressing youth health.
Youth in Economic Development	Create and maintain structural solutions to promote the participation of young people in the development of the economy through the development of more youth training programs to foster self-employment and income-generation activities.
Youth with Strong Cultural Identities	Develop and foster cultural appreciation
Youth and Spirituality	Strengthen and promote spiritual development
Youth and the Environment	Widen environmental education and promote practical initiatives
Youth and Justice	Create a system of justice administration that recognizes the special requirements of youth and responds in a manner that appropriately supports the needs of the community and of the juvenile
Youth with National Pride	Provide a wide range of public and leisure activities for young people that will foster the development of healthy self-esteem and a sense of community spirit
Institutional Strengthening, Capacity Building and Coordination	Improve the coordination of youth programs and activities at national, state and local levels and to strengthen national and local youth organizations and networks

An annual evaluation and bi-annual policy review mechanism is outlined in the policy. The first *Report on Implementation* was completed in 2006. The implementation report outlines activities taken and status, implementing agencies, and impacts on youth under each strategic heading. There was an impressive list of activities, but it is not clear if these were the most strategic interventions. Notably, under key issue number seven, “Youth and Justice”,

⁶¹ HSA 2005 and FSM National Congress 2005 .Note that according to the National Youth Policy document itself Resolution 14-6 was not ratified until November 2005 as resolution 14-6. The congress website says May 2005.

no activities were reported at all. There were also no activities reported for strategies under “Youth and Health” for substance abuse counselling and child abuse.⁶²

Youth Institutions and Key Organizations

At the national level, the Department of Health and Social Affairs (HSA) is responsible for youth issues and development. Within HSA the National Youth Office aims to coordinate and implement youth programmes and organizes National Youth Summits. However, the position of National Youth Officer has been vacant, which has limited progress in implementing these activities. As an immediate priority, it is imperative that the National Youth Office is provided with qualified personnel and sufficient funding to effectively discharge its mandate.

“Many young people come to the center – they spend time together and at the same time we can talk to them about some issues they can have”

Youth worker

The National Youth Office has the responsibility for coordinating support to young people at both national and state levels. In total 37 government, non-government agencies and faith based organizations are listed as partners of HSA. It is positive that efforts have been made to develop partnerships in support of youth and this needs to continue for maximum impact.

In particular, the National Youth Office works closely with the FSM National Youth Council, and State Youth Councils (FSMYC), however, financial assistance from Government to the Councils is not available. The FSMYC through its by-laws is an incorporated body. It is made up of executive members who are elected from the four FSM states youth organizations. FSMYC aims to empower young people by providing youth specific activities and conducting educational awareness raising programmes on issues that are affecting young Micronesians. They are currently receiving capacity building assistance from the Pacific Youth Council to strengthen their institutional capabilities and better communicate with young people and other youth groups.

Justice Institutions and Policies

This study focuses specifically on the impact of crime and violence on young people. In that context, justice sector agencies, including the Department of Justice, Public Prosecutor and Defender and Correctional Services have a special importance. In 2006, the Department of Justice developed a *Justice Sector Children’s Handbook* which was intended to provide guidance to state justice agencies on a range of issues relating to children. The Handbook provided specific guidance on the development of juvenile justice acts by states. It is understood that draft bills have been prepared by Pohnpei and Chuuk which are intended to ensure more appropriate juvenile justice, but these bills have not yet been passed by state legislatures.

Currently, cases involving juveniles are covered under the ordinary state criminal codes. For misdemeanours such as minor theft, drunk and disorderly conduct, and vandalism, juveniles are often given a warning by police. For more serious crimes, they are brought to the police station where they are held until a parent or guardian arrives with the expectation that parents/guardians will discipline their children. Trials for juveniles are mostly closed, with parents present but no information made public. A juvenile may be sentenced to probation

⁶² HSA 2006.

or serve time in jail. For serious felonies, such as sexual assault, manslaughter and multiple offending, juveniles are tried as adults. Part of the sentence may include restitution to the victims.

Most juvenile offenders are put on probation and assigned a probation officer to work with them. The probation officer may assist the parolee to find work or do farming to pay back any restitution. Juvenile offenders must report once or twice a week to the probation office and are often put under a curfew. During consultations, justice officials reported that there are no special correctional facilities for juveniles, but that they are segregated from the adult population within the correctional facilities in Chuuk and Pohnpei. Despite this, it is understood that there is some contact between adults and juveniles within the facilities, particularly during recreational times.

FSM still maintains a traditional informal justice system for youth offenders that is activated in combination with the formal justice system. The traditional system is based on dialogue, reconciliation, harmony and forgiveness between the families of the perpetrator and victim. However, the effectiveness and the appropriate measures undertaken during the traditional system continues to require further research and understanding. Finally, Pohnpei police also reported a new community policing programme that promotes cooperation between police and the community for preventing crime and providing better services. Young people are encouraged to assist in preventing crime by participating in community patrols and other activities.

3.5 Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience

As noted in the Introduction, youth are exposed to many risk and resilience factors which influence their probability of becoming involved in crime and violence. This section seeks to identify the most significant risk and resilience factors which exist in Kolonia and Weno with a view to assist policy-makers and other stakeholders to identify priority strategies to address youth issues, in particular, in order to tackle issues relating to crime and violence.

Growing the Employment Opportunities for Youth

The Government employs over half of the country's workers and government services make up 40 percent of GDP. Unemployment is stated at 22 percent, although subsistence agriculture is still prevalent, especially outside of urban centres, and employs about ten percent of the full-time workforce. The fishing industry is vital and the tourism industry attracts over 20,000 visitors per year and has been identified by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as having high potential for growth.⁶³ Unemployment for 15 to 24 year olds in 2000 was 35 percent overall, though it went as high as 50 percent in Chuuk. Slightly more young women than young men are unemployed.⁶⁴

During consultations, lack of employment and other meaningful activities were reported by participants as common reasons for becoming involved in crime and violence. The youth population far outnumbers the total formal sector positions available and the potential for informal sector employment, even if supported through technical and vocational education

⁶³ U.S. Department of State 2010.
⁶⁴ SB0C 2000.

and training (see below sub-section for more detail), is yet to be fully realized. Support for employment in the agricultural sector through subsistence farming or other activities may be an option and a number of stakeholders throughout the consultations mentioned the possibility of growing this sector to involve more young people.

Greater provision of employment opportunities for young people is imperative for keeping them occupied, building self-esteem, increasing productivity and revitalizing the economy. This was also supported by young people, in particular by young men participating in consultations.

Improving the Quality and Relevance of Education

Quality and relevance of education is a major issue. In 2010, poor teacher attendance rates and the low number of teachers with teaching credentials were highlighted as key problems in a Department of Education report.⁶⁵ This was illustrated by the fact that only 31 percent of grade six students met or exceeded the minimum competency standard. Education is one of the four sectors identified in the *National Development Plan* and identified for priority US Compact funding. There is great emphasis on enhancing basic education to increase indicators such as literacy rates. It is imperative that the Government prioritizes improvements to the education sector, to ensure young people are given every opportunity to become educated citizens capable of contributing to society.

Noting the limited employment opportunities available in the formal sector in FSM, it is important that education opportunities are offered which up-skill young people in areas where there are actual employment opportunities. Many young people aspire to work in nearby Guam, Hawaii or the US mainland for the greater financial rewards and more opportunities. The education system is currently too orientated towards salaried professional work, despite the very limited number of job openings and the insufficient number of skilled trades people such as electricians and plumbers. Civil society stakeholders reported that migrant workers are brought in from abroad to work in the construction industry due to a lack of local skilled workers. The limited facilities to learn vocational skills was a source of frustration expressed by a number of young men and women. Government officials acknowledged the need for greater preparation of the workforce and admitted the lack of promotion by the government of vocational trades as a valid and rewarding career path.

The College of Micronesia in Pohnpei offers TVET. A 2008 ADB report stated several recommendations for improving TVET services in FSM including improving quality, responsiveness to market needs, and flexibility in curriculum. The quality and relevance of education impacts greatly on the employability of young people once they leave school both locally and abroad. Unfortunately however, there is social stigma towards technical and vocational trades in FSM. During consultations, government and civil society interviewees explained that most parents want their children to pursue sales, clerical or managerial jobs within government or the private sector.

Micronesia Bound, an NGO based in Pohnpei, runs limited courses combining life and vocational skills, but due to insufficient funding it is under pressure. It was reported by education officials that previously an initiative entitled Trades, Training and Testing Program (T3) was being implemented. The T3 Program involved training around 300 young people a year in construction, electrical and mechanical trades with basic, intermediate and

⁶⁵ National Department of Education 2010.

advanced courses. Graduates also received an internationally recognized ILO certificate. The reason for closure of the T3 program was not made clear.

Finally, young people who had dropped out from the formal school sector and could not access or did not engage in vocational trade training opportunities were identified by government and civil society as the most likely group to engage in crime and violence. They were seen to be unemployable and this led them to being exposed to other risk factors, such as substance abuse.

“Most of my friends understand my effort to not drink alcohol. I want to show them how it can be done first so that they will try to”
Young man

Tackling Substance Abuse

Substance abuse,⁶⁶ mainly alcohol and marijuana, was regarded by most participants to be a major factor in youth involvement in crime and violence.

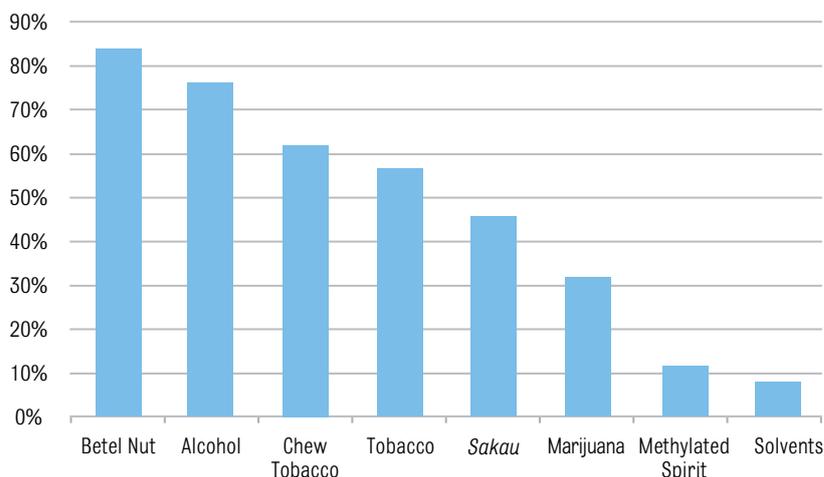
Participants widely acknowledged the damage that substance abuse was causing in young people’s lives, particularly in their physical and mental health, but also as a catalyst for crime and violence.

Anecdotally it was reported by justice officials that 80 to 90 percent of youth crimes were committed when young people were under the influence of alcohol or another substance and/or the crime committed was to obtain more alcohol or other drugs. The easy availability of alcohol, even to those below the legal drinking age of 21 years old, was identified as a factor in alcohol use and abuse according to government and civil society leaders.

Apparently, enforcement of liquor licensing laws by the police is variable. The 2001 *Health Behavior and Lifestyle of Pacific Youth Survey* stated that of 1,516 in-school students in Pohnpei aged between 14 and 17 years 76 percent of students had used alcohol at least once in the past (Figure 3.3). One in five reported to have been drunk more than ten times in the past.⁶⁷ A study in FSM showed a strong correlation between alcohol use and enrolment in school. Across the board, out-of-school young people aged between 10 and 19 were more likely to consume alcohol than in-school young people. In Chuuk, the difference was five-fold and Pohnpei three-fold (Figure 3.4).⁶⁸

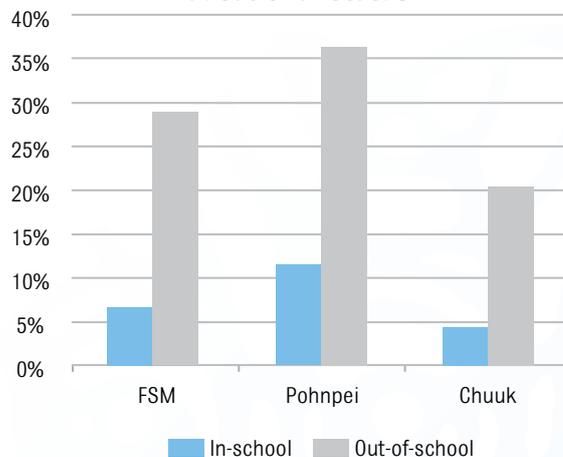
This rate of alcohol consumption amongst young people was also described during consultations in terms of a ‘social activity’.

Figure 3.3: Percentage of High School Students by Substances Ever Used in Pohnpei



Source: UNICEF 2001

Figure 3.4: Percentage of Young People (Aged 10-19) who are Users of Alcohol by Educational Status



Source: Hezel 1997

66 Substance abuse covers: alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, betel nut, sakau, marijuana amongst others.

67 UNICEF 2001.

68 Hezel 1997.

Young people described drinking alcohol and getting drunk as an activity to pass time. It was also stated that alcohol was often seen as a vehicle for greater uninhibited expression that would not be culturally permitted when sober. Young people related how alcohol made some of their friends “lose control” and easily “get in to fights and break things.”

In terms of drugs use, marijuana was described during consultations to be the drug of choice amongst users; however, marijuana was regarded to be less of a cause of violence than alcohol. However, justice officials and young people cited marijuana as being a cause of crime, especially theft. During consultations, betel nut, tobacco, chewing tobacco and *sakau* were not seen by participants to increase the likelihood of involvement in crime and/or violence, although some people thought it affected the motivation levels of young people to be active. All agreed on the negative affects these substances had on health. Finally, glue and solvent sniffing was reported to be used by young people; methamphetamine and hallucinogens were not reported during the course of this study.

In-Focus 4.2: Youth to Youth in Health

‘Youth to Youth in Health’ is an SPC and UNFPA joint project. It has adolescent health clinic staffed by a nurse attached to a multi-purpose youth centre. The centre employs a team of peer educators to raise awareness of adolescent health issues, such as reproductive health, diet and nutrition, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, family planning, self-esteem and equality. To do all this, they visit schools and give talks, produce dramas and videos, create songs, and talk to their friends. Their main motivation is to help other people. The multi-purpose youth centre has facilities such as karaoke, a library, gym, computers and musical instruments. It is a supervised and substance free place where youth can socialize and enjoy themselves.

Opportunities for Meaningful Activity

Noting the inter-relatedness of risk factors such as substance abuse and lack of employment, it is also notable that young people expressed their frustration at the limited sporting facilities and formal competitions available to keep them active. Other young people also expressed their desire to be engaged in the arts, for example, through singing and other creative activities. Young

people specifically identified the lack of meaningful activities that they can engage in as a major problem and identified this as one of the main risks to young people getting involved in violence. At a basic level, in Chuuk, young people noted that limited transportation made it difficult for them to get around and attend youth gatherings and participate in community activities.

There are a number of initiatives that exist throughout FSM which are aimed at providing opportunities for young people to engage in meaningful activities, but they are scattered and not necessarily coordinated for maximum community impact. Examples include:

- Sports programmes, including community basketball leagues, the Youth Educators Promoting Olympic Values and other outreach programmes in sports. These programmes offer meaningful sports activities and positive lifestyle choices where tobacco, alcohol, other substances and violence are specifically discouraged. Conversely, however a number of youth interviewed during consultations were unaware of the Multi-purpose Youth Centre in Kolonia which provides sporting facilities.
- Micronesia Bound, a well established NGO in Kolonia, works with out-of-school and at-risk youth. Its *Aramas Kapw* or “New People” programme started in 1976 and aims to “instill trust, self-confidence and self-esteem” as well as build self-understanding and self-responsibility in young people. The basic concepts are based on similar programmes abroad, but it uses local and culturally appropriate approaches for implementation. Participants receive training in surviving skills in nature, physical fitness, nutrition, substance abuse prevention, traditional fishing and farming, and community service work. However, Micronesia Bound continues to require adequate funding to continue the activities.

- Programmes in the area of traditional and cultural activities run by church groups and other community groups are also being undertaken. These include traditional dancing, singing and crafts. Young people expressed pride and commented that cultural activities enhanced their cultural awareness and at the same time promoted the cultural diversity of FSM. However, these activities were often seen as sporadic and need to be further supported to be continuous.
- Programmes run by faith-based organizations to foster spiritual development of young people were also available. These activities develop young people's religious values, but at the same time include youth specific activities that use their talents such as singing, playing musical instruments and participating in other religious activities.

According to young people who participated in the study – it was perceived that young people who were active in programmes were found to be more positive in their outlook on life. Many had been able to change former negative behaviour patterns such as cutting down or quitting drinking. They also had goals to aspire to, and stayed away from crime and violence. Programmes supporting youth were often perceived by the participants as effective and provided young people with new skills, guidance and a boost in self-esteem.

Other organizations that are involved in youth issues but not directly tackling crime and violence include the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Rotary Club and the Nature Conservancy.

Family Challenges

One of the uniting features of FSM is the importance of family, especially the extended family. Assisting one's family is a fundamental value as it provides security and a sense of self-worth. It was expressed in consultations that the structure of the extended family in particular has changed over a short period of time this was having a negative impact on young people. Formerly, young people could turn to a number of trusted relatives such as uncles, aunts or grandparents for advice and a sympathetic ear without confronting their parents with awkward topics. Similarly, parents with many obligations could get assistance with child-care from relatives living in the same house or in the same compound. Raising children was not just the responsibility of the nuclear family, but involved a network of relatives and community members.

“Parents could do better by talking to their children about sex and other issues that are difficult for us. Forget about culture. Help us. We look up to our parents so they are key to our future”

Young woman

During consultations, however, participants stated that parents are increasingly feeling a greater individual responsibility to look after and discipline their own children, and at the same time have a great range of cultural, religious and community obligations to fulfill.⁶⁹ Parents appear to be feeling the strain of new family and society structures. At the same time, during the consultations a number of young people expressed their concern that their parents were busy not only with church and cultural obligations such as funerals, but also were often at *sakau* parties or drinking alcohol with friends which is why they had little time or inclination to provide guidance to their children. In general young people consulted felt that they wanted their parents to be more open and to be able to talk to them about issues that affect their health and well-being.

⁶⁹ Hezel 1989.



Government officials and civil society members also expressed concerns relating to the lack of proper supervision and guidance of young people. They identified problems due to both parents working (including many parents working abroad) and therefore needing to leave young people at home to care for themselves or with a relative who did not have the authority or the will to discipline the child and provide guidance. This left young people with reduced supervision and more likely to seek out their peers for guidance, many of whom were themselves looking for advice.

Despite the upheavals in family structure over the last generation, many young people and their parents reported that they are still able to enjoy good relations with family members. Guidance, love and support from family were key for many young people consulted. Having someone within the immediate or extended family with whom young people could discuss problems and seek advice from was seen as helpful for a number of young people consulted. Also support and encouragement by family to succeed in school and other activities decreased the risk of involvement in negative behaviour. In the absence of a close confidante within the family; mentors at school, work, in youth groups or church were reported to be important for proper guidance and keeping young people positive.

Societal Challenges

Traditional knowledge of the roles and responsibility of community members is an integral part of community life and the provision of necessary skills for young people in FSM. Stakeholders reported that this traditional knowledge was being lost particularly in the areas of crafts, dance and languages. It was stated during consultations that many of the issues that young people now face was due to the weakening of their cultural ties. In an attempt to address this challenge, the *FSM National Youth Policy* specifically identifies the promotion of respect and appreciation of cultural heritage as a key empowerment tool for young people in their communities.

The continued migration of families and young people to the urban centers of Weno and Kolonia is also creating new urban societal challenges. Overcrowded and poor quality housing has led to the social pressures that create tensions amongst people competing for employment and social infrastructure. Traditional social structures that provided families' safety nets in time of difficulties have begun to deteriorate and the overall weakening provides and environment for crime and/or violence.

Finally, the issue of criminal deportees was raised as an issue by a number of government officials and donor agencies. It was stated that criminal deportees brought to FSM a new level of sophistication in crime. Unlike the criminal deportee situation in Samoa and Tonga where many of the deportees are returned due to immigration breaches, because of the Compact Agreement with the United States, all deportees to FSM are criminal deportees. Young people consulted generally did not admire deportees because they thought they had wasted a great opportunity to live and work in the United States which would suggest that their influence is limited.

3.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the large and expanding population of young people, the government and donors need to tackle youth issues more vigorously. The future cost of not providing support and opportunities to the current generation of youth as they transition into adulthood will have much higher consequences than if concrete and sincere policies and programmes are put in place now. Please note that a number of the recommendations in the Pacific Overview and Regional Recommendations chapter are relevant to Kolonia and Weno as well.

Recommendations

- Revise and update the *National Youth Policy* through a consultative, participatory process, and ensure specific attention is paid to mainstreaming youth issues throughout government processes/programmes.
- Recruit a qualified national youth officer to run the HSA National Youth Office, and ensure over time that the officer is provided with sufficient qualified personnel and funding to effectively discharge its mandate.
- Expand places for vocational training and align training to emerging needs.
- Support to the reintegration and resettlement of criminal deportees.
- Develop and enact legislation for juvenile justice.
- Formalize links between the formal legal system and traditional justice mechanisms.

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CHAPTER

4

Majuro, Republic
of the Marshall
Islands

4

Chapter Four: Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands

4.1 Introduction

This Urban Centre Case Study discusses youth crime and violence in Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI). The research team conducted focus groups discussions and interviews in Majuro with young people, government actors, village leaders and civil society organizations which provided the main basis for the findings. Additionally, a desk review of available reports and statistics was conducted. Drawing together these findings, this case study recommends a number of key actions to strengthen and support resilience among young men and women.

With an average age of just 19 years, RMI is one of the youngest nations in the Pacific. The *National Youth Policy 2009-2014* acknowledges that the definition of youth is open to “legal, statistical, and cultural interpretation”, but it specifically targets young people aged 12 to 24 years old. This makes it much more focused than other youth policies in the region, which often cover people as old as 35 years. In the justice system, juveniles are classed as offenders aged inclusively between 14 and 17.⁷⁰ Culturally,

however, definitions of youth in RMI are related to their roles and responsibilities, for example; a person who is married, financially independent and/or has children is less likely to be considered a youth than someone who is older, still single and financially dependent on family.

Marshallese society is based on matrilineal lineage and cultural customs that promote the social kinship values that are directed at ensuring the well-being of all members. However, despite the strong commitment to taking care of one another in the community, the environment for the development of young people is limited due to a number of development factors such as a largely stagnant economy. Despite this the youth population continues to grow due to urbanization and a high birth rate, which is increasing the pressure on the country to deliver more education, employment and social services.

Nonetheless, many young men and women are playing positive roles in society through peer education, church-based youth groups, work, education, skills training and sports. There are young people and organizations doing inspirational work through vocational education and learning traditional skills. Efforts to revive aspects of traditional culture as a means to build resilience to crime and violence and to encourage positive roles in society by young people have been largely successful although they are only being implemented on a small scale. There are also genuine efforts to address substance abuse and gender based violence.

“Learning about Marshallese culture is important for me. I want to be a high school teacher and help to strengthen our culture”

Young woman



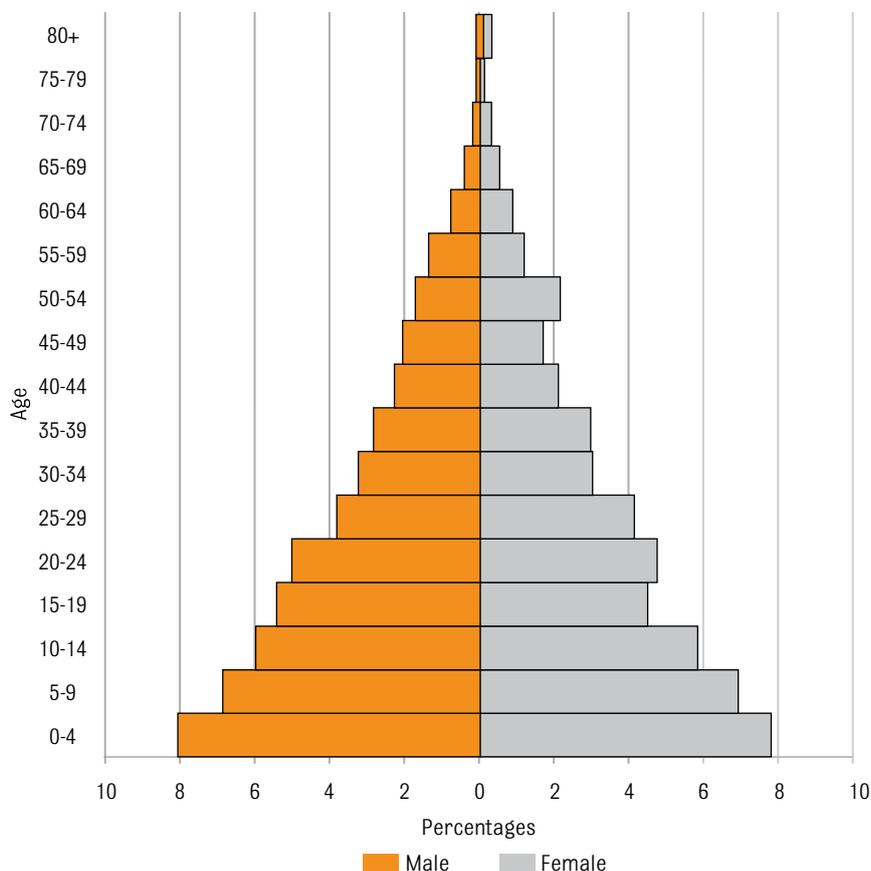
4.2 National Context

RMI has the second youngest population in the Pacific with a median age of just 19.2 years old. The total population of the country is just under 55,000 people, of which approximately 70 percent are under 29 years of age (Figure 4.1).⁷¹ Seventy-five percent of the population live in Majuro and Ebeje Islands, resulting in crowded living conditions. The average urban household has 7.6 members⁷² and the population density in Majuro is almost 2,500 people per square kilometer, indicating the crowded conditions.⁷³

Extreme poverty does not exist in the Marshall Islands although the proportion of people facing hardship does not appear to be falling and slow rates of increase in per capita Gross National Income (GNI) are not expected to translate into reduced levels of hardship.⁷⁴ There are claims that particularly in urban centres such as Majuro, the Marshallese saying *jake jobol eo* or “no person will go hungry through sharing” is no longer guaranteed.⁷⁵ In the *2009 Marshall Islands Millennium Development Goals Progress Report*, the achievement of universal primary education, a reduction of child mortality, and an improvement of maternal health by 2015 are all reported to be “on track.” Progress on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and empowering women, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing of global partnerships for development are reported to be “mixed” and only Goal 6 on “Combat[ting] HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases” is cited to be “off-track” (although the rate of incidence is still relatively low). An official Human Development Index (HDI) for the Marshall Islands has not been reported since 1998.⁷⁶

Marshall Islands currently enjoys a relatively high level of primary education for both girls and boys.⁷⁷ In secondary schooling, a slight gender gap emerges; 12 percent of young men and only eight percent of young women complete their secondary studies. However, in the

Figure 4.1 RMI Population Pyramid



Source: EPPSO 2007

⁷¹ EPPSO 2007.

⁷² Government of RMI and UNDP 2009.

⁷³ EPPSO 2007.

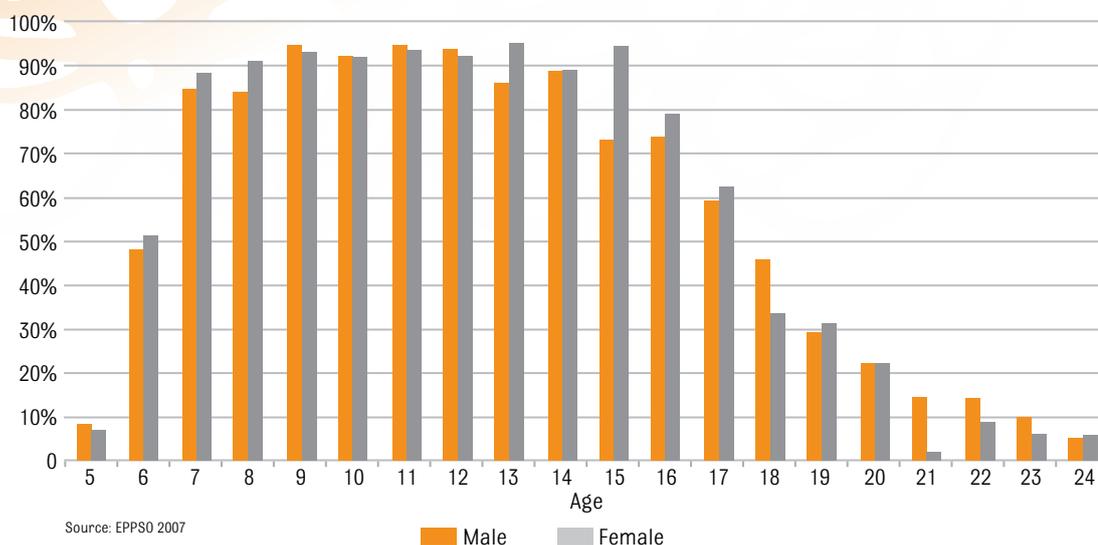
⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Marshall Islands Journal 2009.

⁷⁶ In 1998 the index is stated as 0.563 according to the Marshall Islands Chamber of Commerce at <http://www.marshallislandschamber.net/rmi.htm>. This would rank it 116th out of 169 countries as of 2007 although development levels would have most likely risen since then given the progress with the MDGs.

⁷⁷ Government of RMI and UNDP 2009.

Figure 4.2: Attendance Rates at Educational Facilities



15 to 17 age ratio young women outnumber men in schooling (Figure 4.2).⁷⁸ School dropout rates are a persistent problem, despite compulsory education until the age of 15. There is also the problem of “push out” in urban centres such as Majuro and Ebeye, where children are unable to attend school due to insufficient seats, even in primary schools. Even so, the literacy rate is high, with adult women slightly more literate than men at 95 percent and 94 percent respectively. Young women aged between 15 and 24 are also more literate than young men at 96 percent and 94 percent respectively.⁷⁹

The rate of teenage pregnancy in RMI is one of the highest in the Pacific; in 2007, one in four young women aged between 15 to 19 years was pregnant or had already given birth to their first child.⁸⁰ This is compounded by a high rate of sexually transmitted infections, which indicates the low rate of condom use and other contraceptives.⁸¹ Substance abuse is also a problem. The most common substance used in RMI is alcohol and tobacco, although betel nut, marijuana, *kava/sakau*, inhalants and other substances are also being used by young people. Related to alcohol consumption is the reported correlation it has with attempted suicide rates amongst young people in RMI. In 2008, there were a total of 10 suicides and 16 attempted suicides, with the data showing that it is more common amongst young men than young women.⁸²

RMI is a matrilineal society, with children belonging to their mother’s lineage and having rights to use land which is owned by their lineage group.⁸³ A popular local saying “*au an kora ailin kein*”, which means “these islands belong to the women”, captures this fact. Due to the high value of land and the strong spiritual connection to the land by Marshallese, land is a source of women’s influence in the community, and a foil to men’s dominance in executive positions in the political and business field. However, due to modern pressures of land scarcity and commercialization, women’s access to land and its associated power is being eroded and conflicts over land tenure are increasing.⁸⁴

78 EPPSO 2007.

79 Ibid.

80 MIEPI 2010.

81 SPC and UNFPA 2006.

82 MIEPI 2010.

83 UNICEF 2003.

84 Stege et al 2008.

In 2007, married women were far less likely to be formally employed (35 percent) than men (80 percent),⁸⁵ although it is generally recognized that women do most of the unpaid work of the household and are responsible for child rearing. Women generally are not discriminated against when applying for employment, especially in the private and non-government sectors. That said as of April 2009 there was only one female senator and cabinet minister in the Nitijela (parliament) and a clear minority of female government secretaries.⁸⁶ RMI ratified CEDAW in 2006, but domestic violence is a serious issue (see Section 4.3 below for more details). There is generally equal access to education and health services for young men and women.⁸⁷

4.3 Young People as Victims and Perpetrators

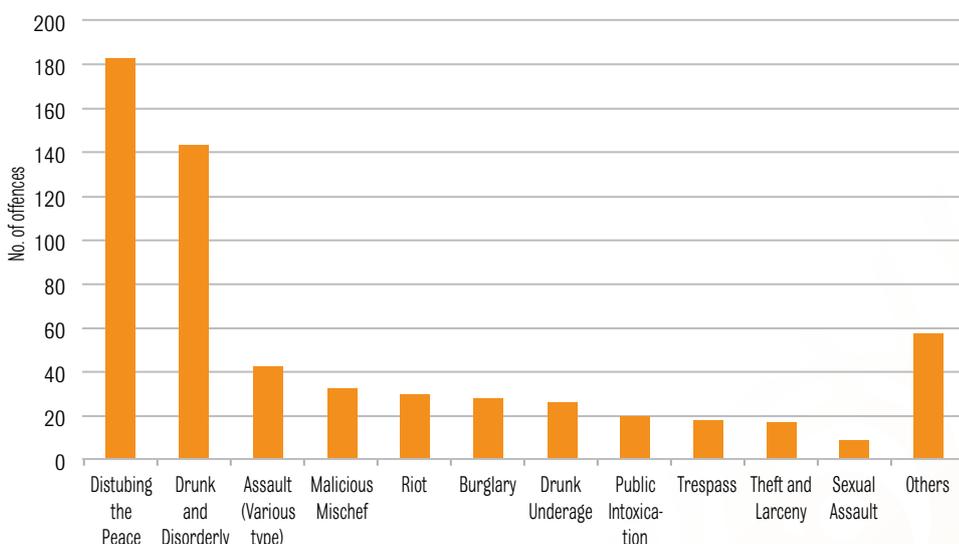
For the most part young people living in Majuro provide and contribute to their country's social, economic and cultural development. They use their skills and competencies in a diverse range of activities and settings and given the opportunity, they are grateful for meaningful and constructive way to express themselves. However, a number of young men and women face a range of challenges in accessing support and services from government, their communities and even sometimes their families, which would assist in empowering them to achieve their potential and effectively engage in society. One of the most significant challenges facing young people is the impact of crime and violence on their development. Some young people are also engaging in criminal activities, including theft, fraud and domestic violence.

