



Children Living Away from Parents in the Pacific

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Table of Contents

Acronyms	3
Terms and Definitions	4
Executive Summary	6
Introduction.	10
Problem Definition	11
Research Goals and Limitations	12
Methodology	13
Discussion	20
Terminology	23
Findings	28
Trends Within Countries	28
Trends Between Countries	35
Reasons Children Move Away From Parents	35
Typology of Separation	55
Recommendations	63
Areas for Further Research and Investigation	71
Annexes	72
Bibliography	82

Acronyms

AusAID – Australian Agency for International Development

CRC – Convention on Rights of the Child

CSA – Child Sexual Abuse

CSEC – Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

HIV/AIDS – Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/ Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome

ILO – International Labor Organization

MoSW – Ministry of Social Work

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

TIP – (United States) Trafficking in Persons Report

UN – United Nations

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Terms and Definitions

Boarding School – a school, public or private, where students reside while classes are in session.

Bride Price – money, property or other valuable given by the bridegroom, and often his family, to the family of the bride.

Children – all individuals under 18 years of age.

Child Sexual Abuse – “Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”¹

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children - “The commercial sexual exploitation of children consists of criminal practices that demean, degrade and threaten the physical and psychosocial integrity of children. There are three primary and interrelated forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children: prostitution, pornography, and trafficking for sexual purposes. Other forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children include child sex tourism, child marriages and forced marriages.”²

Customary Adoption – Non-formal adoption, without State involvement, where family members assume responsibility and care of a child of whom they are not the parents. Occurs when a child is very young and child almost always is granted all rights of a biological child, including right to land and other inheritance.

Forced Prostitution – where someone engaging in sexual activity for some form of payment is compelled or coerced to do so against their will, whether through threat of violence or force. Forced prostitution of children is considered CSEC (see above).

Hosting – the act of receiving a child or children of a family member or friend to reside in your home. The length of time of hosting may vary, as does the extent of support provided by the hosting family to the hosted children.

Indo-Fijian v. Fijian – An ethnic differentiation between the main inhabitant groups of Fiji. Indo-Fijians are Fijians of Indian descent, regardless of their birthplace. Fijians are those of ethnically native Fijian origin.

¹ World Health Organization definition of Child Abuse taken from *the Report on the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention Geneva, March 29-31, 1999*.

² ECPAT International, CSEC Terminology. http://www.ecpat.net/EI/Csec_definition.asp, accessed August 14, 2010.

Informal Boarding School – Residential facilities that are located nearby schools but managed as external to the school system. They may be constructed of local materials, a place where children reside, with varying levels of supervision, if any, during the week while attending classes. Children most often return to their homes on weekends. Most often occurring in rural primary schools where children travel great distances to attend classes. Educational ministries have tended to view such schools as community responsibility locating them outside of governmental systems of regulation.

Separation – The occurrence of children living away from their parents for extended periods

Supplementary Care – Care provided by family and friends of family that is in addition to the care of the nuclear family, it complements and enhances, rather than replaces, care and responsibility of the nuclear family.

Trafficking – “(a) “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs; (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used; (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article; (d) “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.”³

³ United Nations Convention on the Suppression of Transnational Crime and its Protocols. November 15, 2000.

Executive Summary

When studying the movement of children in Pacific society it becomes clear that children are rarely considered as holding individual volition. In some instances they may even be viewed as a form of communal property, particularly when connected with practices such as bride prices and associated debts. Accordingly, attempting to understand the movement of children away from their parents in the Pacific requires an awareness of the cultural context in which parents and extended family make decisions regarding children.

The arrangements in which children are living away from their parents are not consistent with Western conceptions of separation. Families are understood more broadly beyond the nucleus of mother, father, and children. Automatically associating negative connotations with separation is not warranted, as there are many potentially positive aspects to children living with extended family. The term hosting was preferred to separation by local communities and suggested as a suitable word to describe extended or supplementary family care arrangements.

Types of Movement

The typology of movement includes extended family, boarding school, friends, and institutions. The movement of children is broadly consistent with a rural to urban migration, with exceptions occurring due to economic factors associated with schooling costs and extended family decisions to move children for customary adoption or to strengthen links with rural relatives. There are reports of secondary movement because of failed hosting arrangements, where children and youth move to stay with friends; adults sought out by children for security; makeshift housing and street life.

Dimensions of Movement

The proportion of children living away from parents is consistent with the UNICEF baseline survey, which found that between 12-25% of children are spending extended periods away from parents. The majority of movement is from rural to urban settings and is comprised of teenagers. The best comparative data of children living away

from parents is from Kiribati⁴, which indicates that boys are more likely to be in boarding schools, with girls tending to be hosted by extended family. The level of hosting in urban settings such as South Tarawa increases the average household size by almost two persons. On the whole more girls are moving than boys, which may be explained by relatively high levels of international migration of male youth in Pacific Island Countries, and the tradition of land being held by men.

