



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique

A COMPENDIUM OF PACIFIC PRACTICE IN STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Compiled by the Pacific Community

Foreword

The year 2022 is a great milestone for the Pacific Community (SPC): it is the year we turn 75 and celebrate our founding history and service to our 27 members and the Pacific region. It is the first year of implementation for our 10-year Strategic Plan and of our commitment to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. As we reflect on the impact of our scientific research and knowledge coupled with our technical service to the development of the Pacific region, we learn from our past, leverage our present achievements, and imagine preferred futures.

In a rapidly changing and interconnected world, strategic foresight is increasingly used by organisations to envision, anticipate and better prepare for change. Foresight equips individuals and organisations to consider multiple futures, better prepare for uncertainty, make suitable decisions, and navigate towards a preferred vision of the future.

At SPC, we recognise strategic foresight as a critical skill, and are investing in strengthening the capacity of staff and members to understand and apply strategic foresight to their work. The use of strategic foresight has underpinned the participatory co-development of the SPC Strategic Plan 2022–2031, setting the ambition required for political leadership and regionalism; people-centred development; peace and security; resource and economic development; climate change and disasters; ocean and environment; and technology and connectivity, within the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific.

With this compendium, we start to tell our future stories; we celebrate staff capabilities in using strategic foresight to deepen our perspectives of our work and impacts. These papers document our action learning experiences and acknowledge the authors personal achievements in acquiring futurist certification.

The compendium opens with a paper submission to the Journal of Futures Studies, jointly authored by SPC staff, situating strategic foresight in the Blue Pacific, where *our future is in our past*. The second paper delves into the public health challenges of the region and the scenarios for change using futures thinking outlooks of radical change, adaptive change and no change. The third paper delves into policy metaphors and uses the futures triangle tool to understand how a policy focus can erase actors and systems in community-centred contexts rather than individual, economic or political interests. The fourth paper uses the Samoan concept of *tōfā sālili* to make meaning of futures concepts and affirm that Pacific people must see themselves in strategic foresight frameworks. The fifth paper speaks to designing youth futures and ensuring futures tools reflect the lived experiences of young people as custodians of the future of the Blue Pacific. Finally, the sixth paper examines the power of transforming futures by sharing SPC's experiences and learnings in applying futures tools to meaningfully engage the imaginations and aspirations of staff and members in developing its 10-year strategy.

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Disclaimer: The opinions and views expressed in the articles are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of SPC.

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1. PACIFIC RECIPES IN FUTURES THINKING

Practice and Learning from the
Blue Pacific Continent:
Withstanding the changing currents
and charting our canoe in a rapidly
changing environment

By Sarah Mecartney,
Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago-Elisara,
Dr Amerita Ravuvu

The Pacific Community (SPC) hosted a session at the 2021 Asia Pacific Futures Network (APFN) Conference titled Pacific recipes in futures thinking: Practice and learning from the Blue Pacific Continent. Our story was anchored in the co-development of a robust, transformative ten-year strategy using foresight through multi-tiered facilitated processes. Culturally, we acknowledge that our future is in our past, blending traditions, science and indigenous knowledge to multidisciplinary perspectives on our shared future. Central to our narrative is the reciprocity of the learning across our Blue Pacific Continent – manifested in the co-development, endorsement and ownership of a decadal organisational strategy.

“ *Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us.* ”

—Epeli Hau ' ofa, *Our Sea of Islands*

Introduction

As the world wrestles with the changing landscape and environment brought about by COVID-19, organisations and institutions engage in developing different recipes for change, innovating around knowledge and information to make sense of our rapidly changing world. For the Pacific region, the ongoing search for and development of different recipes reflects the need to be adaptive in a changing environment towards co-creating post-pandemic futures that are responsive and relevant for our people.

The Pacific region acknowledges that “our future is in our past”. As an intergovernmental scientific and technical organisation owned by Pacific countries and territories, our collective futures story is based on diverse perspectives and bridges modern science, indigenous knowledge and people-centred approaches grounded in our values as Pacific people.

The application of foresight and futures thinking can be analogised with the Samoan concept, *si'i le matalalaga*, which derives from the art of quality, consistent weaving. It refers to a change of behaviour or action for the better (Toelupe Tago, 2021). The art of weaving is shared across many Pacific nations including Samoa. It has been passed on from generation to generation and is an integral part of our Pacific identity. Weaving is not just about sustainability of an art or our cultures, but it is also about sustenance generated through our connections with each other and with our land and ocean. Like the application of foresight, weaving is about our journey, it speaks to our ability to adapt and change course depending on the circumstances and context, where every strand, every way we bend, weave and connect the different strands of our mat, is done so with purpose, mindful of our end goal and destination. The use of *si'i le matalalaga* therefore is an analogy that describes our journey in applying foresight but also acknowledging that our future is in our past. Our story highlights the utility of foresight tools in strengthening adaptability to the changing context and a COVID-19 landscape through relational and reciprocal approaches, that is, weaving a Pacific mat that withstands the changing currents of the ocean, and to enable us to chart our canoe in a different and new environment.

Figure 1: Illustration of the Pacific Community's Key Focus Area (KFA) 3 Food Systems, which aims to ensure that Pacific food systems provide access to safe and nutritious food and contribute to healthy people, ecosystems, vibrant cultures, and prosperity for all (Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2022-2031).



This report shares some of our wholesome and flavoursome recipes for co-creating futures that adopts an intergenerational approach, reflects our unique cultural contexts and articulates the application of our values across our policy and practice in multiple sectors. It seeks to demonstrate how culture, knowledge and values are intertwined

across Pacific foresight approaches and practices, particularly in how we bring these elements together in our futurists story towards institutionalising this capability across sectors (Figure 1).

The importance of culture and context in Pacific foresight

Our values and our identity as people are in essence presented in our ways of knowing, our ways of learning and our ways of thinking and being. Strategic foresight and futures thinking is *tōfā sā'ili* (*tōfā* means wisdom, and *sā'ili* means to search) in practice, where we are invited through reflection and learning, to delve deeper into our values and engage in our world views and epistemologies to make sense of our realities and the context surrounding us. In exploring our futures, the framing provided through *tōfā sā'ili* resonates with our values as people, recognising that we are in familiar territory and that strategic foresight and futures thinking is not new to the Pacific (Toelupe Tago, 2021, p. 1).

In exploring futures, understanding context is key. Our future is in our past reminds us of our reservoirs of knowledge about ourselves and our journeys all of which provide valuable insights that will help us determine our course for our futures as people, as nations and as a region. It highlights our own value as a people and what we bring to the table in discussing futures, and what it means to explore futures embedded in context and culture.

As wayfinders, foresight provides a continuous and contextual practice for preparing for the voyage into the future. This includes navigating by nature, acknowledging that we know where we are because we know where we have been, and therefore where we are going. The development of our organisational strategic plan and the Phase 2 *Regional Culture Strategy: Investing in Pacific Cultures*, saw the application of causal layered analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 2008) as a valuable tool in upholding and blending different ways of knowing from across the Pacific islands. This enabled deeper engagement with our people since it facilitated the use of Pacific concepts that are familiar and relatable.

In developing these strategic documents, we find meaning in *tōfā sā'ili* as we explore our futures as wayfinders. We apply our cultural lenses in positioning our compass as we reflect on our direction and reclaim our inheritance and identity within our institutional context, our challenges and insights of where we have come from and our subsequent futures. In the words of the former Head of State of Samoa, “we ought to look to the horizons and see the different shades of the new dawns or the changing currents and/or the flows of each new season” (Tui Atua, 2008:1). These words of wisdom are clearly aligned with the application of *si'i le matalalaga* in strategic foresight and reference to *O le fuata ma lona lou*.

The importance of leadership

The importance of ensuring a contextualised agenda for our work in the Pacific calls for strong leadership and cultural humility characterised by working and learning together and co-existing across our differences and diverse realities. Strong leadership enables a platform for genuine engagement and relationship-building premised on our strengths and values as individuals and as a collective. We have showcased that value in the co-development of our new strategic plan, using foresight and futures thinking, demonstrating cultural humility across the board, promoting cross-fertilisation of knowledge and learning, contributing to the evolution of a strategic planning process that is truly embedded in Pacific ways of knowing, thinking and being.



Figure 2: Illustration of the Blue Pacific Continent highlighting SPC's member countries and territories in a starry night sky as presented in the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2022-2031.

The value of leadership in facilitating the application of foresight tools is an integral part of engaging futures conversations. Leaders as enablers hold the key to facilitating deeper engagements and promoting an environment that nurtures connections with the self, each other and our environment. These are important for the practice of foresight, recognising that our sense of being connected is linked to our ability to engage with the content and language used in applying foresight tools.

The adaptation of futures tools with young Pacific people is a true reflection of applying Pacific ways of knowing and learning (Motusaga, 2021). Her paper, *Designing youth futures*, focuses on intergenerational inclusion to prepare for the future through the retelling of Pacific values and a strong appreciation of where our people are at in our respective journeys for ensuring engagement at a deeper level. In talking about futures, it is imperative to recognise and provide active and dynamic space for young people to engage in conversations as our future leaders and guardians of our Pacific heritage.

The adaptation of futures tools, including the futures triangle (Fergnani, 2020; Inayatullah, 2008) and backcasting (through love letters from the future and speed dating activities) enabled an active and authentic engagement with young people. For example, the utilisation of our Pacific Ocean to symbolise the pulls (tides), pushes (waves) and weights (reef) of the futures triangle helped illustrate important matters and influences of young people. It highlighted that the weights were not just about disused futures but were also a critical cultural anchor in that our future is in our past, that is, the importance of the intertwining of our pasts, presents and futures to fully inform shaping the world we want for our descendants.

Central to connecting with diverse audiences is the contextual and cultural knowledge of which tools, languages and experiences to apply (Motusaga, 2021). "Reading beyond the silence" and aggregating intergenerational values for envisioning and planning for a shared preferred future are likened to the Samoan metaphor, *O le fuata ma lona lou* (*fuata* means breadfruit season, *lou* is the stick used for picking the breadfruit) (Figure 3). That is, select and modify the tools and approaches that provide relevance and utility for genuine, participatory and respectful engagement.



Figure 3: Illustration of the Samoan metaphor 'O le fuata ma lona lou' as presented in the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2022-2031.

It indicates that each season is different and we must be prepared to welcome and approach each of the seasons with that knowledge in mind. Like the changing currents of the ocean, each season brings with it its own challenges and opportunities and we must have the relevant tools knowing that the adaption and application will be different in response to the changing currents and seasons.

The importance of systems and relationships

A systems approach has helped contributors to consider highly interconnected issues across a diverse geographical space (Buehring and Bishop, 2020). The ability to recognise linkages and strengthen connections between actions and investments has been central to our engagements within our system. This has been likened to the weaving of a Pacific mat where every strand of the mat, every direction we bend these strands as we weave, are chosen so purposefully given our interconnected nature and relational existence. It is also a reflection of our participatory approach that has helped us hear our people's voices and be informed by diverse perspectives, interests and insights.

A study and application of foresight (Ravuvu, 2021) for progressing the integration of key health considerations into critical policy decision-making processes examined and analysed deeper systemic and transdisciplinary issues and perspectives for developing policy solutions. It highlights the importance of understanding deep culture and the inner stories for the framing of effective policy responses.

The application of CLA and the use of metaphors helped unpack the Pacific Public Health policy narrative through the development of a shared understanding of the convergence of the driving forces in their noncommunicable diseases (NCD) policy environments. This reinforced that a better understanding of factors, such as actor interests and influence, dynamics, governance structures and capacities, was required for a more impactful multi-sectoral policy response. The futures triangle tool brought into perspective how the role of actors, processes, relations and systems are erased from the focus of policy responses when an economic framing is used.

Using the CLA framework and metaphors deepened the futures learning and constructed realities differently, and naturalised and perpetuated worldviews that influence the identification and consideration of policy solutions through the particular framing and construction of the issues at hand (Ravuvu, 2021). The CLA, reinforced by the recognition of Pacific culture and contexts and the use of metaphors, provided a new narrative that shifts responsibility, magnifies the crisis at hand and effectively supports claims about the urgency and extent of required NCD intervention.