Common Crimes

In 2010, there were ten young women under the age of 21 years charged with crimes ranging from drunk and disorderly conduct to fraud and malicious mischief. In the same time period, there were 606 young men under the age of 21 years charged. The top three offences were disturbing the peace, drunk and disorderly conduct, and various types of assault (Figure 4.3).⁸⁸ Anecdotally, government workers in the justice sector identified the main types of

“What else do we have to do but drink and make a little trouble? At least it's fun”
Young man

Figure 4.3 Types of Crime by Young People Under 21 Years Old in 2010



Source: Public Safety 2011

85 EPPSO 2007.
86 Marshall Islands Journal 2009.
87 Government of RMI and UNDP 2009.
88 Public Safety 2011.

crime as being drunk and disorderly behavior, disturbing the peace, vandalism and theft. Young men are far more likely to be charged with a criminal offence and engage more in criminal activities according to citation records. In 2009, the number of criminal citations attributed to young men aged between 16 and 21 outnumbered those of young women ten to one. Furthermore, there has been a 71 percent increase in the number of citations against young people from 2009 to 2010, with three offenders aged only 14 years old.⁸⁹ The widespread involvement of alcohol consumption in the committing of crimes in Majuro was reported by all sectors including the police.

Assaults

During consultations there was a wide variety of opinions amongst participants about whether or not gangs exist in Majuro.⁹⁰ However, government officials and young people agreed that physical fights that constitute assaults between groups of young men of different neighborhoods are common. Most fights occur because of verbal taunts, disagreements about intimate relationships and rivalry in sports. The participants are often drunk and fights usually include punching, kicking, stone throwing and using makeshift weapons such as wooden sticks. That said, the 2003 quantitative *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* on high school students in the Marshall Islands found that amongst young male students, almost one quarter had carried a weapon of some sort in the last month and nearly half of them had been involved in a physical fight within the last year.⁹¹ One third of female students had also been in a fight in the previous twelve months. It was reported that physical fights also occurred on school grounds, with 17 percent of students reporting to have been in a physical fight at school in the last 12 months and one in five having been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the last year.⁹² This indicates a substantive proportion of young men and women who are getting involved in violence – some are criminally charged whilst other might be victims of these attacks.

"I had a full time job at a shop but every weekend from Friday to Sunday I would drink, get in to fights, play guitar and sing. Then I got in big trouble and now I really regret it"

Young man

"90 percent of crime is alcohol related, including crime by many youth under the legal drinking age of 21"

Police officer

Drug Related Crimes

The *National Youth Policy 2009-2014* states: "Alcohol abuse is cited as one of the underlying causes of other issues such as domestic violence, juvenile crime, school drop-out, teenage pregnancy, and poor work performance."⁹³ This was corroborated by young people and other participants who reported that alcohol was seen to be the most prevalent drug and the strongest exacerbating risk factor for crime and violence. Fifteen percent of young men and 6.4 percent of young women began drinking before the age of 13.⁹⁴ The Majuro District Court shows that within the period of 2007 and 2008, 296 young people were charged with 'drunken underage' and according to the *MIEPI 2010 Substance Abuse Epidemiological Profile* this is an increasing trend.⁹⁵ To add to this

89 Public Safety 2011.

90 The National Youth Policy 2009-2014 Draft acknowledges the existence of gangs as did a number of interviewees. There was some opposition to the use of the word gangs with a number of people referring to them as groups instead. Gangs for them implied US style gangs using colours and hand signs and involved in organized illegal behavior which participants claimed Marshallese groups did not engage in.

91 Ministry of Education 2003.

92 Balling et al. 2003.

93 MIA 2010:11.

94 Balling et al. 2003.

95 MIEPI 2010.



the illegal sale of alcohol was flagged by a range of participants as a cause for concern. Better enforcement of liquor laws and a crackdown on under-age consumption of alcohol and other drugs such as marijuana would assist in decreasing young people's involvement in crime and/or violence.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crime

The 2007 *Demographic and Health Survey* reports that 30 percent of women have experienced physical violence in the home and almost one in four have experienced it in the last 12 months. The proportion of women who have experienced domestic violence is highest in the 25 to 39 age range; however one-in-three women between 15 to 19 years old are most likely to have experienced it in the last twelve months. More than half of divorced, separated or widowed women reported to have experienced domestic violence, suggesting that it might be a source of marriage breakdown. Approximately 90 percent of violence is perpetrated by husbands and/or boyfriends suggesting that men are often the perpetrators of violence in the home.⁹⁶ Conversely, 12 percent of never-married women admitted to having initiated violence against an intimate partner.⁹⁷

Sexual violence is also prevalent with one third of young women in the 15 to 19 year old cohort having experienced sexual violence.⁹⁸ Moreover, seven percent of 15 to 19 year olds and 16 percent of women aged 20 to 24 years old had their first sexual intercourse forced upon them. In another survey, 29 percent of high school students reported to have been forced to have sexual intercourse. One in ten married women has been forced to have sexual intercourse by their husbands when they did not want to.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ EPPSO 2007.

⁹⁷ Ibid. (pp. 261-264). This figure is expected to be a lower figure than reality due to women having to admit initiating violence against their husband as opposed to reporting violence against themselves. Furthermore, there was only one question on this issue as opposed to seven about report violence as a victim. This figure is for initiating violence not self-defence.

⁹⁸ EPPSO 2007 Sexual violence is defined here as being forced to perform sexual intercourse or any other sexual act against one's will.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

While there has been an increasing awareness in RMI of domestic violence as a problem and recognition that it is a serious violation of human rights and a crime, it is still prevalent.¹⁰⁰ Both civil society and the government claimed that it is often fuelled by alcohol and is still largely unspoken about in the community. According to government research literature, women in RMI are socialized to accept and tolerate domestic violence and for these experiences to remain unspoken.¹⁰¹ Civil society leaders and government officials stated that young people who have been direct victims and/or witnesses of violence in the home were more likely to become perpetrators of violence themselves. A number of respondents said that such young people were more likely to drop out of school and usually tried to solve problems through violence.

4.4 Institutional Responses in Support of Youth

A number of government initiatives that address the needs and challenges facing young people are working successfully in Majuro. However, there are still gaps and shortages of services which continue to impact on the ability of young people and their issues to be effectively managed and supported at various institutional levels. These gaps and shortages need to be addressed so as to achieve the full potential of young people.

Political Institutions' Engagement with Youth

"Who can I speak to? I am too embarrassed to speak to my mom or dad. I tend just to talk with my friends about my problems but they don't always give the good advice"

Young woman

The Marshall Islands' Nitijela is comprised of 33 senators, only one of which is a woman; although it is positive that she is a cabinet minister. Since 1979 women have had the right to vote and stand for election, but they have had limited success in being elected to the national parliament. The last few parliaments have had only a single female member. Notably, the legislative branch has historically been dominated by older male members of the Marshallese community, which has resulted in young people's voices not regularly being heard at national decision-making forums. Despite this, there has as yet been no consideration of whether it would be useful to reserve any seats for young people in the national legislature.

It is important that young people are more actively engaged in the development of their communities and are brought in to be part of decision-making processes. The need for more opportunities for dialogue between young people and decision makers is essential so that positive contributions can be made and young people feel that they are a resource in the community rather than a burden. The continuation of the first Youth Nitijela in 2010 could be an effective methodology for raising political awareness amongst young people and developing their civic commitment. Likewise, leadership forums, roundtables with senators and schools outreach by the Nitijela itself could be considered. The Nitijela Health, Education and Social Affairs Committee could also be used by senators to consider youth issues in more detail.

Government Youth Policies

Launched in 2001, *Vision 2018: The Strategic Development Plan Framework 2003-2018* is the long term development plan for RMI. It presents a vision of where the nation would like to be in 2018. *Vision 2018* cites ten challenges, including high investment for education

¹⁰⁰ EPPSO 2007 and numerous interviews.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

and research, and ten goals which include “an educated people”, “respecting culture and traditions” and “respecting individual freedom and fundamental human rights”, all of which are directly related to youth development.¹⁰² While *Vision 2018* recognizes the high proportion of young people in the population, there is no particular focus or section on youth.

The development of the *National Youth Policy (2009-2014)* involved extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders.¹⁰³ Overall, the *National Youth Policy* is a promising document that sets out priorities for youth, guiding principles and values, and a vision for youth development. It covers seven policy areas, with numerous and ambitious recommendations for actions in each area (Table 4.1). In the current Policy it is acknowledged that in relation to the previous policy drafted in 1998 that “although this policy and work program was the Government’s principle mechanism for promoting youth development, implementation has not progressed due to insufficient human and financial resources and a lack of awareness, ‘ownership’ and commitment by the service providers across the sector.”¹⁰⁴ This lack of dedicated resources needs to be addressed, coupled with serious political will at the highest levels if the new policy is to live up to the expectations of stakeholders.

Table 4.1 Key Issues and Actions in National Youth Policy

Key Issue	Action
Young people, families and communities	Address issues that exist between youth, their families and communities.
Education and training	Improve and strengthen formal, informal and non-formal education and training for young people.
Career development, employment and livelihood	Expand livelihood opportunities through provision of a wide range of targeted vocational and employment preparation and life skills training.
Health and social services	Improve and strengthen health programmes and social services for young people.
Cultural heritage and creative arts	Foster the Marshallese culture among young people and to use culture as a way to address the other social and economic issues faced by the communities and young people.
Sports and leisure	Promote personal development of youth through increased opportunities for sports and recreational activities.

Youth machineries and youth development programmes Promote greater support, strong leadership, adequate resources and cooperation and partnership between government, NGOs, communities and young people to realize the aspirations of young people.

Youth Institutions and Key Organizations

The Marshall Islands Youth Advisory Board was initially established in 1986 to review the *National Youth Policy* and ensure that the Policy is integrated throughout other national initiatives and plans by government and civil society.¹⁰⁵ The Youth Services Bureau, which is hosted by the Community Development Department within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is now the main government office charged with coordinating initiatives and developing

102 RMI 2001:38-43
 103 MIA 2010.
 104 Ibid:7.
 105 Ibid.

policy for youth. This includes the *National Youth Policy 2009-2014*, which was endorsed by Congress in December 2010.

The Marshall Islands National Youth Congress (MIYC) was established in 1998. It aims to increase the participation of young people in national and local development, enrich and enhance the lives of young people and empower local youth councils. Alongside the Youth Services Bureau the MIYC assists in organizing annual national youth week events, provides training in response to the identified needs of youth groups and engages with community youth coordinators within local youth groups.¹⁰⁶ At present the MIYC is receiving capacity building assistance from the Pacific Youth Council and it aims to continue working in mobilizing funds and supporting young people in RMI.

Justice Institutions and Policies

The Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Attorney General, and Public Safety are all part of the justice system in RMI. However, the justice system has limited capacity and resources to effectively carry out its priorities in terms of juvenile offenders. Some basic protocols exist for the handling of juveniles (defined as young people 17 years old and younger), however further assistance and work needs to be undertaken particularly in the area of legislation, juvenile facilities and rehabilitation programmes.

Police are usually the first point of contact for young people involved in crime and violence. For common crimes such as drunken and disorderly behaviour, a juvenile police investigator will meet with the young person's parents and the young person in question. They may be simply given a warning and parents are then expected to follow up by disciplining the young person. If on probation, young people are required to report monthly. Counselling is available and referrals may be made to the *Waan Aelon in Majel* (WAM-Canoes of the Marshall Islands) programme, which also includes Alcoholic Anonymous sessions. WAM recently completed a jail-based "In-Reach" programme, in coordination with relevant government agencies. The programme ran for six weeks and featured counseling, rehabilitation, and vocational and life skills training. It is considered as a civil society initiative that has been very successful and should be considered for additional support and funding.



¹⁰⁶ UNICEF 2003.

Bringing juveniles to trial is a route taken only for serious offenders. There are currently no special facilities in RMI for juvenile trials. It was understood that in August 2010 there was approximately four juveniles in detention. However there is also no special section within the prison for juveniles. A cell behind the central police station reception is used to house juveniles, as it is separate from the adult's section of the prison. Because there is no special youth recreation area, juveniles mix with adults during this time. Bathroom facilities are also shared. Renovations to the prison were underway as of August 2010, but special juvenile facilities will not be part of the new structure. Noting that there are usually only a small number of juveniles being held in detention, the cost of providing separate facilities should be relatively low and should be considered by Government to ensure basic international standards for the care of juvenile offenders.

It was reported that traditional justice systems are no longer used in Majuro but a number of participants suggested reinvigorating such practices and incorporating them in to the formal justice system. Consideration would have to be given to ensuring that opportunities for abuse of traditional justice systems are kept in check.

4.5 Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience

Risk and resilience factors coexist to create a context in which young men and women are more or less likely to engage in crime and/or violence. Risks reported by young people during consultations include lack of opportunities to constructively contribute to society, learn new skills and inadequate parental support. Involvement in formal activities designed for youth, such as church groups, volunteering, and a guiding and supportive family environment were all identified by participants as resilience factors that deter young people from crime and violence. These factors and more will be identified in the following section to assist policy-makers and stakeholders to identify priority strategies to address youth issues.

Growing the Employment Opportunities for Youth

The Compact of Free Association with the United States is the main source of GDP and accounted for 61 percent of the 2010 national budget.¹⁰⁷ The public sector is the largest employer in the Marshall Islands employing around 41 percent of the formal sector workforce.¹⁰⁸ Coastal fisheries and subsistence agriculture were traditionally a major source of income for most people, but for a large number of people currently living in the urban centres this is no longer an option. Other sources of employment are in agriculture, primarily subsistence based, as well as commercial coconut and breadfruit plantations; however these are not based in the urban centres of Majuro and Ebeye. Small scale industry includes tuna processing, copra, coconut oil, ornamental clams/coral, and handicrafts. Tourism employs about ten percent of the formal workforce.¹⁰⁹ Unemployment is estimated to be 36 percent,¹¹⁰ with growth rates of the working age population outpacing job growth rates, leaving many young people unemployed. The fact that approximately two thirds of young people are estimated to be out-of-work is a major source of social tension.¹¹¹

“My parents want me to be a doctor but I’m not interested and not clever enough. I want to learn more about making canoes”

Young woman

107 U.S. Department of State 2010

108 EPPSO 2007.

109 Government of U.S. Department of State 2010 and RMI & UNDP 2009.

110 RMI and UNDP 2009

111 Ibid.

During consultations, young people and civil society stated that the effect of unemployment often results in low self-esteem, which makes them more susceptible to substance abuse and violence. Young people claimed that employment would help them become more responsible and proud participants in their community. Entrepreneurial aspirations among young people were also mentioned as an area in which the Government could provide support. When questioned about this, young people responded that the ability to rely on other family members for basic needs reduces the incentive for young people to create employment opportunities for themselves.

The National Training Council (NTC) is committed to “building skills and work ethics through innovation, training and partnership.” The NTC has a history of fulfilling this objective for almost 20 years through the provision of vocational and other training programmes, arranging apprenticeships and assisting trainees to find employment. Its main target audience is unemployed young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Its areas of focus include not only technical and vocational skills training, but also basic education and life skills to improve youth employability. The NTC utilizes a range of training providers such as the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI), University of the South Pacific and WAM. It also develops the work ethic of young people and strengthens the TVET policy environment.¹¹²

NTC’s “Accelerated Boot Camp (ABC) Tool Box” programme runs out of CMI for ten weeks at a time. It provides a comprehensive approach to supporting young men and women to become more productive, through the provision of life skills (such as mathematics, English, and work ethics), health education (exercise, nutrition, diet), and basic vocational skills such as carpentry, motor repair and electric wiring. Although widely recognized and generally viewed favorably, one donor expressed concern about the ABC Tool Box programme shifting its initial aim away from supporting unemployed youth-at-risk to find employment, towards boosting the skills of high school graduates who cannot quite meet the academic standard to enter into CMI.

Improving the Quality and Relevance of Education

Another high risk factor stated by young people, government and civil society was school disengagement or ‘drop-out’ which left them with low employability. The reasons behind drop-out as cited by young people and civil society are manifold: lack of sufficient places within schools at the higher levels of formal education; lack of interest; difficulty in paying school costs; and early pregnancies. A 2003 study also found that almost one third of students had not gone to school sometime in the previous month because they felt unsafe at school or on their commute to school, suggesting that violence may be another factor in school drop-out.¹¹³

The focus of the educational system on academic credentials rather than vocational education and skills training is also an issue. The education system is geared toward managerial and/or administrative work for which there are limited opportunities, even for high school and college graduates. This is compounded by the stigma attached to vocational work such as plumbing, motor repair and electrical wiring. Participants mentioned that parents generally aspire for their children to become government or private sector employees due to the perceived status that these positions hold. However, the challenge to receive a higher education is often difficult and support structures such as tutoring for young people who might be struggling with their workload are often not in place forcing a number of students to drop-out.

¹¹² NTC 2010a; NTC 2010b.

¹¹³ Balling et al 2003.

CMI is considered the main post-secondary institution in RMI offering certificate and degree programmes in various fields and at different levels. The Ministry of Education's National Vocational Training Institute offers vocational training, with the support of NTC. WAM also offers some vocational training courses. However, the quality and relevance of the educational framework for these institutions require further analysis and research.

Finally, relevance and quality of education continues to be seen as a key issue that needs to be addressed in the Marshall Islands.¹¹⁴ During consultations, a number of civil society leaders, government officials and young people claimed that there needs to be a greater emphasis on vocational skill development and wider acceptance in society of vocational trades as a legitimate and valuable career path.

Tackling Substance Abuse

Substance abuse,¹¹⁵ together with unemployment, was the most commonly raised risk factor mentioned throughout consultations. The *2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey* found that 41 percent of high school students had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days prior to the survey. The occurrence was higher amongst young men (53 percent) than young women (31 percent). This study also showed that the issue of 'binge drinking' was a concern, showing that 29 percent of high school students consumed five or more alcoholic beverages in a row.¹¹⁶

The urban centres of Majuro and Ebeye are singled out in the current *National Youth Policy* as places where youth binge drinking is commonplace. The large number of outlets selling cheap alcohol to youth outside of legal hours was mentioned by several government officials as one of the causes for alcohol abuse and binge drinking. The production of *jemanin* or home-brew was also reported by participants to be harmful and in need of attention. Police claimed that 90 percent of crimes committed by young men and women were done under the influence of alcohol. Other problems identified relating to alcohol was the negative mental and physical health effects, family problems caused or exacerbated by alcohol including domestic violence, fighting amongst individuals and groups, and financial hardship.

The use of illegal drugs was also mentioned during consultations. This included marijuana, inhalants and other drugs. However, the most common was marijuana. More than three times as many young men (31 percent) than young women (nine percent) reported ever using marijuana. Approximately twice as many young men as young women had also used other substances such as methamphetamines.¹¹⁷ In consultations also participants confirmed that there is greater substance abuse by young men than by young women.

Fortunately, there is already a strong recognition of the problem of substance abuse in RMI. In a 2009 survey, 94 percent of respondents thought substance abuse prevention efforts need to be expanded. Moreover, youth themselves acknowledge the issue, with young people under 25 years of age more likely to regard substance abuse as a serious problem. On a scale of one to ten, respondents rated eight the importance to their community of preventing substance abuse among youth age 15 to 25.¹¹⁸



"I haven't drunk in four years now. I quit because I have family now and I don't want to make trouble"

Young man

114 Government of RMI and UNDP 2009.

115 Substance abuse covers abuse of alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, betel nut, *kava/sakau*, hard drugs, marijuana, and other soft drugs.

116 MIEPI 2010.

117 Balling et al. 2003.

118 Brobrae Project 2010.

It is positive that there are already a number of programmes being implemented in RMI which are making an impact to address substance abuse. Back in 2002, the Marshall Islands Ministry of Finance was put in charge of administering a grant for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment from the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.¹¹⁹ From this grant a number of initiatives are funded; The Bobrae Project, which will run from 2009 to 2013, provides grants to local organizations to fulfill the following three aims:

- Reduce the onset and reduce the progression of substance abuse, including childhood and underage drinking;
- Reduce substance-abuse related problems in communities; and,
- Build prevention capacity and infrastructure at the state and community levels.¹²⁰

A number of civil society organizations receive grants from the Bobrae Project. One of the most successful programmes is Youth to Youth in Health, which runs a range of programmes for young people at-risk. It works specifically on substance abuse prevention on the ground. It runs activities from a youth health centre centrally located in Majuro. Two peer educators work at the youth centre assisting with substance abuse prevention programs. The Youth SMART programme run by Youth to Youth in Health targets school children aged six to 15 that are out of the formal school system. It focuses more on prevention and its ultimate aim is to get young people back into the formal school system as a way to prevent substance abuse.

Finally, a community based organization called Marshall Islands Epidemiology and Prevention Initiative (MIEPI) also works on substance abuse prevention, planning, and epidemiological surveillance. Through extensive data collection, MIEPI produces reports of research findings and makes policy and programming recommendations to government. They also undertake educational campaigns in relation to the sale of alcohol and tobacco to minors, reporting good traction amongst community members and merchants.¹²¹

Opportunities for Meaningful Activity

Young people reported that it was not just lack of employment that undermined their self-confidence and self-esteem, but also opportunities to engage in other meaningful activities. Although there are some opportunities with church groups and civil society, not all young people were aware of these opportunities nor were they necessarily interested. A number of young people expressed their disappointment at the limited sporting facilities and organized sporting events. Others wanted more chances to learn job and vocational skills through non-formal educational channels. Avenues of expression through crafts, music and arts were also suggested by young people. Without meaningful activities young people are more susceptible to becoming involved in negative behaviors.

Involvement in projects targeting young people was seen to increase resilience. In interviews with participants who were involved in such projects, many reported that they had been able to change former negative behavior patterns, such as smoking and binge drinking. They also developed goals that they aspired to and stayed away from violence due to the fact that they were now perceived as role models. Although facilities are limited, playing sports such as basketball and volleyball are popular activities for young people to stay healthy and develop leadership, friendship and teamwork skills. Access to such activities and facilities were mentioned by young people to be a constructive way to support them and stay away from crime and violence.

119 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2009.

120 WUTMI 2010

121 UNAIDS 2010.

As noted earlier, WAM is a particular civil society initiative that has been very successful. WAM provides both “cultural strengthening” and vocational skills training through “long-standing elements of Marshallese culture – canoe building, traditional and contemporary boat building, sailing and navigation, woodworking and weaving.” WAM’s main programme is a six-month “Traditional, Vocational and Life Skills Training” programme which is implemented with support from the NTC. As well as learning traditional canoe building and carpentry, trainees receive counseling and Alcoholics Anonymous sessions as well as life and job skills. They also have a programme researching and promoting traditional navigation and a six-week summer programme for basic vocational skill building and civic education. Usually, around one third of participants in most programmes are young women.¹²³ Participants are a mixed group, ranging from young people in college to high school drop outs.

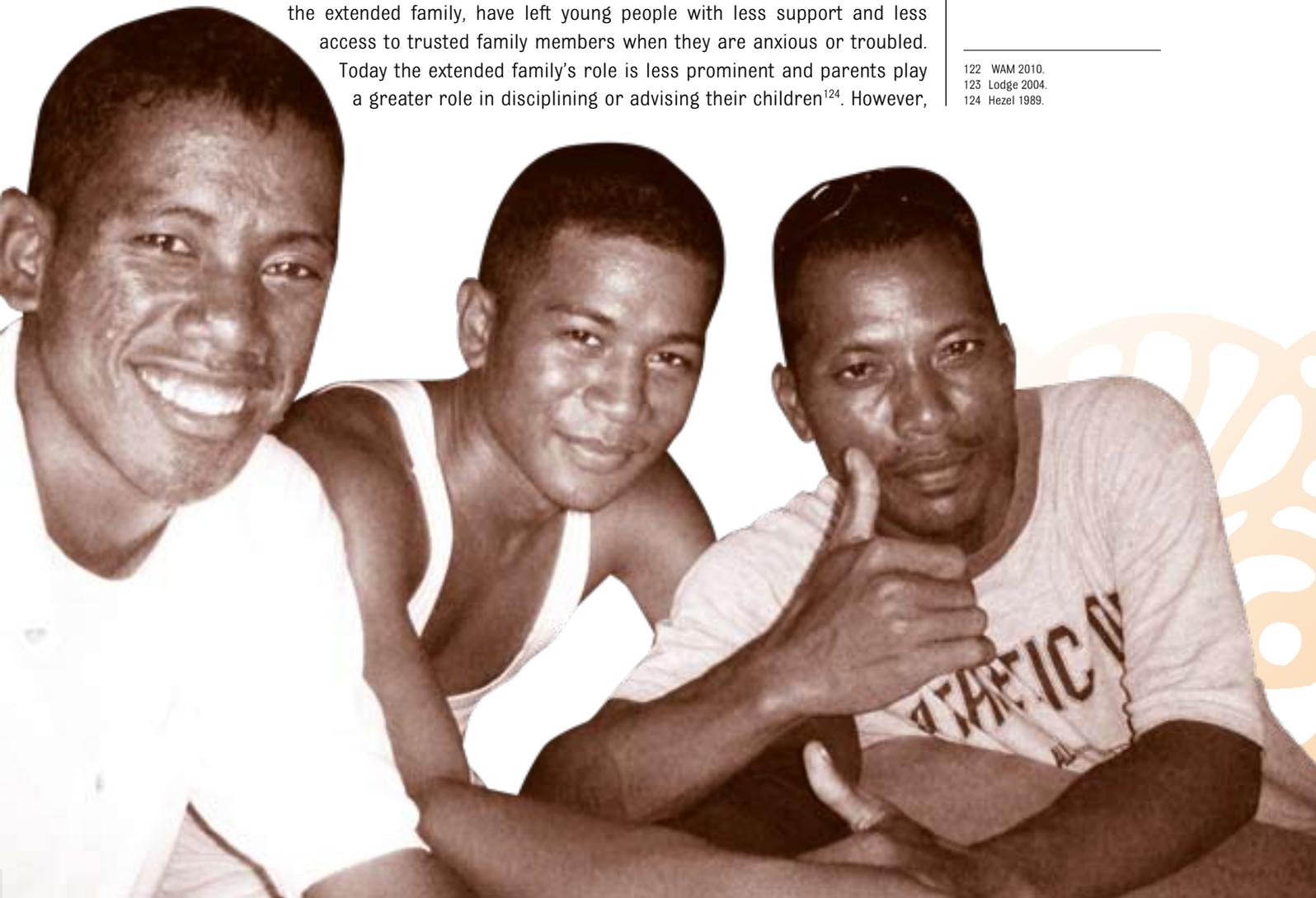
As with other Pacific island nations, the church also plays a pivotal role in society. The church was mentioned by several young people as a place where they could find guidance and meaning in their lives. Through the church, young people are involved in religious activities such as bible study, choir, and prayer groups. There are also many church-based youth groups which are often led by young people themselves. Involvement in church youth groups helped a number of young people to find direction and to give up or reduce negative behaviors. They were also able to get guidance from church leaders.

Family Challenges

The importance of the family in Marshallese culture is highly valued, including family kinship networks, traditional customs and the passing on of customary values to the next generation.¹²² However, changing structure and roles within the family, especially the extended family, have left young people with less support and less access to trusted family members when they are anxious or troubled.

Today the extended family’s role is less prominent and parents play a greater role in disciplining or advising their children¹²⁴. However,

¹²² WAM 2010.
¹²³ Lodge 2004.
¹²⁴ Hezel 1989.



young people reported that they do not feel comfortable talking to their parents about many issues and problems. Some also felt that they did not have access to uncles, aunts and grandparents that could play the role of confidante, counselor or advisor.

A number of participants stated that families are also being separated by migration, especially to the urban centres of Majuro and Ebeye and the US. The impact on children and young people that have been left behind is yet to be fully understood. However, it was anecdotally considered that young people are suffering from these separations and are often perceived to be more at risk due to the lack of supervision and guardianship from extended family members who are in charge of their care. These changes mean that young people have less access to trusted guidance, less discipline and authority, lower self-esteem, more vulnerability to peer pressure, and are more susceptible to turning to groups of friends with similar issues to find belonging. For both young men and women this leads to an increased chance of becoming involved in crime, violence, early sexual activity and/or substance abuse.

Societal Challenges

Young people participating in this study identified peer pressure as a push factor for involvement in crime and violence. Some young people found it hard to say “no” to being involved in drinking sessions and often subsequent violent or risky behavior even if they felt it was wrong. Some of these behaviors included having unprotected sex under the influence of alcohol, property damage and physical fights with other peers. However, it was also stated that peer pressure could also be a positive influence on young people and examples of young people who participate in peer to peer education was particularly highlighted.

“We are learning not only skills but about our traditions. Later I will definitely use the skills I am learning now because I want to be a captain of a ship even though my parents don't want me to do that job”

Young man on WAM programme

Law and justice sector officials also commented on the influences of criminal deportees arriving back to Majuro from Guam and the United States mainland. These individuals are said to be mainly young men who are perceived to have “wasted” their opportunities abroad. Some of the young men are reported to have been affiliated with gangs in the United States whilst other committed crimes that constituted their removal from the countries abroad. Law and justice officials raised this as a concern due to the fact that is not widely known what the recidivism rates of these young people are and also the implications of their arrival on the local community has not been fully understood.

Rapid urbanization from rural-urban migration was another issue that was mentioned as a possible risk factor by stakeholders. Young people and families usually migrate to Majuro and Ebeye Islands in the hope of better economic, educational and health care service prospects. However, upon arrival to these urban centres they are faced with over-crowded housing, less traditional village support mechanisms, and limited employment opportunities. These issues are causing social tension through upheaval in family structure and roles, as well as the pressure on services and infrastructure to cater for the influx of people to urban centres. The impact on the lives of young people varies, but anecdotally many young people feel disheartened and engage in high-risk behaviors as a way to cope.



4.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the large and continually expanding population of young people in Marshallese society, the government and development partners need to tackle youth issues more vigorously. The future cost of not providing support and opportunities to the current generation of youth as they transition in to adulthood will be much higher than if concrete and sincere policies and programmes are put in place now. Please note that a number of the recommendations in the Pacific Overview and Regional Recommendations chapter are relevant to Majuro as well.

Recommendations

- Expand places for vocational training and align them with emerging needs domestically and abroad.
- Implement priorities in the National Youth Policy 2014 to capitalize on its recent endorsement.
- Expand cooperation between justice system institutions and civil organizations such as NTC and WAM to place youth in conflict with the law into programmes developing vocational and life skills.
- Continue support to the MIEPI programme in tracking trends in substance abuse as a basis for policy and programme development.
- Develop and enact specific legislation for youth offenders.
- Support to the reintegration and resettlement of criminal deportees.
- Explore possibility of reinvigorating traditional justice practices as part of the formal justice system.



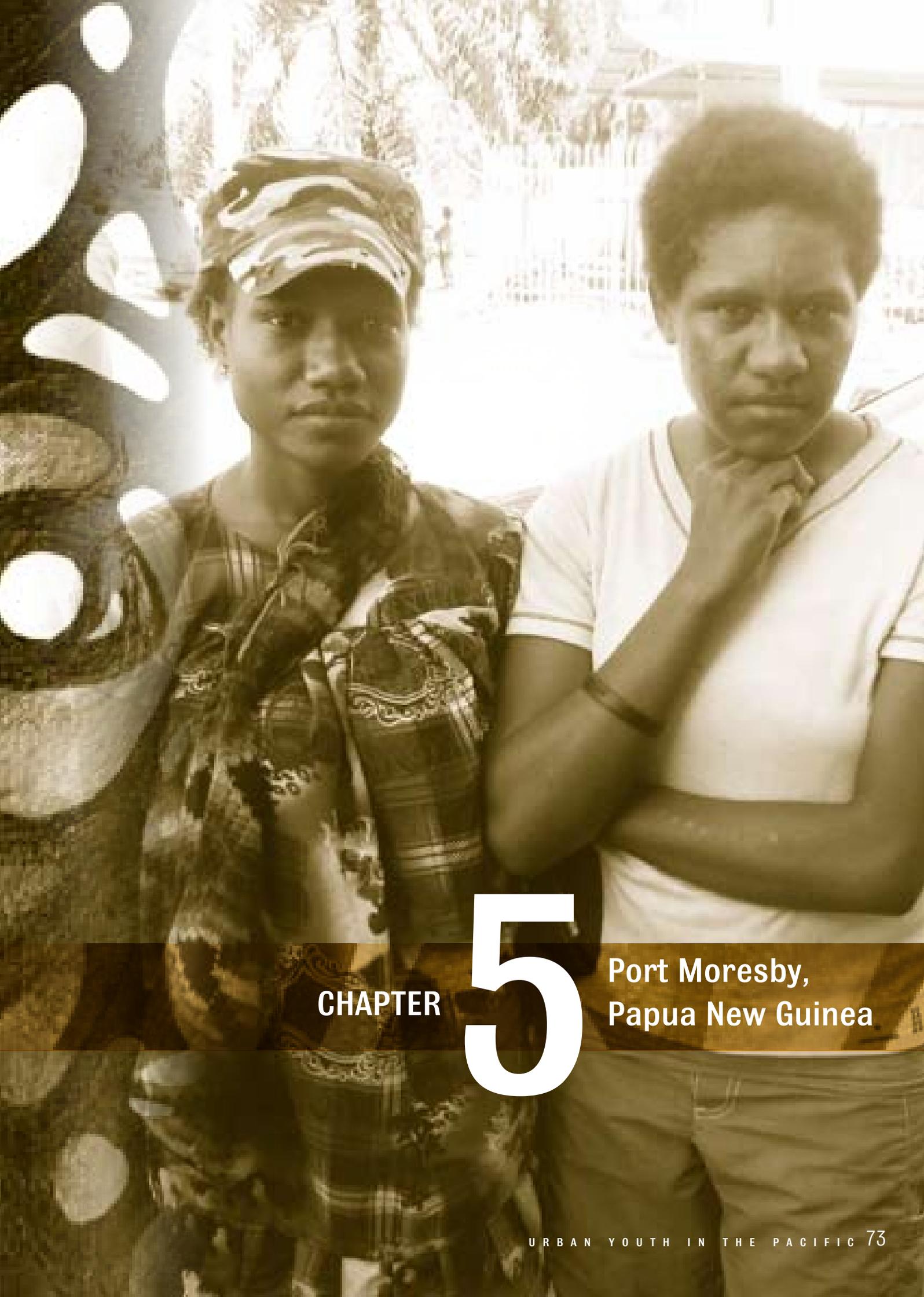
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CHAPTER

5

Port Moresby,
Papua New Guinea

5

Chapter Five: Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

5.1 Introduction

This Urban Centre Case Study discusses youth crime and violence in Port Moresby,¹²⁵ Papua New Guinea (PNG). The research team conducted focus groups discussions and number of interviews in Port Moresby with young people, government actors and civil society organizations, which provided the main basis for the findings. Additionally, a desk review of available reports and statistics was conducted. Finally, this case study includes a set of specific national recommendations for consideration by policy-makers, as well as community stakeholders and the donor community.