Consequences of Movement

It is important to note that there are numerous positive outcomes reported for children living away from parents. Children connect with extended family, build or maintain strong family links, provide economic assistance, and may, in turn, support hosting parents when they (children) reach adulthood. Children may also find safety with relatives as they flee violence in their nuclear family. In the absence of educational facilities, extended family and boarding schools provide a much-needed viable alternative.

Risks associated with living away from the nuclear family appear to be largely dependent on the particular hosting arrangement for children. In this way the site or circumstances in which children are living away from parents may be considered either a positive or negative mediating factor rather than only a risk enhancer; just as the care given by any particular parents either increases or decreases risk.

Young people drifting toward urban centers in search of work or urban lifestyles are reportedly struggling to survive increasing risks of crime and sexual exploitation, is most evident in Honiara, Solomon Islands. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is reportedly occurring and growing in all sites visited though it is unclear if there is any causal link to children living away from parents. In Fiji CSEC is reportedly occurring due to children's motivation to raise funds to cover educational costs. Families hosting multiple children face challenges in coping and attempting to organize the household economy accordingly. Hosted children are sometimes engaged in informal labor and removed from school at times of particular economic hardships. With the exception of informally adopted children, biological

⁴ Urban Drift, Urban Growth, Urban Youth, UNFPA Suva, 2005

children receive favorable treatment over hosted children and are prioritized for feeding, schooling, and assignments of household labor. Hosted girls often fare worst in hosting arrangements and are given a greater burden for household work than hosted boys or biological children, leaving them less time for study.

The success or failure of such hosting arrangements has direct implications for children's risks, with failed arrangements resulting in children beginning a downward spiral as they engage in riskier activities to access resources, and potentially drifting in search of security. One option reportedly pursued by teenage girls includes seeking out male adults who will take them into their household.

Whilst there is usually a level of increased risk for children in boarding arrangements there is a potentially alarming concern in primary informal care in rural settings.

Recommendations

Given the pivotal role hosting arrangements play in mediating risk it is recommend that there be exploration of targeting such arrangements with social protection. This could be done either bilaterally through government or in collaboration with donor agencies currently reviewing social protection, such as AusAID or the World Bank. Such approaches should be carefully considered in light of the potential for unintended consequences associated with placing a monetary value on extended family care.

It is recommended that communication for social change initiatives be revised, with new campaigns rolled out using language and concepts that are family inclusive rather than solely focused on individual children and their rights. For example, pointing out the mutual long-term benefits of strong children and strong families.

Given the concerning nature of primary informal boarding it is recommended that there be additional investigation into the prevalence of such institutions, followed by evidence based advocacy with government for a level of regulation.

Large numbers of male youth are drifting into urban centers with few prospects and limited options for positive activity. Whilst Won Small bag would seem to fill this gap in Port Vila to an extent, an equivalent is sorely missing in Honiara. Identifying a

potential partner for UNICEF that could provide broad programming across education, HIV/AIDS and protection would seem prudent.

Due to logistics and the range of outcomes for children living separately from their parents it is not recommended that there be any programming for general registration or regulation of children on the move. Of note, the researchers found no evidence to suggest that children adopted through informal or traditional mechanisms were at greater risk than those adopted through formal legal channels. Rather, it is recommended that greater attention be paid to those children moving due to divorce or marital separation. Children forced to move from such settings do so without the planning and support found in other types of relocation, with respondents consistently ranking these children as the most at risk for abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

On the whole, the study has not found evidence of practices that would meet the international definition of trafficking. The exception could be the forced marriage of girls to foreign men living and working in logging camps in the Solomon Islands. Absent preventative work, there is a real potential that this practice could grow unchecked. Previous efforts on the part of the Ministry of Social Work (MoSW) to engage in awareness-raising with affected communities and companies in the Solomon Islands should be re started, continued, and expanded.

UNICEF could play a role of facilitating the engagement of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) who are able to provide technical support for countries that have received unfavorable rankings in the US State Department Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report to improve their trafficking legislation, implementation and prosecution.

Notwithstanding the need to integrate programs and approach issues holistically, a targeted initiative on CSEC in all countries visited is recommended. Girls and boys are engaging in transactional sex on a growing level with associated risks of assault and HIV/AIDS clearly apparent. One option recommended, particularly in Kiribati, is to work in partnership with government to incorporate child rights provisions into licenses provided to the fishing and logging industries.