In the co-development of a decadal organisational strategic plan, relational approaches to foster greater engagement and ownership were anchored in acknowledging where we ourselves have travelled from and what we bring to the space and engagement with our communities (Mecartney, 2022). An open, learning and participatory process sought the systematic engagement of people across several (adapted) futures tools and narrative approaches for futures thinking and strategy development (Milojević and Inayatullah, 2015).

CLA was particularly useful for leveraging lateral thinking through the blending of convergent (using logic) and divergent (using imagination) thinkers. This was enhanced through thought leadership, investment in institutional building of futures literacy and the embracement of Pacific values and ways of knowing and learning. This enabled us to motivate the convening and connection of diverse groups, enabled divergent perspectives to be heard and created space for shared action and innovation for the co-development of a ten-year strategic plan.

The importance of growing and institutionalising futures capabilities for transformation

Reciprocity and the sharing of knowledge has been a key principle in developing the organisation's decadal strategic plan. Foresight coupled with our culture and values has enriched and deepened engagement with staff, members and stakeholders. It provided an energy that enabled the weaving of usable and cross-disciplinary capacity development and promoted the sharing of knowledge for the co-development of the strategic plan.

A parallel investment was participation in the “Become a Futurist” online course run by the Metafutures School. This first staff cohort tested opportunities for establishing a Pacific futurists community of practice and explored how this can grow organically. The strategic planning process allowed for real-time application, reflection and action learning. It drew out lessons on what could be done better and what could be enhanced further as part of action learning.

Key benefits of this approach are recognised through 25% of 600+ staff engaged in at least one strategic foresight activity conducted as part of the co-development of the strategic plan. This enabled greater contribution of content and enriched discussion through diverse multisectoral and multidisciplinary perspectives. It is a purposeful investment for future-proofing a 75-year-old organisation in which staff have the vocabulary, tools and methodologies to facilitate and support strategic conversations about the future. Building organisational futures capabilities provides the basis for futures readiness through improved staff capabilities to lead and contribute to transformation of the organisation. Foresight enables us to use Pacific relevant tools to continually explore the future and to expand our practice and service, learning from each other and sharing insights across disciplines.

The focus on growing and institutionalising futures capabilities for the organisation is an ongoing journey. While this is a recent investment, we are already seeing the benefits in terms of deepening engagement with our staff and members and generating content that will continue to solidify some of the foundational principles for driving foresight and futures thinking. This continuum of learning is a platform that will continue to evolve and will facilitate the needed transformations for us to lead in the foresight and futures thinking space in the Pacific and beyond.

Conclusion

Figure 4: Illustration of the Pacific Community's Key Focus Area (KFA) 7 Transforming Institutional Effectiveness as presented in the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2022-2031.



Homemade recipes create the most flavoursome of dishes. The preparation of a hearty and healthy meal is best made with local ingredients, over a slow-cooking flame and by a brigade of chefs to embed behavioural and mindset shifts for transformed futures.

Our secret ingredient has been learning together, sharing and growing our knowledge (reciprocity, participatory ownership) not just among practitioners but across our Blue Pacific continent. This has also enabled a strong sense of cultural

humility as we share and offer learning about our diverse Pacific cultures, acknowledging its value in our services to our people. It has strengthened internal and external relationships, taking our engagements as professionals to another level where there is a sense of deeper connection and resonance with the knowledge and content shared among ourselves. It has encouraged aspirations in grounded ambitions and uncovered new possibilities for positive and transformative change both within our organisation and beyond.

The use of weaving and the analogy of *Si'i le Matalalaga*, the value of culture and context, and the reference to *O le fuata ma lona lou*, speak to how we applied the foresight tools and adapted our practice across our organisation (Figure 4). As people of the Blue Pacific Ocean, we recognise the importance of context and embedding our practice in our culture towards facilitating deeper engagement with our people. This is through the use of language and content that our people are familiar with, for it is only through a sense of familiarity and resonance that we can genuinely engage in the true essence of what it means to be of service to our Pacific communities.

In conclusion, the use of our secret ingredient, combined with the rest of the ingredients needed to prepare a hearty meal, has been welcomed for the nourishment of an appetite that sees value in embedding Pacific ways of knowing, thinking, learning and being as part of our future as an organisation servicing the Blue Pacific Continent. This requires that we be continuously reminded of our identity as people of the ocean and as the foundation upon which we build our recipes for serving our people and our region.

End note: This paper was originally submitted for publication to the Journal of Futures Studies Special Issue: Recipes for Change.

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2. STRATEGIC FORESIGHT TO COMBAT NON- COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

The Pacific Islands perspective

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Introduction

Globally, emerging and re-emerging diseases continue to threaten human health and hinder socio-economic development (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014; United Nations [UN], 2018). In the Pacific region, non-communicable diseases (NCD), such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, and cancers, are the leading cause of death, accounting for approximately 75% of mortalities (World Bank, 2014). This creates a major threat to health, social and economic development in the Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). With the complex backdrop of globalisation creating unhealthy environments and accelerating the pace of change in people's lifestyle behaviours, the burden of NCDs is highly likely to increase. The Pacific will only be able to cope with the growing burden of NCDs – and its challenges on development – if countries and regional technical support agencies, such as the Pacific Community (SPC), broaden their future perspectives and adapt strategies to meet the rapid pace of change in the region.

Recognising this, we – the NCD technical support team under the Public Health Division of SPC – conducted a series of informal discussion sessions in 2021 and continuously scout the horizon with the aim of developing future strategies to better support PICTs to combat NCDs. We adapted the six pillars approach of futures thinking using, mapping for the future, anticipating the future through emerging issues analysis, creating alternatives with scenarios and transforming the future through visioning and backcasting (Inayatullah, 2021; Inayatullah, 2020).

Assessing and mapping for the future

To inform the design of new strategies, we reviewed existing global and regional NCD strategies, including the global NCD best-buys (WHO, 2017), Pacific NCD Roadmap (WB, 2014), tobacco-free Pacific strategies (WHO, 2013) and Pacific ending childhood obesity priorities (Ravuvu, 2020). To understand the progress made in PICTs, we reviewed key reports, such as SPC's 2016–2018 and 2019–2020 NCD result frameworks (SPC, 2018; SPC 2020), the Pacific Monitoring Alliance for NCD actions (MANA) Dashboard (Win Tin, 2020), and the NCD impact assessment (WHO, 2019). This formed a key part of our shared history. To broaden our perspective, we discussed the progress and challenges associated with NCD prevention and control with the Pacific development partners and PICTs' national NCD focal persons and mapped out technical support needs.

Through this process, we identified several gaps that we need to address to effectively halt or reverse the existing Pacific NCD crisis. For example: Leadership, governance, and financing remain weak; policy and legislation measures are not strong enough; engagement from non-health sectors and civil society is very limited; and the health systems for NCD management services are fragile. The Global NCD progress monitor 2020 reported that most PICTs are not progressing fast enough and are off-track to meet their global NCD targets and commitments to reduce premature mortality from NCDs (WHO, 2020).

Anticipating the future through emerging issues analysis

It is very likely that high rates of premature death will continue to be associated with high rates of NCDs. We identified and analysed possible key emerging issues or potential drivers of change in the Pacific context, and their likely follow-on effects in addressing NCDs in the future. We also took a strategic outlook on the evolving NCD landscape and its implications on SPC's work in this space.

Social, economic and environmental factors:

With a continued complex backdrop of globalisation, unplanned urbanisation, climate change and food insecurity (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat [PIFS], 2019), PICTs will continue to experience changes in the ways people acquire and practice unhealthy behaviours. The production and availability of local healthy foods may continue to decline, and the importation and consumption of unhealthy food will likely continue to increase due to social, environmental, economic and commercial factors influencing the Pacific. The likelihood of industries' (tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy diet) interfering through advertising, promotion, sponsorship, and trade would hinder efforts in combating NCDs. It is highly likely that government ministries will need to strengthen and enforce NCD-related policies and legislation in collaboration with non-health sectors, the private sector, and civil society through the establishment of strong political leadership and effective governance.

Technology, digital transformation, and communication factors:

With advancements in technology and changing lifestyle behaviours, traditional ways of educating people to practice healthy lifestyle will no longer be sufficient to address NCDs in the future. Instead, there will be a need to invest in innovative health promotion interventions using advanced technology and creative ways of communication to enhance behaviour change.

Co-morbidity and cross-cutting factors:

With the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing comorbidities with NCDs, the Pacific represents a region that is significantly vulnerable to the health crisis in the future (Win Tin, 2020). These comorbidities will intensify premature death, disability, and reduced productivity. Continued diverted attention and shifting resources to prepare for, and respond to, the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters will continue to hamper progress on all aspects of NCD prevention and control. The double burden of NCDs and infectious diseases is likely to increase further. There will be a need to focus on addressing these cross-cutting issues; otherwise, PICTs will remain off-track and this will continue to threaten economic development.

Other factors:

In recent literature, "mental disorder" has been added as a NCD (O'Neil, 2015) and air pollution has been included as one of the risk factors causing NCDs (Linou, 2018). Compounded by the increasing burden of mental health conditions due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that PICTs will need to strengthen their efforts to address mental health issues. NCDs are linked to other health conditions, such as maternal and child health and sexual and reproductive health, and this interconnectedness emphasises the critical need for integrated interventions through a life course approach.

Creating and analysing alternatives with scenarios and identifying a preferred approach

The trends and emerging issues generally shape transformative scenarios and their potential for future strategic response. This also helped us to consider assumptions and scenarios for alternative futures. With an understanding of the evolving NCD landscape due to the existing and emerging issues at the global and regional levels, knowledge of the perspectives of key stakeholders in the Pacific through our mapping process, and the anticipation of “Pacific health as investment” to maximise a sustainable socio-economic development by combating NCDs that cause premature mortalities and lost productivity, we explored multiple possible futures using the scenario-building method. Based on the scope and nature of our work, we considered three possible scenarios of change – **no change**, **radical change** and **adaptive change** – to identify possible future strategies to support PICTs.

No change: Unadventurous strategic actions

We reviewed our existing strategies supporting PICTs to strengthen NCD actions in the past five years. Most strategies remain relevant in the future, given that our current strategies are the essential pillars in addressing NCDs. However, in our existing strategies, there are no concrete actions to effectively address the potential emerging issues and trends, such as those concerning trade and commercial factors, co-morbidities and cross-cutting issues, digital transformation, mental health, and air pollution. If we are to continue with limited additional investment and a “business-as-usual” approach through traditional strategic actions, despite the trends at the global and regional levels, like *“an island with no electricity”*, we may not be able to shape the future in which we want to live.

Radical change: Brand-new strategic actions

We considered the potential need to make a total transformation of our existing strategic actions under each strategy given the existing circumstances and potential emerging issues and trends. We also considered the potential need for additional substantial investment to make a total transformation, considering limited resources in the region. Although the “no change” traditional approach may not completely and effectively address the growing burden of NCDs, our existing NCD strategies and most actions will remain relevant. Like *“strangers on a remote island”*, total transformative change to an entirely new level may not be able to shape the future we want and could even deviate from the path towards our preferred future. Therefore, a total transformation or a substantial redesign to a brand-new strategic focus may not be required, as there will be no guarantee of value for money.

Adaptive change: Sculptured strategic actions

In this scenario, we considered the potential need to adapt our current strategies and actions to cope with the changing environment. While we believe that our existing strategies remain relevant to address NCDs, there is significant potential to expand our actions under each strategy and improve our support for PICTs to address key emerging issues with the aim to fast-track towards achievement of our preferred future. For example, given SPC is a multidisciplinary organisation working in a broad range of fields, there is an opportunity to: emphasise trade and commercial factors that support healthy living; engage with non-health sectors and civil society to improve the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach; protect people with NCDs from emerging infectious diseases by building better health care systems and services; and utilise technology-based innovative interventions to promote behaviour change, and assess health impact to generate more scientific Pacific evidence for future policies and planning. Taking into consideration our existing capacity on human and financial resources for long-term sustainability, understanding of the Pacific context and the context in which SPC works, as well as the comparative advantages that already exist within SPC, we considered that an incremental improvement – by building on investment and developing strategic actions to cope with the changing environment – could be ideal, like *“landing to the islands of wellbeing: healthy people, nature and animals”*, to shape and achieve the future in which we want to live.