The *National Youth Policy of Papua New Guinea 2007-2017* defines youth as individuals aged between 12 and 25. In recognition of 'older' youth, it also welcomes individuals older than 25 years to participate in youth programming.¹²⁶ In the justice system, a juvenile is legally defined as an individual between seven and 17 years old inclusively.¹²⁷ Culturally however, the age of youth depends on roles, health and involvement in community life.¹²⁸ This actually has significant policy and development implications because it has meant that adults (predominately older men) claim to be youth in an attempt to represent young people in power structures and activities. This can be an obstacle for young people's voices to be heard and for adequate gender perspectives to be taken into consideration in decision-making forums.¹²⁹

"I am happy. I enjoy the life I am now living. I feel blessed. I just want to help young people to become successful. God is priority in everything I do "

Young woman

In Port Moresby; a city that faces substantial challenges due to the highest rates of crime, illiteracy and poverty in the Pacific, young people are exposed to a number of risk and resilience factors. The risk factors that increase the likelihood of involvement of young people in crime and violence include: unemployment and lack of other meaningful activity; low literacy rates and poor quality/relevancy of education; frequent exposure to violence in the home and immediate community; the breakdown of extended family structure; tension between rural traditions and urban lifestyles; existence of *raskol*¹³⁰ gangs; availability of mood altering substances; and pervasive poverty.

Despite this setting most young people are not involved in crime and violence and are eager for an opportunity to contribute positively to their communities. Government has developed youth and justice policies and supporting structures but is struggling to implement them effectively. Police and correctional service institutions in particular need to improve the treatment and handling of young offenders by actually putting in to practice the well-developed protocols already in existence.

5.2 National Context

PNG has the lowest Human Development Index (HDI)¹³¹ in the Pacific region, ranking 148 out of 182 countries worldwide.¹³¹ Port Moresby is generally thought to have higher per capita

125 For the purposes of this study Port Moresby includes both the NCDC district and all surrounding settlements even though they may not be located within the official city boundary.

126 National Youth Commission of Papua New Guinea 2007.

127 Juvenile Courts Act. 1991. Fully gazetted in 2003. Children under seven years old are termed as infants and youth above 18 are treated as adults in the PNG justice system.

128 Based on these differences CSOs in Port Moresby have different definitions of youth; City Mission defines youth as between 16 and 24 years old while OXFAM uses the 18 to 25 age bracket.

129 Renkin and Hughes 2006.

130 *Raskol* is Pidgin or Tok Pisin and is derived from the English word 'rascal'. It is commonly used to describe the numerous gangs that undertake criminal activity mainly in Port Moresby and Lae in PNG.

131 The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and gross enrolment in education) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income). See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/> for further details.

132 UNDP 2009b.

income levels than the national average although the most recent data is only from 1996. In 2009, the second MDG Report for PNG found that the country has not been able to meet any global MDG targets, although there was improvement in some goals such as reducing infant mortality. In 2003 the government developed its own Medium Term Development Strategy 2005-2010 targets, however, most of these have also not been met due to the lack of data to measure progress.

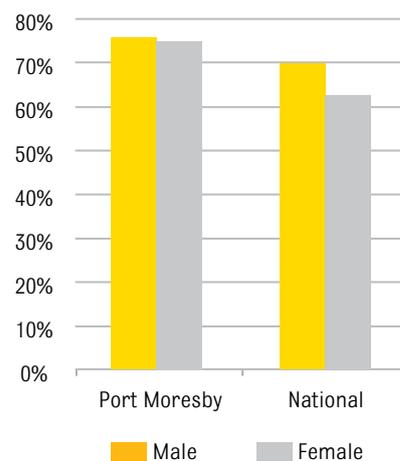
PNG's economy is one of the fastest growing in the region. Economic growth was seven percent in 2010 and GDP is predicted to be eight and a half percent in 2011. The 2011 budget, at USD 3.5 billion, has record development funding allocations for education, health and infrastructure.¹³³ The Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) project construction will be the mainstay of economic growth in the short-term, but exporting will not begin until 2015. A Sovereign Wealth Fund Working Group has been established to manage the financial 'windfall' to the Government and there are high hopes it could be used to address long-standing development issues. However, there is a correspondingly large risk of major conflict if disrupted or not managed well. The LNG Project has also raised unrealistic expectations of employment amongst young people.

Education levels in PNG are the lowest in the region. Nationally, the adult literacy rate is 60 percent. 29 percent of young people between the ages of 12 and 25 currently attend educational institutions. In Port Moresby, the situation is marginally better than the national average (Figure 5.1). Only seven percent of youth in Port Moresby have never attended school, while nationally one third of children have never attended school.¹³⁴ Low enrolment rates are due to lack of infrastructure, insufficient personnel and inability of families to pay school fees.

PNG ratified CEDAW in 1995. However, it is ranked 124 out of 136 countries listed on the UNDP's gender development index meaning that women have few rights and little recourse to justice.¹³⁵ The rate of violence against women (see Section 5.3) is amongst the highest in the world. Adding to this is the rapidly growing number of HIV cases. Nationally it is thought that about half of all new HIV cases are young people, who are vulnerable to the infection, face barriers to treatment services, and are disproportionately affected when they lose family and community members to the virus.¹³⁶

PNG has one of the most ethnically diverse populations with over 800 indigenous languages¹³⁷ and a wide range of cultures in its population of approximately 6.2 million people.¹³⁸ The traditional land owners in the Port Moresby area are the Motu-Koita, who make up approximately 30,000 of the city's population.¹³⁹ The rest of Port Moresby's population comes from around the country, creating a diversity of cultures and traditions. Population estimates that include the 100-plus informal settlements located mainly on the city fringe range up to 500,000 people.¹⁴⁰ Due to urban migration the population is growing at 3.6 percent annually compared to the national average of 2.6 percent.¹⁴¹ There is a greater percentage of youth

Figure 5.1: Gross Enrolment Rates, Preparatory to Grade Eight



Source: Blank 2008

133 ADB 2011.

134 National Youth Commission of Papua New Guinea 2007; Blank 2008.

135 Oxfam Australia 2010.

136 Renkin and Hughes 2006.

137 Government of Papua New Guinea and United Nations in Papua New Guinea 2007.

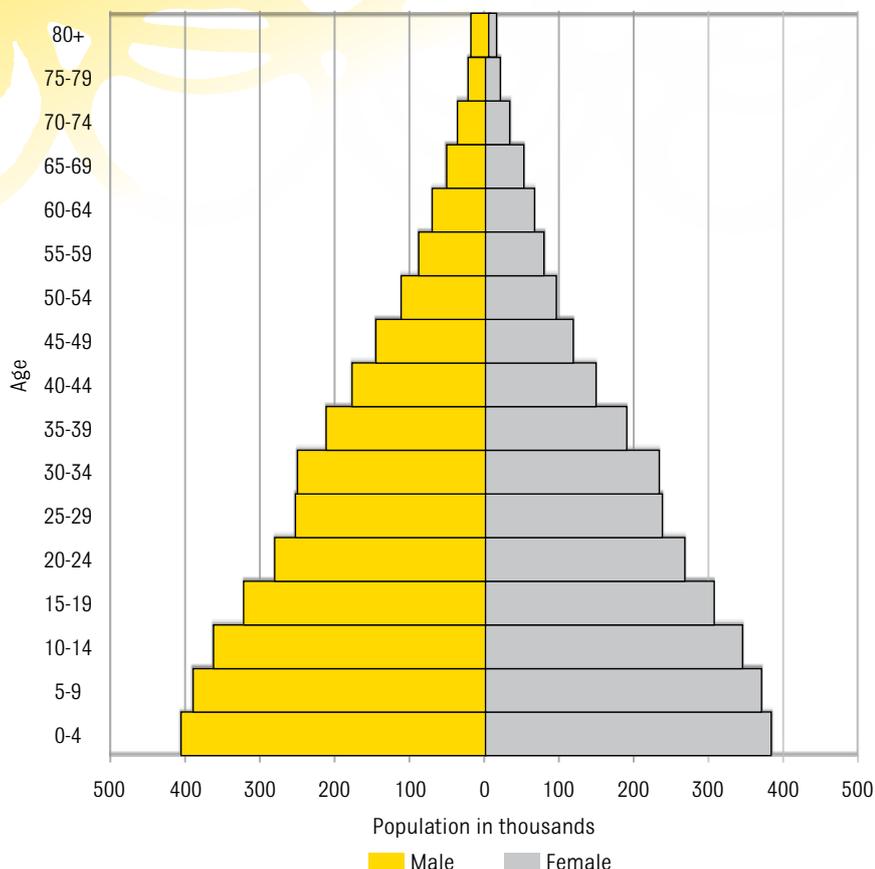
138 CIA 2011.

139 Sullivan, Warkia, Kee and Hunianguare 2010:15.

140 UN-ESCAP and UN-HABITAT 2009:63.

141 National Statistics Office 2003.

Figure 5.2: PNG Population Pyramid



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base

aged between 15 and 29 years old in Port Moresby (35 percent) compared to the national average (29 percent) (Figure 5.2). In total, approximately 70 percent of the population in Port Moresby is under 29 years of age.¹⁴²

During consultations, young representatives of the Motu-Koita people expressed their perception that there is tension between the Motu-Koita people and the new “settlers” over unauthorized settlements on traditional Motu-Koita land and over the perceived gradual displacement of Motu-Koita people out of the education system and civil service by other ethnic groups residing in Port Moresby.¹⁴³ That said there are many mixed ethnic groups living in relative peace in the same communities and some inter-ethnic marriages.

5.3 Young People as Victims and Perpetrators

Whilst some young people are involved in crime and violence there is massive potential for youth to contribute to economic, social and

cultural development. However, certain challenges prevent youth in accessing adequate support and services to empower them to engage meaningfully in civic and political participation. This can result in youth perpetrating crimes such as assault, theft, rape and murder. It can also lead to the victimization of young people both inside and outside of their homes.

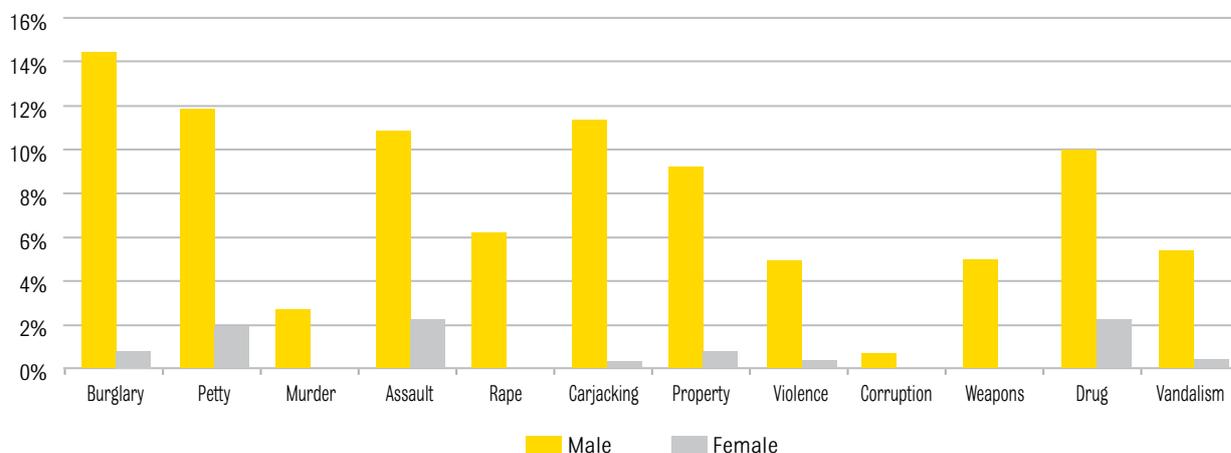
“I’m not going anywhere and I don’t have anything to do. I am just hanging around”
 Young man

Common Crimes

Although Port Moresby only accounts for six percent of the population of PNG, it accounts for 30 percent of all crime.¹⁴⁴ The negative impact on the economy is massive with the government estimating that nine percent of business revenues are lost to crime.¹⁴⁵ Much of this crime is committed by young people, often involving physical violence. The most common crimes committed by young people were burglary, petty crimes, assault, carjacking, drug related, violence, rape and vandalism (Figure 5.3). A series of studies between 2004

142 UN-HABITAT 2004a; Blank 2008.
 143 Nou 2010.
 144 Sourced from confidential international security community in PNG.
 145 Department of National Planning and Monitoring 2010.

Figure 5.3 Types of Crime by Youth in Port Moresby

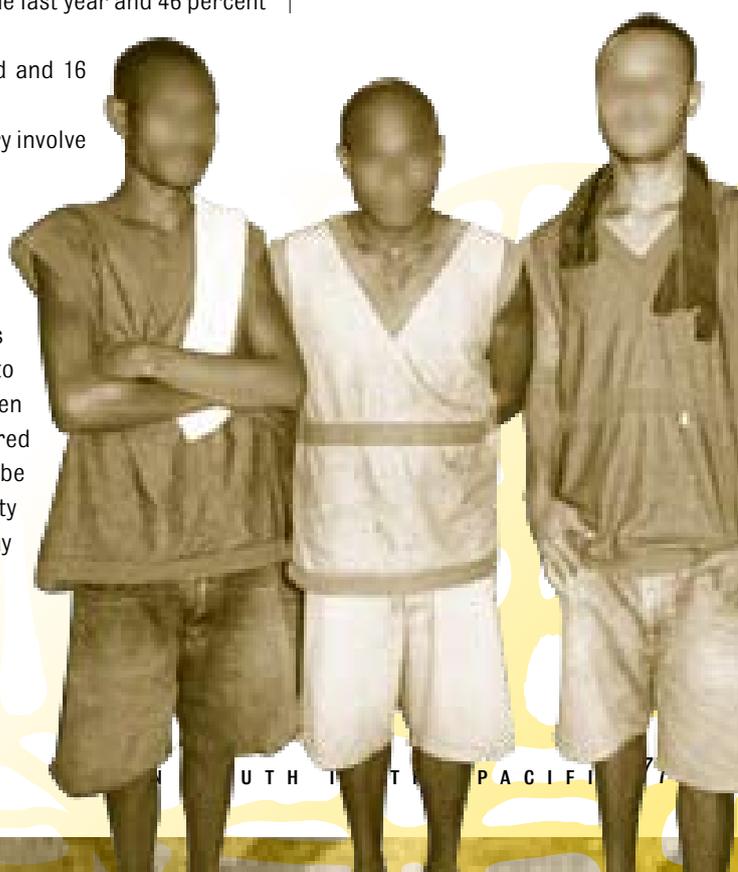


Source: Boamah and Stanley 2007

and 2007 in Port Moresby revealed the following alarming results:

- Youth aged between 19 and 29 are the most active age group in crime;
- Over one third of young people admitted to having committed criminal offences;
- Almost one quarter of respondents had taken part in burglary, one in five in petty crimes,¹⁴⁶ 19 percent in carjacking, and 18 percent in assault;
- One in ten male respondents had participated in rape and four percent in a murder;
- 15 percent of respondents were involved in organized crime trading drugs and/or weapons;
- Almost half of all crimes involved a high level of violence;
- One in ten young people belong to a gang, with ten percent of gang members being female;
- Less than half of the perpetrators were arrested for their crimes;
- 61 percent of households reported being a victim of crime in the last year and 46 percent were victims of multiple crimes;
- 22 percent of young people reported being physically abused and 16 percent sexually abused, and;
- Unlike in other Pacific nations many crimes of theft and burglary involve assault as well.¹⁴⁷

In discussion groups women were reported to engage in crime, however, they most often play a more supportive role such as assisting with planning crimes, harbouring criminals and aiding *raskals*. They were also said to act less in groups and more as individuals in crimes such as petty theft. Men were thought to be more physically violent and more likely to use a weapon when committing crimes. Motivations for involvement in crime differed according to stakeholders consulted. Young men were seen to be most likely seeking recognition from peers and/or the community as a 'hero'. They also were more likely to see crime as a pathway



146 Petty crimes refer to crimes such as bag snatching, vandalism, intoxication, pick-pocketing, and shoplifting.

147 UN-HABITAT 2004a; UN-HABITAT 2004b; Boamah and Stanley 2007.

to fame and fortune among peers. Women were more likely to be involved to meet personal and family needs, although men also felt some pressure to be the 'bread winner' of the family.

On an individual basis, both sexes were also identified as becoming involved in physical fights, especially when intoxicated, although women usually fought over problems arising from intimate relationships, while men fought over issues such as insults, property disputes and claims of authority. Lastly, both men and women were reported to be involved in substance abuse as users, smugglers, dealers and producers, especially homebrew and marijuana.

Group Violence

Inter-group fights in Port Moresby manifest mainly in the form of tribal or ethnic group fights, *raskol* gang fights and inter-school fights. It was reported by civil society and government officials that tribal fighting perpetuates a culture of violence in Port Moresby, as it is seen that fighting is a traditional way to resolve conflict.¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately the traditional dispute resolution mechanisms that are still often used to prevent or resolve conflict between tribes in rural areas before fighting erupts are not applicable in urban centres due to the breakdown of tribal structures and leadership.

Tribal structures have largely been lost in the process of urbanization.¹⁴⁹ Young people who have grown up Port Moresby generally do not regard themselves as members of tribes. However, their identity is still tied strongly to their broader ethnic group at the regional and sub-regional level. In this setting, individuals willingly support those people with whom they feel an affiliation for or *wantoks*.¹⁵⁰ Group fights in Port Moresby are based on broader affiliations of ethnicity or language rather than tribe as they would be in rural settings. The *wantok* system is undoubtedly a valuable social safety net, whereby *wantoks* in need are supported by other members of the family and community. However, the *wantok* system is reportedly subject to abuse by people taking advantage of this resource. Some young people admitted that due to the *wantok* system there was no strong motivation to get a job as they could live off relatives. Moreover, it was stated by participants that the *wantok* system is seen to be contributing to the harboring of criminals, due to the strong obligation to protect that person from the law even if he/she is a known criminal. Revenge crimes were also reported to be a negative aspect of the *wantok* system. For example, if a *wantok* is murdered, the other members of the *wantok* group are expected to exact revenge on the assailant without regard for the law. If the actual assailant cannot be found, then a revenge killing on a member of the murderer's *wantok* group might be carried out.

Violent inter-school fights between certain schools representing different ethnic groups in Port Moresby were also reported in the feedback workshop by a range of participants.

Raskol gangs are a feature of the criminal landscape in Port Moresby and are mainly composed of young people, in particular young men. According to *raskols* themselves and other participants, motivations to join are to secure an income, be recognized, gain status, find companionship, obtain protection, and to assert power and control. *Raskol* gangs were

148 See for example www.stuff.co.nz/world/south-pacific/4600874/Five-dead-in-PNG-capital-tribal-fight and <http://news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-world/homes-torched-in-port-moresby-tribal-fight-20101207-18nxx.html>.

149 In rural areas people from the same ethnic group or region such as the Central Highlands will fight against each other. There are no other large ethnic group to fight against. However, in urban areas, due to lack of individuals from the same tribe, people tend to associate with people tend to associate with others from the same broader region. Some stakeholders reported that in urban areas tensions exist between these broad regional or ethnic groups.

150 *Wantok* comes from the common language in Papua New Guinea, Tok Pisin, and means "same language" (wan=one or same and tok=language or talk). A *wantok* is therefore an individual or group of people who speaks one's language or share similar interests and cultures. The system is based on the concept of reciprocity and mutual relationships, a sense of community and a common identity. From Stella 2004.



reported as providing an alternative identity for youth based on their new urban settlement. During consultations, the researchers heard countless stories from young people who stated that they had “fallen in with the wrong crowd”, but that crowd had provided a form of companionship.

The leaders are generally older youth or adults that have come up through the ranks or have managed to establish their own gang. In the settlements some gang members are viewed as robin-hood-type heroes. Young children look up to them due to their power, influence and relative access to money. Some members are desperate to find other sources of income and leave the gang whilst others are career criminals who view *raskolism* as their way of life.

Most *raskols* use homemade firearms, machetes and knives, but they are becoming increasingly sophisticated with some using machine guns and high calibre automatic weapons. In many instances the police are simply out-gunned. In 2004, nearly ten percent of youth reported that they had their own gun.¹⁵¹ The gangs are usually neighbourhood-based rather than ethnically based, and have grown out of the settlements at the periphery of Port Moresby.

Although initially involved in petty crimes, robberies and burglaries, *raskol* gangs have gradually become more sophisticated. They are involved in bank robberies, assassinations, political thuggery and the international drug and weapons trade. They increasingly have links to politicians, big business and international crime networks. 10 percent of respondents in the UN-HABITAT survey also identified politicians/authorities/law enforcers as “the criminals in Port Moresby.”¹⁵²

Fights between rival *raskol* gangs over access to and control of resources, as well as fights over perceived insults, have reportedly decreased over the last five years as gangs have

151 UN-HABITAT 2004b.
152 Ibid.

In-Focus 5.1: Short Term Crime to Get Out of Long Term Crime

During the course of consultations the researchers came across a number of instances whereby individuals had purposely used crime in the short term with the deliberate aim of getting out of a long-term cycle of crime.

In a focus group discussion with university graduates and young government workers, one participant admitted that he had paid for his university education through a secret life of crime that even his friends were unaware of. Throughout high school his parents had managed to pay his fees but just before enrollment in university his father passed away leaving his mother struggling to support the family. As a high school graduate he was considered to be highly educated and became the brains for robberies for a *raskol* gang. His role was to pick targets and plan strategies. Through this criminal activity he was able to pay his fees, support his family and land a good job with the government thereby enabling to get out of crime as a source of income.

In another case *raskols* were able to find stable employment as public servants through crime. During informal discussions with several government employees it was found that they had formerly been *raskols* and were involved in political thuggery for an election candidate. When their candidate won the election, in a show of blatant nepotism, the *raskols* were given employment as civil servants. Once employed the former *raskols* ceased their criminal behaviour. That said the government employees were doubtful that they would be able to keep their positions if the politician lost the next election because the new winner would most likely bring in his own *raskols*. Then what they would do remains an unknown.

increasingly cooperated to fight against a perceived common enemy; the police.

Although a minority, women also play various supporting roles in *raskol* gangs. This includes keeping watch, logistics (such as organizing food and alcohol), planning, and selling stolen property. They often become involved in gangs as girlfriends of male members but once a member they become more susceptible to abuse and exploitation by gang members or security sector personnel. Wives and other relatives of gang members can be targeted victims of physical and sexual violence by rival gangs.

A more recent phenomenon is the widespread emergence of 'cult groups' or just 'cults' in high schools in PNG, especially in Port Moresby. Cults generally form in or around school areas and are made up of young people. They include both young men and women, although it is perceived by participants that men outnumber women. Although there are a variety of cults, they commonly worship evil spirits and pursue supernatural activities such as alleged changing of appearance, invisibility, laying curses, psychically obtaining exam answers, magically seducing women, and wondrously obtaining goods and money. Cult groups often have traditions whereby nicknames are passed on to new students from school leavers. Some of the more extreme cults exhibit violent and negative behaviours such as animal sacrifices, initiation beatings, bullying, and drug and alcohol abuse. Arson, rape, sexual favours and assault are also part of the initiation proceedings of some cults. An example of this occurred in August 2010 when a student was tied up and beaten to death as part of a cult ritual.¹⁵³ Peer pressure to join cults is strong. Some respondents said that the positive benefits of joining a cult were a feeling of belonging, group support, and connections for future employment with former cult leaders.¹⁵⁴ Several young people consulted characterized youth in cults as "good boys doing bad things", and talked openly about getting "caught up" in peer pressure although most expressed a fear of cults.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crime

In 1996, the PNG Law Reform Commission reported that 75 percent of women and children experience family violence, one of the highest rates in the world.¹⁵⁵ A more recent survey in 2004 by UN-HABITAT found that in Port Moresby 48 percent of youth households experience physical abuse, 26 percent emotional abuse, and 14 percent sexual abuse.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, half of married women are subject to actual or threatened violence by their husbands demanding sex.¹⁵⁷ The cycle of violence is entrenched in PNG, with 69 percent of women reporting they witnessed their mothers being beaten by their fathers.¹⁵⁸ Domestic violence mainly against women including rape and sexual violence within families is widespread.¹⁵⁹ Recent data is

153 "Wipe out those evil school cults!" 2010

154 From interviews and focus group discussions. and; Drawii 2008.

155 Law Reform Commission 1996. Final Report on Domestic Violence, Report 14, LRC: Port Moresby cited in UNICEF Papua New Guinea 2009.

156 UN-HABITAT 2004a.

157 In Amnesty International 2006. Data referenced as being based on a study by the NSRRT and Jenkins 1994. The study involved 423 interviews with men and women and 61 focus groups representative of 82 percent of the population. The results are summarized in Bradley, C. & Kesno, J., "Family and Sexual Violence in Papua New Guinea: An Integrated Long Term Strategy. Report to the Family Violence Action Committee of the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council, Discussion Paper No. 84." Institute of National Affairs, Port Moresby, 2001:8;12 -13.

limited, partly due to under-reporting and partly due to the failure of police and health institutions to record incidents of violence when they are reported. Communities view violence that occurs within households as a private matter, not to be interfered with.¹⁶⁰

Exposure to violence in the home and immediate environment is a daily occurrence for a number of young men and young women. In the 2004 UN-HABITAT *Youth and Crime Survey*,¹⁶¹ young people reported the following:

- 39 percent witness physical violence between family members at least once a week;
- 29 percent are beaten at least once a week by a male relative;
- 18 percent are beaten at least once a week by a female relative;
- 51 percent experience physical punishment as a form of punishment;
- 44 percent acknowledged that relatives have been arrested for violent crime including assault, murder and rape;
- 16 percent have been forced to have sex, with one in five of them forced to engage in sex with a family member; and,
- Almost one percent were forced to have sex to obtain good grades in school.

Sexual violence outside the home is also widespread. According to one study, 60 percent of men reported participating in at least one gang rape.¹⁶² A government report also noted that 30 percent of the girls and women in an urban settlement had been victims of sexual violence. Most perpetrators of rape know their victims, who are mainly young women and girls. The Government recognizes the high risk of rape, gang rape and other forms of violent sexual assault that young women are subject to, and the fact that this occurs severely limits their rights to freedom, assembly and equal participation in social, economic and political life.¹⁶³ Only a small fraction of cases of sexual violence are reported to the police and of these, follow up action by police is often not taken.¹⁶⁴ Rape by young men against boys and young men was also reported, however, there is limited information about the issue.

5.4 Institutional Responses in Support of Youth

Violence and crime, including amongst young people, is one of the most debilitating challenges facing Port Moresby today. Addressing crime and violence is a key priority for both Government and development partners and there is still considerable work that needs to be done. Presently, the provision of services for young people by the government, civil society organizations and international actors is wide ranging and large compared to other urban centres in the region. However, due to the large youth population, demand far outstrips supply.

Political Institutions' Engagement with Youth

PNG has the biggest Parliament in the region, with 109 national members of parliament. PNG also has Provincial Governments, which have key service delivery roles. Significantly, although CEDAW prioritizes women's political participation,

"I enjoyed every opportunities and life situations that have come by my way; I've never wasted any of them"

Young woman

158 NSRRT and Jenkins 1994.

159 UN-HABITAT 2004a; Amnesty International 2006.

160 Eve 2007.

161 UN-HABITAT 2004b.

162 NSRRT and Jenkins 1994.

163 Committee on the Rights of the Child, "Consideration of Reports Submitted by State Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention – Papua New Guinea", UN Doc. CRC/C/28/Add.20, 21 July 2003, para. 172. In Amnesty International 2006.

164 Amnesty International 2006.



both the legislative and executive branches of government are dominated by men. Since independence there have been only two female members of Parliament and currently there is only one woman in Parliament. Currently, there is a legislative bill pending in the legislature to reserve an additional 22 seats for women in the Parliament.¹⁶⁵

Since politics infiltrates all aspects of life in Port Moresby, it is essential that young people are more actively engaged in the development of their communities and are active in decision-making processes. Although legislatures are the foremost forums for discussing and addressing political issues, including youth issues, to date there has been only very limited engagement between legislators and young people. Most legislators are much older, and as noted, older men often dominate youth decision-making fora. For young women, this is even more disconcerting due to the lack of political voice which is exacerbated by sex adding to their already limited political voice. The need for more opportunities for dialogue between young people and decision makers is essential. In this context, it is interesting that to date there has been no consideration as to whether it would be useful to reserve any seats for young people in the national legislature.

The first National Youth Summit was held in 2006 and the first National Youth Parliament in 2007. These were both important opportunities for young people to display leadership and express their opinion at the national level. The National Youth Commission (see below for more detail) organized both events and a second Youth Parliament is planned for 2012, dependent on funding. Young people, civil society organizations and relevant government officials all felt that these events should be held more often to assist young people to build confidence, skills in advocacy and ensure their civic participation.

Government Youth Policies

Youth are identified as a key strategic focus in the national *Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030*. The Plan recognizes the need for more responsible and caring parenting,

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

technical training, youth centres, sporting activities, and spiritual and social opportunities. The ambitious targets for 2030 include all school leavers having employment opportunities, secondary education for all and halving the rate of youth crime.¹⁶⁶

The current *2007-2017 National Youth Policy* was developed through “extensive nation-wide consultations between young people, government agencies, community-based organizations and key stakeholders including international partners.”¹⁶⁷ The Policy is comprehensive in that it spells out its vision, principles and values, key policy areas, rights and responsibilities and strategies. There are nine key policy areas, including a pillar on “law, order and justice.”

Table 5.1 Key Issues and Actions in National Youth Policy

Key Issue	Action
Improving the quality of young peoples' lives	Empower young people, especially in rural areas to mobilize their own resources for improved living standards.
Accessing integrated education	Improve access by young people through formal and non-formal education for skills development so as to enhance effective participation in economic and social development of their communities.
Nurturing sustainable livelihoods	Mobilize resources for young people to support innovative youth-led enterprises and to engage young people in long-term natural resource management through economically and environmentally sustainable practices.
Promoting healthy lifestyles	Conduct life-skills training on HIV/AIDS, provide counselling through youth-friendly service centres, and encourage sports development by involving parents and community in the process.
Building stronger communities	Promote full participation of young people in decision making in their communities and protect them from exploitation and abuse.
Strengthening institutional capacity	Improve and strengthen the institutional capacity of the National Commission, Provincial, Districts and LLG Administrative Divisions and Sections responsible for youth development and other youth service providers.
Youth and identities	Strengthen and nurture the interest of young people in their cultural, spiritual and social identity and raise their appreciation for traditions, customs and values as well as tolerance for ethnic diversities.
Research, information and data collection on youth	Improve the capacity of NYC to produce and analyze data to evaluate the progress of implementation of the Policy and disseminate information in the most efficient and appropriate means available.
Law, order and justice	Promote and maintain safety, security and peace in the communities.

The law, order and justice pillar has specific strategies to promote public safety including; encourage community based peer leadership and restorative justice programmes; educate

¹⁶⁶ Department of National Planning and Monitoring 2010.
¹⁶⁷ National Youth Commission of Papua New Guinea 2007:3.



young people on their rights against abuse and violence; strengthen community policing programmes; resource village court systems; introduce targeted programmes to exchange weapons for development initiatives; and, strengthen community-based corrections programmes. The indicator targets are generally realistic and include a ten percent reduction in law and order problems, ten percent reduction in youth in custody, and a ten percent reduction in re-offending by 2017.

Youth Institutions and Key Organizations

The National Youth Commission (NYC) under the Ministry of Community Development is the lead national body charged with youth development across the country. Its main tasks are to develop and implement the *National Youth Policy*, provide policy and technical advice to the Government, undertake research, and coordinate and monitor youth programmes. The NYC has been criticized by some stakeholders for its poor transition from policy development to implementation.

“I want to keep working for youth and expand our activities. Through OIYP I can learn the skills I need as well as meet inspiring young people from all over the world”

Young man

Implementation has been poor due to a lack of political will from government resulting in a lack of resources, as well as insufficient coordination and personnel capacity even when funding is available. As an example, the NYC has funding for the establishment of Youth Friendly Service Centres throughout the country, but to date only two have been established with a third under construction as of June 2010. For some other key proposed programmes, there is no budget available for implementation. Moreover, the Annual Work Plans and Action Plans of the NYC are not in-line with the *National Youth Policy*, and performance indicators are not always measurable and/or are partial outputs rather than outcomes or results for youth in their lives.¹⁶⁸

Port Moresby forms the National Capital District and is governed by the National Capital District Commission (NCDC). Youth activities at the city level are handled by the Youth Affairs Sub-section of the Community and Social Services Division within the NCDC. The office of Youth Affairs is staffed by a small team of youth officers. NCDC is the lead agency on a number of large youth projects such as the Urban Youth Employment Project (explained in Section 5.5) and Yumi Lukautim Mosbi.