Introduction

There is very little policy or research around voluntary separation of children from their nuclear family as a global child protection issue. Most Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and governments tend to focus on specific groups of vulnerable children such as street children or child laborers, rather than addressing the issue more broadly⁵. To address this knowledge gap, UNICEF Pacific commissioned a brief mapping exercise to gather knowledge about the issue, addressing Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Kiribati. The researchers aimed to understand and present separation as a macro phenomenon, addressing its causes, both direct and indirect, and related outcomes, as well as paying particular attention to the possibility of associated risks, such as CSEC and trafficking.⁶

This examination of children living away from their parents aims to:

1. Establish the predominant root causes of the separation of children and young people from their parents and nuclear families;
2. Outline the types of separation and associated risks, if any;
3. Examine the relationship, if any, between separation from the nuclear family and forms of abuse and exploitation of children, including CSEC and trafficking.

Whether or not children and youth who live away from their nuclear families experience increased risk and vulnerability was not assumed at the outset of the study. Rather, it was approached as a null hypothesis, assuming the connection did not exist, and looking to see if the opposite was demonstrated through data collection. This is particularly essential given the prevalence of children and youth living away from nuclear families in the Pacific, and its function and long standing practice.

⁵ See: Child Briefing Paper: “Why do separated children matter?” 2008, www.everychild.org.uk

⁶ See Annex for complete TOR for the study

Problem Definition

The goal of this mapping exercise was to understand not only why children and young people are leaving home and where they go when they leave, but also to understand whether there is risk inherent in this movement to an extent that merits intervention. It must be stressed that at the outset of this investigation it was not assumed that separation from the nuclear family placed children at greater risk than living at home. This is because living with a nuclear family should not always be assumed to be the safest place, because for many children home can be a very dangerous place if they are abused by family members or others there, or if their parents do not provide adequate care and protection. Alternatively, while care arrangements away from nuclear families equally hold the potential to be dangerous, given the ingrained nature of children living with their extended family and attending boarding schools in the Pacific, it cannot be assumed that adequate care and protection are not provided in those settings.

This lack of preliminary assumptions regarding the inappropriateness of children living away from their parents, in child protection terms, allowed researchers to approach each care arrangement away from parents from a neutral standpoint, allowing participants in key stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions to define which arrangements hold more potential benefits or risks.

Another possibility that warranted consideration was that the movement of children away from their nuclear family was not a cause of risk. Rather, the movement itself could be a mediating factor, increasing or decreasing risk, depending on the levels of care and protection in the place the child or young person resides. Essentially, that it is the people and circumstances that create risk and vulnerability for children, regardless of whether they live with their parents, with extended family, in boarding schools, or another location. Mapping out the causes of risk and vulnerability is an enormous and imprecise task and while the exercise attempted to do so, the conclusions about categories of separation, destination, and increased or decreased risk must be considered within the bounds of this investigation.

Research Goals and Limitations

The parameters of the study are broad yet simultaneously precise in their requirements. To map all circumstances in which children live separately from their parents in four counties, ascertaining possible risk correlations whilst also focusing on trafficking and CSEC is highly ambitious. At the outset it is worth recognizing that setting relatively disparate tasks in the terms of reference decreases the possibility of a succinct and purposeful report.

Expectations for the study were that the researchers would identify potential reasons for separation of children from their parents, the places children go once they have left their nuclear family, the benefits and risks of different arrangements away from home, and any potential risks associated with each type of separation. In each type of separation, particular attention was paid to its potential to increase children and youth's vulnerability to abuse and exploitation, including CSEC and trafficking, without the expectation that the relative prevalence of either would be ascertained, or the assumption that such an association existed. Additionally, as will be explored with depth later in this report, the research team avoided the use of the word separation in all countries visited, as they were informed that the interpretation of the term locally could range from being considered inappropriate to being offensive. The term separation has a very negative connotation, which is why the team developed new, and more locally acceptable, terminologies. Additionally, inherent in this negative connotation association with separation, is that all such situations, where children are not with their biological parents, are less than ideal and to be avoided. The assumptions being that children are always better off when living with immediate family. However, given the ingrained nature of raising children communally, and often away from parents for periods of time, the research team began with the null hypothesis, the assumption that children being away from their parents does not increase their risk, and set out to see if that hypothesis would be disproved.

Given the research methods employed, time frame available for research, and broad scope of the investigation, impressions of these issues were gathered, but it was not possible to draw definitive conclusions about population level trends or association and causation between separation and heightened risk. Additionally, given the

sensitive nature of many of the topics associated with the movement of children away from parents, including child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking, many of these issues were explored peripherally at the community level, with elements that increase the risk of them occurring being addressed, rather than asking about directly in interviews and focus groups. This allowed the researchers to work in communities, and especially with children, without risking causing secondary trauma to victims of such abuse, as well as moving around issues that are taboo in many of these countries.