Three scenarios of change to combat non-communicable diseases: The Pacific Island perspective

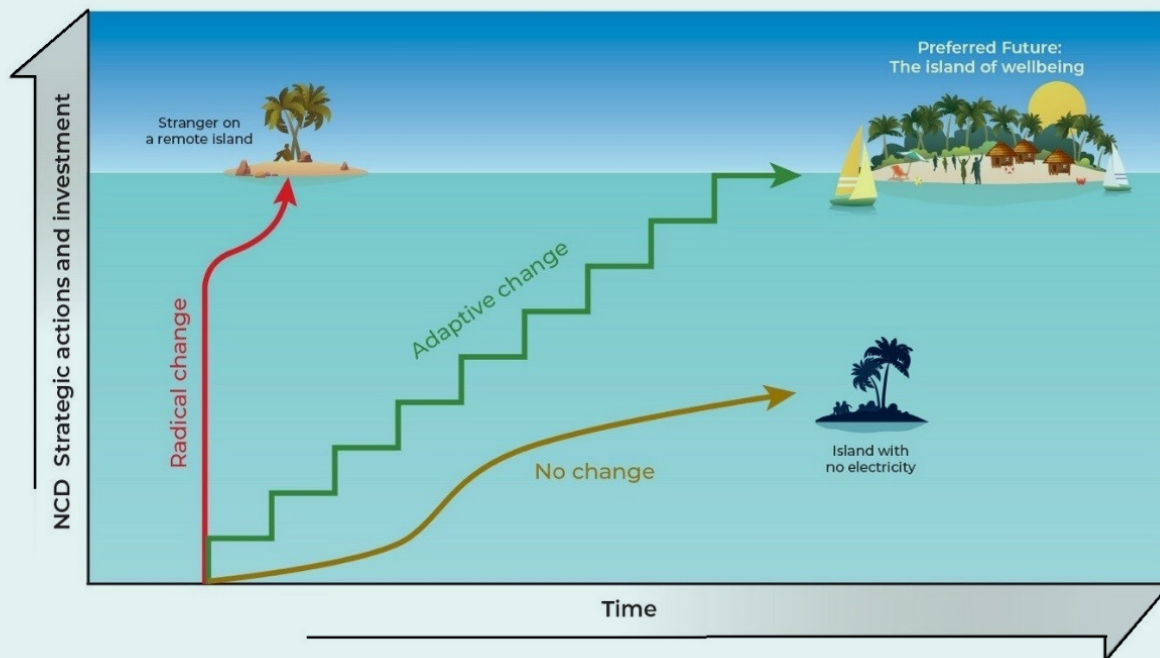


Illustration by
Si Thu Win Tin.

Transforming the future through visioning and backcasting

We have reached a crossroad in terms of the options to choose, and we will take on adapting futures through an incremental approach to strengthen our support to PICTs. In light of the opportunities and challenges we face now and especially in the future, we anticipate a future in which *“Pacific people live long, healthy and productive lives”* through our goal of *“PICTs improved multisectoral response to NCD and reduced premature mortality from NCD by a third by 2030 and by 50% by 2050”*¹. This is in line with the region’s existing commitments to the Healthy Islands Vision (WHO, 2015) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015), as well as its future potential commitment to the Blue Pacific Vision 2050².

Using the backcasting methodology, we reframed our existing NCD strategies to be implemented concurrently through prioritised expanded actions that we can take today, pave the path (as per the timeframe of SPC’s next business plan cycle by 2025, SDG by 2030, and Blue Pacific Vision by 2050), and make the future we want. These are:

1. *PICTs strengthened leadership, governance, and multi-sectoral engagement* – 25% by 2025, 50% by 2030, and 90% by 2050³. Key actions include:
 - ensure NCDs have a high profile at regional and national ministerial meetings for stronger leadership;
 - develop multisectoral national NCD plans, and establish committees to enhance governance; and
 - engage non-health and non-state actors to improve multisectoral engagement.

2. *PICTs enhanced policies and legislation in all relevant sectors that address NCDs – 25% by 2025, 50% by 2030, and 90% by 2050.* Key actions include:
 - develop policies and legislations that address environmental, trade, and commercial factors;
 - develop regional goods including guidelines that address NCD and risk factors; and
 - review and assess unhealthy product imports and trade for policy recommendations.
3. *PICTs improved NCD prevention and management services – 25% by 2025, 50% by 2030, and 90% by 2050.* Key actions include:
 - develop training packages and tools, and conduct training and professional placement;
 - create resources using advanced technology and innovative ways for behaviour change; and
 - build better systems for NCD services through integrated and cross-cutting approaches.
4. *PICTs strengthened accountability mechanism and research to generate scientific Pacific evidence – 25% by 2025, 50% by 2030, and 90% by 2050.* Key actions include:
 - develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks and mechanisms to track progress; and
 - support NCD operational research priorities for future planning, policies and programmes.

Conclusion

Recent years have been a time of unprecedented change on a global scale. However, the Pacific region has experienced much of this change directly, with countries facing climate change impacts and natural disasters, sea level rises and displacement, and fragile economic development due to health crises. A systematic and holistic approach is required to address emerging issues and determinants of health, particularly NCDs, during times of disruptions. It is critical to take additional measures, beyond more mundane activities, that promise to be achievable and create our desired future. However, we also need to consider our resources and the context in which our organisation operates to determine what we can do now and, in the future, when more opportunities arise. Overall, the six pillars approach that we adapted helped explore different possible futures alongside the opportunities and challenges and makes our future foresight a practical exercise. The next step is to develop a detailed action plan with timeframes and specific indicators, explore additional resources and new opportunities, and anticipate actions to make our preferred future and vision real. Additionally, we must continuously explore potential drivers of change to challenge our preferred approach, adapt our strategies to meet the changing emerging issues, and prepare for a better future.

- 1 Progress and achievement will be monitored using the global NCD monitoring framework that measures the progress against the SDGs' NCD target on premature mortality due to NCDs.
- 2 With the recognition that the region's vulnerability is seriously threatened by the escalating impacts of climate change and the intensification of geostrategic competition, Pacific leaders called for the development of the 2050 strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent which is still underway.
- 3 Progress and achieving targets (% relative improvement) will be monitored using the PICTs' 2020 MANA Dashboard as a baseline throughout the path i.e., by 2025, 2030 and 2050. 'Strengthened/enhanced/improved' means progress towards the implementation of strategies reached to the level of 'green with 3 stars, i.e., high strength of implementation', as per MANA Dashboard traffic light scoring and assessment criteria.

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3. POLICY METAPHORS IN THE PACIFIC REGION

Plague to ocean —
Reaching the furthest behind first

By Dr Amerita Ravuvu

Introduction

The Pacific region is a leader in progressive regionalism (*The Framework for Pacific Regionalism*, 2014) and, in many ways, the region is a case study of policy success. However, at the same time, progress in integrating key health considerations into national government development plans and key policy decision-making processes has been inconsistent and hampered by a range of political-economic and contextual factors, including economic imperatives (Ravuvu et al., 2017; Snowden & Thow, 2013; Thow & Snowden, 2010; Thow et al., 2011). In this paper, attention is drawn to policy metaphors of two key crises currently impacting the region – the non-communicable diseases (NCD) crisis and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic (Win Tin et al., 2020). The paper describes how political-economic factors framed through economic and war metaphors have defined and constructed the reality of the problems currently faced and, thus, in turn have gained currency and become entrenched in public health policies that support economic growth at the expense of human health. Using the causal layered analysis (CLA) and Futures Triangle as tools to gain insight into policy scenarios (Inayatullah, 2005; Inayatullah & Milojević, 2021), a number of issues are explored across these frames and deconstructed to create the possibility for an alternative future.

Metaphors in the Pacific region's NCD and COVID-19-related policy-making

In 2011, Pacific Forum Leaders declared NCDs a “human, social and economic crisis” due to the significant and growing burden of NCDs in the region (Tolley et al., 2016; World Bank, 2014). There have been calls for a more systematic, collective approach to tackle this burden and, at the request of the Pacific Finance and Economic Ministers, by 2014, the Pacific NCD Roadmap (World Bank, 2014) had established a menu of interventions and cost-effective actions to “bend” the cost curve for NCD treatments. The Roadmap emphasised the large but often preventable financial costs of already overstretched government health budgets and the trickle-down effects on the well-being of Pacific populations.

Efforts to strengthen NCD prevention and control measures have been side-tracked and impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. At both the international and regional levels, a war has been declared on this pandemic (Business Wire, 2021; International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2020; The Lowy Institute, 2021), which has threatened human health globally and completely transformed the way people live (Win Tin et al., 2020). For the Pacific region, the COVID-19 pandemic has serious implications for its populations, which are already impacted by the prevalence of NCDs, given the evidence that NCDs increase the risk of dying from COVID-19 and other viral infections, such as seasonal influenza (Guan et al., 2020; Hong et al., 2014; Tin et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020). While much of the Pacific has effectively minimised the health impacts of this pandemic, the two economic giants of the region – Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG) – are seeing large spikes in cases (Crawford School of Public Policy Australian National University [ANU]; Radio New Zealand, 2021). This presents policymakers with a troubling situation – weighing the costs of economic imperatives against public health well-being. Public health campaigns in both of these settings are now using the economic and war metaphors to help solve these crises (Bohane, 2021; Talebula, 2021).

The “economy as a body” metaphor at work in NCD-related policies across the region

Since the early 2000s, high-level political support for addressing NCDs has been strong with ministerial endorsement of several global and regional commitments¹. In 2007, the region embarked on the ambitious five-year Pacific Regional 2-1-22 NCD Programme (2007–2011) under which many Pacific Island countries and territories developed, costed, and prioritised strategies to reduce NCDs (Tolley et al., 2016). Despite this initiative, economic and social burdens caused by NCDs continued to grow, leading to the declaration of a crisis by leaders in 2011 and the development of the Pacific NCD Roadmap.

Following declaration and endorsement of the roadmap, the framing of NCDs has repeatedly used the “economy-as-a-body” metaphor to frame the issue of NCDs as a burden on Pacific economies. The region’s “growing NCD burdens threatens the health and well-being of Pacific populations and combined with modest economic growth, will inevitably further squeeze ministry of Health and national development budgets and undermine national economic productivity that will result from premature death and disability” (World Bank, 2014). Framing the debate as such, where economic growth (the body) is the focus, has supported calls for an urgent and effective multi-sectoral response (Tuitama et al, 2014; World Bank, 2014). Using CLA and analysing key political commitments that regional leaders have supported (see footnote 1), the issue of NCDs across the Pacific region has been constructed as a “burden” on the Pacific economy, as shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1: Causal layered analysis of the NCD crisis response in the Pacific region

Frame	
Litany level (visible problem)	The population of the Pacific region is overwhelmed by the prevalence of NCDs. (Number of NCDs, premature deaths related to NCDs, cost of NCDs, epidemiological data)
Systemic level	Underlying determinants for the crisis are outside the health sector, necessitating a multi-sectoral response.
Worldview or discourse	Economic, political, public health.
Myth and metaphor level	The Blue Pacific Plague.

While the framing of NCDs as an “economic burden” has been effective in gaining political momentum and development partner support for an articulate plan to combat the Blue Pacific Plague, and to “bend the cost curve” and put countries on a path to more sustainable financing, a major challenge remains. The translation of regional commitments into national policies as well as policy implementation of those policies that have been adopted at the national level has been inconsistent across Pacific countries. The impacts have also been negligible for beneficiaries at the community level. Even in cases where comprehensive NCD-related policies exist, policy implementation and enforcement remain weak and monitoring and evaluation almost absent (Win Tin et al., 2020).