Yumi Lukautim Mosbi (YLM) or ‘You and Me Looking After Port Moresby’ is a multi-faceted, multi-agency programme that tackles urban safety and crime prevention.¹⁶⁹ Managed by the Urban Safety Unit within the NCDC, YLM is overseen by a steering committee comprised of relevant government agencies, faith-based organizations, and private-sector members. It is funded by the Government of PNG and AusAID. YLM started in 2005 and has grown in scale and developed organically since then. Its four main themes are:

- Community Engagement – community-sponsored engagement in crime prevention;
- Reintegration and Skills Development – skills development and on-the-job-training for youth who support positive change in communities;
- Sports and Youth Engagement – sports aimed at grass roots community level to develop community pride;

168 Blank 2008:32-33. Also focus group discussions and individual interviews.
169 “You and Me Looking After Port Moresby” is taken from the YLM website at www.yumilukautimmosbi.org.pg. Other translations such as “Lets Care for Port Moresby” are also sometimes used.

- Awareness and Cross Cutting Issues – exposing positive community change to PNG society through “The YLM Monthly News” lift-out in the Post Courier newspaper, and the monthly television programme, “The YLM Report” on EMTV.

YLM recognizes that crime hampers development in Port Moresby and that urban safety is also the responsibility of communities. It emphasizes employment and activities for young people and developing pride in one’s community. YLM has become a network of partnerships with each stakeholder adding their own special value to the project. For example, a security company offers free response and evacuation for women in domestic violence situations. Also safe spaces have been created for women and children in supermarkets, government offices and companies, where they can find refuge from threats and violence. YLM describes itself as being “community first” and a “catalyst for change” that provides an entry point for other stakeholders to contribute. In 2008, NCDC won the highly coveted United Nations Habitat certificate of excellence of urban safety, crime prevention and youth in recognition of its work on the YLM programme.

Peace Foundation Melanesia has a successful Community Justice Training programme that promotes community-based conflict resolution, mediation and restorative justice using Melanesian customary law for empowerment. It is secular and has carried out most of its work in Bougainville and Port Moresby. The customary approach emphasizes that mediation must be available to the community and that the extended family is liable for restitution and parole duties for the offender. Peace Foundation Melanesia use a three-pronged approach, namely, consensus, win-win mediation and customary law.

Sacred Heart Brothers is a faith-based organization that works closely with Community Based Corrections (CBC) in the management of Hohola Remand Centre. Notably, the Hohola Remand Centre was one of only two correctional facilities in PNG recognized by the UN Rapporteur as implementing international best practice.¹⁷⁰ CBC usually provides funding to Sacred Heart on a contractual three-year basis, but payment is often delayed. Hohola provides vocational training in an adult learning environment. Approximately one quarter of the students have a criminal history. Of the 80 young people who graduated in 2009, approximately 20 have reportedly found regular employment.

City Mission is another faith-based organization working in this area. It runs a range of programmes for juvenile offenders and at-risk youth. Twenty minutes out of Port Moresby at Miigeda it runs the New Life Skills Training Centre, which accommodates around 140 young men, most of whom have been in conflict with the law, are not attending any educational facility, and/or do not have stable homes. All of the young men staying at the Centre are expected to take part in daily spiritual activities and work. Vocational and on-the-job training are provided in agriculture, animal husbandry, carpentry, painting, welding, building, mechanics, cooking, hospitality and screen printing. Some of the young men staying at the Centre do outside work and receive a wage, which assists in paying for board at the centre. Stay at the centre is voluntary, however, some young men stay up to two years. City Mission tries to find jobs for the most promising students with a number of prominent success stories. Several former trainees have stayed on as staff at the Centre and now provide peer mentoring to their fellow young men. The facilities were built by the young men attending the centre as part of their training.

170 Special Rapporteur on Torture 2010.

Justice Institutions and Policies

There are a very wide range of actors, policies and laws of relevance to the juvenile justice sector as it impacts on young people in Port Moresby. An obvious result of this breadth of institutions is the imperative need for coordination to ensure better impact.

“I realised that I can contribute positively to the lives of my friends; that there is a talent within me to talk to those who are still involved in bad behaviour. I tell them about Christian principles. I am example to them. When they see me, they know that they too can change their behaviour and lead a positive life. I want to continue to work for the youth in my neighbourhood, city and country so that they can have a bright future and live in peace and harmony”

Former juvenile offender

The juvenile justice system is based on several acts of legislation.

The Juvenile Courts Act of 1991 (adopted in 2003), spells out procedures for the establishment, powers and functions of juvenile courts; procedures for the arrest of juveniles; proceedings for juvenile courts; and requirement for juvenile institutions. The 2006 Prosecution Policy from the Office of the Public Prosecutor also has a section on juvenile prosecution. Both documents adequately deal with handling juveniles in conflict with the law, however, proper implementation is an issue.

National Government institutions include the Law and Justice Sector, which is the overarching structure for the formal and informal agencies that are addressing law and order issues in PNG. Other main agencies in the Sector who deal directly with young people are the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC), Papua New Guinea Correctional Service, and the Department of Justice and Attorney General.

The relationship between the RPNGC and young people is adversarial despite some recent efforts by the government to bridge the gap. The police are the first point of contact for young offenders and currently most young people regard the police as highly corrupt and abusive. Severe police brutality toward juveniles is well documented.¹⁷¹ The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture carried out a mission to PNG in May 2010 and found that “there is no doubt that police beatings often reached the level of torture, as defined in the UN Conventions against Torture” and there is a “complete disrespect for the presumption of innocence” by police.¹⁷²

The RPNGC has a number of special policies and protocols for dealing with juveniles involved in crime and violence. The ‘*Police Juvenile Justice Policy and Protocols: Securing a Safer Community in Partnership*’, developed in partnership with UNICEF in 2006 spells out protocols for arrest and detention of juveniles, encourages diversion programs, and refers to relevant international conventions. In line with the justice policy, 85 percent of non-violent juvenile offenders are diverted with only the most serious offenders going to prison. Diversion options include warning, counselling, mediation, community work, bail, and restorative justice programmes.

Upon arrest in Port Moresby, except for the most serious of offences, youth are supposed to be brought to the Boroko Juvenile Reception Centre.¹⁷³ Here specialist police officers assess

¹⁷¹ Human Rights Watch 2005:1-10.

¹⁷² Special Rapporteur on Torture 2010

¹⁷³ There are two other juvenile reception centres in Lae and Goroka in PNG.

the situation and decide on appropriate action. However, the Centre is being extremely underutilized. In 2008, it was found that only three percent of juveniles arrested were being brought to the Boroko Reception Centre.¹⁷⁴ This shows a strong lack of awareness of protocols and/or compliance. There is also the Police Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit within the Community Policing Directorate of the RPNGC. The Unit suffers from lack of personnel and budget, depending heavily on UNICEF for support.¹⁷⁵ Its activities include training on and monitoring of policy and protocol implementation; monitoring of conditions in detention facilities; conducting drug abuse programmes for young people and community representatives; and, liaising with juvenile court officers.

Following key reforms, the number of juvenile courts has increased to ten throughout the country.¹⁷⁶ Overall, the number of young offenders subject to non-custodial penalties is increasing. As part of this trend, courts are increasingly referring young offenders to mediation and are conducting ongoing training of mediators for this purpose. CBC under the Department for Justice and the Attorney General works closely with the juvenile courts and is the primary institution for managing community-based orders, which mandates offender to do particular types of community service. CBC employs compensation and/or community work, often combined with probation. In 2008, 123 such cases were handled by CBC.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, CBC employs juvenile court officers who defend juveniles accused of offences and provides probation and parole services for convicted juveniles.

Young offenders who are found guilty of serious crimes by the national courts are sent to juvenile correctional institutions run by the PNG Correctional Service.¹⁷⁸ As of mid-June 2010, 17 male juveniles were staying at Bomana Correctional Institution just outside of Port Moresby for crimes such as rape, murder, serious assault, drug dealing and armed robbery. One was on death row for murder.¹⁷⁹ Only one organization, the Young Women's Christian Association, was running a regular rehabilitation programme for the juveniles in the facility.

Currently juvenile justice reforms are being pushed by the National Juvenile Justice Committee (NJJC) made up of different government agencies, UNICEF and NGOs. The role of the NJJC is to promote cooperation and contribute to the development of a comprehensive justice system for juveniles. Reform activities include increasing the number of juvenile courts, training juvenile court officers, supporting the Visiting Justice Scheme,¹⁸⁰ promoting diversion of offenders away from incarceration, reviewing the juvenile related legislation, and undertaking awareness raising activities. Thirteen Provincial Juvenile Justice Working Groups have also been established. NJJC's work is contributing to a decrease in the number of young people in detention and more being diverted to community based programmes. The NJJC in its reports clearly recognizes the massive task that it is facing given the entrenched corruption, impunity and disregard for human rights. There are people in Port Moresby who are passionately dedicated to revolutionizing the juvenile law and justice system from policy to implementation; unfortunately they are still vastly outnumbered.

174 National Juvenile Justice Committee 2009:8.

175 Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary 2010:5.

176 Juvenile Courts as of 2008 are located in Port Moresby, Lae, Mt. Hagen, Kokopo, Goroka, Kundiawa, Alotau, Vanimo, Kimbe and Buka.

177 National Juvenile Justice Committee 2009.

178 Youth charged with serious crimes are tried at national courts rather than juvenile courts.

179 Even though the death penalty still exists in PNG, the last execution was in 1954.

180 A scheme started in 2006 by the chief magistrate whereby judges can inspect and monitor detention facilities. The scheme has been successful to a degree in bringing the poor conditions to the attention of the government and wider public but not all judges are participating and the scheme is not regulated sufficiently. The obligation to implement the scheme is incorporated in to the duty statements of the judges.

5.5 Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience

Young people in Port Moresby face a wide array of risk and resilience factors that coexist to create a context in which they are more or less likely to engage in crime and violence (see Figure 1.1). Despite this, young people in Port Moresby continue to move forward and show incredible resilience – it is this energy that needs to be harnessed to create safer and productive communities.

Growing the Employment Opportunities for Youth

Every year over 80,000 young people leave the school system and a mere 10,000 of them gain employment in the formal sector.¹⁸¹ In 2000, the overall unemployment rate in Port Moresby for men was 21.2 percent and 12.8 percent for women. Many are young, with over half of young men and one third of young women aged 15 to 24 years unemployed.¹⁸² The vast majority of those who are employed are in the informal sector plying jobs such as petty traders and labourers and living below or close to the poverty line due to low incomes.

"I hope I can get a job there [LNG project]. I can be a driver or a security guard. I want to learn about maintenance or be a mechanic"

Young man

Formal employment was frequently identified as a resilience factor against involvement in crime and violence. A number of people consulted also identified that informal sector employment can also be a strong resilience factor if more opportunities are provided and it is profitable enough. In this context the streets in central parts of Port Moresby are densely populated by unemployed young people. Poverty-driven early school dropout and lack of employment opportunities are two of the most important issues which are leaving young people at risk of becoming involved in crime and violence. Related to lack of gainful employment, some young people thought that men with families felt more pressure to provide for their family which led to an increased risk of committing crime, mainly burglary and robbery. A number of participants, including young people with criminal records, stated that they stole to survive out of desperation or for a particular purpose such as to pay for school fees. According to the 2004 UN-HABITAT survey, the main reason that young people, particularly young men joined *raskol* gangs was to get money to survive. Similarly, the three main reasons for committing crime were "to have money and food," "for survival and fun" and "for survival and rebel against society." Half of those who did commit crime felt no emotions in doing so because it was due to the need to survive.¹⁸³

In female-headed households the pressure to provide was thought to be even stronger, leading women to engage in sex work, theft and other crimes to provide for their children, which makes them more vulnerable to abuse. It was reported that young women often turned to transactional sex work out of desperation to survive. However, other stakeholders claimed that due to social breakdown and loss of values some young women carried out transactional sex as a way to buy sweets, cigarettes and other substances. Due to poverty and unemployment, young people lacked self-esteem and were pessimistic about the future. Reflecting this pessimism, almost 80 percent of youth in 2004 felt that people in Port Moresby were sadder than five years before that.¹⁸⁴

181 National Youth Commission of Papua New Guinea 2007.

182 National Statistics Office 2005.

183 UN-HABITAT 2004b.

184 Ibid.

Nearly all young people consulted, from those who were already successful and contributing to society, to those who were in prison - had bright dreams to become scientists, doctors, farmers, carpenters, traders, social workers, engineers, mechanics and more, but had no opportunity to follow this dream.

Responding to the imperative of providing young people with real employment opportunities, in 2010 NCDC with the support of the World Bank, began the USD 17.9 million five-year Urban Youth Employment Project (UYEP). UYEP focuses on disadvantaged youth between 16 and 25 years, who are currently not working or studying and have limited economic opportunities. It aims to address four key issues; poverty, employment, human capital development, and social stability. It does this through the provision of short-to-medium-term employment and training, including life-skills and counselling. Approximately 17,500 participants of the working age population in Port Moresby, will receive 40 hours of life skills training and placement on public works projects for two months maintaining and improving roadways. Four thousand participants will be selected for extra-pre-employment training for higher skills employment followed by five months of on-the-job training.¹⁸⁵

Another project is Ginigoada, which translates as “Stand Strong” in the local Motu-Koita language. The Ginigoada Bisnis Development Foundation was established in 2002 to support disadvantaged populations to stand strong in their lives. It works in cooperation with Yumi Lukautim Mosbi (see Section 2.4) as the leading training provider and is managed from an office within the Chamber of Commerce. It provides micro-enterprise training and business development courses, links to micro-finance institutions, on-the-job training, work experience, and job referrals to create income generation opportunities for the disadvantaged populations, including many young people. Previously, it provided capital and in-kind support to some graduates of the training courses, but the goods were often sold and the cash used for other purposes. Formal job placement is usually successful, but there are only limited opportunities available. Currently, many graduates of Ginigoada are working in Port Moresby’s hotels and other hospitality enterprises, as well as large companies. Ginigoada has been successful; however it aims to develop new employment opportunities outside of large companies and enterprises so as to build and expand and create more opportunities.

Improving the Quality and Relevance of Education

There have been improvements across the board due to educational reforms implemented since 1995. That said ongoing low enrolment and retention rates in the formal school system lead to many young men and women being largely unemployable and contributes to their feeling of dissatisfaction toward society. Only 4,000 or three percent of students complete grade twelve of a total of 135,000 students that enrolled in grade one. This high rate of drop out was reported by participants to be primarily due to high school fees, lack of facilities and limited places. Only 24 percent of students who sit the grade ten exam can be accepted into grade eleven. More females are illiterate and have less schooling but these gender inequities are less apparent in the capital.¹⁸⁶

In-Focus 5.2: LNG and Youth Expectations

On January 25, 2010 the Papua New Guinea Post-Courier reported that 11 villagers were killed in Southern Highlands Province over land for the project. Again in February there were further clashes spurring the Minister for Community Development, Dame Carol Kidu, to acknowledge publically that the project is spurring inter-village war between traditionally non-violent tribal groups. A number of young people consulted for this research expressed high expectations of employment or indirect benefit through the LNG project; not all of which will likely be met. Wide spread unfulfilled expectations from the LNG project of young people may lead to dissatisfaction and increase the chance of violence against those who are perceived to be benefitting unfairly from the project. Young people were key actors in the conflicts in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands; both of which were at least partly related to grievances arising from mining projects.^{viii}

viii Evans 2010; Conciliation Resources 2002.

185 World Bank 2010. UYEP is financed through a USD 15.8 million International Development Association (IDA) credit from the World Bank; USD 1.5 million funding from the Government of Papua New Guinea/NCDC; a USD 600,000 grant from the Republic of Korea; and a USD 40,000 grant from AusAID.

186 Blank 2008.

The focus of the formal education system is mainly academic with an aim to produce office workers. However, there are an increasing number of trade and vocational work training opportunities. There is little stigma attached to trade and vocational work in Port Moresby as most young people would prefer to have regular employment in any form. That said, most parents would prefer their children to be employed by the government or the private sector and young women stated that they are discouraged to study trades such as mechanics, carpentry and metal work.

There are a number of TVET facilities in Port Moresby, most notably the Australia Pacific Technical College, Port Moresby Technical College, Don Bosco, and the new PNG LNG Project Construction Training Centre. The orientation of TVET courses to meet the needs of the LNG project is a positive development for youth in Port Moresby. Some civil society organizations also support vocational education training. As an example, Sacred Heart Brothers (see Section 5.4) through their vocational centre provides training to 200 students, including 80 females, in automotive repair, welding, carpentry, and business studies. Tuition costs PGK 600 (USD 210) per year. Vocational courses are two years in duration and open to young men and women who have graduated from grades seven to ten. Religious instruction is provided to all students as part of the curriculum. There is also a six-week adult literacy course and substance abuse counselling is offered.

Tackling Substance Abuse

Alcohol and homebrew¹⁸⁷ are readily available from road-side stalls and supermarkets in Port Moresby. Marijuana and other illegal substances are also readily available at markets and street corners. Recently glue and petrol sniffing have also become more popular. These substances are seen as the most common catalyst for crime and violence in Port Moresby. During consultations, a number of youth offenders stated that they were under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of offending. Law and Justice Sector officials substantiated this claim and also recognized that alcohol and drugs were often used by young people to increase bravado when committing crimes.

Having parents or wider family members who engaged in substance abuse was also regarded by young people and government officials as a risk factor. This was due to the resulting lack of proper supervision and guidance, as well as the increased likelihood of violent behaviour and the projection of a negative role-model. Both young men and women engaged in substance abuse in Port Moresby. However, stakeholders believed that men were more susceptible to perpetrating violence than women when under the influence of a substance, particularly alcohol.

Opportunities for Meaningful Activity

The risks resulting from wide-scale unemployment are exacerbated by the fact that young people have few avenues to engage in volunteer work, do meaningful recreation and/or gain access to land for agricultural activity. In Port Moresby, young people are also separated from cultural activities that are more ingrained in everyday life in rural areas.

Despite this, during consultations a number of participants reported that many young people are involved in church activities and/or NGO projects, trainings, work for social causes or are employed without remuneration. These young men and women are more likely to be self-confident, clear in their goals and not engage in criminal violent behaviours. Moreover,

¹⁸⁷ Homemade alcohol made for own consumption or for sale cheaply on the streets.

they had a sense of responsibility, made decisions, felt they were developing positively on a personal level and positively contributing to their communities.

Church related activities were the most common form of participation. These activities included church youth groups, bible studies, social justice work, and spiritual development. Some had previously been involved in crime but were encouraged by the church and are now positive role models for other young people. Church-based organizations, such as City Mission and Sacred Heart Brothers, reported numerous success stories. Other young people that were active in trainings offered by NGOs, volunteer work or youth groups related to ethnicity (Motu-Koita Assembly Youth Representatives) or trade (Informal Sector Youth Association) or geographical area (Tatana-Araira Working Group) were also not generally involved in crime or violence. In many of these roles young people had responsibilities and were involved in decision making processes.

Other meaningful activities identified in consultations included sports and cultural activities such as dance, art and music. During consultations participants mentioned a number of limited public sports facilities in Port Moresby city; these included the basketball courts and a small field at Ella Beach. However, it was stated that these were not sufficient, especially in settlement areas on the outskirts of the city where many at-risk young people reside. Adding to sports, participants stated that cultural activities were regarded as a resilience factor because it builds a more concrete identity for young people. These activities often linked young people back to family lineage through traditional cultural practices.

A global programme run by Oxfam called the Oxfam International Youth Partnership (OIYP) aims to create a network of young people who share a vision of a just world. OIYP is a three-year program and it is in its third cycle. From March 2010, 15 young Papua New Guineans together with 300 other young men and women aged 18-25 from around the world joined the OIYP network. The OIYP programme focuses on building skills and facilitating networking. Members are given opportunities to network and form partnerships with other organizations and communities around the world to support them in their work.



Family Challenges

Urban migration was seen to be a source of stress for families on a number of fronts. Many of the young people and their parents are not born in Port Moresby. While the older generation still holds onto traditional values and customs from their rural areas, young people have grown up in a different environment and therefore have different views of life and sense of identity from their parents. This is causing tensions within families and alienating young people from family members. Urban migration is also breaking down the extended family and giving young people less access to trusted mentors. Usually, the immediate family migrates to the city centre cutting ties with extended relatives. In traditional communities members of the extended family as well as respected elders in the community played a mentoring role for young people. Youth often felt more comfortable going to trusted extended family members than parents for advice on sensitive topics. Extended family members and community members were also able to keep a watchful eye on the activities of young people in rural communities. A range of participants stated that without this guidance and monitoring, young people are more easily swayed by negative influences. Advice could come from parents, but other sources identified were; extended family members, community chiefs/elders, church leaders, sport coaches, teachers, and peers. In a number of interviews and focus group discussions, successful young people mentioned the strong influence that one or a number of people had on them in bringing them around from negative to positive behaviour.

During consultations, pressure to contribute to family income was also mentioned as a stressor. This is especially so in families where there is no adult income earner. In some, cases young people are encouraged to earn an income by any means, including crime. Earlier studies found that 70 percent of those who were pressured into committing offences stated that it was by the family who depended on them for their survival.¹⁸⁸

At the same time, during consultations many interviewees identified strong and caring parenting and access to extended family members as the most important factors in youth playing a positive role in society. This parental or guardian support was seen by some participants to be more important than access to education and levels of wealth. A number of participants stated that even if a child has a good education and was relatively wealthy, if that child grew up in a broken and/or violent home with little guidance, the child would more than likely turn to crime later in life. Conversely, many believed that even if a child was from a poor family, if the parents and extended family members somehow found a way to give the child an adequate education, he or she would develop into a responsible person.

Corporal punishment by parents and guardians to make their children attend school or as punishment for misdemeanors was seen as acceptable to young participants in the study. They felt it demonstrated that their parents cared for them. This was despite the general acknowledgement that exposure to such violence was likely to increase the propensity to engage in violence later in life to solve problems and conflict.

Aspects of good parenting that were mentioned by both young people and adults included:

- Commitment to at least minimal formal education of children;
- Providing value-based education through example and/or introduction to systems of values such as the church;
- Willingness to work hard to support the family;

¹⁸⁸ UN-HABITAT 2004b.

- Providing an environment where children feel safe and secure;
- Ability to communicate with children;
- Spending time with children and showing an interest in their activities;
- Playing a mentoring role and introducing children to positive mentors and role models outside the immediate family;
- Using alternatives to violence to discipline children;
- Screening of peers and friends, and supervising the movements of children; and,
- Maintaining family unity by living together and being loyal to each other.

5.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the social and economic challenges that Port Moresby youth face on a daily basis, the high rate of crime and violence is not surprising. While it is important to acknowledge that crime is a serious problem in Port Moresby, it is equally, if not more important to recognize that most youth are not involved in crime and desire better opportunities. This is evident in the well-developed government structures, active and passionate NGOs and faith-based organizations, and the willingness of youth themselves to embrace a better life. Please note that a number of the recommendations in the Pacific Overview and Regional Recommendations chapter are relevant to Port Moresby as well.

Recommendations

- Support the National Juvenile Justice Committee to expand their mandate and influence.
- Expand the YLM model as an example of good practice of cooperation between different sectors both in Port Moresby but also to other regions in Papua New Guinea, Taking the YLM model to other countries in the region, especially Melanesian countries, should also be explored.
- Establish Youth Resource Centres in key areas of Port Moresby for dissemination of advice and information, and to provide a venue for healthy activities.
- Review challenges in implementation of juvenile justice sector policy and procedures.
- Review opportunities for restorative justice community based correction programmes in Port Moresby.

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CHAPTER

6

Honiara,
Solomon Islands

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Chapter Six: Honiara, Solomon Islands

6.1 Introduction

This Urban Centre Case Study discusses youth crime and violence in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The research team conducted focus groups discussions and interviews in Solomon Islands with young people, government actors and civil society organizations which provided the main basis for the findings. Additionally, a desk review of available reports and statistics was conducted. Drawing together these findings, this case study recommends a number of key actions to strengthen and support resilient capacity among young men and women.

The *Solomon Islands National Youth Policy 2010-15* defines youth as people between the ages of 14 to 29 years of age. However, the Policy states that due to cultural and traditional contexts the policy can cover young people less than 14 and above the age of 29.¹⁸⁹ In the justice system juveniles are considered to be aged between 14 and 17 inclusive.¹⁹⁰

The large youth population, which will grow into the political leadership and economic engine of the country, is the key to the sustainable recovery and development of the Solomon Islands after years of conflict (1998-2003), political rioting (2006) and natural disasters (2007 and 2010). The country has begun a slow recovery but the on-going high youth unemployment rates, trauma, and social disruption that remain as a fall out from the conflict or “the Tensions” as it is commonly known still need to be addressed. Young people must be part of this recovery process and be involved in the development process if Solomon Islands is to continue to make progress.

Young people have many aspirations to contribute to the long term sustainable development of the nation and are eager for opportunities. However, during consultations for this report, a number of risk factors were identified that increase the likelihood of young people becoming involved in crime and violence: lack of employment; the continuing post-conflict recovery process, including the need to address reintegration and rehabilitation of young people affected by the Tensions; and substance abuse. At the same time there were many resilience factors that encourage young people not to engage in crime and violence: parental support; opportunities for meaningful activities, and positive role models and peers.

“I’m very happy to be given this opportunity. This is the first time in my life to experience this type of interview”

Young woman



189 MYWCA 2010.

190 Juvenile Offenders Act 1972.

There is an immediate need for better coordination amongst stakeholders to support young people and prevent duplication and/or gaps within youth development initiatives. Government strategic planning for young people should be prioritized, in particular in the areas that encourage young people's involvement in community safety and crime prevention programmes. There are some structures and services already directed at supporting young people, which are implemented by government, civil society and faith based organizations. However, demand outstrips supply and a more strategic focus is required.

6.2 National Context

In 2009 the population of Solomon Islands was approximately 515,870, with a growth rate of 2.3 percent per annum.¹⁹¹ In 2010, the proportion of the national population aged between 15–29 years was 29 percent, with young women making up 48 percent and young men 52 percent (Figure 6.1). The median age is 19.7 years.¹⁹² More startlingly, 40 percent of the population is under the age of 14 – a demographic bulge which makes the need to address youth issues even more imperative. The youth population is expected to continue its rapid growth until at least 2025.¹⁹³ Eighty per cent of the population lives in the rural areas.¹⁹⁴ However, the rural-urban migration of young people in search of employment, education and training continues to grow, such that they make up one-third of the total population of Honiara (Figure 6.2).¹⁹⁵

The 2010 UNDP Human Development Index ranks Solomon Islands 123 out of 169 countries. The rate of development is lower than the regional average.¹⁹⁶ The country's *2004 Millennium Development Goals Report* indicated that it is on target to meet two MDGs by 2015: Goal Two on universal primary education and Goal Five on improving maternal health.¹⁹⁷ However, more broadly progress has been mixed and achievement of other MDGs is unlikely without substantial further investment. In this context, poverty is usually described as hardship in the Solomon Islands, which signifies a lack of access to services and opportunities. While many people in rural areas are considered 'cash poor', generally the population has access to sufficient nutrition and housing due to subsistence agriculture and extended family social

191 NSO 2010.

192 MYWCFA 2010.

193 World Bank 2008.

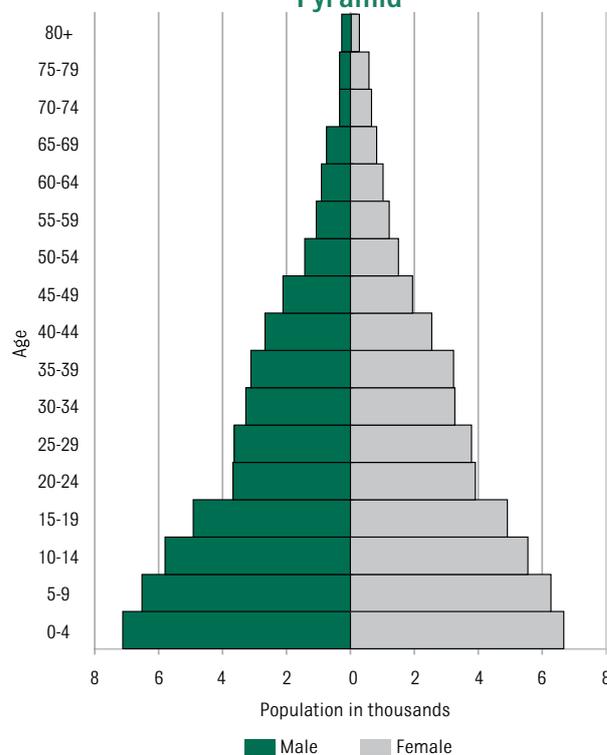
194 MYWCFA 2010.

195 This has potential positive implications in terms of growth and development with a large and energetic workforce available but is also creates challenges such as increased likelihood of violent conflict and unrest if economic stagnation and lack of opportunities continue. Urbanization is also changing societal and family structures leaving youth with less support and guidance from elders.

196 UNDP 2010a.

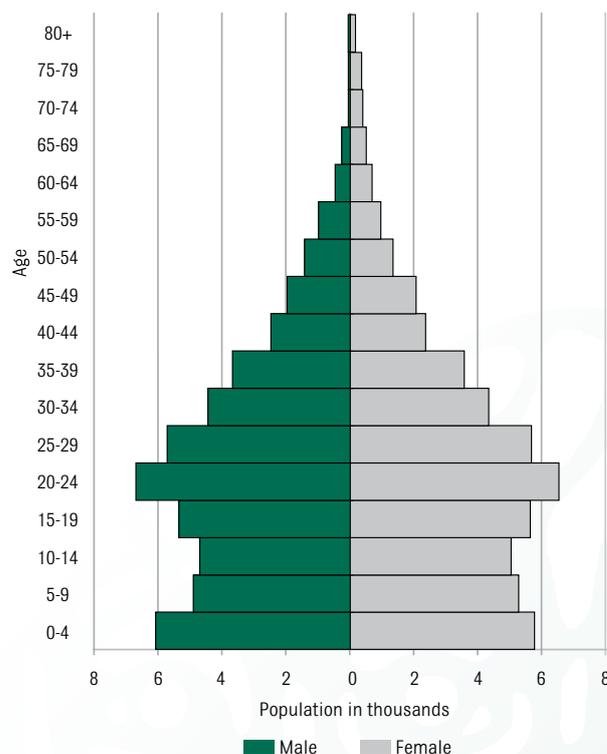
197 SIG and UNDP 2005.

Figure 6.1 Solomon Islands Population Pyramid



Source: Solomon Islands Government

Figure 6.2 Honiara Population Pyramid



Source: Solomon Islands Government

Figure 6.3 Attendance in Formal Education by Age



security nets. It is perceived that the hardships experienced are higher in Honiara, with almost one in three people considered 'poor', compared to less than one in five people in rural areas.¹⁹⁸

The country is on target to meet the MDG on universal primary education by 2015.¹⁹⁹ Primary school is free, but not compulsory.²⁰⁰ As of 2007, half of seven year olds and 29 percent of eight year olds were not attending school. In the urban area, over 70 percent of children aged six to twelve are enrolled.²⁰¹ Problematically, only

about half of those who attend primary school can be placed in secondary school due to limited places. Amongst those who enter secondary school, as many as 60 to 85 percent are 'pushed out' through failed compulsory examinations and/or because of an inability to pay school fees.²⁰² The gender gap in education becomes increasingly wider the higher the grade. For example, of the total population of young men aged 18, 47 percent are enrolled while only 34 percent of young women are enrolled (Figure 6.3). The literacy rate in the age group between 15 to 29 years is 88 percent for males and 80 percent for females.²⁰³ In 2009, only 30 percent of government scholarships were awarded to female students.²⁰⁴

Only one in six school leavers find formal employment.²⁰⁵ The Central Bank estimates that about 7,500 young people enter the workforce each year, but the maximum increase in formal employment since 1982 has been only 3,800 people per year.²⁰⁶ According to a 2009 report of the Asian Development Bank, the youth unemployment rate is 45 percent.²⁰⁷ In Honiara, the need for full-time employment is even greater, as young people do not have the ability to fall back on subsistence agriculture. Almost 80 percent of household heads are formally employed in Honiara compared to only 17 percent in rural areas.²⁰⁸

The 2007 *Solomon Island Demographic and Health Survey* revealed that there is significant gender disparity in the employment sector.²⁰⁹ There are no laws guaranteeing equal pay or opportunity for women, or laws that address sexual harassment or discrimination in the workplace.²¹⁰ The government has recently initiated several efforts to improve gender equality in society. In a policy statement in early 2008, government committed itself to gender

198 NSO and UNDPCC 2008: 2.
 199 UNDP 2010b.
 200 In practice most primary school charge at least a small fee to help with the operational cost, while parents must also meet the cost of transportation, uniforms and education material.
 201 SPC 2007.
 202 World Bank 2008.
 203 SPC 2007.
 204 JICA 2010: iv.
 205 ADB 2009.
 206 World Bank 2008.
 207 Ibid.
 208 NSO and UNDPCC 2008: 4.5.
 209 The Solomon Island demographic and health survey (2007) conducted by SPC found that a small number of currently married women (42 percent) in the age range of 15 - 49 were employed in the last 12 months compared to (87 percent) currently married men had had employment in the last 12 months. The economic vulnerability of women was exacerbated by the fact that more than half (56 percent) of women employed were not paid, either in cash or in kind, for their work.
 210 JICA 2010: iv.

equality as “one of the core principles and objectives for development in the country.” Moreover, in January 2010, cabinet approved the “National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Development” developed by the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Family Affairs (MWYCFA).²¹¹ Finally, high rates of violence in the home and sexual violence in the Solomon Islands remains a serious concern and a risk factor that pushes youth to crime and violence.

The major health issues for young people include poor diet, the increasing prevalence of non-communicable disease, high level of substance use (e.g. *kwaso*,²¹² alcohol, betel nut, marijuana and tobacco), mental health issues, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and poor access to health services and information. Studies on sexually transmitted infections and HIV in the country revealed low condom use among sexually active young people.²¹³ In 2007, the rate of teenage pregnancy was at 12 percent for girls aged 15 to 19 years of age.²¹⁴ That figure is probably underestimated given anecdotal evidence that many pregnancies amongst young women are under reported. Mortality and morbidity related to unintended pregnancy and child birth, including unsafe abortions remain a significant health risk for young women.

6.3 Young People as Victims and Perpetrators

Many young people living in Honiara contribute to the nation’s social, economic and cultural development. However, meaningful partnerships between government, civil society and young people require strengthening to assist young people to access support and services that would empower them to achieve their potential and effectively engage in community matters. The effects of the Tensions and other unrest are still impacting on the lives of young people with many experiencing a sense of community dislocation and some engaging in criminal activities. A number of young people are also at risk of becoming victims of violence both inside and outside the home.