1 Political commitments include: WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), 2003; Tonga Commitment, 2003; WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, 2004; WHO Pacific Framework for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, 2007; WHO Western Pacific Regional Action Plan for Noncommunicable Diseases, 2009; WHO Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, 2010; Honiara Communiqué, 2011; and Apia Communiqué, 2013.

While this framing requires a multi-sectoral response, in practice, activities are siloed across government policy sectors and governance levels. The facilitators and barriers to consideration of NCD prevention and control efforts in non-health sectors, with respect to actor interests and influence, the framing of policy issues and dynamics, governance structures and capacities are not analysed and understood well enough to enable more effective policy-making and implementation. Concrete ways to bring convergence to upstream factors that drive delivery – for example, engaging with governments and donors to address siloed budget lines – needs to extend beyond the health sector to address broader drivers across multiple sectors. Given that the activities of different sectors and ministries within governments – such as agriculture, education, trade and sports – can affect NCD prevention and control, budgetary contributions that these different sectors make to the prevention and control of NCD needs to be measured. A framework for the actions that can be taken by non-health sectors to affect NCD prevention and health promotion can be mapped out using a Futures Triangle (see **Figure 5**) to understand better the weight of the past, the push of the present, and the pull of the future of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response for which the economic framing of NCDs calls.

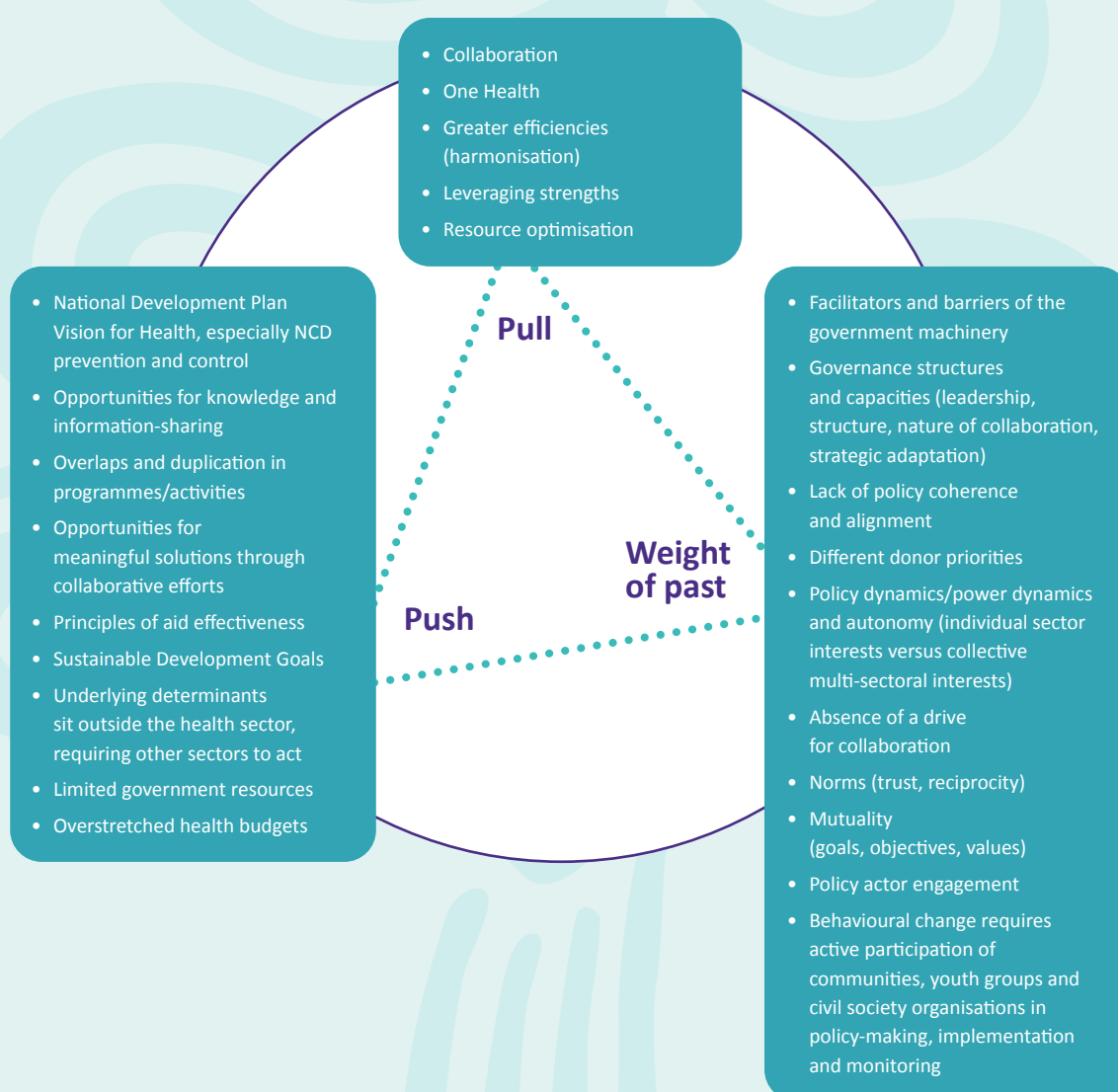


Figure 5: Drivers of change in a “multi-sectoral response” Futures Triangle.

Across the region, there is a significant need to understand the fundamental forces that shape policy-making and implementation at the national levels in order to foster healthier environments. Key political commitments in the region reveal a mutual understanding of the drivers of change developing the present and shaping the future of a multi-sectoral response, as illustrated in [Figure 1](#). However, a more nuanced understanding of the convergence of the drivers of change anchoring the past remains limited and requires unpacking. Policy implementation, enforcement, monitoring and evaluation largely rests on these deep structures and fundamental forces that resist change, act as barriers to change, and continue to hinder multi-sectoral efforts. Additionally, more investment needs to be made to empower affected communities and civil society to engage in policy-making, implementation and monitoring progress – an area of focus that the region has yet to mobilise.

The martial metaphor at work in public health policies: the Fiji case

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been likened to a “zombie apocalypse”, given the mutation of the virus (Inayatullah & Black, 2020), deaths reaching proportions equivalent to a world war and references to “hospitals in the trenches” and “heroic frontline workers” (Arkadia Translations, 2020) who are fighting the enemy, COVID-19. Across the Pacific, the war metaphor has also been used to construct the magnitude and urgency of the outbreak and, in Fiji where the spike in positive cases continues to spiral upwards (Government of Fiji, 2021e), the Government’s response has been a “declaration of war” on COVID-19 (Government of Fiji, 2021f). Using CLA and analysing 60 government speeches (Government of Fiji, n.d.) since the April 2021 outbreak, war metaphors have been used to frame the crisis with the aim to strengthen public health strategies, as shown in [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Causal layered analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic response in Fiji

Frame	
Litany level (visible problem)	“The war against this virus is still winnable” and COVID-19 is viewed as a virus which the public and officials must “fight”. (Number of positive cases, COVID-19 related deaths, COVID-19 deaths with underlying conditions, cost of COVID-19 on the economy, epidemiological data)
Systemic level	“The Covid-19 virus moves if people move. If people stay still, the virus stays still.” (Solution: A public health campaign to restrict movement)
Worldview or discourse	To “defeat the virus and keep the country moving and working as much as possible requires a national effort”. (Solution: A targeted surgical approach to reopen the economy, ensure people can return to work, support businesses to resume, and facilitate the resumption of “normal life”)
Myth and metaphor level	A deadly war with flashing lights. (To combat this deadly virus, all measures – regardless of how restrictive they may be on civil liberties – will need to be respected in order to “win” this war, except when it triggers an economic crisis impacting the prospects for jobs, micro, small and medium enterprises, and entire industries)

However, the framing appears to be “martial” with daily speeches from the higher echelons, marshalling phrases, such as: “our most effective weapons so far against this virus are contact tracing and testing” (Government of Fiji, 2021a); “if we don’t win this fight over the next two weeks and this outbreak gets out of control” (Government of Fiji, 2021f); “we’ve added some invaluable tools to our arsenal that will help us expand and quicken our laboratory testing” (Government of Fiji, 2021d); “to combat this virus in a targeted way...defence is our best attack” (Government of Fiji, 2021b); and “the war against this virus is still winnable” (Government of Fiji, 2021c). While these war metaphors help illustrate the scale of the challenge before Fiji, borrowing the tenets of effective organisation and coordination from the armed forces has militarised the public health response in a literal sense, thereby curtailing civil liberties. For instance, Fiji’s curfew restrictions implemented as a public health response were first imposed from 11:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. following the first outbreak in April 2020. One year later, coinciding with the April 2021 outbreak, curfew hours were extended from 6:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. and went unquestioned. If anything, the “martial war” framing has made people become more accepting that this is a public health effort as a war on a virus and has made it easier to enact policies restricting movement, echoing Keiger’s sentiments (Keiger, 1998). While such regulations may be implemented out of necessity – to protect life and quickly respond to the escalating situation (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2021) in Fiji – the war vocabulary used in Fiji’s policy response has diminished other concerns that emerged in 2021.

When the virus outbreak began, the Government’s response to positive cases in Fiji was neither swift nor harsh, although it framed the challenge in terms of a war in its public health response. Following several weeks of sporadic cases, the Government’s response included a non-essential business lockdown, bans on domestic air and international travel, inter-maritime travel, and domestic road travel beyond containment borders, as well as curfew restrictions limiting movement. These strict measures appeared to be working, although they began to lose effectiveness shortly thereafter. After a mere 700 hours of these measures being in place, the war-framing laxed along with the stringent measures, and a more “targeted approach” ensued (Government of Fiji, 2021b), using the economic argument that these were “first steps toward reopening the economy” (Government of Fiji, 2021a) and shifting the responsibility to the public to “strictly do their part to prevent the spread by observing restrictions and following the COVID-safe guidelines” (Government of Fiji, 2021a). Despite an increase in cases, the “flashing lights” in this “deadly war” prevented drastic measures, such as the 28 days of straight lockdown (although this indeed appeared sensible at the outset, before cases spiralled out of control), as the measures were seen as putting the country in a situation in which it was “face-to-face with economic disaster and miserable isolation, people’s jobs may never return, and structural unemployment through the permanent loss of industries” (Government of Fiji, 2021a).

Using the CLA in [Table 2](#), it is important to caution against the use of war metaphors in the Fijian Government’s response for several reasons. Firstly, it became clear that the Government’s response was to justify “fighting the enemy” at all costs without consideration of other concerns, including civil liberties, indefinite school closures and other matters of national concern. Normal priorities and concerns were put aside and the Government assumed top-down control with people obliged to accept sweeping authoritarian power without this necessarily being appropriate to the vested political-economic interests at hand. Secondly, as a result of the “war declaration”, the moral appeal became about “obeying orders” and “doing your duty”. Where people have performed above and beyond their duty, they have been hailed as heroes and, at the same time, those who did not, have been perceived as traitors. This has framed people, including health care workers as soldiers giving their lives for the cause despite fatigue and poor work conditions demonstrated by the proliferation in cases, with the aim to pursue the nation’s interest in sustaining a healthy economy. Finally, the use of the war metaphor in the Government’s response shifted the focus of fighting a war to protect human health and the well-being of its population, to fighting a war where the economy is the body to be protected. The war metaphor distracts from its intent to strengthen the public health response to one that is appropriated for political-economic interests.

The use of the war metaphor to design restrictions appropriated for political-economic interests has consequently downplayed many other emerging issues, including the socio-economic frustrations that people have experienced with unemployment and reduced work hours, limited access to food and the overstretched human and infrastructural resources within Fiji's already fragile health system that is on the brink of collapsing. In this climate of confusion, where the Government's advice has not always been clear and has changed repeatedly, the war metaphors became unhelpful because of their underlying implications and the type of leadership needed for them (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2021). The Government's main role is not to fight a war, but to foster trust, build community and manage services and support systems responsibly – a far-fetched reality throughout much of the pandemic in Fiji.