Common Crimes

Predominant criminal offenders in Honiara are males and females aged between 12 to 45 years of age, however, sex disaggregated statistics were not available to permit gender analysis.²¹⁵ A Save the Children Australia study and police records indicate that the main crimes involving children and young people in the Solomon Islands are alcohol-related crimes (including production and sale of homebrew or *kwaso*), drunk and disorderly behavior, marijuana sale and use, assault (including domestic violence), theft and property damage.²¹⁶ This was also confirmed during consultations where participants identified breaking and entering (business and residential properties), family-related violence, assault and theft as the most prominent crimes committed by young people.



“I think some young people get involved in thefts, burglary or other crimes because they follow young people in their community and work as a group to involve in criminal activities”

Young man

211 Ibid.

212 A home-brewed potent local spirit (alcohol) that is popular in the Solomon Islands

213 MYWCF 2010.

214 SPC 2007

215 Crime Statistic & Records Division 2010.

216 Save the Children Australia 2009.

The majority of participants consulted stated that many of the crimes committed by young people were perpetrated by young men. However, participants also indicated that many of the risks factors pushed both sexes to engage in crime and violence. According to the stakeholders consulted, men were more likely to be the perpetrators of violent crimes such as assault whereas women were more likely to be involved in opportunistic crimes, such as theft. From the consultations it was also suggested that men would more likely to execute a crime, whereas women played a more supporting role.

Assaults

Physical fights, which constitute assault under current criminal law, were highlighted during consultations to be prominent amongst young people. Many participants explained that alcohol and other substances was one of the main contributing factors to young people engaging in fights. Physical fights usually occur between different youth groups from different geographical areas around Honiara and amongst drunken nightclub patrons. The fights occur due to insults, rivalries, and control over geographical areas. According to participants consulted, young women were more likely to be involved in physical fights due to personal relationships or other family matters. In general these fights usually involved physical violence such as punching and kicking their opponents.

The use of makeshift weapons such as stones, bottles and sticks was also reported.

“Most young people are involved in fighting and other activities because they are drunk and on drugs... Most of them are unemployed”

Community member

Drug Related Crimes

According to the Crime Statistics and Record Divisions of the RSIPF, alcohol-related cases that include the production and sale of homebrew or *kwaso* have been on the rise in Honiara from 2005–2010. For this period, RSIPF recorded a total of 3057 alcohol related offenses for the 12 to 45 age group. These alcohol offenses included disorderly behavior, drunk and disorderly conduct, consuming liquor in public places and selling liquor without a license. Relating to substance use, for the 2006–2010 period, a total of 327 marijuana related offences were recorded by the RSIPF for the same age category.²¹⁷ Marijuana related offences included possession, sale, growing and smoking marijuana. The statistics received from RSIPF were not disaggregated by sex therefore this research could not distinguish between the crimes committed by males or females.

“I remember my most violent moment when I was 8 years old boy that’s when my father chase me and hit me several times until I was badly harm and cry ... I feel that I am not a particular child in this family, I think am an adopted son from this moment”

Young man

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crime

Domestic and sexual violence is a common crime that is widely under-reported. It is understood that young women are particularly most vulnerable to all forms of violence and abuse. A year after the Honiara riots in 2006, an AusAID report on Melanesia and East Timor cited crimes against women as a key issue in Solomon Islands.²¹⁸ The most heinous of crimes are sexually based offences. During the period of 2005 – 2010, a total of 230 cases of sexual offences were reported for Honiara.²¹⁹ These offences included attempted rape, defilement, indecent assault, incest, insulting modesty and rape. According to RSIPF, these

²¹⁷ RSIPF 2010.

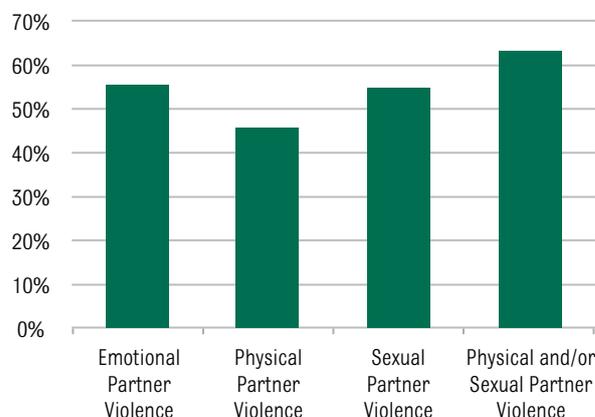
²¹⁸ AusAid Office of Development Effectiveness 2007.

²¹⁹ Crime Statistic & Records Division 2010.

statistics represented only reported cases as many cases go unreported due to fear of further victimization of the victim and their families. In other cases, these offenses were dealt with by the Chiefs of the community.

Nearly two-thirds of Solomon Islands women surveyed in 2008-9 reported experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse from an intimate partner in their lifetime (Figure 6.4). Of these, 30 percent have been injured by physical violence. Seventy percent of victims had never told anyone prior to the survey about their experiences of violence demonstrating a strong culture of silence around the issue. In the same government survey, more than one third of women between 15 and 49 years of age reported being sexually abused before 15 years of age. Moreover, 38 percent of women reported that their first sexual experience was either coerced or forced.²²⁰ Further to this, young people are not only victims of violence, but are also perpetrators. Between 64 to 83 percent of women reported experiencing intimate partner violence with partners aged between 15 and 29 years of age, demonstrating the need for immediate and targeted intervention aimed at young people.²²¹

Figure 6.4: Women Reporting Types of Intimate Partner Violence



Source: MYWCFA 2009

6.4 Institutional Responses in Support of Youth

As the Solomon Islands Government continues to strengthen its capacity, it is positive that some initiatives are already in place which attempt to address the range of needs and challenges facing young people. However, government and civil society organizations need to continue to address the major gaps, which hamper the progress in effectively supporting young people to achieve their full potential.

Political Institutions' Engagement with Youth

Both patrilineal and matrilineal inheritance is practiced in Solomon Islands. Despite this, power and authority is most often assumed by the men.²²² Most notably in this context, women's participation at the parliamentary level has been virtually absent.²²³ Out of 50 members of Parliament, none are women and since independence, only one woman has been elected. Women's representation is slightly better at provincial government level, with five women elected in provincial assemblies. In the public service, women only hold six percent of key decision making positions.²²⁴ In the Solomon Islands most legislators are older men, with the result that young people's voices are rarely heard in national decision-making forums. Despite this, there has to date been no consideration as to whether it would be useful to reserve any seats for young people in the National legislature.

"My friends and I want to build a good community where it is safe and we help young people and work together"

Young man

²²⁰ MWYCFCA and NSO 2009: 61.

²²¹ Ibid: 145.

²²² JICA 2010.

²²³ Since independence, there has only been one woman elected and only one woman to hold a Ministerial portfolio. In the 2010 elections, 25 women ran as candidates compared to 484 male candidates however no women were elected.

²²⁴ JICA 2010.

In a positive move, the Solomon Islands Parliament, with support from the UNDP Solomon Islands Parliamentary Support Project, conducted a Youth Parliament in 2010 for the first time. They also hold a regular Annual Open Day and conducted a schools outreach programme designed to teach young people about parliament, government, active citizenship, and political participation. Most recently, a Youth Leadership Forum was held as part of their outreach programme. This work should continue to be supported by development partners.

National and Provincial Youth Policies

In November 2010, the *National Youth Policy 2010-2015* was launched. The 2010-2015 Policy is the result of the review of the *2000 National Youth Policy* which had limited implementation and impact due to the Tensions of 1998-2003 and the Honiara riots of 2006.²²⁵ The review of the previous youth policy was initiated by MWYCFA supported by Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), SPC, United Nations, World Bank and bi-lateral donors (Australia and Japan). The review captured critical issues faced by young people and youth development organizations.²²⁶ The 2010-2015 Policy has two parts: the *National Youth Policy* and the *Strategic Plan of Action* (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Key Issues and Outcomes in National Youth Policy

Key Issue	Outcomes
Youth and Career Pathways	Improved and equitable access to education, training and employment opportunities for young women and men.
Youth and Governance	Increased and equal opportunities for young women and men to participate in decision-making and leadership.
Youth and Wellbeing	Youth health improved through equitable access to health services for young women and men.
Youth and Peace-building	Increased number of young people participating in activities that promote peace building and conflict prevention.
Youth and Sustainable Development	Increased number of young people promoting sustainable development.
Youth Mainstreaming	Improved capacity to implement this policy.

In November 2010, a National Youth Summit that focused on ‘Mainstreaming the Solomon Island Youth Policy’ was held. Permanent Secretaries, senior government officials and non-government organizations assisted in creating a detailed plan of programmes and activities that would align to the Policy’s *Strategic Action Plan* and identify responsibilities for particular activities.²²⁷ A similar mainstreaming workshop is scheduled for 2011 at the provincial level.

Alongside the national review, provincial consultations were also carried out throughout the country resulting in the development of the first provincial youth policy and plans of actions.²²⁸ During 2009 and 2010, six of the nine provinces in Solomon Islands have launched their *Provincial Youth Policy* with accompanying Action Plans, with the exception of Malaita, Makira and Renbel Provinces which will be launched later in 2011.²²⁹ In 2009, the youth division of the Honiara City Council also reviewed its urban youth policy which was developed

225 MWYCFA 2010: 3

226 Carter 2010.

227 MWYCFA 2010: 9.

228 The provincial consultation was led by National Youth Congress (NYC) in partnership with OXFAM, Save the Children (Australia), AusAID (Community Sector Programme) and MWYCFA

229 Fox, Charles. Email to Charles Fox, January 20, 2011

in 2006. However, as of December 2010 the finalized new youth policy has yet to be launched. While it is commendable that youth policies and actions plan have been developed at national, provincial and local level, the challenge will be to ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are allocated for the implementation of these policies at all levels.

Youth Institutions and Key Organizations

Under the newly launched *2010-2015 National Youth Policy*, the following implementation mechanisms are set to be put in place as of December 2010 to realize the policy:

- The MWYCFA is the lead government agency responsible for youth development across the country. It is tasked with maintaining regular dialogue with civil society organizations (including youth organizations) and across government. MWYCFA is also responsible for the facilitation of the implementation of the Plan of Action.
- The Youth Development Division of MWYCFA is specifically tasked with: implementing programmes to meet the policy outcomes; working with youth development partners; and, providing advice and information to relevant stakeholders on youth issues.
- The National Steering Committee for the National Youth Policy (NSC-NYP) is the highest decision-making body for implementing the policy and is to be comprised of Permanent Secretaries of relevant Ministries. It is planned that it will meet annually to assess the state of youth development in Solomon Islands.
- The National Youth Congress (NYC) is a semi-governmental body that is affiliated with MWYCFA. The NYC operates as an independent body, however, most of its funding is from the Government. The NYC primarily advocates to government on behalf of young men and women, and is responsible for monitoring with the Youth Development Division. is also responsible for monitoring.
- A National Youth Stakeholders Committee is comprised of representatives of the public and private sector agencies implementing youth programmes and activities, and is chaired by the Undersecretary of MWYCFA. It meets on a quarterly basis to receive updates from government on the implementation of the policy and the accompanying plan of action. The Committee reports at least once a year to the NSC-NYP.



It is positive that the implementation mechanism of the policy has been designed to ensure that a collaborative approach is taken.²³⁰ However, there are many committees and potentially complex layers of bureaucracy to be set up and it is yet to be seen whether such an approach will be implemented.

At the provincial level, the provincial youth policy lays out the implementation mechanism that has been endorsed by the Provincial Governments. Development partners will need to work alongside these provincial implementation mechanisms.²³¹ The challenges in implementing the provincial youth policies include limited capacity and resources. Provincial government infrastructure also remains at very basic standards.

Save the Children Australia has a specific project focused on 'Children and Youth in Conflict with the Law', which is one of the few programmes specifically focused on young people in the justice sector. The project uses child rights programming and a community justice approach to address youth offending in the Solomon Islands. The project is multi-faceted focusing on prevention and modules of support post and pre-release for young people. It addresses issues in urban and rural areas for young people and has potential for sustainable outcomes. The project requires the infrastructure of government to be robust enough to support change, not only in terms of policy and procedure, but also attitudinal change in the overall treatment of young offenders. The project targets the main stakeholders in the justice system, namely police, the courts, and corrective services. However, there have been challenges due to the capacity of some government stakeholders and lack of consistency in their commitment and involvement with the project. The project also works with the community, in particular Crime Prevention Committees at urban and provincial levels, as well as supporting young people through their integration back into the community. One of the dilemmas faced by this programme mentioned during consultations was the limited number of service providers in Honiara for the referral of young offenders.²³²

Justice Institutions and Policies

One of the key pillars of the *2010-2015 National Youth Policy* focuses on "youth and peace-building" (Table 6.1). Under this pillar, the Policy lists the following activities as performance indicators:

- Increased civic education activities especially those focused on youth;
- Increased activities for youth to use the arts to express themselves;
- The quality of rehabilitation programmes is improved;
- Programmes for strengthening families that have been successful to be scaled up to reach more youths in provinces;
- No new traumas in Solomon Islands;
- Reduction in youth crime rates;
- Reduced juvenile delinquency;
- Increased opportunities for youth to participate in the construction of the nations through sports, arts, business, community work, youth groups etc.; and,
- Increased counselling available to youths, whether due to traumas from the tensions or from the many pressures that may affect youth.

The main stakeholders in the justice sector in Solomon Islands are the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF), the judicial/courts system and the correctional services. Notably,

²³⁰ MWYCF 2010: 4.

²³¹ Fox, Charles. Email to Charles Fox, April 01, 2011.

²³² Save the Children, Australia 2009.

consultations held by Save the Children Australia in 2009 revealed that there was lack of support in place for young people as they progressed through the formal justice system. This included the lack of counselling for young people in court and correctional centres; lack of support to encourage better treatment by police of an alleged offender; the need to provide a more convincing argument of sentencing that is less damaging to self-esteem than prison sentences; and, better transition into community following incarcerations.²³³

There was a proposal for the establishment and endorsement of a National Crime Prevention Council before parliament at the end 2010, but it does not appear that this proposal has progressed. The National Crime Prevention Council would be required to provide strategic direction, management and support to the provincial community based Crime Prevention Committees.²³⁴ Due the lack of policing in every community, the Crime Prevention Committees intend to build the capacity of communities for crime prevention, problem solving and order maintenance. The proposal is supported by Participating Police Force, RSIPF and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)²³⁵ Law and Justice Programme.

The Juvenile Offender Act 1972, Correctional Services Act 2007 and Correctional Services Regulation 2007 make provision for processes to address some of the needs of children and young people that come into conflict with the law. For example, they allow for a separate juvenile court; protection of young offenders from publication of identifying information; specific consideration in relation to early release, including provisions for a child or a young person to be placed in the care of his or her family instead of placement in detention facilities; requirements for programmes of education for juvenile detainees; juvenile specific sentencing considerations; and, efforts to ensure that children and young people in detention do not mix with adult prisoners.²³⁶ However, according to civil society organizations consulted, most of these special provisions have not been met due to a lack of facilities and funding. There are two juvenile facilities in Solomon Islands namely Rove and Auki. It is understood that the Law Reform Commission is currently reviewing the Penal Code, which provides an opportunity for amendments to existing youth legislation to bring Solomon Islands in line with international standards.

Community Structures

When a young person commits a crime, traditionally the chiefs and other community elders bring the village together for a reconciliation process. The reconciliation ceremony involves apology and forgiveness and sometime some form of (non-monetary) compensation from the perpetrator of the crime to the victim or the victim's family. Throughout the country it appears that these practices still remain strong and in fact still occur even if an offender is facing charges in the formal justice systems.²³⁷ At the local level, these informal systems are seen to be highly effective and legitimate.²³⁸ However, in Honiara the reconciliation ceremony is practiced to some extent but is not as strong as in the rural areas. Furthermore, the tradition of material compensation for wrong doing was abused during the Tension period and was seen by many to be only a symbolic act, lacking in deep lasting meaning.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ SIG and RAMSI 2009.

²³⁵ See section under the Tension for more details on RAMSI.

²³⁶ Save the Children 2009.

²³⁷ Save the Children 2009.

²³⁸ Cox and Morrison 2004.

6.5 Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience

Youth development has been recognized as a priority in the national development agenda.²³⁹ The Government recognizes the importance of youth as a stakeholder in national development and the need to build on already existing mechanisms for youth development.²⁴⁰ The young population can have positive implications for growth and development, forming a large and energetic workforce. Yet a young population also creates challenges such as the increased likelihood of violent conflict and unrest, if economic stagnation and lack of opportunities continue. Unfortunately, in this context, many young people are not catered for by the formal and informal education systems. The economy is not growing as fast as the population and the unemployment rate is high. Other issues identified by young people are lack of participation in decision making processes, limited employment opportunities, and insufficient recreational activities. The combination of these factors, which are all interrelated, increases the probability of youth involvement in crime and violence.

“The Tensions”

The internal armed conflict, or “the Tensions”, that occurred between 1998 and 2003 and the riot of 2006 in Honiara have seriously affected the country, and with it numerous young men and women. This is true particularly for those in Honiara, and the provinces of Guadalcanal and Malaita.²⁴¹ It is largely understood that the conflict drivers were associated with inter-island migration; informal settlement on land and disagreement over customary land ownerships; the clash of traditional and non-traditional authority structures in relation to land and justice sectors; limited and unequal access by communities to government services; and unequal formal and informal economic opportunities for different communities.²⁴²

Approximately 35,000 men, women and children became internally displaced, losing their homes and livelihood as well as access to basic services such as access to water.²⁴³

Young people were heavily involved in the Tensions as both victims and perpetrators of violence. While it is largely understood that politicians and allied militants were responsible for “mobilizing and politicizing” (or ethnicizing) the violence, a subgroup of young people acted as agents in the looting and violence.²⁴⁴ This involvement of mainly disenfranchised young men resulted in them becoming perpetrators of violent acts that were fuelled by resentment and grievances against the state and other groupings.²⁴⁵ Young people who did not join the fight or did not take advantage of the social unrest suffered as well. Many school and colleges ceased functioning when teachers stopped receiving their wages. Families also reported no money to pay for school fees and therefore children and young people had to stay home.

239 MWYCF 2010: 3.

240 Ibid: 1.

241 World Bank 2008.

242 World Bank 2008.

243 JICA 2010.

244 World Bank 2008.

245 World Bank 2008 & JICA 2010.



Fear became a fact of life and this restricted young people's activities and freedom of movement.²⁴⁶ Many became isolated from their network of friends. During this period, there were many cases of women, particularly young women and girls, suffering high levels of sexual violence by militant groups and by intimate partners.²⁴⁷ The 2008 *Youth and Mental Health Study for Solomon Islands* highlighted the impact of the Tensions on young people, including loss of trust in national institutions due to years of unsatisfactory governance, struggle over resources, corruption at all level of government and having limited opportunity to constructively contribute to the social and economic development of their country. The Report also revealed that the trauma created by the Tensions should not be underestimated.²⁴⁸

On 24 July 2003, RAMSI, an Australian-led, Pacific Island Forum-endorsed state-building intervention was put into action and continues to date. It has been greeted with a mix of acclaim and criticism. RAMSI has been effective in bringing law and order problems under a level of control, but broader efforts to strengthen Government capacity, in particular in the context of economic growth and the machinery of government, has had variable impacts. The long-term recovery process remains challenging, and efforts to implement policies and programmes to address the reintegration and rehabilitation of people affected by the conflict have had variable success. The issues around marginalized youth, land disputes, rural-urban migration and high unemployment rates remain problematic to the full recovery process.²⁴⁹ Women have been under-represented in the formal peace processes and continue to be absent from national decision-making via the national legislature, even though women in Solomon Islands were instrumental in suspending the violence between Malaitan settlers and the indigenous people of Guadalcanal.

Growing the Employment Opportunities for Youth

The Tensions also severely affected the economy of Solomon Islands. Since RAMSI's arrival, annual growth has averaged almost six percent and economic stability has largely been maintained, although the food and fuel crisis and the global economic crisis have impacted negatively on recovery to a degree.²⁵⁰ Problematically, a large part of the growth in 2004-2008 was due to logging revenues, which many believe is unsustainable and may also be attributed to a surge in aid.²⁵¹ Logging activity experienced a downturn in early 2009 due to low prices in the key Asia markets but then recovered in 2010 by 24 percent.²⁵² Per capita income is the second lowest in the region. In 2007 aid made up 63 percent of GDP, but with around two thirds of that used to support RAMSI.²⁵³ This means that any change in aid flows could severely impact the economy.

As stated earlier, an estimated 7,500 young people enter the workforce each year however the formal economy since 1982 has only been able to absorb 3, 800 people per year.²⁵⁴ In 2005, the unemployment rate amongst 15 to 19 year olds was 75 percent.²⁵⁵ During consultations,

"I would like to become a teacher, I have a good teacher, I want to be like her and teach and learn more"

Young woman

246 JICA 2010.

247 Jourdan 2008.

248 World Bank 2008.

249 Ibid.

250 ADB 2009.

251 Ibid.

252 Roughan and Wara 2010; ADB 2009.

253 ADB 2009.

254 World Bank 2008.

255 MWYCF 2010: 7.

young men and women frequently identified paid employment as a strong resilience factor. At the same time, they expressed disillusionment toward their future dreams and aspirations due to their limited opportunities to gain formal or informal employment and/or engage in income generation activities. The stagnant economic growth, strains in social services, and fewer traditional safety nets in urban Honiara have added to the juvenile delinquency rates.²⁵⁶ The vast majority of Solomon Islanders are engaged in subsistence farming with only about 16 percent of people employed in formal employment.²⁵⁷ However, in Honiara opportunities to engage in agriculture are limited. A commonly expressed view by those consulted is that there is a lot of potential for young people to earn good income in the rural areas with most provinces implementing various strategies to encourage young people to stay in villages.

It is interesting to note that a number of the young people participating in the interviews stated that they had not given their future career and possible sources of employment much consideration. Many suggested that they did not expect to have the opportunity to choose and just assumed that they would undertake whatever work they could find.

To date the Government has focused few resources to tackling youth unemployment, although the *National Youth Policy* specifically recognizes the importance of “improved and equitable access to...employment opportunities for young women and men.” The Rapid Employment Project (REP) is one of the few projects specifically focused on employment for young people. It is implemented by the Honiara City Council and the Ministry of Infrastructure Development to provide short term employment and training to Honiara’s young urban unemployed. With support from the World Bank, Australia, and New Zealand through the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility, the REP began in 2010 labour-based works in various places around the capital. The programme involves participants cleaning up Honiara City and improving the infrastructure. As of December 2010, in Honiara a total of 17 community groups have started working in the REP and over 400 people have already benefited from the project, while more people are going to the project office to register their community groups. The REP is expected to directly benefit roughly 7,500 people over its five year period through work and training.

Improving the Quality and Relevance of Education

The *National Youth Policy* specifically recognizes the importance of education as a key issue for ensuring “career pathways.” It specifically identifies “Improved and equitable access to education, training and employment opportunities for young women and men” as a priority.²⁵⁸ However, the education system continues to orient young people towards a formal economy and insufficiently prepares them for alternative options, including informal livelihood options. Increasing population numbers have resulted in the current situation where the numbers of vacancies in this sector are few and cannot meet the demand for employment of school leavers.

An additional challenge confronting the education system is the quality and the relevance of education in schools. The *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* identified shortfalls in the quality of education and emphasised the need for school to be relevant to the lives, interests and cultural context of young people in Solomon Islands.²⁵⁹ This is a step in the

²⁵⁶ World Bank 2008.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ MWYCF 2010.

²⁵⁹ Asia-South Pacific Education Watch 2007.

right direction but it does not adequately address the need for technical and professional training for youth.

There are only two tertiary institutions operating in Solomon Islands, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and a Honiara branch of the University of the South Pacific. There are 30 vocational and technical training institutions called 'Vocational Rural Training Centres' in the country. These vocational and technical training institutions appear geared towards young males; in 2008, there were 24 percent of female student enrolled compared to 76 percent male students.²⁶⁰ In 2010 the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development was in the process of revising school curricula to provide more opportunities for students to acquire vocational skills.

Tackling Substance Abuse

The rate of alcohol and cannabis consumption amongst young people is reported to be high, with several respondents and reports linking substance abuse with crime and violence, particularly physical fights and bashings.²⁶¹ *The Baseline Report on Understanding HIV and AIDS Risk and Vulnerability Among Solomon Islands Youth* carried out by the UNICEF Pacific Office and Solomon Islands Government found that 44 percent of the sample reported alcohol use, 28 percent used homebrew or *kwaso*, and four percent used *kava*. The rate of frequent alcohol consumption (more than three times per week) was five percent. Substance abuse was reported to be higher for males than for females and a higher percentage of young people in Honiara area used alcohol, homebrew or *kwaso* and *kava*. Sixteen percent of the youth surveyed were currently using drugs including marijuana, ecstasy, speed, ice and prescription drugs.²⁶²

The legal drinking age in the Solomon Islands is 21 years, but in reality there is no age restriction for purchasing and consuming alcohol in both private residences and public places.²⁶³ Youth respondents in the Baseline Report reported that nightclubs and bars did not enforce restrictions related to young people consuming alcohol and said that when nightclubs and bars were closed, ad-hoc bars sprung up.

Recently, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services has taken steps to address the increasing levels of cannabis and alcohol use amongst the youth population in the Solomon Islands.²⁶⁴ Currently the Ministry of Health addresses substance abuse as part of the *Mental Health Strategic Plan* and the *Integrated Mental Health Services Plan*. The current focus areas include alcohol, tobacco and cannabis use among secondary school students. In late November 2010, the Ministry of Health and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community held a conference in Honiara to develop a multi-sectorial national alcohol policy. These are all positive steps, but while policies are a good start, implementation remains a challenge. It is essential that sufficient funding and staff are dedicated to these programmes. It is also imperative that a multi-sectoral approach continues to be prioritized.

"My father left and married another woman. I did not attend school because no money to pay for my school fee. Now my work is to look after my small sister who is about 2 years old and my mother have to work as a house lady to keep another child who was the same age as my small sister"

Young woman

260 JICA 2010.

261 See ABC Radio Australia: 2010 and Save the Children Australia 2009. On March 22 2010, ABC Radio Australia reported that homebrew alcohol is being blamed for Solomon Islands rising crime rate.

262 UNICEF Pacific Office Forthcoming: 72.

263 Australia National Council on Drugs 2010.

264 Alcohol Related Harm, a Global Issue. 2010.

Opportunities for Meaningful Activity

Young people reported concerns not just with lack of employment, but lack of opportunities to engage in other meaningful activities. Although there are some opportunities with church groups and civil society, not all young people were aware of these opportunities nor are all interested. A number of young people lamented the lack of sporting facilities and organized sporting events. Others wanted more opportunities to learn vocational skills through non-formal educational channels. Avenues of expression through crafts, music and arts were also highlighted. Other participants stressed the need for opportunities for meaningful youth participation not to be limited only to the urban and peri-urban areas; more opportunities for youth participation needed to be made available in the rural areas to lessen the rural-urban drift.

Young people that were interviewed for this study highlighted the positive roles that young people played in society and how these roles served as a resilience factor. The positive roles for young people include students, workers, sports people, volunteers, farmers, and peer educators, active members in community and church youth groups, bible study groups, and youth councils. Young people also participate in cultural events and contribute to their family's welfare through attending to crops, caring for younger siblings, and cleaning and maintaining their home. In many of these roles, young people had a responsibility and were involved in decision making processes. Unfortunately, youth participation in meaningful activities such as sports clubs, non-government organizations, youth associations and the media often involve better educated and connected young people and rarely disadvantaged young people.²⁶⁵

Family Challenges

During consultations, both violence within the home and break down of the traditional extended family and community structures in urban areas were identified by participants as risk factors pushing young people towards involvement in crime and violence. Young people exposed to violence as a victim or witness in their own home were thought by participants to have a greater likelihood of becoming violent and adopting other types of risky behavior threatening their own and other's wellbeing. Studies in the Solomon Islands have also demonstrated a correlation between violence in the home and other forms of violence. Men are more likely to engage in violence with their partner if they were beaten as a child (85 percent), and if their father beat their mother (82 percent). Men that are more violent with other men (82 percent) and those who get drunk at least once a week (83 percent) are more likely to commit intimate partner violence.²⁶⁶

This demonstrates that exposure to violence is a risk factor that may contribute to young peoples' engagement in violence and other risky behavior.

Respondents also felt that the breakdown of extended family structures was leaving young people with inadequate support mechanisms. The main reasons for the breakdown were identified as: rural to urban migration leaving relatives behind; changes in traditional roles due to external influences; and, parents not living together due to work arrangements or separation. Traditionally, young people could turn to relatives such as uncles/aunts or grandparents to address concerns or gain advice. The members of the extended family also

"Young people do not have the guidance and advice from parents and family this leads many to do as they like"

Youth worker

²⁶⁵ World Bank 2008

²⁶⁶ MWYCA and NSO 2009: 145.



played the role of mentor or role model for young people in their transition to adulthood. The new, more nuclear structure puts greater pressure not only on young people, but parents as well. “Lack of parenting skills” and “low parental monitoring” as well as the “movement of young people from rural areas to cities away from family support networks” were identified as factors in young people coming in conflict with the law.²⁶⁷

During consultations, positive parenting or guidance was highlighted by young people as an important factor in young people playing a positive role in society. Young people highlighted the importance of having strong, guiding and caring parents, or other guidance that served as a positive role model while growing up. Young people felt that with changing times, their roles and accepted social values are in conflict social roles are being redefined and parents are busy with their careers and trying to make ends meet. Parents played a crucial role in monitoring and influencing the life path of a young person providing support, advice and discipline.

Youth also identified having a positive role model as an important factor in influencing positive behavior in young people. It is not just parents who can set a good example for youth. The Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT), a non-government organization engages with young people in Honiara through mentoring, using community development perspectives in every part of their work. During consultations, the young people who were met at the SIDT office spoke positively about being empowered through the mentoring and positive activities that SIDT provided. The young people benefitting from the activities of SIDT are potential role models for the young people across the nation.

²⁶⁷ Save the Children Australia 2009; World Bank 2008.

Societal Challenges

According to government and civil society leaders, as well as former police, the Tensions affected young men in particular in a number of ways. They have become bolder and more brazen in their attitude to crime and violence. Due to the experience of a number of young men involved in the Tensions, they have also become desensitized to violence and are more willing to use it in attempts to solve problems. Some interviewees claimed that young people are also more suspicious of other people and that they are less likely to listen and respect elders than prior to the Tensions. Notably however, lingering ethnic tensions as an underlying cause for violence was vocalized by adults, but was not evident when speaking to young people.

Young people spoke about not only the importance of more political stability, but also about their disappointment in the leaders of their country for not prioritizing issues for young people in the post-Tensions period. The trauma created by the Tensions should not be underestimated. It lives on for many young people. In the eyes of young people, there are still many unresolved issues such as poor governance, including widespread corruption and struggles over equal resource distribution. Young people stated that they are looking for leadership and role models to look up to and to successfully lead them.

Young people also highlighted that the increase in rural urban migration and over population have put a strain on them. The competition for jobs has increased and the on-going influx of *wantoks* in their home has made it difficult to deal with everyday life requirements. The limited financial means of individual people also push people in Honiara to live together in crowded conditions in order to make ends meet. These family and community upheavals, coupled with rural-urban migrations have left young people struggling, forcing many to use complicated new pathways in their coping skills to deal with change - including turning away from the family toward friends and outside role models. Many respondents felt that these factors pushed young people to search for new identities and acknowledgement which sometimes involved engaging in risky behaviours that can include acts of violence and/or crime. Peer pressure was seen as a risk factor although some young people pointed out that positive peer pressure also exists and can encourage them to take the "right path" and not commit crime.

The church remains a key community institution which engages young people through youth programmes which use the church's existing networks within communities throughout the country. In the 1999 census, 98 percent of Solomon Islanders identified themselves as being affiliated to a Christian church. Different denominations have different viewpoints on youth issues and the church youth groups prescribe to the religious values of the denomination.²⁶⁸ The church youth groups are therefore guided in which work they undertake and often this needs to first be discussed within higher bodies within the denomination. While some high officials in church organisations recognize that youth programmes need to respond to emerging youth issues, there is concern over the possible reaction of older church members to such activities. Notably, not all young people who are part of a certain church are members of the youth groups. Those not part of church youth groups are more likely to be marginalized. Paradoxically, the church often does not allow young people to participate in church youth activities if they have been caught engaging in behaviour that the church deems as inappropriate, such as smoking, out of wedlock sexual activity or committing criminal offences. During consultations, many young people questioned whether this was the right approach as it alienated many young people.

²⁶⁸ AusAID 2004.

In Honiara, most of the civil society organizations that work with young people do not necessarily work with juvenile offenders. This was highlighted as a key issue due to the lack of consistency in the provision of services to juvenile offenders and other young people at-risk. What is particularly problematic is the referral process from one service to another. At a more specific level, during consultations non-government organizations highlighted the need to improve data collection and project design to better evaluate the impact of projects on young people. Profiling success stories for young people was not evident. Participants consulted spoke about their programmes with pride but did not articulate well the success stories for young people. This would be particularly useful for nation building to inspire and to motivate young people to take part in their citizenship contributions.

6.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

While the bulging youth population in the Solomon Islands could be regarded as a burden on society and a cause for grave concern, it can also be seen as an opportunity. Many regional countries such as Japan, Australia and New Zealand have aging populations and a lack of skilled young people. The vibrancy of youth has an opportunity to shine in the Solomon Islands and to become the foundation for the recovery and long-term development of the nation - but only if the correct investments are made sooner rather than later. The future cost of not providing support and opportunities to the current generation of youth as they transition to adulthood will be much higher than if concrete and sincere policies and programmes are put in place now.