So what?

There is a need to shift the public policy discourse for future crisis preparedness in the region using approaches that are more impactful (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2021). Using CLA, a preferred future using the polis model – where the framing of problems shapes how alternative futures are constructed (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2021) – is shown in **Table 3** to create a better, more equitable and overall healthier Blue Pacific that leaves no one behind.

Table 3: Causal layered analysis of a preferred future for policy-framing

Frame	
Litany level (visible problem)	Evidence-based science within a narrative of inclusion. "A team of 20 million". (The Pacific's projected population for 2050 is 19,555 million [Statistics for Development Division, 2021])
Systemic level	A Regional Health Awakening where the five "p" health model – prevention, precision, participation, partnership and personalisation – become the norm for strong health systems across the region that serve all populations.
Worldview or discourse	Collectivist – Focusing on regional solidarity, political leadership, social inclusion. (prioritising the vulnerable and the marginalised, using the region's solidarity to mobilise the region's abundant resources and treating young people as the present, not the future)
Myth and metaphor level	The Blue Pacific: Reaching the furthest behind first.

Policy encompasses "storytelling, ideas and argument" where "community is the major unit of composition" rather than individual interests (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2021). Instead of focusing on a cost-benefit analysis approach where public policy responses that yield the best results are chosen, or where the whims of political leaders inform public policy (Inayatullah & Black, 2020), which is common across the region, the polis model which focuses on "hidden storylines" to create alternative strategies (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2021) should be promoted. There is a need to better understand fundamental forces anchoring the past at the decision-making level, as these impact the measures and interventions taken for the benefit of most, including the most vulnerable in society.

Conclusion

Using the CLA framework, this paper has argued that the use of economic and war metaphors has constructed realities differently and naturalised and perpetuated particular worldviews, which influence the identification and consideration of solutions through the particular framing and construction of the issues at hand. The Futures Triangle tool used in this paper has brought into perspective how the role of actors, processes, relations, and systems are erased from the focus of policy responses when an economic framing is used.

The policy responses for both crises – the NCD crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic – have been limited to a range of responses that can be argued to view economic growth positively despite its negative impacts on both human and environmental health. Through the CLA analysis, this paper illustrates how the use of these metaphors also shifts responsibility, magnifies the crisis and effectively supports claims about the urgency and extent of required intervention.

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4. “TŌFĀ SĀ’ILI”

Seeking knowledge through
strategic foresight in the Pacific

By Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago-Elisara

Defining strategic foresight in the Pacific

When I was first asked to define Strategic Foresight, I compared it to *tōfā sā'ili* (pronounced toh-fah sah-ee-lee), a Sāmoan concept that refers to one's efforts to seek wisdom, knowledge and insight through reflection, prayer and meditation, or through dialogue and observation. When broken down, *tōfā* means “wisdom”, and *sā'ili* means “to search” (Tui Atua, 2009).

Our values and identity as people are presented in our ways of knowing, learning, thinking and being. Strategic foresight is *tōfā sā'ili* in practice: We are invited – through reflection and learning – to delve deeper into our values and engage in our world views and epistemologies to make sense of our realities and the context surrounding us. In exploring our futures, the framing provided through *tōfā sā'ili* resonates with our Pacific values, enabling us to approach Strategic Foresight from a perspective of familiarity and comfort. Applying our own concepts – in this case, *tōfā sā'ili* – to strategic foresight learning enables us to feel a sense of connection while determining and exploring our futures from a Pacific or Sāmoan lens.

Our story, our words, our indigenous and metaphorical references applies to the futures tools

As a regional public servant, I am always mindful of who I am in this regional space, and what this means in practice and in serving our people of the Blue Pacific Ocean. This awareness is particularly important given our colonial histories, the dynamics of decolonisation and the enduring role of colonisation in our lives and minds, whether consciously or subconsciously. As we navigate our futures, it is critical to remember our journey as a collective as well as the diverse contexts within our communities and the impacts these histories and experiences have on our identities as individuals and as a community.

In developing the Pacific Community (SPC) Strategic Plan 2022–2031, causal layered analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 2017) enabled us to draw on different ways of knowing from across the Pacific Islands. This has elicited powerful engagement with our people to apply concepts that are familiar to them and to develop content that reflects and responds to the needs and interests of our communities, allowing our people to be able to identify with the content and to see themselves in it.

The practice of *tōfā sā'ili* is also linked to the development of the Second Pacific Regional Culture Strategy, which I was fortunate to have led in 2018. While developing the new strategy and our vision for the future, it became clear that the conversation was not advancing because – in reflecting on Pacific cultures – we were trying to retrofit our Pacific story within a western framework. This was the beginning of a transformation that would help situate Pacific cultures in regional development, where the metaphorical reference of Our Future is in Our Past was a reiteration of the fact that our future is grounded in our past (SPC, 2021).

This has been possible through CLA, through “new” metaphors and the rebirthing of the power within, acknowledging that answers do come from within. This transformation also brought about a reorientation of our thinking, an opportunity to unlearn and relearn, recognising that as people of the Blue Pacific continent, we are equipped with tools to help design our futures and, importantly, these tools speak to our values and identity and resonate with us and our world view.

From a Sāmoan perspective, this is simply but adequately described as *Fa’asamoa speaking to my mind and soul* (Tui Atua, 2009), and the use of our cultural concepts and metaphors is what connects us at a deeper level than when we apply western frameworks and concepts. As a community of people, our own language and approaches speak more clearly to us and respond more appropriately and effectively to our needs. This is further supported by the late professor Aiono Dr Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, an authority on Samoan culture and language, who was of the view that: “*A leai se gagana, ua leai se aganuu. A leai se aganuu, ona pō ai lea o le nuu*” (“If there is no language, then there is no culture; if there is no culture, then the village will be in darkness.”) Our language, our words, our indigenous and metaphorical references, are the key to understanding ourselves and our identity; without them, we risk causing future generations to grow up in total darkness, without the knowledge of who they are and where they belong. Without a strong sense of belonging, we not only lose our way as a people, we also lose sight of who we are in the broader Blue Pacific context.

Where CLA meets a Pacific futures perspective

The application of CLA provides insight into the context of the Island Model of Culture (**Figure 6**) where the exploration of Systemic Causes, Worldview Discourses and Myths and Metaphors allowed us to explore what is underneath our litany – the commonly accepted headlines of the way things are or should be, depicted in the Deeper parts of Culture in the Island Model. The “Old and Current” column portrays the realities that underlie our strategic thinking to lead a transformative approach to strategy development, building on our cultural wealth and strengths and framing our story from a Pacific lens, in alignment with the Blue Pacific narrative (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2017). The use of CLA has helped strengthen the cultural considerations for our strategy development work and, as a Sāmoan *matai* or chief, this was an opportunity to situate our history and cultural identity in the regional development discourse through the application of Sāmoan metaphorical references to help frame our story from our perspective. For years, our stories have been told through someone else’s eyes; CLA has enabled us to tell our story through our own eyes, using our own words to frame and design our strategies for the future.

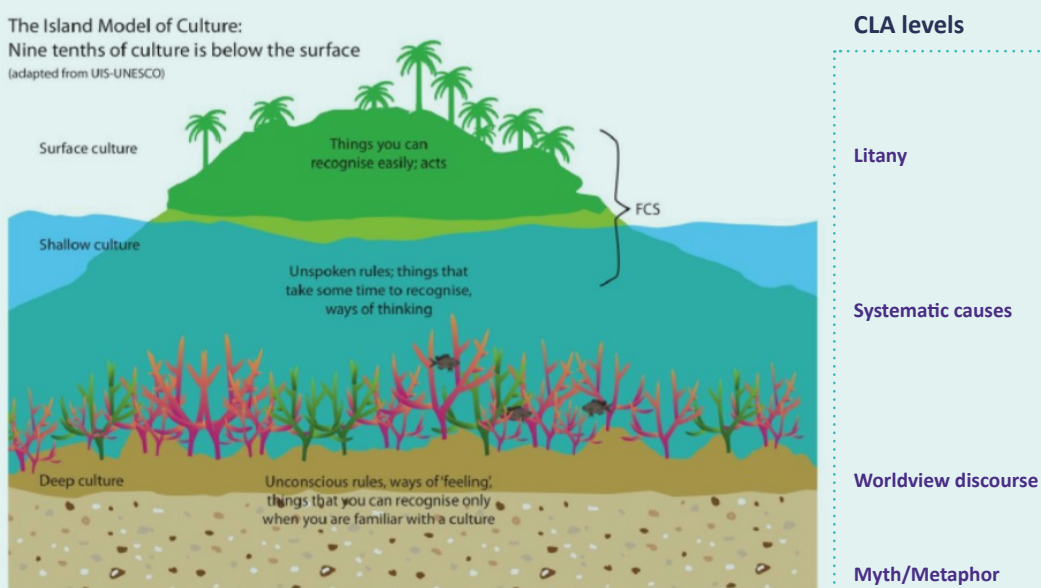


Figure 6: Causal layered analysis and the Island Model of Culture, Adopted from UIS-UNESCO

Source: SPC
Social Development
Programme, 2019

Table 4: CLA Applied

CLA	Old / Current	New / Future
LITANY – commonly accepted headlines of the way things are or should be.	Pacific people need help, and they need someone to save them. Pacific people lack the capacity to lead their own development.	Pacific people have the knowledge, assets and tools to lead their own development. Pacific people have the voice and agency to determine their destiny as a collective.
SYSTEMIC CAUSES – social, economic and political causes.	Colonisation. Politics of development aid in the Pacific. The place of the Pacific in international relations and the realities of Small Island Developing States.	Decolonisation of our policy and practice. Appreciation for our cultural wealth and cultural strengths as people.
WORLDVIEW DISCOURSE – the lenses we use to understand and shape our world.	“Small” Island Developing States, including all of the Pacific Island countries and territories, are vulnerable, isolated and operate from a deficit model.	Application of a Strengths Based Approach to Pacific development. Changing the narrative – economic, social, and political and elevating the Blue Pacific Narrative.
MYTH/METAPHOR – the deep unconscious story.	<i>Tagi a le pu mate</i> : Like the crying of a dying triton or conch, this refers to a person whose life is in danger.	<i>Vivili fa’amanu o matagi</i> : A bird flying against the wind despite difficulties. <i>Fofō alamea</i> : We are the solution to our own challenges. We are part of the problem, and we are also part of the solution. <i>Sa’ilimālō</i> : Leading a legacy in search of, or to achieve, great things for the good of the collective.

The application of strategic foresight has provided a platform for deeper engagement among ourselves, within our cultural context, and with respect to our cultural values as we explore the future of work and organisation. This platform invited us to tap into our reservoir of indigenous knowledge and epistemologies to articulate our world view in a western-dominated discourse of development and, specifically, of Pacific regional development. It has helped us strengthen our practice of weaving together the various aspects of our work, including our knowledge, our science, our Pacific ways of knowing and learning and our innovation, to define a future for our region within a challenging context. While we lead the cultural development of the work of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP), culture has often been overlooked as a key strand to weave into our Pacific mat for sustainable development.

Reinforcing Our Cultural Identity in the Practice of Strategic Foresight

To date, my journey in practicing strategic foresight has been and remains about my cultural identity and who I am within this regional space. “Samoa epistemology is pragmatic where knowledge and learning are practical phenomena that are often shared through language and metaphors” (Tuisuga-le-taua, 2011; Tui Atua, 2003 cited in Pala’amo, 2017). The application of Samoan epistemology not only entails positioning one’s cultural identity within the wider context, it also entails making sense, as we apply different models and frameworks to what we do. This is reminiscent of the Samoan metaphor of *fetu’utu’una’i muniao*, which translates to “manoeuvring a fisher’s rod” (Pala’amo, 2017). In the context of strategic foresight and futures thinking, it refers to our adaptability in applying a cultural approach to our practice. The use of culture and reflection reinforces the strengths of the tools used, such as the Futures Triangle and Horizon Scanning, (Inayatullah, 2020) to broaden their reach and resonance across our practice, in alignment with our values and the Pacific context.