Despite the fragility of current systems and infrastructure, Solomon Islands' recovery has begun to move forward. It will only be sustainable with the assistance and support of young people. The road to recovery entails the active involvement of young people who have a strong sense of identity – provincially and nationally. Their energy needs to be redirected and harnessed into active participation at all levels of government and within the community. For this to happen, it is imperative that the government makes good on its stronger commitment to youth as displayed in the new *National Youth Policy*, thereby facilitating the process of recovery and change. Please note that a number of the recommendations in the Pacific Overview and Regional Recommendations chapter are relevant to Honiara as well.

Recommendations

- Prioritize Government strategic planning for young people particularly in the areas that encourage young people's involvement in community safety and crime prevention programmes
- Enhance employment opportunities in the informal sector such as fisheries, forestry and logging, agriculture and horticulture, and livestock breeding.
- Review justice sector policies and obstacles to full implementation of relevant laws for juvenile offenders.
- Support the government to implement and monitor the new *National Youth Policy* and Strategy at all levels.

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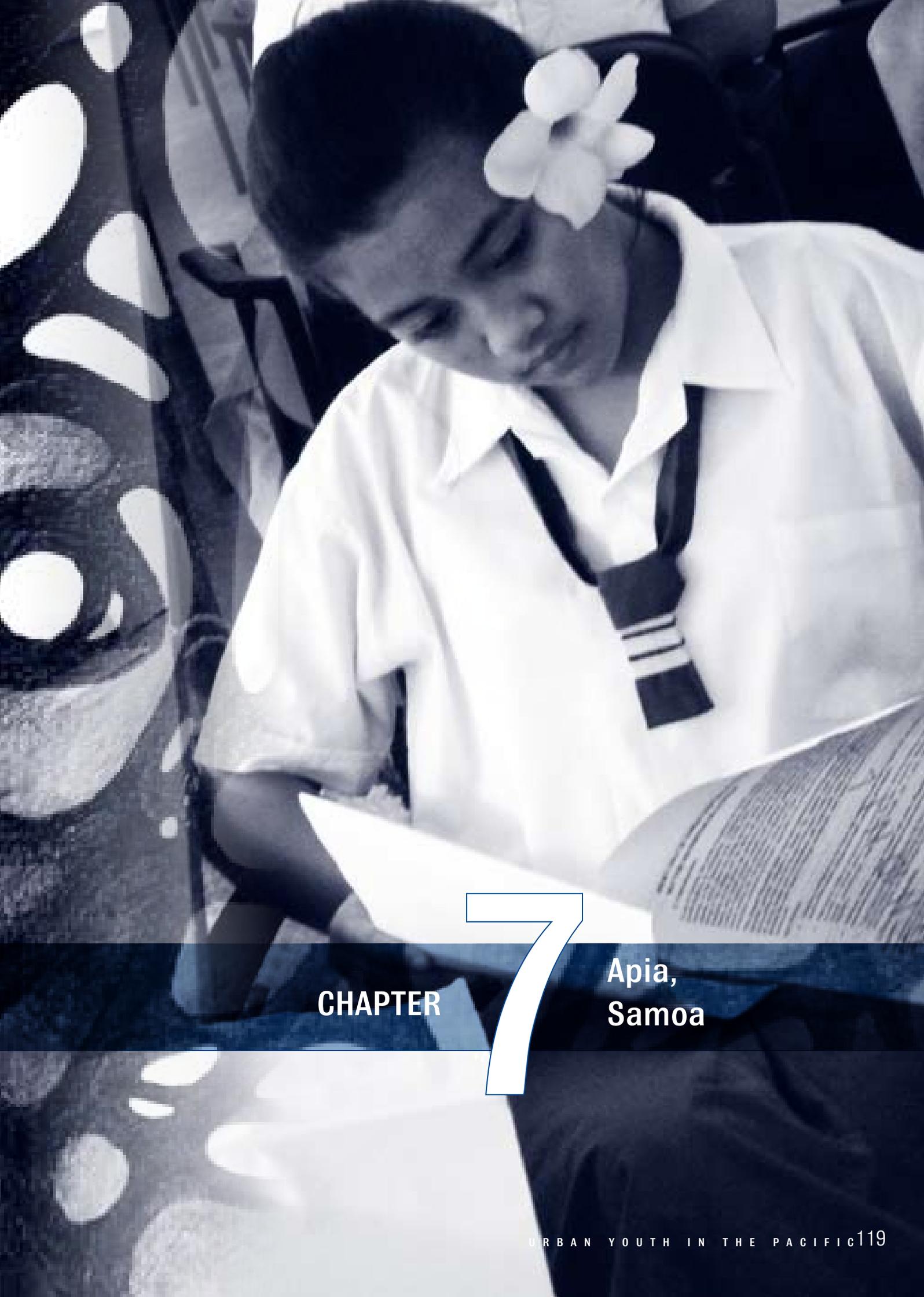
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CHAPTER

7

Apia,
Samoa

7

Chapter Seven: Apia, Samoa

7.1 Introduction

This Urban Centre Case Study discusses youth crime and violence in Apia, Samoa. The research team conducted focus groups discussions and interviews in Apia with young people, government actors, village leaders and civil society organizations which provided the main basis for the findings. Additionally, a desk review of available reports and statistics was conducted. Drawing together these findings, this case study recommends a number of key actions to strengthen and support resilient capacity among young men and women.

The median age in Samoa is 20.5 years, making it a relatively young population. The *2001-2010 National Youth Policy* defines young people as aged between 12-29 years old. However, with the current review of the National Youth Policy, it is anticipated that the new policy may re-define the age bracket. In addition, a young person can be criminally held responsible between the ages of 8-14 years according to the Crimes Ordinance 1961.

"I'm proud to be Samoan. One day I want to play for the Manu Samoa and show the world our Island, our friendly way"

Young man

Young people in Samoa are facing a number of challenges, including the impacts of globalization and changes occurring as a result of rural-urban migration. Despite these transitions, there is still an ongoing adherence to *fa'a-Samoa*, or the 'Samoa Way'.²⁶⁹ In Samoa, the social structure rests on kinship values, which place the family and the village at the centre. The underlying traditional belief is that the well-being of the family and the village will ensure the welfare of the individual.²⁷⁰ The *fa'a-Samoa* allows the participation of young people through *auluma* (daughters of the village), the *aumaga* (untitled men) and the *autalavou* (faith-based youth groups).²⁷¹ However, as more Samoan families

begin to reside outside of their own village structures with its strong traditional administration and social governance, the implications, roles and responsibilities of young people in their community are changing.

Statistics maintained by the police as well as qualitative interviews undertaken during this study suggest that the prevalent forms of youth crime include burglary, theft, narcotics and assaults. Risk factors create an environment which increases the likelihood of young people becoming involved in criminal activity. The most commonly agreed upon risk factors during consultations include unemployment, break down of families, lack of good role models, and urban migration. Additional factors, such as globalization, urbanization, drugs and alcohol, might exacerbate young people's likelihood of engaging in crime and/or violence. Nonetheless, young men and women have demonstrated they can be resilient against these negative factors through the existence of good role models to give advice, strong family/cultural ties and opportunities for employment and training.

7.2 National Context

In 2006, the population of Samoa was 180,741 (Figure 7.1), with 37,708 living in the Apia Urban Area.²⁷² This means that approximately 21 percent of the overall population is urban-based.

²⁶⁹ SPC and UNFPA 2006.

²⁷⁰ Meleisea 1987.

²⁷¹ Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010; Government of Samoa 2001.

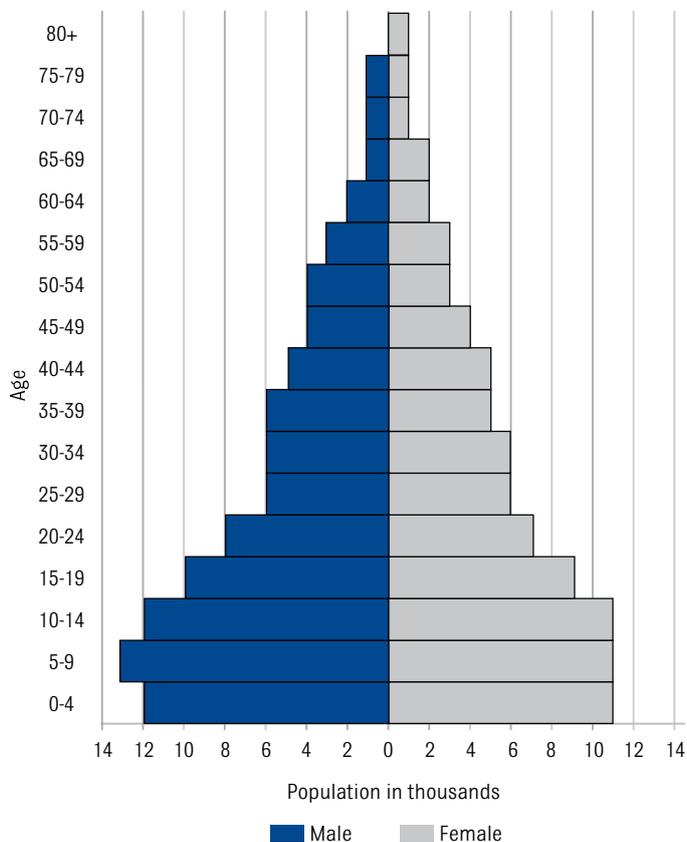
²⁷² Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2008.

The 2009 Human Development Index ranks Samoa 94 out of 182 countries.²⁷³ Samoa is on track to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals such as the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. While the Government of Samoa does not maintain a statistic on the incidence of poverty in Samoa, it has undertaken participatory poverty assessments that identify a widespread “poverty of opportunity.” This encompasses: “a lack of access to basic services, a lack of adequate resources to meet basic household needs and customary obligations to the family, village community and church, [and] a lack of opportunities to participate fully in the socioeconomic life of the community.”²⁷⁴

As of 2008, 15,323 students attended the 13 secondary schools in the Apia Urban Area, of which 8,023 are females and 7,300 are males. 60 percent of these students are in Government schools and there are more young women (938) enrolled in year 13 than young men (719). The highest dropout rate is at year 12 and 13.²⁷⁵ It is estimated that approximately as many as 21 percent of secondary school age youth (between the ages of 12-17 years old) are not in school, and that an average of 10,000 young people leave school every year in Samoa.²⁷⁶ The National Youth Policy specifically identifies the risk that these young people are facing as they join the ranks of the already unemployed out of school youth and who, due to their disillusionment, may be attracted to drugs, alcohol and crime.

Teenage pregnancy continues to be an issue in Samoa with nine percent of teenage girls having had children. The *Second Generation Surveillance Surveys* undertaken by SPC on HIV and other sexually transmitted infections found that young people under 25 years of age had extremely high prevalence and very low knowledge of sexually transmitted infections. This, combined with the level of teenage pregnancy, indicates high levels of unprotected sex amongst young people.²⁷⁷ The issue of youth suicide is also a key social and health concern in Samoa. In 2004, there were 42 suicide deaths recorded. By 2006-2007, the number dropped to 16 suicide deaths, but there were still 37 attempts. The highest rate of suicides attempts and deaths are amongst young males aged 29 and under.²⁷⁸ It has been suggested that in Samoa there is a link between suicide and high parental expectations in relation to education and employment attainment.²⁷⁹

Figure 7.1: Samoa Population Pyramid



Source: UN Population Division 2009

“Peer pressure and thinking they are the master starts so many fights here... Saturday I go to church and Sunday I help my mother with things around the house”

Young woman

273 For more information and a detailed explanation of the Human Development Index see: http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_WSM.html

274 AusAID 2010.

275 MESC 2007.

276 SBEC 2006:14.

277 Ministry of Health 2010.

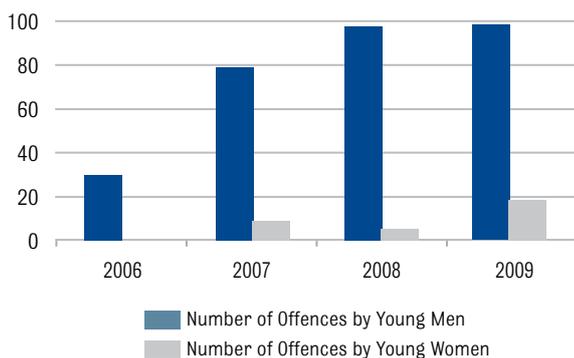
278 FSPI 2009 & Government of Samoa 2001.

279 National University of Samoa 2006.

Culturally, Samoa has held on strongly to many of its traditional values and community structures. Since 1991, Samoa has had universal suffrage, but customary processes (*fa'a Samoa*) also play a very large role in contemporary politics. Only citizens with *matai*²⁸⁰ titles are eligible to stand for election. Moreover, a substantial portion of the national administration of law and order is entrusted to *matai* through the devolution of responsibilities to village councils or fono composed of titled individuals. The *matai* system offers a challenge for women's political and economic empowerment as only approximately five percent of Samoan *matai* titles are held by women.²⁸¹ Nonetheless, Samoa ratified CEDAW in 1995 and has created a specific Ministry to promote women's rights. It is estimated that approximately 40 percent of women form part of the formal economic sector and 33 percent of the total workforce. However, women continue to occupy a lower social status than men. This is highlighted by the high levels of domestic violence, which indicates that 46 percent of women who have ever been in a relationship experience partner abuse (Section 7.3).²⁸²

7.3 Young People as Victims and Perpetrators

Figure 7.2 Number of Offences per Year by Young People Aged 15-29



Source: MWCSO 2010

“They have no money and can't get a job to receive money so they get into selling drugs and stealing”

Young man

Many young people living in Apia contribute positively to the society. That said their potential is not being realized. There needs to be further strengthening of partnerships between government, civil society and young people to better enable young people to access effective support and services to empower them especially in the justice sector. Some young people are engaging in criminal activities, including assault, drug abuse and domestic violence. At the same time, young people are at risk of being victims of crime, in particular, violence inside and outside the home.

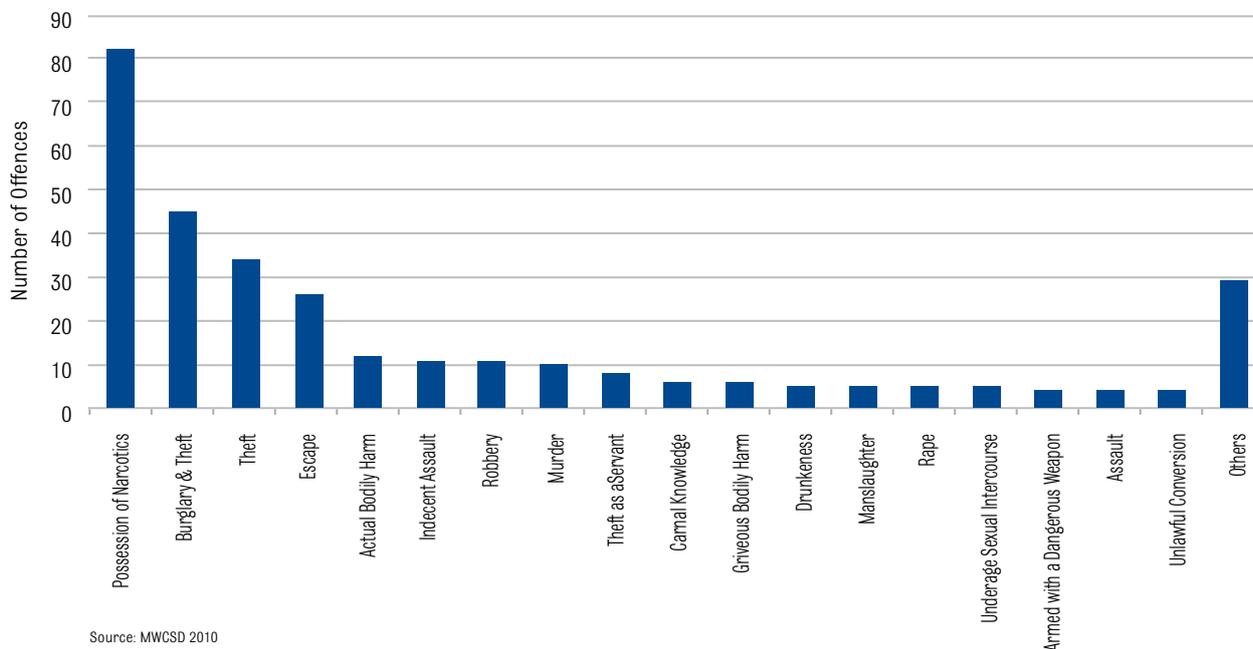
Common Crimes

Predominant criminal offenders in Samoa are males aged between 24-30 years of age. The total number of youth offenders aged between 15 to 29 years has increased substantially – for example in 2006 there were 30 offences committed by young men. However by 2009 the number had increased to 99 offences by young men (Figure 7.2). According to police statistics, in 2009 the top five crimes committed by young male offenders were: possession of narcotics (44 percent), escape from custody/prison (22 percent), burglary (13 percent), theft (11 percent), and actual bodily harm (ten percent) (Figure 7.3).²⁸³

Out of a total of 312 crimes committed from 2006-2010 by young aged 15 to 29, the Ministry of Police lists 32 female offenders during that period with only one aged 17 years. Women's crimes were almost exclusively money-related, often involving breach of trust and were almost all non-violent except for one assault and one manslaughter charge. In 2009, there were 19 crimes involving young women (under the age of 29 years), 15 of which were theft as a servant, forgery, false pretence, or falsifying accounts (Figure 7.4).²⁸⁴

280 Chiefly title.
281 PIFS 2006.
282 SPC and UNFPA 2006.
283 MWCSO 2010.
284 Ibid.

Figure 7.3 Male Offenders Aged 15-29 from 2006-2010 (March) by Type of Offence

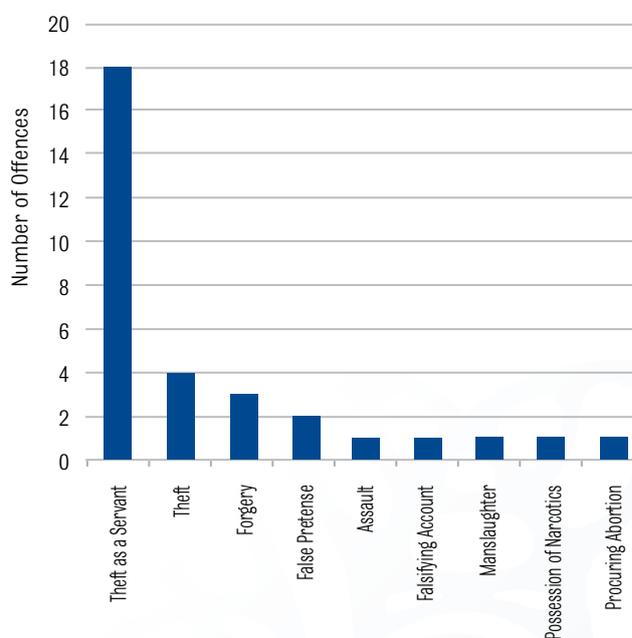


Source: MWCSO 2010

Perceptions of crime prevalence gathered from government, civil society and young people during consultations largely matched the available statistics. The Attorney General’s office identified possession and selling of drugs as the most serious crime commonly perpetrated by juvenile offenders which may correlate with information on substance use amongst young Samoans. Crimes involving violence (e.g. actual bodily harm, indecent assault, robbery, murder) ranked among the top eight crimes recorded by the police, but they were less common among young offenders. Over the four-year period mentioned above, only four offenders were convicted for violent crimes namely, armed with a dangerous weapon.²⁸⁵

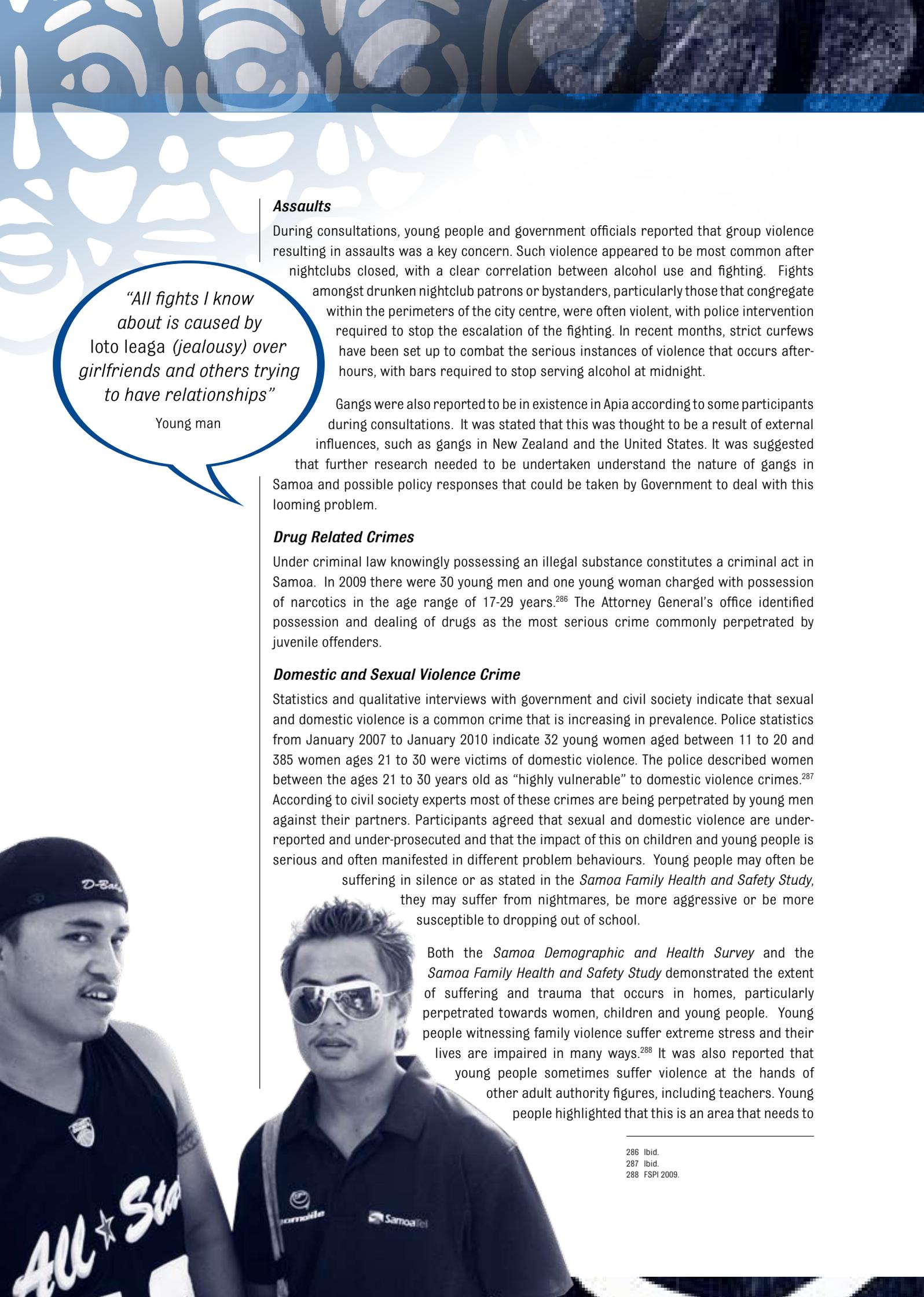
Statistics on recidivism were not available, but it was widely agreed among government and NGO officials that recidivism is a problem. One government official estimated that three out of every ten young males reoffend, often multiple times. None of the women in prison at the time of consultations were re-offenders, however, this may not indicate the rates of recidivism amongst females. Lastly, recidivism rates may be due to limited rehabilitation programmes within prisons, including the male juvenile detention facility. According to government officials, a number of inmates are provided counselling by police guards, pastors or are taken to Church.

Figure 7.4 Female Offenders Aged 15-29 from 2006-2010 (March) by Type of Offence



Source: MWCSO 2010

285 Ibid.



Assaults

During consultations, young people and government officials reported that group violence resulting in assaults was a key concern. Such violence appeared to be most common after nightclubs closed, with a clear correlation between alcohol use and fighting. Fights amongst drunken nightclub patrons or bystanders, particularly those that congregate within the perimeters of the city centre, were often violent, with police intervention required to stop the escalation of the fighting. In recent months, strict curfews have been set up to combat the serious instances of violence that occurs after-hours, with bars required to stop serving alcohol at midnight.

Gangs were also reported to be in existence in Apia according to some participants during consultations. It was stated that this was thought to be a result of external influences, such as gangs in New Zealand and the United States. It was suggested that further research needed to be undertaken understand the nature of gangs in Samoa and possible policy responses that could be taken by Government to deal with this looming problem.

Drug Related Crimes

Under criminal law knowingly possessing an illegal substance constitutes a criminal act in Samoa. In 2009 there were 30 young men and one young woman charged with possession of narcotics in the age range of 17-29 years.²⁸⁶ The Attorney General's office identified possession and dealing of drugs as the most serious crime commonly perpetrated by juvenile offenders.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crime

Statistics and qualitative interviews with government and civil society indicate that sexual and domestic violence is a common crime that is increasing in prevalence. Police statistics from January 2007 to January 2010 indicate 32 young women aged between 11 to 20 and 385 women ages 21 to 30 were victims of domestic violence. The police described women between the ages 21 to 30 years old as "highly vulnerable" to domestic violence crimes.²⁸⁷ According to civil society experts most of these crimes are being perpetrated by young men against their partners. Participants agreed that sexual and domestic violence are under-reported and under-prosecuted and that the impact of this on children and young people is serious and often manifested in different problem behaviours. Young people may often be suffering in silence or as stated in the *Samoa Family Health and Safety Study*, they may suffer from nightmares, be more aggressive or be more susceptible to dropping out of school.

Both the *Samoa Demographic and Health Survey* and the *Samoa Family Health and Safety Study* demonstrated the extent of suffering and trauma that occurs in homes, particularly perpetrated towards women, children and young people. Young people witnessing family violence suffer extreme stress and their lives are impaired in many ways.²⁸⁸ It was also reported that young people sometimes suffer violence at the hands of other adult authority figures, including teachers. Young people highlighted that this is an area that needs to

"All fights I know about is caused by loto leaga (jealousy) over girlfriends and others trying to have relationships"
Young man

²⁸⁶ Ibid.
²⁸⁷ Ibid.
²⁸⁸ FSPI 2009.



be addressed due to the seriousness of incidents, but also because drop-out rates are impacted by violence at school at the hands of teachers and other senior students.

Domestic violence is not proscribed in specific legislation, but it can be charged as 'common assault'.²⁸⁹ However, with the establishment of the Samoa Law Reform Commission, steps are being taken to reform and review Samoa's laws in relation to sexual and domestic violence. The Law Reform Commission has made specific recommendations to Parliament to amend the Crimes Ordinance 1961 to introduce provisions to punish sexual offences against persons less than 12 years of age and to require such offences against young men and women between 12-16 years to incur harsher penalties.²⁹⁰ Under the same recommendation to Parliament, the Law Reform Commission has also proposed that marital rape become an offence.

*"I do get hit
by my mother and
my father... It makes
me sad and scared but also
when they fight it makes me
scared"*

Young man

Inter-School Fights

Inter-school fighting, which includes crimes such as assaults and grievous bodily harm, were reported to occur in the urban area, either at the market or at the sea-wall. Inter-school fighting often arises over rivalry between schools over sports such as rugby, where students fight en masse in retaliation to insults or individual assaults on members of their own school. Students may use glass bottles, rocks, metal pipes/bars and other makeshift weapons to attack other school students. The most severe of these attacks occurred in 2008 whilst a group of students were waiting at a bus stand. A Molotov cocktail or petrol bomb²⁹¹ was thrown and it exploded on three students. One female student sustained serious injury causing second degree burns to her hand, head, face and torso. The student who threw the petrol bomb has now been convicted of causing grievous bodily harm.²⁹²

7.4 Institutional Responses in Support of Youth

Government initiatives such as the Law Reform Commission and the 'Towards A Legacy of Achievement, Versatility and Opportunity through Unity' (TALAVOU) programme are already in place to address the range of needs and challenges facing young people, particularly in relation to crime and violence. However, there are still limitations and gaps in effectively tackling youth issues and in supporting young people to be to achieve their full potential and continue to serve and participate in their communities.

Political Institutions' Engagement with Youth

Samoa has 49 members in its National Parliament. At the 2011 election, the number of female MPs was halved from four to two and the number of Ministers was reduced from three to one, the new Minister for Justice. There were only nine women candidates amongst the 158 candidates that stood at the 2011 election. Although CEDAW prioritizes women's political participation, both the legislative and executive branches of government are dominated by men. The legislative branch is also dominated by older male members of the Samoan community, with the result that young people's voices are rarely heard in national decision-making forums. Despite this, to date there has been no consideration of whether it would be useful to reserve any seats for young people in the national legislature.

289 SPC and UNFPA 2006:5.

290 Email from Government Official 28 February 2011.

291 An improvised incendiary device made of a glass bottle containing flammable liquid, usually petrol, and fitted with a burning cloth wick that is designed to set target ablaze on impact.

292 Petrol Bomb Student Jailed 2010.

Young people need to be more actively engaged in the development of their communities and be part of decision-making processes. The creation of more opportunities for dialogue between young people and decision makers are essential so that positive contributions can be made and young people feel that they are a resource in the community rather than a burden. To this end, it is positive that Samoa has held Youth Parliaments, which provide young people with a forum to connect with the political system and an opportunity to contribute to national policy debates. Such activities should be continued in the future so young leaders are developed and acknowledged by their political structures, although meaningful exchanges with parliamentarians need to be included.

Government Youth Policies

The *Strategy for the Development of Samoa (2008-2012)* specifically recognizes that development cannot occur if young people's issues are not addressed.²⁹³ Accordingly, it has developed specific indicators to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of its policies. These indicators include a reduction in youth suicide, violence and sexual abuse, and juvenile crimes.

Whilst the *2001-2010 National Youth Policy* (Table 7.1) and its *Strategic Plan* were developed a number of years ago, implementation has lagged and youth development remains a relatively new area for implementation and coordination. The Division for Youth tasked with implementation of the Policy is situated within the Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development. The Division is divided into two departments, one focused on economic development and the other on social issues. As of December 2010 the Division was transitioning into a policy-making and monitoring role, rather than an implementation role. If done effectively, this will be a positive step as the Division will be able to direct more energy and resources to mainstreaming youth issues across departments. Lastly, it will also be required to take the lead in developing and implementing the next iteration of the *National Youth Policy*, to follow on from the 2001-10 Policy which has just concluded.

Table 7.1 Key Issues and Actions in National Youth Policy

Key Issue	Action
Youth Health	Ensure that health care information and facilities are readily accessible to all youth and prevent the occurrence and spread of diseases before they occur amongst young people.
Education and Training	Maximize the learning potential and talents of youth and provide viable alternatives for all students to gain employable and livelihood skills.
Employment and Occupation	Support and promote sustainable income generating activities of youth.
Youth Justice	Prevent youth involvement in criminal behaviour and establish a separate judicial and rehabilitation process for processing juveniles and young offenders.
Youth and Natural Resource Use	Encourage and increase the involvement of youth in protecting, conserving and using in a sustainable manner Samoa's natural biodiversity.
Youth Recreation	Acknowledge and develop the creative talents and natural abilities throughout Samoa.

²⁹³ Priority Area 2: Social Policies - Goal 5: Community Development: Improved Economic and Social Wellbeing and Improved Village Governance.

Youth Institutions and Key Organizations

Within the social department of the Division for Youth is the 'TALAVOU' programme. The aim of the programme, which is a partnership between the Division and UNDP, is the coordination of a multi-sector approach to improving the quality of life for Samoan youth. The programme includes four components:

- Self-worth improvement initiatives;
- Skills formation and human development initiatives;
- Income generation and livelihoods initiatives; and,
- Programme management and coordination.²⁹⁴

The TALAVOU programme runs a number of activities, such as awareness-raising initiatives, which include the consequences of breaking the law and life-skills classes. It also holds annual awards for individual young people and supports youth group projects. The TALAVOU programme uses church youth groups to access young people, estimating that approximately 80-90 percent of young people participate in youth ministries. However, it acknowledges that there are young people who do not participate in these groups and that they are likely to be the most marginalized. TALAVOU identifies its central challenges as lack of partnerships with other government departments and civil society to assist in programme delivery and failure to reach vulnerable youth.

The nationwide consultation process to determine the re-establishment of the Samoan National Youth Council has concluded and an internal report to Government has been submitted. The steps for its reestablishment has been taken up by the Division for Youth to encourage the participation of young people and to assist in the implementation of youth services. It is currently sourcing funding from donors and it aims to be operating within the next two years with the assistance of the Pacific Youth Council.

There are a few key non-government organizations that also work specifically in the justice sector to provide services to young people designed to respond to youth in crisis and/or who are involved in violence or crime, including:

- Family Haven / *Mapusaga O Aiga* – This organization was founded in 1993 “to raise awareness about sexual abuse and domestic violence and to educate people about these issues.”²⁹⁵ Women surveyed identified *Mapusaga O Aiga* as one of the few places they would go if they experience domestic violence. *Mapusaga O Aiga* also trains the police about domestic violence;
- Samoa Victim Support Group supports, cares for and empowers victim/survivors of crime, particularly pertaining to sexually based offences, through the provision of safe houses and shelter. It also provides assistance with legal and police procedures as well as providing welfare and educational assistance;
- Lifeline is best known for its crisis hotline. People in need, including young people, can call for advice when they are experiencing difficulties, particularly relating to suicidal thoughts. Lifeline also does face-to-face counselling. Additionally, the organization runs a programme in schools and has piloted youth empowerment seminars in villages.

Justice Institutions and Policies

The Division of Probation and Parole in the Ministry of Justice, the Samoan Police Service and the Office of the Attorney General are the most prominent government agencies

294 MWCSO 2006.

295 SPC and UNFPA 2006:6.



handling cases involving juvenile offenders. The Office of the Attorney General prosecutes cases involving sentences longer than seven years and the police process cases involving minor crimes. The Division of Probation and Parole supervises young men and women who have been convicted of crimes but who will not serve prison time. They provide limited rehabilitation services, but are moving away from an implementation role and are seeking to identify NGO who can fill this gap.