This metaphor is relevant to our experience over the past 18 months: The manoeuvring and adaptation process has enabled us to examine our learning and to try to make sense of it within the Pacific cultural context, in order to ensure that our practice was centred on our ways of knowing and relevant to our people. *Fetu’utu’una’i muniao* also entailed checking in with ourselves and with each other on this journey, challenging our assumptions and testing our practice against our cultural values and context. As we continue to weave the different strands of perspectives and elements of our work into our future Pacific mat, we also make time to pause and reflect on the progress we are making in our journey across the Moana or Blue Pacific Ocean. In addition to our ability to weave these different aspects, the role of reflection in this journey is also critical for, without reflection, we will not know how to manoeuvre or adapt our fishing rod, or to capture our learning so we may revisit our metaphors to see whether they are still relevant or hold true for alternative futures to which we may aspire. Our experience as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainties it has presented necessitates the application of *fetu’utu’una’i muniao* as an imperative, in order to ensure relevant futures that withstand the changing landscape and seascape of all times.

Our Futures and Moving Forward

Strategic foresight or *tōfā sā'ili* has provided the space to reflect on the future within a different frame, one which is truly embedded and centred in our cultural context and values. It has shifted the conversation towards something more meaningful, as it is better tailored to Pacific realities, culture and community needs, enabling us to apply Pacific ways of knowing to what we do and how we will deliver as an organisation. This experience has introduced Pacific ways of knowing into a scientific and technical organisation and has reinforced the value of applying a Pacific lens to the exploration of alternative futures for the Blue Pacific Continent. It has truly spoken to the *tōfā* and wisdom of our ancestors, while also allowing our current and future generations to *sā'ili* or search for who we are as a people in the way we render our *tautua* or service to our Pacific people.

Our foresight voyage has provided an opportunity to reflect and learn, as we traversed an unprecedented environment as a result of the pandemic. Furthermore, it has prompted us to appreciate that answers do come from within and that, as Pacific people, our knowledge, experiences, and learning are vital in framing our futures and in exploring alternative futures for our Blue Pacific Continent. According to Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, "... it is time for us to reclaim our knowledge of ourselves. To define ourselves in terms of ourselves for ourselves. What this achieves is a sense of autonomy and self-assuredness that accompanies the ability to discern the patterns of the past, present and future in autochthonous terms" (2008:4). Our future is indeed in Our Past and our futures must be centred and grounded in who we are and our rich cultural heritage. The late Lemalu Tate Simi of Sāmoa, offers important advice in his poem, *Identity*, words that were relevant then and are equally relevant now and into the future.


Our practice of strategic foresight has demonstrated that this approach is not new to the Pacific; we have adapted the futures tools to ensure relevance and resonance with our values and context. In driving this work, we recognise our agency as people and the value of our contribution in charting our own futures as a region. The Strategic Foresight and Futures platform is an invitation to continue along this path as we explore the futures of those who come after us, building on the knowledge of our ancestors and those who came before us. Our story, as people of the Blue Pacific Continent, is therefore evidence of our knowledge, the relationality of our existence and our connections, our cultural wealth and cultural assets, and our endeavour to *sa'ilimālō*¹ for the greater good of our collective and our people. This is what we offer to advance Strategic Foresight in the Asia Pacific region and across the globe, with the aim to strengthen the futures tools for the people of today and tomorrow.

1 *Sa'ilimālō* refers to leading a legacy in search of what is for the greater good of the collective or to achieve great things not for one's own good but, rather, for the greater good of society.

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5. DESIGNING YOUTH FUTURES

A Pacific recipe in
foresight application

By Dr Mema Motusaga

Context

The Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023 (PYDF) declares youth participation in decision-making processes one of the four priority issues for youth development (Pacific Community [SPC], 2015). The PYDF represents an important milestone for the Pacific region and responds to calls from young people, development partners and governments for greater support for the implementation of national youth policies and to address barriers to progress. The PYDF aims to be a catalyst for investment in youth, to facilitate shared decision-making based on evidence and contributions from relevant communities of practice, and to support Pacific Island countries and territories in implementing their development objectives for youth.

It seeks to strengthen the way technical organisations, like the Pacific Community (SPC) and other Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies, United Nations (UN) agencies and other stakeholders, collect data to understand the circumstances of youth in the Pacific. Importantly, it also calls for youth to be positioned at the forefront of these efforts to ensure their voices are heard and that they are able to influence the decisions that affect them. It is anticipated that with young people at the helm of these important discussions, the Pacific region can nurture partnerships between youth, governments, administrations and development partners, taking into consideration the perspectives of each and collaborating to meet development challenges together and in the best interests of youth and Pacific communities.

“ *E tautala mai ananafi mo le aso, o le aso e faatonu folau mo ataeao* ”
Yesterday informs today's actions and today determines your tomorrow

Young people constitute almost 50 per cent of the total population of the Pacific region, offering the potential to contribute substantially to Pacific development. Zeldin et al (2014) defined youth participation as an indicator of quality for interventions involving young people, describing their participation as an issue of social justice, a platform for positive development, a medium for active citizenry, a human right, and a strategy for nation-building (Zeldin et al., 2014).

Yet, despite the PYDF and the potential contribution of youth to Pacific development, young people remain largely excluded from decision-making forums in the region. Investment in youth development remains ad hoc, and youth programmes are still designed with limited engagement by young people. In the Pacific context, the mere presence of youth is often mistaken for youth participation when their mere presence results in only passive contributions from them, thus limiting their inclusion, stifling their voices and often resulting in their frustration.

While youth participation and achievement in education has increased slightly, youth unemployment rates in the Pacific region are double the global average and young people face numerous mental, sexual and reproductive health challenges. For youth, social exclusion hinders access to economic opportunities and results in disproportionate impacts from climate change and natural disasters. This paper reflects on these and other challenges, draws on the lessons learned from implementation of the PYDF over the last 10 years, and examines the potential influence of youth on local development.

Youth-Led Engagement

To address the challenge of youth engagement, development partners and CROP agencies, including SPC, have sought to implement projects and programmes that model the benefits of youth inclusion and learning from young people about the complexities, opportunities and challenges that can emerge within and from youth-led initiatives. The discussion in this paper on youth participation in programmes takes place against the backdrop of a broader interest in youth participation in research and policy. Several factors have contributed to the global interest in youth participation. In the context of many Western democracies, interest in youth participation stems from, among other things, concerns about youth disengagement (Manning and Edwards, 2014), fears of youth radicalisation (Harris and Roose, 2014) and the resurgence of right-wing parties pushing racial sentiments (Akbarzadeh and Roose, 2011). In developing countries, youth participation has been seen as part of a solution to social, economic and health-related challenges. For example, young people are key to government responses to the HIV epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region (Bearinger, et al. 2007) and have been mobilised to overcome barriers to sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa (Ansell, 2016). These concerns and coinciding acknowledgements of the important role of youth have elicited debates about participation as a “right” of young people (UN, 1989) and a remedy to the economic, social and political uncertainties of contemporary societies. Despite recognition of the significant role of youth participation, policy discourse on youth remains contradictory, often depicting young people as critical to community development and, yet, simultaneously a risk to social cohesion and democracy.

The discussion in this paper provides insight into the experience of the SPC Youth and Social Inclusion Adviser, using strategic foresight methods to amplify youth engagement by supporting the Nadroga-Navosa Provincial Youth Council (NNPYC) in Fiji to use the Futures Triangle. The paper acknowledges the support and the traditional wisdom and expertise of the *Yavusa* Ketenavunivalu (clan), the wisdom and knowledge of the NNPYC, and the 85 young leaders who represented the expertise and wisdom of the province’s young people who were unable to participate in this exercise.

Youth Participation in Nadroga-Navosa

Nadroga-Navosa Province is comprised of 123 villages under 22 tikina (districts). Nadroga-Navosa is the largest and richest province in terms of natural resources in the Fiji Islands. The NNPYC was established in 1994 as an umbrella body for all indigenous youth-led and youth-serving organisations across Nadroga-Navosa Province. NNPYC is part of the Provincial Council and acts on behalf of its affiliates before policy-makers and development agencies across Fiji and beyond. Its membership includes 122 village youth councils (VYC) from 22 tikina youth councils (TYC). According to Fiji’s 2017 Census, young people (aged 15–35 years) represent 35 per cent of Fiji’s total population. Of the 309,710 (35 per cent) of Fiji’s total youth population, Nadroga-Navosa Province youth represent 6.6 per cent or 20,629 youth (Government of Fiji, 2018).

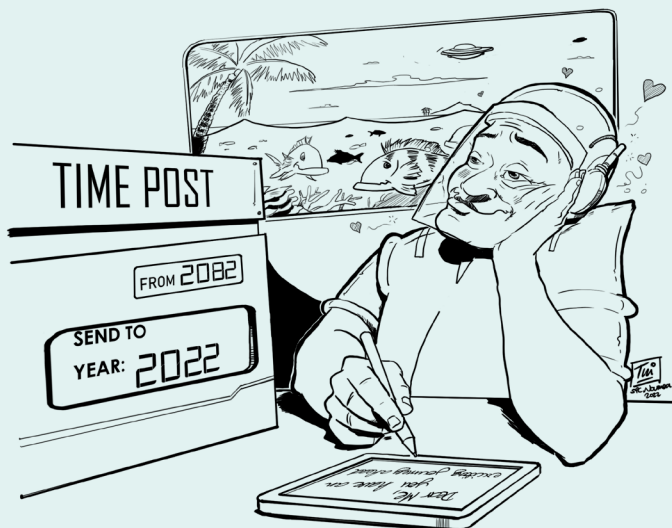
“ *We, as young people, are the backbone of our families, villages and our province. We need to have a collective vision; we thought a strategic plan would be a great starting point.* ”

Young people, thus, represent almost half of the population of the Fiji Islands and similarly of the Nadroga-Navosa Province, offering immense potential to benefit the province socially, politically and economically. To be able to benefit the province in these ways, however, they require support and inclusion in the community's strategic development and planning processes. In 2021, the NNPYC carried out several surveys and identified five priority issues of socio-economic development, which are critical to youth development: youth leadership and participation in governance; health and well-being; protection and promotion of human rights; green growth and climate action. These five priority issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as by numerous tropical cyclones, which have hindered the development of Fiji over the past two years and continue to impact significantly the lives of individuals, families and communities. Regional stakeholders, CROP agencies and the Government of Fiji are prioritising interventions to counter these challenges, and NNPYC foresees young people and the NNPYC as playing a collaborative and key role in identifying solutions to these challenges. In an interview, the interim president of the NNPYC, Mr Kinivuwai D. Naba, responded to a question on the development of the Strategic Plan, stating: *"We as young people are the backbone of our families, villages and our province. Our youth constitute the majority of the Fiji youth population, however, almost half of that number are unemployed and have been discriminated because of their shortcomings. We have been side-lined for many developments and we have been called names. I can't blame young people, there is the lack of mentoring and there are no pathways set up for them/us. We have been seeking assistance from government and other stakeholders however we didn't get any support. We are tired of waiting and depending on the government and people from outside. We needed to help ourselves and invest our energy to develop and empower ourselves before we can build our communities. For that to happen, we need to have a collective vision, therefore we thought a strategic plan would be a great starting point..."*

At the beginning of 2022, the NNPYC requested technical and financial assistance from the SPC Human Rights and Social Development Programme to develop their Strategic Plan 2021–2026. The Youth and Social Inclusion Adviser was assigned to lead this engagement. Numerous young people, as well as other villagers in the Nadroga-Navosa Province, previously worked in the tourism industry but have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop took place in the remote village of Emuri, where the *Yavusa Ketenavunivalu* clan resides, and provided an opportunity for the youth to showcase and convey their passion for their livelihood activities and the ways in which these activities had supported and sustained them as well as their families, until the pandemic deprived them of their livelihood.

This workshop, which hosted 85 young leaders from all 123 villages, represented the first time the NNPYC developed a strategic plan. Thus, for most of the participants, it was also their first time to participate in such a dialogue and training. For some, it was also their first time to leave their villages.

Youth engagement in the Pacific context requires understanding the local cultural processes. The workshop opened with a *sevusevu*, a Fijian cultural protocol typically conducted to ask for the blessings of the traditional landowners, or the *Yavusa Ketenavunivalu*, before a training or other event is conducted in their community. As a workshop participant, I also needed to experience this process – as a Samoan working on foreign soil, as a young woman, and as a representative of a regional organisation – in order to pay my respect to the landowners and to request their permission and support to conduct the workshop. For the 85 young leaders from Nadroga-Navosa Province, it was also necessary for them to acknowledge their culture and gain the support of their *vanua* (elders). After receiving their support, a church ceremony was held both for the workshop participants and for the *Yavusa Ketenavunivalu* clan. This event signifies the importance of culture and Christianity in the lives of Pacific people. Participants from outside the province tributed and respected the *vanua* and land of the traditional landowners as well as their traditions and the custodians of the land through the *sevusevu*. Further, as Christians, it was important to seek divine blessings for the entire village, notably the hard-working villagers conducting background work, and most importantly to seek the Holy Spirit's blessing and anointing over the young leaders selected as representatives to devise a vision for the future of the NNPYC.



Postcards to Love Letters

Following the blessings, the workshop began with a visioning exercise, initially referred to as “Postcards from the Village”. However, because the workshop represented the first time that most participants had left their villages, the planned activity was not something to which they could easily relate. A mere seven of the 85 participants were familiar with the term “postcard”. Thus, the name was changed to “Love Letters from the Village”, in an effort to render the activity more youth savvy and, thus, relatable to young people. In the absence of modern technology

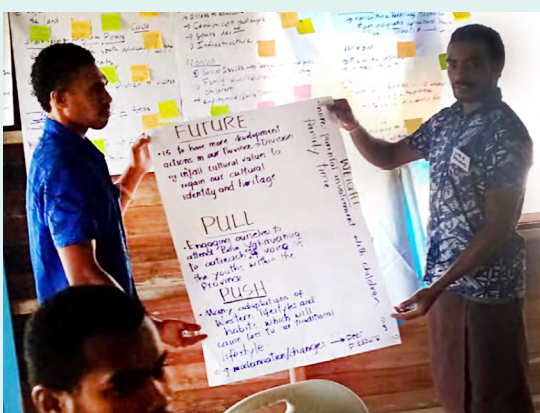
and due to significant connectivity issues, coupled with the distance and effort required to reach the villages in the mountains or along the banks of the Tuva and Sigatoka rivers, often requiring strenuous hiking over mountaintops or traversing the rivers on horseback, young people in this environment still communicate via letters. For this reason, the participants easily related to the concept of love letters and were eager to start the activity.

The Love Letter activity was used as a means to understand the perspectives and visions of both the participants and the elders of their communities, who were not present at the workshop. Through the activity, the young people shared visions for a future NNPYC as well as for the entire province, and they provided suggestions of measures to implement in order to achieve their visions. The participants acknowledged that, in designing a vision, they must first recognise their past, thus referring to the indigenous knowledge of their elders and the need for intergenerational learning, mentoring and coaching in order for the youth to be able to navigate the challenges presented in the future. As they emphasised, it is only in this way that they are able to weave their wisdom into their vision and to fulfill the dreams that their elders have for them, as youth, sustaining and transmitting indigenous knowledge into the future.

Gum Boots

While adjusting and modifying the programme to suit the needs of the audience and building a rapport between the participants and myself, as the facilitator, I became aware that not all of the participants were comfortable with my approach. Because most of the participants had traveled and it was their first time away from their families and places of birth, many of them felt timid and uncomfortable joining in the discussion. One of the participants wore white gum boots each day of the workshop, including while playing rugby daily after the strategic planning sessions. As I associated gum boots with working on a plantation or collecting seashells on the lagoon, I was perplexed. This particular participant was especially quiet and refrained from participating during the first session. I noticed the gum boots and wanted to learn more about them. During lunch on the first day, I invited this participant to sit with me and asked him about the gum boots. The young man shared that he was from the interior, behind the mountains, and that the gum boots were the first pair of shoes he had received as a child and were also part of the resources given to him for a project he was conducting in his community. As this was the first time that he had left his village, for him, the boots helped him to feel more comfortable; they were familiar to him in an otherwise unfamiliar environment. After lunch, I invited him to lead the energisers and he quickly transformed from being a shy participant to serving as the lead facilitator for the energisers and engaging in all discussions. Recognising the gum boots helped bring this participant closer and enabled him to be a more engaged part of the group.





Guiding Metaphor

At this point, the workshop was in place and I had acquired information on, and insight into, the host village, the process of working with remote and indigenous communities, and the participants. It became clear that the tool was not appropriate for this particular group and the activities planned were generally unfamiliar, making it more difficult to proceed as planned. As a facilitator, I needed to observe the audience in order to read and understand their actions and facial expressions, beyond what appeared to be silence.

I was reminded of the Samoan saying – *“O le fuata ma lona lou”* – which refers to *ulu* in Samoan and *uto* in Fijian, meaning breadfruit, which is a Blue Pacific staple food. This saying originates from the breadfruit, with *“Fuata”* representing the Samoan word for the *“breadfruit season”* and *“lou”* being the Samoan name for the stick used to pick the breadfruit when it is ripe. The saying is translated as: *“Each season has its own stick.”* It speaks to the varying nature of the breadfruit seasons requiring Samoans to prepare a *lou* specific to each season. The *lou* used for the January season, for example, cannot be used to harvest for a December season.

This concept can be applied to the engagement of youth in the Pacific. As indicated above, youth engagement is generally passive in the Pacific context. Their engagement is perceived differently by both elders and stakeholders as well as by young people. For me, working with the Nadroga-Navosa youth confirmed the need for intergenerational learning and coaching, the need to modify our approaches to ensure that we reach a situation that is beneficial to all, and that young people are at the centre of all decision-making processes.

“O le fuata ma lona lou” corresponds well with the concept of *“sii le matalalaga”*, a concept derived from the art of weaving, which refers to the act of making a closer plait in the event that the quality of the weaving becomes inconsistent with the standard set at the beginning. As such, it refers to a change of behaviour or action for the better. In this instance, it is applied to our adaptability and, in particular, our ability to adapt to the changing context and landscape caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it refers to our collective efforts to make those adaptations a reality and a new norm for the organisation to be able to chart its course in a new environment. The two traditional concepts referenced reiterate that the foresight tools are not new to the Pacific and that we have our own skills and capacities to ensure that our youth are at the centre of every development.

Reflections

Working with the Nadroga-Navosa Province has taught me, as a facilitator, that as a Pacific regional public servant, I need to either bend my *lou* or obtain a new one, so we are able to understand our *matalalaga* in the context of the Strategic Plan. It speaks to our collective efforts to make the adaptations needed a reality. I made several modifications to the tool and readjusted the entire programme to adapt to the particular audience, its perspectives and needs. Activities were modified from general and high-level activities to village activities, activities to which young people from the village could relate. I drew on scenarios relevant to Nadroga-Navosa and to the daily lives of the participants. It was also important for me to recall the person I was as a young person and to draw on that inspiration in order to *talanoa* (dialogue) effectively and to give the space for participants to interpret the triangle.

As a Samoan, working with Fijians speaking their mother tongue throughout the workshop, I also needed to sharpen my listening skills, open my heart, and dig deeper into my *mauli* (inner being) to find common ground in what we share as people of the Blue Pacific Continent with the aim to help them weave a robust Strategic Plan that effectively responds to the realities of the province. This required skills to ask the right questions at the right time, given the unique context and audience. Having the confidence to ask hard questions and be able to cope with the implications of asking hard questions was crucial.

As indicated, young people are often excluded in important matters, even when the matters directly involve their well-being and futures. Decisions historically have been taken by leaders and elders based on their own perception as to what is best for the futures of Pacific youth, rather than hearing and taking into account the personal perspectives of youth themselves. This is reflected in the use of top-down approaches in most of the programme/project designs, which often have resulted in programme instability or failure. In searching for solutions to the challenges faced by our youth, moreover, programmers often look outside rather than recognising and acknowledging that our communities have the solutions that are best suited to our own unique challenges and needs. Using the Futures Thinking Triangle as a foresight tool to work with the NNPYC provided an opportunity for intergenerational learning and coaching. Most importantly, it taught us that young people – as the current and future leaders – need to be actively respected, consulted, engaged and heard in decision-making processes at all levels and in designing futures, as they are the custodians of the Blue Pacific Continent.

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6. FUTURES AND THE POWER OF IMAGINATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

By Sarah Mecartney



When I was a child, I had a dragon named Figment from the Disney Epcot Centre's Journey of Imagination. Figment travelled everywhere with me. We explored the world together discovering multiple possibilities. Although I lost Figment along the way, I rediscovered the power and joy of imagination with strategic foresight.

Futures has strengthened my ability to make connections between imaginative thinking, creativity and practice in strategic planning for organisational transformation. Multiple futures tools can be used for individual needs but, when connected, create greater impact. A key learning has been the importance of thoughtful and intuitive weaving together of methodologies and culture to design and create strategic pathways to achieve the future we want.

“*Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.*”

— Albert Einstein

Introduction

I work as a strategy adviser for a member owned international organisation for sustainable development. As a member of the Strategy, Performance and Learning team charged with overall strategy development and monitoring as well as consultations with member states and partner institutions, it was clear to me and to our team that participation in the “Become a Futurist” course would support this work while also building our in-house capacity for ongoing application of the tool and skills acquired through the coursework.

The governing body of our organisation tasked my team with exploring futures to develop a robust 10-year organisational strategy. This thought leadership and courage for change influenced a new narrative and innovative thinking in the co-development of a strategic plan amidst disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We were motivated to develop a practice that blended futures literacy and systems approaches for transformational change. Our ambition was for an owned and robust strategic plan across the organisation and its members.

The “Becoming a Futurist” course enabled action learning and applied imagination (Osborn, 1953) for creative, yet pragmatic, ways forward. The unleashing of imagination enabled greater understanding of the flexibility of futures and of some fundamental shifts in the ways that authority, power, and resources are structured and flow in a particular system to determine the required actions to achieve a futures-ready organisation. With a trained mind, intentional or purposeful imagination can help us see future events as opportunities.

This paper will look at a selection of the tools from the course that were adapted and applied during the co-development of our strategic plan. This selection is based on tools, listed below, that: amplified inclusivity in the strategic planning process; nurtured creativity and imagination; and anchored creativity in practical ways forward.

- **Horizon scanning**
- **Futures Triangle**
- **Causal Layered Analysis**
- **Backcasting**

An open, participatory process has been central to the application of futures tools in the development of our strategic plan. That is, the systematic engagement of people to anticipate, imagine and create more sustainable, inclusive futures (Nesta, 2019). Our team designed consultations that included all of the technical and corporate divisions of the organisation as well as our 26 members. It encouraged imagination and diverse perspectives by applying horizon scanning as a first step, followed by the Futures Triangle, causal layered analysis and backcasting. This approach helped ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives across the organisation and its membership in order to develop a collective image of the future we want and to make better, more informed decisions that reflect the perspectives of all. We were mindful of shaping a strategic plan that seeks a just and equitable transition to a transformed organisation and regional future. Insights into the application of these tools in the operating context, as well as key lessons learned, are outlined below.



*All staff informed through town halls and intranet updates. Information available to the public on the dedicated webpage - [Strategic Plan 2021+ | The Pacific Community \(spc.int\)](#)

Tools and their application for a futures-fit organisation

Horizon scanning has helped us to be more attentive to what is happening around us and to determine whether we are adequately prepared for change, future opportunities and threats. It is an effective tool to bring together a diverse range of expertise and perspectives to better determine areas of focus to achieve a shared preferred future. We emphasised (as guided by the course) the cyclical actions of scanning, analysing, synthesising, and communicating information.