As stated above the Law Reform Commission facilitates the review, reform and development of laws in Samoa. It is currently developing a new Criminal Procedure Act and a new Prisons Act. Within this positive step, it is understood that the Prisons Act will include more provisions relating to the rehabilitation of offenders. The Commission is also responsible for reviewing legislation to identify inconsistencies between Samoan law and international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child that was ratified in 1994.

In terms of the current legal framework governing juvenile offenders, the Young Offenders Act 2007 establishes a criminal justice system for young persons. The Act defines a young person as between the ages of 11 and 16 inclusive. Any criminal charge against a young person, other than murder, must be brought into the Youth Court, a division of the District Court. However, the judge has the discretion to transfer any serious case to the Supreme Court. The Act requires that a sentence of imprisonment for a young man or woman will be imposed only as a last resort: other sentencing options include community work and limited rehabilitative programmes. The Act also provides an option for the Police to issue a young person a formal warning rather than bring the charges to court.

The Community Justice Act 2008 provides judges with options for community-based sentencing, to promote rehabilitation of offenders and the integration of Samoan custom and tradition into sentencing. Such sentencing may include formal apologies, community work and restorative actions. Awareness of both the Community Justice Act and the Young Offenders Act seemed to be lacking amongst a number of participants during consultations, suggesting that more needs to be done to build knowledge of the laws and how they can be effectively implemented.

7.5 Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience

Due to the many changes that are occurring in the lives of young people, risk and resilience factors coexist to create a context in which young men and women are more or less likely to engage in crime and violence. These changes include the transition from traditional exchange-based economies to a more cash-based economy and other issues such as family breakdown. If not managed carefully, through the provision of special youth services and the implementation of specific programmes for young people, these changes pose great risks to the youthful population of Samoa. However, it is encouraging that Samoa has a strong foundation on which to build programmes, noting the strong role of village structures and existing youth leadership.

Growing the Employment Opportunities for Youth

The small, open, local economy that makes up Samoa's resource base is comprised mainly of agriculture, tourism, small-scale manufacturing and fisheries. The economy also depends on development aid and very highly on remittances. In 2009, the double impact of the September tsunami and the global economic crisis affected Samoa's economy and the government adopted a further set of policy reforms and public sector adjustments in response. Formal employment and income-generating opportunities are key challenges for the Government, with an estimated 20 percent of households having inadequate income to meet basic needs.²⁹⁶

The definition of employed according to the 2006 Census covers all persons working in paid jobs, working to earn an income and/or all persons working in activities such as handicrafts, planting and farming for family consumption and/or sales. Within this broad definition Samoa experiences one percent formal unemployment.²⁹⁷ For those that are unemployed, 89 percent are between the ages of 15 to 34 years of which 59 percent are males and 41 percent are females. Youth unemployment rates are directly linked to the high number of school leavers who cannot be accommodated in the formal employment sector. Government officials participating in the study explained that youth unemployment leads to problems of poverty and increases incidents of theft as a way to gain money and material items. According to the 2006 Apia Youth Survey, the correlation between increasing crime and youth unemployment is the "major issue."²⁹⁸

Another risk factor mentioned continuously by participants during consultations was the new 'need for cash'. Part of this new reality was explained as the result of global and 'new' influences. Juvenile offenders interviewed identified a desire for luxury, fashionable and high-tech items such as new mobile phones, MP3 players and lap-top computers. This is due, in part, to new information and technology coming in from outside of Samoa. Young people interviewed explained that the need for cash is also driven by ideas about family obligations and expectations. Money might be required for special occasions, such as weddings and funerals, or to support relations, whether family, friend or intimate.

Although underemployment and lack of income generating activities remain problematic, there has been an increase in self-employment and/or engagement in family business by young people which has been attributed to an increase in seed funds, business knowledge

²⁹⁶ ADB 2010.

²⁹⁷ SBEC 2006.

²⁹⁸ Ibid:9

and NGO participation.²⁹⁹ Recently, the Government also revised the school curriculum to include models on entrepreneurship and financial education amongst students. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour also provides apprenticeship training schemes so that young people have more capacity to engage in the labor force and/or create their own income generating activities. The Small Business Enterprise Centre of Samoa facilitates access to finance for businesses and provides trainings and mentoring. The Samoa National Private Association (formerly the Chamber of Commerce) promotes sustainable growth, the creation of employment opportunities and supports business growth. Women in Business Development Inc. provide support to rural and vulnerable people to earn an income in their current village setting and with the resources available to them, and have suggested that the best place for young people to remain is in their villages. It tries to assist young people by focusing on agriculture development skills and also counsels parents to reimburse their young people for work that contributes to family subsistence.

Improving the Quality and Relevance of Education

The Education Sector is supported by a number of development partners. Samoa is specifically benefiting from AusAID and New Zealand Aid Programme funds to provide the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, a programme that subsidizes school fees.³⁰⁰ Contributing to this Samoa's Education Act 2009 requires compulsory education for all young people aged between five and 14 years. Despite this positive legal requirement, there are still young people of compulsory school-age who engage in street trading during school hours, in order to earn money for their families. It is for this reason that the Government needs to support these children and young people to stay in school and assist parents in ensuring their children's education is fulfilled. Priority also needs to be given to post-school education and training, as well as life skills training to enhance the lives of young Samoans who have left school and become more vulnerable. This is one of the main recommendations in the

Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2008-2012.

In any case, even where students stay in the education system, many of them are still leaving school with inappropriate skills to secure sustainable livelihoods.³⁰¹ It was suggested that this is compounded by parents' expectations which focus on academic achievement, rather than vocational or technical skills. In 2007, there were approximately 654 males and 232 females in TVET institutions, taking courses in agriculture, arts and crafts, design technology and food and textiles technology.³⁰² There are also a number of literacy programmes that are conducted with institutions that provide second-chance education programmes. Educational pathways such as TVET need to be strengthened and promoted as viable options for educational and career advancement and as a feasible option for young people to support themselves and their families.

It was evident throughout all consultations that the quality and relevance of education is one of the strongest resilience factors for young people. Notably, this priority was even reflected during consultations with women at Tafaigata prison who suggested a need for education, particularly about the consequences of committing crimes, how to resist involvement

"It's about listening to the young people... they are not the problem"

Teacher

299 ILO 2008.

300 NZAID 2009.

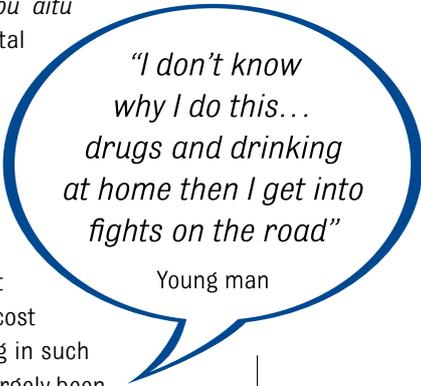
301 Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2008.

302 MWCSO 2006.

in criminal activities, how to budget money and how to establish clear expectation and responsibility structures for family and friends to respect. This was consistent with the recommendations of the Women Prisoners Rehabilitation Pilot Project (2008-2009) that was managed by the Young Women Christian Association of Samoa. Young people at the Oloamanu Juvenile Centre also mentioned a need for skills training whilst in detention so that they could do something productive when they return to their communities. They also suggested the implementation of specific youth rehabilitation programmes upon their release, which participants reported are almost non-existent.

Tackling Substance Abuse

In Samoa the most prevalent substance use is alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and hallucinogens mainly *logo* (Angel's trumpet or datura) and *pulou aitu* (magic or spirit mushroom).³⁰³ It is also suggested that crystal methamphetamine, inhalants and methylated alcohol are also becoming more prevalent, however alcohol, tobacco and marijuana represent substances of greatest concern.³⁰⁴ Participants in consultations all made strong statements correlating crime and alcohol/drug use and abuse and expressed a growing concern for young people, in terms of the negative health impacts as well as the social consequences of substance use and abuse. However, whilst the health impacts of substance abuse are measureable, the social cost and the deeper understanding as to why young people are engaging in such self-destructive activities has yet to be properly examined, and has largely been over-looked by policy-makers.³⁰⁵ Some village leaders have aimed to reduce drunkenness and alcohol related crimes by imposing curfews and patrolling public areas at night.



Opportunities for Meaningful Activity

Meaningful activities that encourage youth volunteerism in humanitarian, charitable and civic organizations are effective tools to engage young people in public participation and decision making processes. *The National Youth Policy* recognizes that youth participation is an integral part of youth development in Samoa and specific recommendations in this area include recognizing and strengthening the voice of young people in governing organizations such as parliament, village councils and religious organizations. Youth specific organizations such as the Rotaract (part of the Rotary Club of Apia) and the Samoa Victim Support Group Juniors operate to provide opportunities for young people to engage in extra-curricular activities.

Young people expressed a stronger desire to be engaged in more activities that are 'youth friendly', where their leadership and decision-making skills could be valued and respected. In the area of sports and recreation, young people recognized that the facilitation of organized sports and related events could not only increase their social skills but could also open up opportunities for them to engage in sport as a viable future career. The desire for becoming meaningfully engaged also included a need for more information about where young people could volunteer, in particular in areas where they could develop/enhance skills that would help them in attaining future employment.

The role of religious organizations and their contribution to youth development is also quite

303 Odden 2011; Government of Samoa 2001.

304 Odden 2011.

305 Government of Samoa 2001.

visible. The Council of Churches has a membership of nine churches and one fellowship ecumenical for women. Many churches encourage youth unity and build unification in sports and other group activities. Many religious youth groups provided young people with youth specific activities that engage them and put their youthful skills – such as singing, playing musical instruments and dancing – to use. These programmes contribute to developing religious values and beliefs, but also include participation in development projects such as farming.³⁰⁶

Family Challenges

Traditionally, the *aiga* (family) is the foundation of *fa'a-Samoa* and it provides all supporting members social and economic well-being. Young people's roles and expectations are defined by the *aiga* and the notion of *va-fealoaloai* (respectful relationship) within the *aiga*.³⁰⁷ In this context, it is very significant that the second most prevalent risk factor identified by participants consulted was the breakdown of families and the impact of this on young people. One of the most mentioned causes of family breakdown is the changes in cultural values, where individual rights and needs have become more prominent. Divorce, financial problems, abuse, lifestyle differences and migration are some of the driving factors in the breakdown of family relationships. This also goes for the extended family network that once assisted with the raising of young people. Young men and women may experience feelings of grief, loss, anger, and of being forgotten due to this breakdown. They may begin to act out due to the reduced parental skills, lack of guidance and supervision and less time being spent with them by parents due to added economic pressures such as working late or having more than one job.



³⁰⁶ Government of Samoa 2001.

³⁰⁷ Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010 and Government of Samoa 2001.

During consultations, young men and women also identified the lack of good role models, both in adults and peers, as a problem. NGO actors that participated in interviews agreed, stating that some young people do not have good advice to make positive decisions and avoid negative behaviours. Government officials worried about the effects of peer pressure in the absence of positive influences. According to youth, local leaders, and NGO actors, effective communication, generally, is reported to be absent between young people and adults. Young participants also expressed the challenges they face in not knowing how to access opportunities and succeed in their transitions into adulthood. They identify the wide accessibility of negative influences, including adults who engage in criminal activities, drugs and alcohol users. Some young people currently detained in prison said these influences were present in their families.

At the same time, participants also identified a number of resilience factors that promote success and dissuade youth from engaging in negative behaviours. The most common – and the one identified universally by young people consulted – was good advice and mentoring. Youth believed peer mentoring was most important. They want positive examples and advice from someone in their lives. They particularly valued people who demonstrate confidence in them and have an investment interest in their lives. Young men in the Oloamanu Juvenile Centre mentioned that young people need someone to help them feel happy. Secondary-school young people consulted confirmed that youth need help looking on the “bright side” in order to prevent them from committing crimes. Additionally, adult mentoring was identified as important by government, NGO and local leaders, but the root of this suggestion appeared to be grounded in developing stronger family and cultural ties. Adults and young people consulted believed good communication with parents was important to prevent young people from leaving home and acting out through crime and violence.

Societal Challenges

In the *fa'a-Samoa* system of chiefly rule the roles of all Samoans is set. The *faamatai* (chiefly system of governance) means there are roles for everyone. The *aiga* (family) is crucial and young people are expected to provide support and respect to those of higher status and seniority, especially during *faalavelave* (social obligations). According to local leaders, village leadership positions are given based on service to family and community. This is either through monetary or traditional contributions towards either village development or family obligations and it is reflected by the Samoan saying: “*O le ala I le pule o le tautua*” symbolically meaning “the way to authority is through service.”

Young people’s roles and responsibilities are conducted through the *aumaga* (untitled men), the *aualuma* (daughters of the village) and the *autalavou* (faith-based youth groups).³⁰⁸ The *aumagas* are often the workforce of the village and may provide a community policing function in some instances. Their purpose is to act upon specific instructions imparted by the village council. The *aualuma* traditionally learn handicrafts, weaving and perform hospitality functions. They may also form part of the women’s committees that may undertake health programmes and other small development projects.³⁰⁹ Finally, the *autalavou* are the religious based groups that provide youth specific activities that often benefit the entire village.³¹⁰

308 Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010; Government of Samoa 2001.

309 Government of Samoa 2001.

310 Government of Samoa 2001.



The observance of traditional culture was recognized as important for many young people consulted. According to young people, if one person does something seen to breach the village bylaws the entire family may be punished. The responsibility on the individual, thus, becomes onerous and is looked upon by some young people with condemnation or at least, frustration. The *faa-Samoa* is crucial to the development of young people and their perceived place in their communities. However, the shifts caused by global and/or outside influences and societal transformation has caused changes to the cultural fabric of Samoa.

According to government, NGO leaders and young people interviewed there is a need to further strengthen and empower youth participation at all levels, recognizing the impacts of both the traditional and modern aspects of the state. Failure to do this may contribute to young people developing poor relationships with families and village leaders. Young people who are not engaged in decision making processes are more likely to act out their frustration in their villages and break rules. These young men and women might face the village council or be reported to police, which was identified by a village leader as a modern response inconsistent with traditional approaches. *The Mapping Vulnerable Youth* report explains: "In the past, social infringements were settled within the aiga and village community systems only...the increasing number of crimes reported to police suggests a weakening ability of the family and village systems to cope with rising crime."³¹¹

Another contributing risk factor identified across the board by participants was rural-urban migration. It was reported by participants that young people arrive in Apia looking for cash-earning opportunities, but often they end up disappointed. Separated from their direct family members and their land adds to their frustration. Necessities cost money and local support structures may be absent or weak. Government officials and local leaders confirmed that many families that have migrated from rural areas live in freehold land in the peri-urban area, where there is a heightened level of crime. In urban areas, where there is more activity and influence from the outside, young people reported that they find more temptations and face negative peer pressure.

Numerous NGO stakeholders also identified the exacerbating effect of natural disasters. The 2009 tsunami caused trauma for all Samoans, but in particular for families in the coastal region most affected by the tsunami. The resulting fatalities and destruction of land forced families to move inland and live a different way of life. There have also been cyclones and a taro leaf blight that have affected peoples' livelihoods. These natural disasters have disturbed family and community structures, enhanced the need for employment and promoted urban migration which puts further pressure on societal coping mechanisms, with particular implications for vulnerable youth populations.

Samoan justice officials and a number of other stakeholders commented on the issue of criminal deportees in Samoa. From 1998 to 2008 there were approximately 124 criminal deportees arriving in Samoa from the U.S., New Zealand and Australia. However, significant missing and withheld data from the deporting countries make it difficult to determine exactly how many criminal deportees currently reside in Samoa.³¹² During the course of interviews with Samoan justice officials it was stated that the arrival of criminal deportees has produced a number of issues for the justice sector citing mainly the first ever armed bank robbery in Samoa where two of the assumed robbers were allegedly deportees.

³¹¹ SBEC 2006:25.
³¹² Pereira 2011.



Criminal deportees in Samoa are mainly young men aged between 25 to 35 years and have spent between 16 to 31 years abroad either in the United States, Australia or New Zealand. The criminal offences range from aggravated robbery to weapon charges.³¹³ Many of the deportees face a number of challenges accessing employment and housing options. They have limited connection to social safety nets that are vital in the Pacific and often do not engage with broader social services. The rates of recidivism and the impact on the communities are unknown at this stage.

The issue of criminal deportees in Samoa has been tackled by a number of stakeholders through a taskforce that was chaired by the Attorney General's Office. This resulted in the development of the Samoa Returnees Charitable Trust which will undertake, promote and advance reintegration and resettlement programs for criminal deportees. However, funding and technical advice is required before adequate reintegration and resettlement begins to occur for those arriving back in Samoa.

7.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Youth crime and violence has been identified as an increasing problem. In this context it is encouraging that Government and CSO actors are committed to a new focus of crime prevention. A multi-sector approach will be required to address the risk factors underpinning youth crime. It is notable that participants in this study agreed on the major risk factors: unemployment, substance abuse, breakdown of families, poor education and urbanization. Exacerbating risk factors included globalization, and new modern/urban influences.

³¹³ *ibid.*

Resilience factors were primarily the reverse of the risk factors: good role models to give advice, strong family and cultural ties, opportunities for training and employment. A theme linking all of the factors, both positive and negative, is youth participation. Whether or not youth have opportunities to communicate to adults and participate in activities – whether to earn money, to give voice to their views and concerns, or to merely gain support and encouragement – contributes to their probability of achieving successful outcomes.

Recommendations

- Re-establish the National Youth Council to monitor the implementation of the National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan.
- Develop a new National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan with monitoring and tracking of achievements built in.
- Create a central community meeting space in Apia to provide a venue for youth to tackle issues of concerns to them.
- Review disincentives for young people to take up agriculture.
- Provide support to the Law and Justice Sector for the development of a National Crime Prevention Strategy that encourages the participation of all sections of the community, recognizing formal and traditional pathways to enabling young people to be supported from early intervention to reintegration stages.
- Build capacity and raise the awareness of relevant government ministries and CSOs to implement the recent Youth Offenders Act and the Community Justice Act.
- Develop a rehabilitation policy for juvenile offenders.
- Provide support to the reintegration and resettlement of criminal deportees.



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CHAPTER

8

Nuku'alofa,
Tonga

8

Chapter Eight: Nuku'alofa, Tonga

8.1 Introduction

This Urban Centre Case Study discusses youth crime and violence in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. The research team conducted focus groups discussions and interviews in Nuku'alofa with young people, government actors, village leaders and civil society organizations which provided the main basis for the findings. Additionally, a desk review of available reports and statistics was conducted. Drawing together these findings, this case study recommends a number of key actions to strengthen and support resilience among young men and women.

As defined by the *Tonga National Youth Strategy*, "youth" include young men and women between 15 and 34 years of age.³¹⁴ However, cultural definitions of youth include people that are single, have no children and are still living at home.³¹⁵ The Criminal Offences Act states that a person can be held criminally responsible from the age of seven to 12 years, as long as the court and/or jury can ascertain sufficient maturity of understanding and awareness of the crime.³¹⁶

Most young people in Tonga are bound by family ties, faith, honour and tradition. In many ways, these traditional and social structures are preventing young people from becoming involved in crime and violence. However, as time passes a number of risk factors have emerged, including drug and alcohol abuse, high emigration rates and the breakdown of families. This has meant that some young people have become more susceptible to negative and self-destructive behaviour. Limited employment and meaningful activities restrict opportunities for young people to positively contribute to their communities. The ongoing tension between current and traditional social structures have made some young people feel more vulnerable and created a sense of displacement within their communities. Factors that promote resilience include: active engagement in youth services and activities; strong faith networks; and, a high general level of relevant education.



³¹⁴ The National Youth Strategy notes that this group was selected in accordance with the population census to facilitate statistical calculations; however, only Tonga youth 26 and under can represent Tonga at national and international level. MOTEYS 2007:4.

³¹⁵ FSPI 2009

³¹⁶ Criminal Offences Act 1988:17.

8.2 National Context

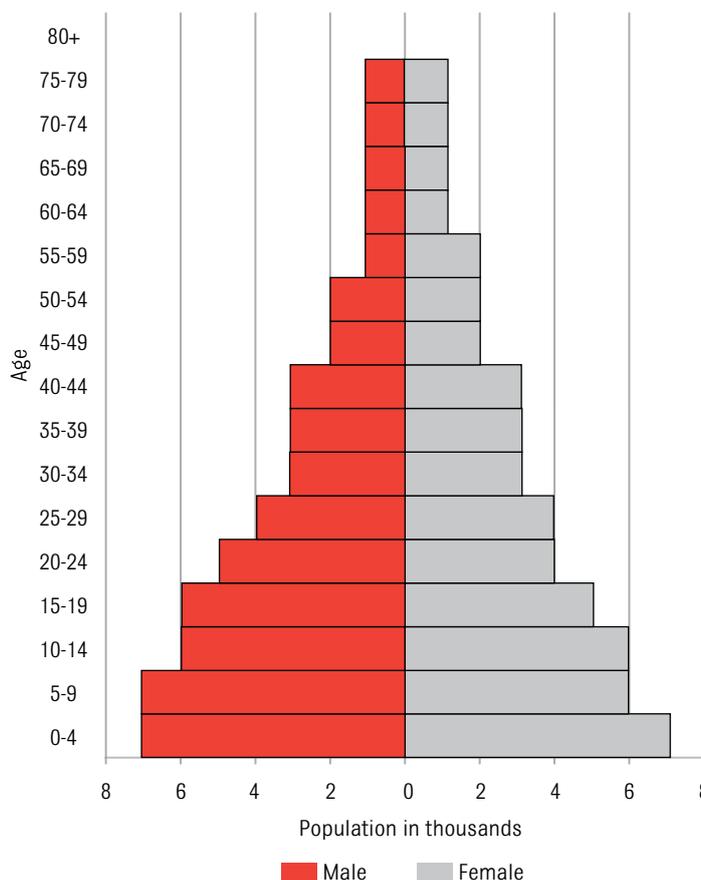
In 2010, Tonga was highlighted as one of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region making better than average progress towards the MDG objectives. The 2010 UNDP Human Development Index ranks Tonga 85 out of 169 making it one of the only Pacific island countries with a high human development ranking. The Kingdom's relatively positive ranking on the Human Development Index reflects a comparatively high gross domestic product per capita, good life expectancy, the lowest child mortality rates in the Pacific and near-universal literacy. Remittances from Tongans living abroad improve income distribution, assist in hardship alleviation, promote business activity and create larger investments in education.³¹⁷

The population of Tonga is estimated to be 105,916 in July 2011, with a high rate of outward migration.³¹⁸ In the 1996-2006 census periods, the population growth rate was at 0.4 percent per annum. The number of Tongans who have migrated overseas to New Zealand, Australia and United States is estimated to be 150,000.³¹⁹ Tonga is a predominantly rural country, with 25 percent of the Tongan population living in urban settings concentrated in Nuku'alofa. The median age of the Tongan population is 21.4 years³²⁰, making Tonga a youthful population. Approximately one in five of the overall population is aged between 15-24 years old (Figure 8.1).

The Tonga 2006 Census states that 27 percent of females and 25 percent of males aged 15 years and older have secondary level qualification. An estimated eight percent have vocational/professional qualifications, with populations in the urban areas reporting better qualifications compared to the rural population. The literacy rate of 15-25 year olds was 98.4 percent for males and 98.8 percent for females mainly due to compulsory education and high enrolment rates.³²¹ Currently education is compulsory through to age 14, but a new policy has been discussed to raise this to age 18.

Health issues for young people relate mostly to sexual and reproductive health concerns. The incidence of HIV/AIDS in Tonga is low, however, misconceptions about the use of modern contraceptives has meant that sexually transmitted infections are increasing amongst the youth population.³²² Teenage pregnancies continue to be an issue in Tonga, with young mothers often facing stigma and shame from family members and community.³²³ The issue

Figure 8.1 Tonga Population Pyramid



Source: United Nations Population Division 2009

³¹⁷ UNDP 2010.

³¹⁸ CIA 2011.

³¹⁹ Department of Statistics 2006.

³²⁰ CIA 2011.

³²¹ Department of Statistics 2006.

³²² TFHA 2011.

³²³ Havea 2007.

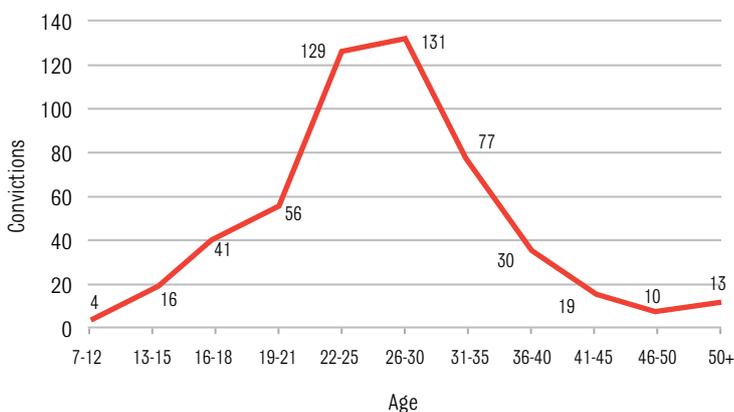
of youth suicide is also a serious concern. Between 1991 and 2001 attempted and complete suicides have fluctuated ranging from one completed suicide in 1995 to 13 in 2001. Studies have shown that while the causes of suicide tend to vary, it is most commonly triggered by some form of social conflict, particularly those arising from societal transition.³²⁴

Women in Tonga have good access to health and education services. There is now an increasing number of women engaged in economic activities, with more involved in waged employment within the labour force. However, women are still heavily involved with traditional activities such as *tapa* making, mat weaving, light agricultural work, and child rearing.³²⁵ Women are increasingly playing an important role in the government; in 2005, women comprised approximately 46 percent of the civil service list. The major challenges for women in Tonga are land ownership, inheritance rights and issues of domestic violence.³²⁶

8.3 Young People as Victims and Perpetrators

Young people have massive potential, which needs to be harnessed for the benefit of Tonga's social, economic and cultural development. However, young men and women in Tonga face a range of challenges in accessing support and services from government, their communities and in some instances, their families. One of the most pervasive and problematic challenges facing young people is the impact of crime and violence on their development. Some young people are engaging in criminal activities, including assault, theft and domestic violence. At the same time, many young men and women are also at risk of being victims of crime, in particular, physical violence both inside and outside the home.

Figure 8.2: Criminal Convictions by Age



Source: Ministry of Police Annual Report 2005

Common Crimes

The Ministry of Police alongside other reports suggest that the largest numbers of juvenile offenders are convicted for theft, assault, breaking and entering, forgery, trespassing, conspiracy and inflicting bodily harm.³²⁷ During consultations justice officials and other participants indicated consensus that the major categories of crime that involve young people include: shop break-ins; house break-ins; and drug possession (almost exclusively marijuana). The nature of these acts rarely involved firearms or aggravated assault, although in the past there has been a spate of assaults, armed robberies, burglaries and arson aimed especially at

Chinese shop owners. More recently, there have been a number of armed robberies, one in particular targeting a financial institution where an employee was wounded with a firearm. During interviews, concern was expressed that more and more weapons are being illegally trafficked to and through Tonga, potentially augmenting the rate of armed assault, but there is no data available to support this.

³²⁴ Government of Tonga 2006.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ PPDVP 2009.

³²⁷ MOTEYS 2007:9.

Statistics also show that the majority of crime is committed by young people aged between 15 and 34 years of age (Figure 8.2). Participants suggested that young men were often the main perpetrators of common crimes. Young women were occasionally reprimanded but it was mainly for drunk and disorderly behaviour, which usually did not result in a criminal charge. At the time of the initial interviews in June 2010 there was only a small population of female inmates in prison, mainly for embezzlement. No juvenile women offenders were incarcerated.

Inter-School Fights and Violence

The most widely mentioned category of violence involving young people was inter-school fighting, which has a long history in Tonga. According to a 2008 report published by the Tonga Secondary School Principals Association on this issue, fighting occurs most often during sports competitions, in particular rugby matches. Records from the Ministry of Police show that fighting has become more widespread recently, occurring throughout the school year and during school vacations, which was not the case historically. For the past three or four years fighting has occurred mainly between two rival schools; however, the violence is now spreading to fights between other colleges.

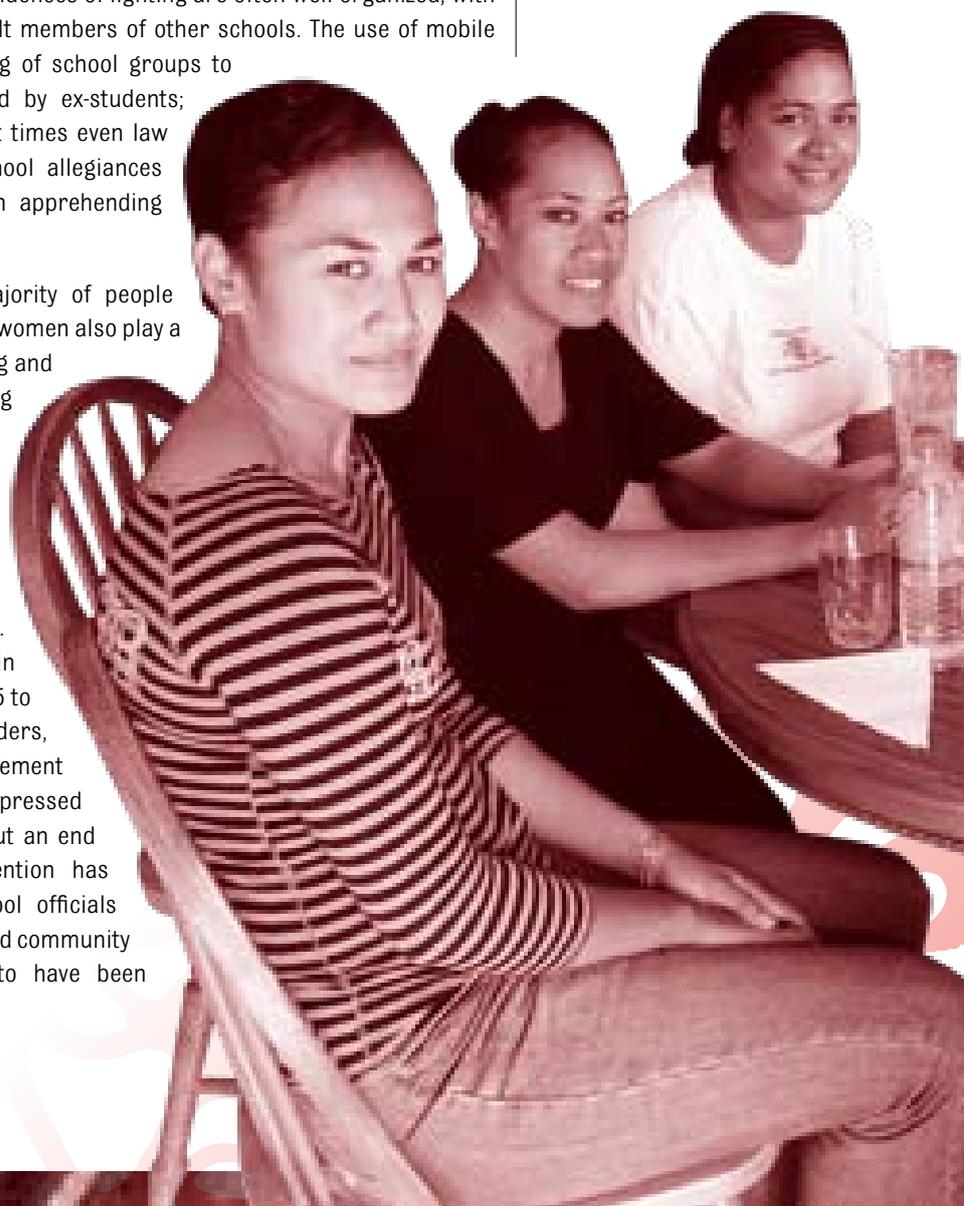
In-country consultations confirmed that incidences of fighting are often well-organized, with groups waiting at specific points to assault members of other schools. The use of mobile phones has facilitated the rapid gathering of school groups to engage in fighting. Fights can be fuelled by ex-students; older brothers, fathers and uncles, and at times even law enforcement officials with particular school allegiances (usually through deliberate negligence in apprehending those involved).

While young men make up the vast majority of people involved in the inter-school violence, young women also play a role. This includes encouraging, supporting and provoking fights but only rarely becoming physically involved. Young women as well as older female relatives encourage the young men through appealing to their sense of pride and masculinity.

Police are trying to take a proactive role in addressing this particular form of violence. It was reported that in one incident alone in 2010, police arrested 75 young men aged 15 to 18 years. During consultations, church leaders, school principals and teachers, law enforcement officials and community members expressed general frustration with the inability to put an end to this phenomenon. Significant intervention has occurred with church leaders and school officials participating in reconciliation processes and community discussions with parents. This seems to have been

*"It's a pride
in our school, if they
get me I will get them for
sure or someone from
that school"*

Young man



successful in the short-term, but does not prevent the violence from recurring. The courts have recently adopted a more stringent stance regarding young people involved in school fighting; as of December 2010 for the first time two repeat offenders were serving prison sentences in the hopes of sending a message of deterrence.

Drug Related Crimes

Under criminal law, knowingly possessing and distributing an illegal substance constitutes a criminal act. These crimes as stated by justice officials are becoming more frequent amongst young people. To date there is limited information as to the rate of incarceration amongst young people aged between 15 and 34 years that are sentenced under this law. However, it can be assumed that the increasing rates of illegal substance use by young people and the disproportionate consumption of alcohol are both having an impact on the crime rates in Nuku'alofa.