We combined horizon scanning with a brainwriting drivers of change activity that was specific to our organisation and region, drawing on the knowledge, skills and experience across our organisation using the STIR-DEEPER framework (Bradfield et al. 2015). The seven categories for identifying drivers of change were: natural environment; demographics and society; built environment; technology and communications; resources, energy, and productive industry; economics; and politics.

This online activity was conducted with ConceptBoard, to better connect across multiple locations. Participants were invited to work both individually and collaboratively and to withhold comments or critiques until the activity was complete. This activity was a helpful means to initiate conversation with colleagues and members and also served as a mapping tool to determine how trends influence the organisation and the regional ecosystem. We identified that the forces driving change in the Pacific to inform strategic decision-making depend on how they interact and are framed and prioritised.

We produced 600 drivers of change across 49 virtual whiteboards, which required synthesis into 13 core drivers¹ for a more manageable collection of influences on the organisation's ambitions. Together, the collective wisdom of our staff provides a comprehensive collection of unique Pacific-focused drivers of change. In time, I hope to develop Pacific trend cards (for the organisation's Pathfinder Pacific Guide to Foresight²) with the aim to provide for more localised trends and metrics to assist Pacific planners and policy-makers.

Horizon scanning needs to be performed consistently and effectively or it may languish, and it needs to be combined with other futures tools to facilitate the identification of gaps and signals and to be presented in an accessible, user-friendly platform for ongoing use by planners and policy-makers. It requires time to synthesise and analyse contributions and integrate them into broader foresight processes for improved strategy and policy-making.

The **Futures Triangle** is an easy-to-use tool developed by Sohail Inayatullah, which builds on horizon scanning and maps current perspectives of the future through the three dimensions of weights, pushes and pulls.³ We applied the Futures Triangle at divisional, organisational and sectoral levels, added contextual visuals and cultural conditions (e.g. ocean and waterway imagery) to encourage contributions across the organisation's seven key focus areas. Our learning included a cultural view of the triangular weight as a positive anchor to transform the future (Motusaga, 2021).

This tool risks remaining a static exercise if it is not integrated into broader foresight activity. Given the commitment of the activity to inform the organisational strategic plan, reconfirming the pulls of the future in consequential activities was helpful. We repurposed each triangle back into the drafting of the strategic plan, using the pulls and the pushes to further define the actions and navigations within our key focus areas of work. We used Futures Triangle across several Pacific young people platforms (youth councils, emerging young professionals), tapped into regional sectoral convenings, and opened strategic processes to all staff members (skilling up with foresight capabilities).

1 Thirteen core drivers and their potential impact on Pacific Community (SPC): social change; environmental health; strategic recovery; funding and independence; interconnected systems; conflicting priorities; socially inclusive work; climate change impacts; supporting social equity; changing technology; regionalisms versus nationalism; science for decision making; and global decarbonisation.

2 This guide is a decision-support toolkit that provides Pacific case studies whereby future-orientated strategic planning has been conducted online in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3 Fergnani (2020) provides additional insights on the integration of the Futures Triangle with Scenario Planning.

13th SPC Heads of Fisheries
1 June 2021 – Futures Triangle Side Event
Framing the future (COVID recovery and sustainable growth)



Common across these exercises were: The centrality of people and their agency; and the interconnectedness of actions and systems that provided for a bigger picture, and shared understanding. This approach helps them make sense of the interconnectedness of systems and develop solutions that are effective, long-lasting and sustainable.

Over 60 minutes, participants were able to identify the pulls of the future, including science capabilities and effective partnerships/relations to create pathways for a resilient future. (Please refer to the snapshot of the framing the future exercise for our Fisheries and Aquaculture division.) They recognised the pushes of integration and inter-operability of fisheries agencies and institutions, climate change impacts, and the importance of real-time data. Dynamic political agendas, climate change and inequitable access to resources were noted weights.

We found that this tool quickly and easily engaged people as it provided a platform to speak to one's knowledge and expertise to define a preferred future. This was further supported by our contextualisation of the tool to create additional relevance and utility as we explored tensions between barriers from the past preventing change in the present and took deeper dives into the change required to reach the future. There is more to learn from this tool, particularly as work on the democratisation of futures evolves and grows.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) helped refine our new strategic narrative with the participatory and shared analysis of four levels of analysis – the litany, social causes, worldview and metaphor, and different ways of knowing. This tool, while initially daunting, proved integral to deepen our understanding of the future and facilitate more transformational thinking from participants. We conducted seven CLAs, one for each of our key focus areas (as shown in the [Summary Table](#)). With practice, we formed an approach in which participants found comfort with terms which then gave way to constructive dialogue with a shared understanding of change. People of Pacific cultures found this to be a comfortable tool and enthusiastically shared indigenous proverbs to navigate away from futures that have not responded to members in favour of more promising future states.

Summary Table of Organisational Transformation using CLA

	Litany	Systemic	Worldview	Metaphor
KFA 1 Resilience and climate action	Coordinated resilience knowledge systems	Pacific voices and solutions	Equitable optimisation of resources	Harmonic generosity of wisdom
KFA 2 Natural resources and biodiversity	Whole-of-island-state-approach	Interdisciplinary actions and decision-making	Balance of power/agency	The Earth and I are are One. The Ocean is us.
KFA 3 Food systems	Pacific recognition in global food systems	Systemic decision-making	Food sufficiency and health	Bountiful baskets and canoes
KFA 4 Equity, education and social development	All people have access to well-being	Redesigned inclusive systems	Equity for everyone	Woven basket of well-being
KFA 5 Economies and Livelihoods	High levels of early adoption of novel technologies	Economic systems spread prosperity and well-being	Pacific leadership on learned best practices	<i>O le la'au e toto nei mo taeao⁴</i>
KFA 6 Planetary health	Health is measured by wellness and well-being	Risk-informed, responsive health systems	Preventative health	Healthy <i>mana</i>
KFA 7 Transforming institutional effectiveness	Working as one (integrated collaboration)	Inter-connected multidisciplinary approaches	Unified strengths for impact	Many weavers, one fine mat

4 The tree we plant today will bear fruit for tomorrow.

There was a distinct division between convergent (using logic) and divergent (using imagination) thinkers⁵. Finding the preferences of lateral thinkers (thinking outside the box by using both convergent and divergent thinking) was a learning curve – one that we addressed with practical and relevant case studies as well as ensuring the freedom to explore cultural metaphors. The importance of imagination was evident in the ability to generate alternatives, challenge assumptions and take on the perspectives of others.

I found CLA to be a key strategic resource to navigate the uncertainty of the future alongside the utilisation of Pacific affinity with metaphors for change and transformation. Conducting these workshops on ConceptBoard allowed for reference to past contributions, imaginings and shared knowledge. Placed against an organisational systems map, actors were able to see where and how they were involved in the process of change, as well as the relationships between them. This helped individuals to see how and where they could be part of the change.

KFA 7

Transforming Institutional Effectiveness

CURRENT STATE 2021

SPC serves the region through scientific and technical expertise, capabilities and assets. Innovative partnerships based on shared values are demonstrating genuine collaboration with members and between partners for impact.

Policy to action

Data, statistics and knowledge

Innovation and research

Digitisation and technology

Capability and influence

PATHWAYS

Coordinated strategy and planning improves integrated governance across the Blue Pacific architecture, shifting toward a OneCROP approach.

Regional data ecosystems and improved data governance enable greater data sharing and empower members to use evidence for decision making.

Strengthened cross-SPC planning and communication, innovations in our business systems and funding for internal innovation, drives necessary transformation.

Appropriate technology and digital investments provide evidence and enable effective engagement for shared and inclusive decision making, networking and learning.

SPC invests in staff and member capabilities and develops gender sensitive systems supported by appropriate facilities and by communities of practice with deep sectoral capabilities and leadership skills.

SPC leads information sharing through the [Pacific Data Hub \(PDH\)](#), the central repository of open data and knowledge products about the Pacific region. [Digital Earth Pacific](#), data, information and decision-ready products will strengthen planning, decision making and reporting.

FUTURE STATE 2031

One SPC is values-based and working with members and partners to provide coherent, social and environmental responsible learning for enhanced representation of Pacific people and gender equality across the organisation and at all levels of decision making.



5 See: <https://www.teachthought.com/critical-thinking/3-modes-of-thought-divergent-convergent-thinking/>

Backcasting (Bibri, 2018) provided a means to use the seven new metaphors developed with CLA and identify key events, conditions and triggers that would be needed to reach this transformed future. We utilised the new metaphors and the pulls of the future to anchor our backcasting. We applied this across our seven key focus areas and identified five distinct strategic pathways for the implementation of our plan: policy to action; data, statistics and information; innovation and research; digitisation and technology; and capability and influence. The image below is a screenshot for KFA 7 – transformative institutional effectiveness.

Backcasting was a “bookend” tool for the development of the strategic plan that brought in practical actions to realise our imagined, and preferred future state. Earlier findings from horizon scanning, the Futures Triangle and CLA provided an invaluable evidence chain for our future state. We still needed to challenge dominant perspectives for “working backwards to identify what steps to take (or avoid)”⁶.

In one instance, we modified the tool through the creation of a speed-dating activity, requesting participants to imagine themselves in retirement and reflect on key events that brought about the preferred future they were experiencing. The “gaming” of the tool enabled the removal of constraints and active participation. This approach was reinforced with a clear explanation of the purpose of the activity and how it would be synthesised into practical steps and milestones – allowing participants to see the output and understand the activity.

As a tool, backcasting is interactive and helped a diverse range of participants think critically, hear different perspectives and articulate their ideas in a low-risk setting. It enabled all voices to be heard and the facilitation of an agreed synthesis of inputs and key actions/milestones. An important tip is to ensure adequate time to synthesise inputs, and to be aware of potential additions from those not in the room for the initial exercise.

These foresight tools have enabled the weaving of intelligence, aspirations, imagination and pragmatism for the co-creation of a robust and open 10-year strategic plan. Each tool has provided critical substance for a cumulative foresight narrative⁷ that focuses on actions required to achieve the future we want. It has signalled and motivated investment in organisational capabilities to achieve these goals through cultural shifts and systems strengthening.

The culmination of the use of these tools can be viewed in our 10-year strategic plan [here](#). It is the organisation’s first strategy built by foresight and co-developed by staff and members. The utilisation of futures has helped us to foster ownership of the strategic plan, as evidenced in a [statement](#) by the President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

6 See: <https://www.oecd.org/strategic-foresight/ourwork/Strategic%20Foresight%20for%20Better%20Policies.pdf>

7 See: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2015.08.007>

Conclusion

Futures practice provides the “spark” for transformation. It has motivated the convening and connection of diverse groups, enabled divergent perspectives to be heard, and created space for shared action and innovation for the co-development of a 10-year strategic plan. It has inspired courage and creativity for positive change. In our experience, it brought a diverse organisation together to create bold action, an experience that will help us sustain the change needed for transformation.

We are encouraged by our abilities to build our future by design and not default. Social learning, trust, and ownership are key to apply strategic foresight to strategic planning. As noted by IFRC⁸ in their own foresight journey:

“ *Futures is a brilliant igniter for organisational transformation, but it has to be supported by approaches which drive curiosity, experimentation and the permission to dive into the unknown.* ”

My team has pioneered the organisation’s application of futures and is committed to continue sharing our experiences with regional partners (e.g. with the 2050 Strategy for a Blue Pacific Continent). Given our guiding principle of reciprocity, it is the team’s intent to further develop our Pathfinder Pacific Guide to Foresight, building on our experiences and practices in the Pacific. We aspire to continue to build our capabilities and to share our learning with the broader futures community, to institutionalise strategic foresight and to grow a Blue Pacific Futures Network.

Wherever you are today, Figment, I know you have a futures home!

8 <https://www.iran.org/blog/future-fit>

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