"I just don't ask, what is the point? I just get more beaten"

Young woman

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crime

Statistics and qualitative interviews with government and civil society indicate that domestic and sexual violence is a common crime increasing in prevalence. According to police records, from 2000 to October 2010, 2,753 women were victims of physical abuse, with 47 percent of those resulting in convictions. In 2009 alone there were 404 domestic violence reports made, translating to more than one incident reported a day. Four women and one child were killed.³²⁸ Interviewees including young people attested to the frequency of violence within the home and cited the influence of alcohol as an aggravating factor. The Women and Children Crisis Centre reported that the main contributing factors to men perpetrating abuse in 2009 were: assertion of power and control; alcohol and drugs; perceived insults to his extended family; financial hardship; and failure to do domestic duties.³²⁹

Domestic and sexual violence is both perpetuated and experienced by young people. Civil society organizations report that many of the incidents of domestic violence are perpetrated by their young partners. According to Police the act of violence is a learned behaviour; young people witnessing violence perpetrated by family members promotes its use in adulthood to solve problems and gain control.³³⁰

The Tongan Police recently instituted a no-drop policy which means that once an incident has been recorded, follow up investigation and prosecution continues even if the victim wants to remove the charges. This has resulted in an increased number of reports due to greater public confidence in the police that meaningful action will be taken against perpetrators. Currently, there are no specific laws relating to domestic violence, however assault charges are used to convict perpetrators. The National Advocacy Committee on Domestic Violence to the Police, chaired by the Police Commissioner and made up of representatives from civil society and relevant government ministries are looking into drafting specific legislation to deal with domestic violence crime.

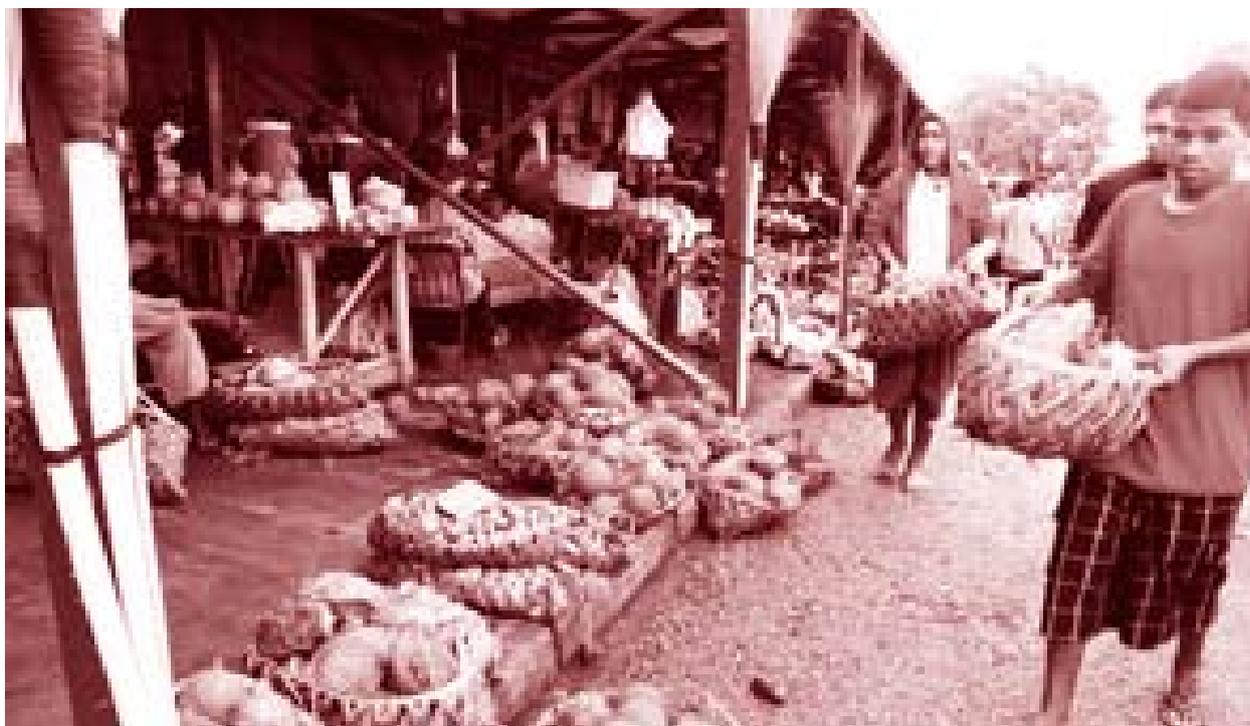
2006 Riots

The November 2006 riots that occurred in Nuku'alofa, where groups of people vandalized property, looted and burnt buildings - were the most shattering public event in decades. Nuku'alofa city centre was left in disarray and the impact on the national psyche was deep.

³²⁸ Women and Children Crisis Centre 2010.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Interview with Chris Kelly, Tonga Police Commander, 25 June 2010.



The riots left eight people dead and at least 60 percent of the city centre destroyed with a bill of up to USD 75 million.³³¹

Following the riots, several groups of people stood accused; from politicians who were against the monarchy, to pro-democracy supporters, to anti-Chinese groups and elements within the military.³³² Security forces detained 1,200 people, mainly young men between 18-35 years of age³³³ Although the crimes committed by the young men during the riots were arguably opportunistic, nonetheless, it is of concern that these young people were so willing to engage in such destructive behavior.

8.4 Institutional Responses in Support of Youth

There are a number of structures in place to support young people; these include effective cooperation between the justice sector and non-government organizations. Other structures assist with prevention strategies by giving young people opportunities to actively participate in a different range of activities. That said there are still gaps in institutional approaches particularly in the area of rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders.

Political Institutions' Engagement with Youth

The last few years have seen major democratic reforms enacted and implemented in Tonga. At the time that consultations were being conducted for this study, Tonga was preparing for the November 2010 general election. It was evident through interviews with government officials that young people were considered a key target group for education in the election. The Prime Minister's Office specifically planned to engage with young people and educate

331 <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2006/11/2008525122925975337.html>

332 Elements within the military were not prosecuted but were subject to civil claims for damages as result of unlawful assaults. Email from Tonga Government Official. 5 May, 2011.

333 FSPI 2009.

them about electoral law and practice, the importance of free and fair elections and the power they wield by voting.

The November 2010 election has constituted a new Legislative Assembly, and has more members elected by the common people, than Nobles or appointees of the King. In a parliament of 28, 17 members are People's Representatives, nine are Nobles Representatives and two, including the only woman in parliament, were appointed by the King on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. Women constitute almost half of the electorate and since 1951 have had the right to vote and stand for election, but have had very limited success in being elected to the national parliament.

Notably, the legislative branch has historically been dominated by older male members of the Tongan community, with the result that young people's voices are not regularly heard in national decision-making forums. Despite this, there has to date been no consideration of whether it would be useful to reserve any seats for young people in the national legislature. In a very positive move however, the new Legislative Assembly has a number of new parliamentary committees, and the new Social Services Committee is specifically mandated to look at youth issues. This opportunity should be seized by youth advocates as a channel to get youth issues onto the national legislative agenda.

It is also positive that Tonga is recognized as having the best Youth Parliament programme in the entire region. The Tongan National Youth Congress (TNYC) has organized the Youth Parliament for a number of years. Consultations with former youth parliamentarians demonstrate that young people are active consumers of information and current happenings in Tonga and are interested in being active in civic affairs. The youth parliamentarian role in Tonga is an excellent example of ways in which young people can make meaningful contributions at the highest levels of society, when given the chance.



Government Youth Policies

The *Tonga National Youth Strategy 2007-2012* (Table 8.1) provides a guiding framework for government agencies and youth stakeholders by identifying priorities for youth development. The Secretariat for the Pacific Community played a significant role in helping the Government develop the *National Youth Strategy*, which has five key pillars. The Strategy states in summary that: “The young people of Tonga have strengths and talents and must be given the opportunities to exploit them for their benefit and well-being as well as the improvement of their families and communities. Young people must be given the opportunities and ‘choice’ to develop skills and competencies in a wide variety of areas in order to secure and retain employment, fulfill leadership positions and perform essential services.”³³⁴

Table 8.1 Key Issues and Actions in National Youth Strategy

Key Issue	Action
Employment Creation	Economic hardship is eliminated through targeted and equitable employment and income generating opportunities.
Skills Development	All young people are provided with educational opportunities which develop their talents and abilities, and help ensure a prosperous future for individuals and communities.
Healthy Living	All youth of Tonga are empowered to practice healthy lifestyles and behaviour through accessing high quality health education, life-skills training and youth-friendly health services.
Community Service	The value of community service is recognized at all levels of society and young people are encouraged to play an active role in community development.
Participation and Advocacy	National pride is fostered and the full participation of young people in decision making and the development of their communities encouraged.

Youth Institutions and Key Organizations

The Ministry of Training, Employment, Youth and Sports (MOTEYS), which was established in 2006 and became operational in 2007, has the mandate for youth affairs and development in Tonga. MOTEYS is responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of the *National Youth Strategy* and other policy issues that relate to young people. The Ministry successfully undertook a review and streamlining of the *National Youth Strategy*, which was approved in 2007. At present, MOTEYS main task is to implement the *National Youth Strategy*, which requires the involvement of all stakeholders and effective coordination, particularly given that some of the Strategy’s areas of focus are outside the mandate of the Ministry. The Ministry has recognized the need to engage a wide range of stakeholders and the challenges this poses for coordination. To this end, it formed the Youth Stakeholder Forum in November 2007, an umbrella mechanism with representation from key agencies, non-government organizations and other actors working on youth issues. The strategy behind this was to provide strong partner organizations to assist MOTEYS implement its mandate and better serve young people. However, the Forum has not met regularly enough to be effective and struggles to discuss substantive issues and cooperation strategies to actively assist with youth programming.

334 MOTEYS 2007:8.



The key civil society entity that works on youth issues is the Tonga National Youth Congress (TNYC). The Ministry of Education established the TNYC in the mid-1980s as the umbrella organization for youth groups in Tonga. Given its initial mandate to work with village-level groups, this organization is particularly effective at working at the grassroots level. In addition, TNYC has developed into a competent youth civil society organization, influencing policy at the national level and serving as a regional model for effectively implementing youth programming in the Pacific. TNYC is particularly good at working with at-risk young people and provides significant training and programmatic opportunities, including sponsoring the National Youth Summit every two years, running a Young Women's Caucus for female entrepreneurs and hosting the Tongan branch of regional schemes such as Future Farmers and the National Volunteer Scheme. In addition, members of the TNYC noted that there is a wealth of training opportunities for Tongan youth, many of which are facilitated through the Congress. Until the beginning of 2011, contact between the TNYC and MOTEYS was limited, however, recently representatives have met regularly to begin work on the next *National Youth Policy*. This was viewed as a positive development by both parties.

The Civil Society Forum is an umbrella organization for civil society actors in Tonga, and participates in the Youth Stakeholders Forum to bring the perspectives of its membership regarding youth issues to the attention of policy-makers. The Civil Society Forum's membership includes organizations such as the Tonga Family Health Association, the Women and Children Crisis Centre Tonga, and other organizations that are working on issues that relate to young people's health, education and employment.

The Salvation Army provides a three-month rehabilitation counselling course focused on dealing with drug and alcohol addiction, anger management and life skills. The organization works closely with the Ministry of Justice, the court system and other youth stakeholders to provide services to juvenile offenders and other at-risk youth. Most young people who participate in the Salvation Army's programmes do so as part of their court mandated rehabilitation under the Criminal Offences Act.

Tonga Lifeline, which is hosted by the Free Wesleyan Church, works with marginalized young people. The Church provides a 24-hour hotline, counselling services, a temporary dormitory and casework support for at-risk youth through its ministry. Lifeline's staff work with the Ministry of Police and through a wide network of local ministries to support young people mediate conflict and "reconnect" them to their culture and community. A primary aspect of the programme is to rehabilitate youth who are on probation. These young people are offered the opportunity to participate in a three-month training programme focusing on life skills, values and self-esteem. Participants receive a certificate of completion at the end of the programme and participate in a Tongan feast, which includes their parents and community members. When their individual training is completed, they are referred to their community churches through the National Forum of Churches so that they have access to ongoing support.

The Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC) is "committed to the elimination of violence against women and children who are victims/survivors of domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, and all forms of child abuse and will work towards the elimination of all forms of violence in Tonga." It provides 24-hour counselling and transitional housing for those in high-risk situations, undertakes advocacy, carries out research, and provides legal assistance. Its Male Advocacy Group meets regularly to design strategies to prevent violence against women, including by young men. Advocates perform outreach services at

kava ceremonies. It also works with the Domestic Violence Unit of the police. The Tongan National Centre for Women and Children (TNCWC) is another organization that is mandated to eliminate violence against women and children and works with WCCC and the Police.

Justice Institutions and Policies

During consultations several participants noted the fact that there is no criminal code or law specifically pertaining to juvenile offenders. There are general provisions for adult and youth offenders to attend counselling and rehabilitation services in the Criminal Offences Act.³³⁵ However, there are no formal allowances for lighter or non-custodial sentences to encourage rehabilitation. Basically the judge can use his or her discretion when sentencing. Young offenders are currently charged the same as adults under the relevant legislation depending on the nature of the crime with consideration for the age and maturity given in sentencing.³³⁶ There have been calls by officials within the justice sector for the establishment of a youth justice system based through a juvenile offenders act. This would allow the system to better handle juvenile offenders based on the success of the Youth Diversion Scheme (see In-Focus 8.1) established after the November 2006 riots. A system was conceptualized based on the Samoa model, however, resource constraints limit the advancement of this proposal.³³⁷

*“These guys
right here really
could make a difference
-- if they got the resources
they needed”*

Juvenile justice worker

Lastly, community policing is a major focus of the Tonga Police's *2009-2013 Strategic Plan*. As part of this initiative police regularly visit primary and secondary schools to talk to young people about safety, child abuse, crime prevention, and drug and alcohol abuse. Police officials stressed the necessity of teaching young people at a very young age about not engaging in violence, whether inter-personal, inter-family, inter-school or criminal. The Police are pursuing this goal through the framework of promoting safer communities.³³⁸

8.5 Supporting Young People: Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience

In traditional Tongan society the roles and responsibilities of young people are defined by culture, values and traditions. The economic and social changes brought about by globalization have impacted on all levels of society, including family dynamics which in turn has impacted on the situation of young men and women. These changes are occurring at a much faster rate than ever before and pose great risks to the youthful population, in particular in the area of crime and violence. Nonetheless, participants in consultations expressed the belief that young men and women largely play positive roles in their communities, through active memberships in church groups, engagement in education and other opportunities.

In-Focus 8.1: Youth Diversion Scheme

In the aftermath of the 2006 riots, the Ministry of Justice established the Youth Diversion Scheme. Under the Scheme offenders aged seventeen and under were diverted at the discretion of the court. This potentially replicable programme model was based on a restorative justice approach and stressed community and parental involvement. The programme centred on holding a meeting with Ministry staff, offenders and their families to develop a work plan for rehabilitation. Restorative measures including seeking forgiveness and compensation to victims were part of the scheme too. The work plan was monitored by Ministry staff, with cooperation from the Salvation Army. Once the young person completed their work plan their criminal record was expunged.

³³⁵ Section 24(3)(d) of the Criminal Offences Act. "The court may also impose conditions during the period of suspension of sentence, including a requirement that supervision by a probation officer or another responsible member of the community takes place. A breach of such conditions may, upon application, result in the rescission of the suspensions order."

³³⁶ Most youth offenders are charged under one of the following four acts: Criminal Offences Act, Illicit Drugs Control Act, Intoxicating Liquor Act or the Public Places Act.

³³⁷ Ministry of Justice 2011. Personal email with official. 11 April 2011 and interviews.

³³⁸ Tonga Police 2009 and interviews.

Growing the Employment Opportunities for Youth

The issue of unemployment was the highest risk factor mentioned by participants during consultations and was supported by youth respondents in the 2009 *Youth and Mental Health in Tonga* study as being the principal contributing factor in young people who develop short-term mental illness. The Tonga 2006 Census reports that while a high percentage (57 percent) of the Tongan population 15 years and older was economically active, only a relatively small proportion (37 percent) received regular paid income.³³⁹

“Support should go in the direction of helping coordination through the Youth Stakeholders Forum or other central mechanism. It would be better to pool resources and have a master plan to assist with... [issues such as] self-employment, micro-enterprise development, marketing products, etc.”

Young entrepreneur

Young men and women interviewed associated unemployment with feelings of being “useless” to the family, as it means being unable to help with financial obligations and expectations. The guilt associated with being economically dependent on family members was mentioned by young people as having a negative impact on their self-esteem and therefore on their lifestyle choices, with the result that it motivated some young people to commit crimes, such as theft to gain money and/or luxury items such as mobile phones and MP3 players. Participants in the study also highlighted that unemployment amongst young people had resulted in many of them migrating (in some instances illegally) to New Zealand, the U.S and Australia to find work and send remittances to support family members. It was also suggested that some young women were also opting to get married sooner than expected to a working man in the hopes that the husband would also be able to provide for her family.

In 2010, the economy contracted by 1.2 percent and it is forecasted to grow by only 1.4 percent in 2010-11.³⁴⁰ Given this reality, expanding the employment sector for young people will be a challenge in the short-term at least. Nonetheless, some activities are laying the groundwork to enable young people to take up employment opportunities in the future. As an example, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in partnership with the Secondary Schools Principals Association and the Ministry of Education with sponsorship from the private sector held for the first time the Youth in Business – Dream Big Challenge 2010. This competition involved students from nine local high schools plus a commerce teacher designing a business plan for a product. Each school received a mentor from the private sector who volunteered their time and expertise. From these nine schools, a final four schools were chosen in late May 2010 and each given real seed money to invest in their business. The winning high school was announced at a ceremony in the following September with judging based on financial reports, presentation and marketing strategies. The team then travelled to New Zealand in November to meet with successful business people and see firsthand the fruits of entrepreneurship.³⁴¹

The TNYC also runs another initiative called the Future Farmers of Tonga project supported by the Tonga Development Bank. It encourages young people to take up agriculture using new techniques such as organic farming. Farmers are set to get international organic certification in 2011. These types of successful programmes that encourage youth employment need to

³³⁹ Labor force Survey 2003

³⁴⁰ ADB 2011.

³⁴¹ Interviews with Tonga Chamber of Commerce and Industry on 24 June 2010 and 7 April 2011. Also Tonga Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2011.

be given further support so that they can be expanded throughout Tonga. Wherever possible, creating special opportunities for youth at risk to participate in these types of programmes is recommended.

Improving the Quality and Relevance of Education

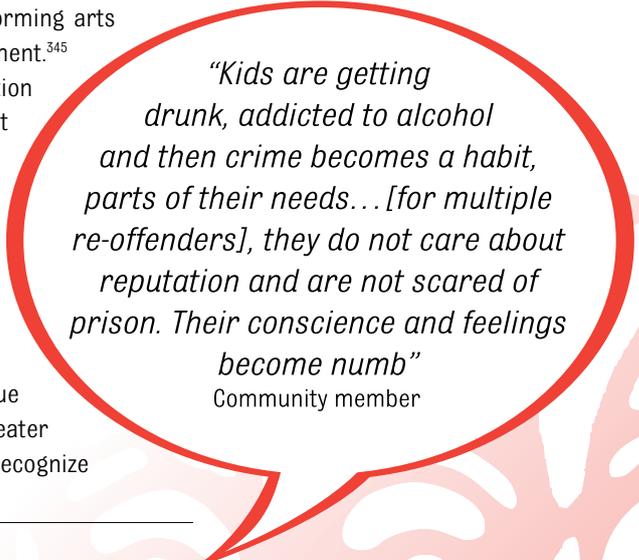
While school enrolment rates are high in primary school, rates rapidly decline after the age of 15.³⁴² The education system is highly academic and gaps between the educational outcome and employment opportunities have been noted by the government. Stakeholders consulted highlighted the imperative for education and training to be aligned to current employment needs. Specifically there needs to be development of more informal employment opportunities as well as providing young people with a wider range of educational choices to enable them to acquire necessary work skills in all sectors.

A survey undertaken by the Asia Development Bank in 2007 identified a number of key constraints to improving the quality and relevance of TVET in Tonga. This included a shortage of skilled teachers/trainers in TVET providers and inadequate funding for initiatives in sectors with economic potential such as agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. Adding to this was the lack of support from parents who buy-in to the stigma of vocational training and continue to encourage young people to choose the path of formal education, despite the fact that there is a lack of skilled tradesmen and women in Tonga.

In an effort to meet the need for more investment in technical, vocational and life skill development, MOTEYS offers a walk-in Training and Education Centre with trained staff to direct clients to employment, vocational and training opportunities. With the support of a recent AUD 7 million grant from AusAID and New Zealand Aid Programme, the Ministry is also committed to building the capacity of TVET centres, including offering programmes with international accreditation.³⁴³ To improve the quality of education, the Ministry of Education, Women and Culture has also set up a Quality Assurance Control Office which monitors improvement in education through Minimum Services Standards for Schools, which set benchmarks that schools must meet.³⁴⁴ There have also been discussions about creation of other education programmes, such as performing arts programmes to increase youth participation and development.³⁴⁵ There have also been discussions about sports as a career option for women, in light of the fact that the 2008 Olympic Games first qualifier for Tonga was a young female.³⁴⁶

Tackling Substance Abuse

The 2009 *Youth and Mental Health in Tonga* study highlighted that a number of young people are involved in illegal activities such as substance abuse as a means of asserting their identity.³⁴⁷ These substances include alcohol, tobacco, magic mushrooms, *fafangu* or datura, *kava*, methylated spirits, marijuana and glue sniffing.³⁴⁸ However, alcohol, in particular, has been linked to greater involvement in crime and violence. Ministry of Police officials recognize



“Kids are getting drunk, addicted to alcohol and then crime becomes a habit, parts of their needs... [for multiple re-offenders], they do not care about reputation and are not scared of prison. Their conscience and feelings become numb”
Community member

342 Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a.

343 AusAID 2009.

344 Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010a.

345 Tonga National Youth Strategy 2007 - 2012 cited in FSPI 2009.

346 FSPI 2009.

347 FSPI 2009: 27.

348 UNICEF 2001

the availability of alcohol as a serious problem, reporting that there are currently 265 liquor outlets in Tonga, up significantly from five years ago. While there are significant efforts to monitor licensing, it is all too easy to sell alcohol illegally. However, since the introduction of the Intoxicating Liquor Amendment Act 2010 there is stricter control on attaining liquor licenses. Adding to this, justice officials also stated the correlation between substance abuse and the increasing number of drug related charges amongst young people. Justice officials mentioned the number of drug-related charges amongst young people has increased, due to the proactive enforcement of the Illicit Drugs Control Act.

Opportunities for Meaningful Activity

Limited organized activities, such as volunteering, sports and other recreational programmes for young people who have finished or dropped out of school was also highlighted as a key risk factor. Other than local youth groups and church based activities, perceived options for meaningful activities were limited, with young women having even more limited activities than young men. According to participants consulted during this study, the perception of limited organized activities created a feeling of “boredom” and facilitated, in their view, participation in crime and violence. Creating more meaningful activities for youth to engage in was therefore highlighted as a key resilience factor for youth.

*“In
Tonga, young
people don’t have the
right to stand up, speak
out or argue”*

Young woman

At the same time, participants also highlighted the positive roles that some young people already play in society, which demonstrates the potential for youth to be responsible and effective in decision-making processes. Within the family unit, young men and women perform tasks including cooking, cleaning, shopping, caring for the sick, caring for younger siblings, minor household repairs and other household activities.³⁴⁹ Within the community, young people are active members of youth groups in churches, youth councils, other youth organizations, sports and cultural events. At the national level, youth participated in the National Youth Parliament, the drafting of the national youth policy and national and international sporting events.

Recently, several activities for youth have been undertaken at the national level including the Inspiring - Young Emerging Leaders Programme (I-YEL) by WCCC. I-YEL aims to encourage, prepare and challenge young people from diverse backgrounds to be advocates for human rights, especially women and children’s rights with the overall goal of eliminating violence against women and children. The Programme promotes leadership development, career exploration and goal setting.

The ‘Ola Fou’ Pasifika Youth Development Project implemented by Praxis has been providing training to youth workers to develop leadership skills, promote indigenous approaches to youth development, improve research abilities, and gain recognized qualifications in Tonga, as well as Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands. These programmes should be further supported by the Government and/or development partners for replication so as to contribute to the overall opportunities for young people.

Family Challenges

Young people consulted felt that lack of parenting skills within their own families was another push factor for young people to be involved in crime and violence. Respondents saw

349 2003 Labour Force Survey

the role of the parent and family as important for young people growing up who needed support, guidance and counselling. Due to modernization, the traditional method of parenting, which relied on support from extended family members and wider community members, is breaking down, leaving young people with less family support to enable them to positively manage the greater freedom and liberal attitude of modern society.³⁵⁰ According to participants consulted, parents and schools rarely educate their children in life skills, each arguing that it is the role of the other. When parents and educators do not discuss such issues openly, young people tend to become secretive because they fear punishment from parents or educators who disapprove of their behaviour. This increases the likelihood of engaging in high risk behavior, including substance abuse and unsafe sex. Stakeholders also highlighted that there is a lack of guidance for parents who have difficulty raising their children. Parent absenteeism was also highlighted by the *Youth and Mental Health in Tonga* study in 2009 as a cause of mental stress for youth.³⁵¹

"I couldn't make it without my parents' help. Parents here will make a big, big deal [out of mistakes], but will help you in the end"

Young man

Migration of family members is also having an impact on the environment that young people are growing up in. Migration is seen to have an impact on the family structures (creating single parent headed households), family support systems, parent-child relationships and spousal/partner relationships. In many cases, when one or both parents leave for abroad for work reasons, children are often left in the care of relatives. Young people consulted felt that these relatives sometimes lack the concern that a parent has toward their own child. Young people also felt that they were less obliged to listen to other relatives and felt that relatives were often too busy looking after their own immediate families to be concerned about them. This increases the vulnerability of young people in these situations, who sometimes end up turning away from their families toward friends and outside role models, who may have a negative influence on them.

³⁵⁰ Government of Tonga 2006:39.
³⁵¹ FSPi 2009.



Societal Challenges

Another widely expressed push factor for young people to become involved in crime and violence was the shifting norms of Tongan culture and the way in which traditional society was changing due to the influence of globalization, urbanization and external values. The transition to adulthood for many young people today is vastly different to the transition experienced by their parents. Previously, young peoples' place and role in their communities was defined by tradition and social rank. Both young women and young men played important roles in traditional ceremonies and other aspects of life. However, these roles have become less important in modern times and new expectations linked to pressure to succeed in modern education, formal employment and other areas have created new demands on young people in Tonga, leaving them confused.

It was interesting to note that in the *Youth and Mental Health in Tonga* study, young respondents had very negative perceptions of development and change in society, linking development to 'increasing unemployment', 'dropping out of school', 'drugs and substance abuse'.³⁵² The ongoing conflict and stresses between traditional and modern social structures and values increases the vulnerability of young people and leads to a feeling of displacement. Some seek to express themselves in a meaningful manner, while others, frustrated when they fail to realize their aspirations, resort to crime and other unacceptable and risky behaviours.

In addition, participants consulted felt that young people need to be taught *anga' fakatonga* (the Tongan way) as a way to build resilience in young people. *Anga' fakatonga* is a defining element of the Tongan identity. It is a fundamental attitude and behavior that is taught to Tongan children and is expected to be practiced and passed to their children as well.³⁵³ *Anga fakatonga* emphasizes most highly the importance of family more than any other entity, but also stresses the importance of kinship, community, respect, discipline, generosity, loyalty, and obedience to parents, elders and authority.³⁵⁴ Respect is a basis for all Tongan relationships. Within the Tongan family, children display their love (*ofa*) to their family through obedience and conformity to the orders and counsels of their parents and elders. Notably, during consultations, many juvenile offenders expressed remorse at having brought shame to their families and damaging their family's and community's reputations, stating that this was the single most important factor that would deter them from committing further criminal acts in the future.

Finally, Tongan justice officials as well as a number of other community organizations commented on the issue of criminal deportees in Tonga. From 1998 to 2008 approximately 358 criminal deportees have arrived in Tonga from the U.S., New Zealand and Australia. However, significant missing and withheld data from the departing countries make it difficult to determine how many criminal deportees currently reside in Tonga.³⁵⁵ In Tonga several participants cited conflicting views on how widespread the involvement of deportees in criminal activity actually is. Consultations with deportees resulted in the expression of frustration at being stigmatized, asserting that deportees were the first group of people to be blamed for any disruptions or criminal activity in Tonga.

Criminal deportees in Tonga are mainly young men aged between 25 to 35 years; however there are documented cases of young women also being deported back to Tonga. The

³⁵² FSPI 2009.

³⁵³ Morton 1996: 20.

³⁵⁴ Hansen 2004.

³⁵⁵ Pereira 2011.



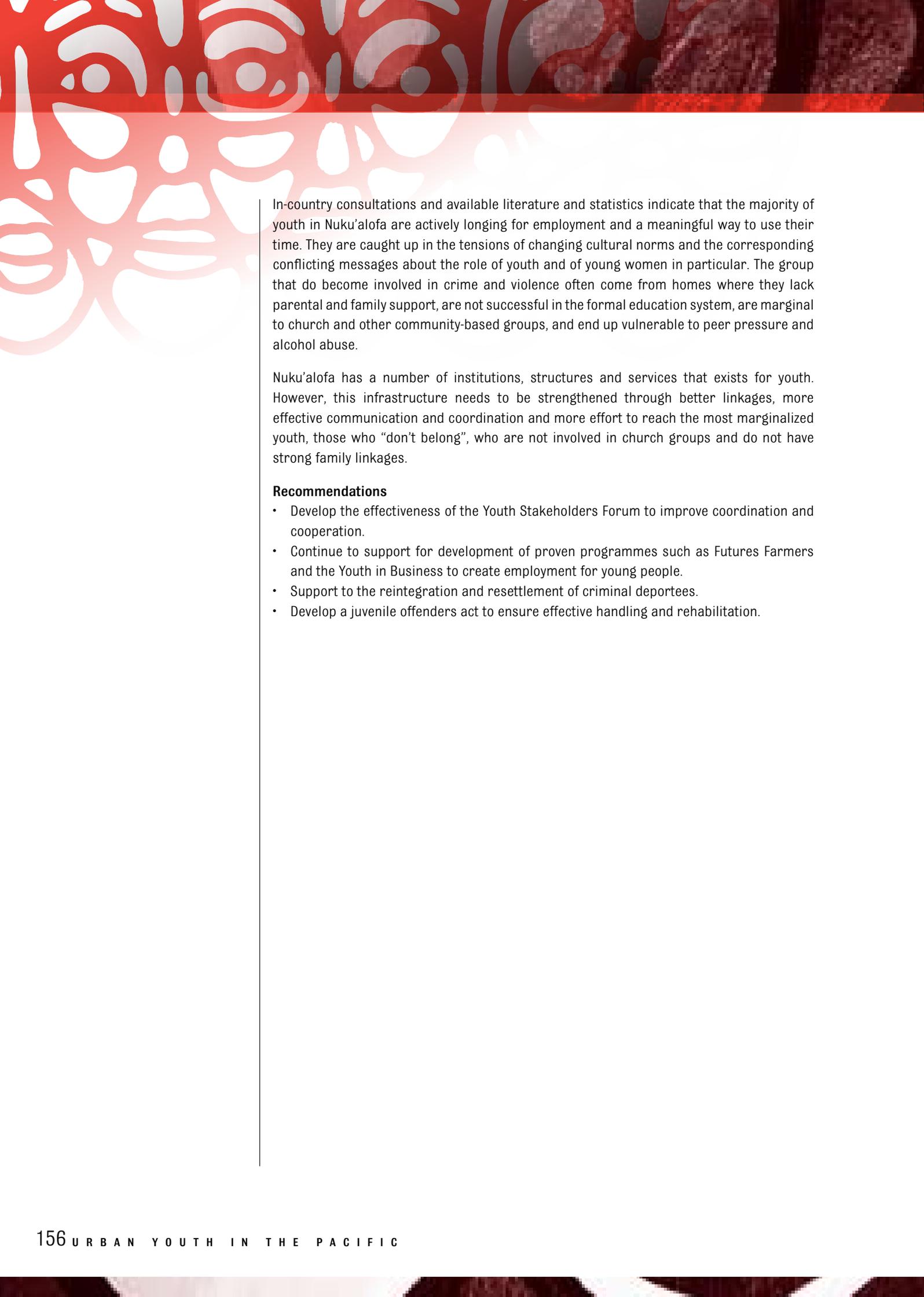
time spent abroad ranges from 5 to 36 years either in the United States, Australia or New Zealand. The criminal offences range from conspiracy to armed robbery.³⁵⁶ Many of the deportees face a number of challenges accessing employment and housing options. They have limited connection to social safety nets that is vital in the Pacific. A number of deportees have physical and psychiatric disabilities which further impede in their reintegration and adds to their stigmatization. The rates of recidivism and the impact on the communities are unknown at this stage.

The issue of criminal deportees in Tonga has been tackled by government and a number of civil society organizations. However, to date Tonga continues to require further coordination and assistance to be able to address the adequate reintegration and resettlement of those deported back to Tonga.

8.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

The majority of young people in Nuku'alofa and surroundings are not involved in crime and violence. A number of resilience factors deter youth from the path of crime and violence and enable them to engage meaningfully in society. These include strong faith networks, opportunities for meaningful engagement including training and employment, and Tonga's high level of literacy and education, which enable students to focus their attention on social and political concerns in the world around them. Furthermore, the traditional collectivist structure of Tongan society, the importance of family reputation, the support of parents and extended families, a strong sense of Tongan values such as family honor and reputation and effective use of traditional structures to manage conflict and support young people to negotiate the complex path to adulthood were also very important enabling factors for success.

³⁵⁶ Pereira 2011



In-country consultations and available literature and statistics indicate that the majority of youth in Nuku'alofa are actively longing for employment and a meaningful way to use their time. They are caught up in the tensions of changing cultural norms and the corresponding conflicting messages about the role of youth and of young women in particular. The group that do become involved in crime and violence often come from homes where they lack parental and family support, are not successful in the formal education system, are marginal to church and other community-based groups, and end up vulnerable to peer pressure and alcohol abuse.

Nuku'alofa has a number of institutions, structures and services that exists for youth. However, this infrastructure needs to be strengthened through better linkages, more effective communication and coordination and more effort to reach the most marginalized youth, those who “don't belong”, who are not involved in church groups and do not have strong family linkages.

Recommendations

- Develop the effectiveness of the Youth Stakeholders Forum to improve coordination and cooperation.
- Continue to support for development of proven programmes such as Futures Farmers and the Youth in Business to create employment for young people.
- Support to the reintegration and resettlement of criminal deportees.
- Develop a juvenile offenders act to ensure effective handling and rehabilitation.

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