Methodology

The methodology employed was chosen to achieve the goals of research outlined and was purposefully flexible and broad. Mixed methods were used to gather information related to the research goals, both directly and indirectly, and to triangulate findings. Given the wide array of possible findings, acknowledged from the outset, and breadth of sources needed to answer the research questions, all elements of the methodology were ongoing and participatory, allowing information gathering to enlighten that which occurred after it. Information was gathered through a literature review, interviews with key informants from government, NGOs, UN agencies, and community members, and through focus group discussions with children, youth, and parents, and community forums.

Data Collection

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted before and during primary data collection. Sources of data included English language articles from peer-reviewed journals addressing child protection, migration, urbanization, separation of children from parents, CSEC, and trafficking, among other topics. Additionally, reports and research obtained from various UN agencies, government, NGOs, and other key stakeholders were reviewed to ensure that the research team had the most up to date information on all pertinent issues and did not duplicate any research that had been conducted previously.

These literature sources informed the choice of key stakeholders interviewed, what groups to engage in focus group discussions, how to form questions for both data

collection activities, as well as for the recommendations made to UNICEF about how to proceed to ensure that established best practices encountered in literature and programming, both in the Pacific and elsewhere, received due consideration.

There was considerably more information and research available about the status of children living away from their parents in Fiji than in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, or Kiribati⁷. Given the quantity and quality of information available about Fiji, both in terms of direct research and data from monitoring and evaluation of programming, it was possible to spend considerably more time examining the risks for and existence of trafficking than was possible in other countries.

At the time of conducting fieldwork the consultants learnt of an extensive piece of research being conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Fiji. The study was conducted in collaboration with Save the Children and the Ministry of Social Welfare and included focus group discussions with a range of children and young persons engaged in CSEC and various forms of child labor. The consultants were advised that protocols included questions on the place of origin of participants, whether they were living with parents, and, where relevant, the reasons for moving away.

Based on discussions with the head researcher for the ILO and other staff, the research team was under the impression that analysis was near completion with results forthcoming. In the interest of avoiding duplication and re-interviewing of children, as well as maximizing available data, a decision was made to largely forgo focus groups with children and young people in Fiji, as needed information could be obtained from the ILO. This had the added potential of allowing for more time in other settings and to run secondary analysis on the data provided by the original ILO study.

Unfortunately, despite requests to both the ILO directly and via UNICEF, the consultants have been unable to receive draft copies of the report or any data to run primary analysis for comparison with other country settings or secondary analysis at a greater depth. While this is highly disappointing for the study itself it is also

⁷ See Save the Children 2005 and ILO Draft Report Fiji

concerning for the potential for follow up on the issues raised, indicative of a somewhat limited level of interagency coordination.

In Kiribati, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands, however, it was essential to collect significant primary data in order to establish the reasons for movement away from parents, the different sub-groups of children involved and affected, and how that movement may increase their vulnerability. In order to accomplish this goal, more time was spent speaking with locals and community members in both urban and rural settings, rather than speaking with other stakeholders, as the established base of knowledge, beyond conjecture and anecdotes, was significantly less well established.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

In each country key stakeholders involved in the care and protection of children were interviewed to explore the current knowledge base regarding children living away from their parents, as well as to gather information from other stakeholders about what research and programming is in place or in planning that related to this exercise. Subjects for interviews were chosen in consultation with UNICEF staff, as well as through referrals from other interviews, to other individuals or organizations that might have relevant information or who were involved with children living away from parents in some way. Interviews were conducted and continued within each subset of interviewees until saturation of ideas about the causes of children leaving their nuclear families and the risks inherent in that separation was reached. Given that many more interviews with key stakeholders were conducted in Fiji, interviews in the other countries focused on views and groups that had not been previously represented, as well as those that would give particular insight into the status of children living away from home in that particular country.

UNICEF and other UN Staff

In each country UNICEF and other pertinent UN staff whose own work related to this research were interviewed to gain knowledge about children living away from home in the Pacific. Those interviewed were asked to share knowledge related to their own research and programming, as well as knowledge and experience working in that country that might not be available in any written document.

UNICEF staff served as key partners in the connection to other government and community leaders involved in child protection. Members of the child protection staff also worked with the research team extensively to ensure that the ongoing work to achieve the above mentioned research goals was not only on track, but consistent with both the local context and applicable to UNICEF's goals and ongoing work.

Government

Members of government interviewed in each country differed based on availability and existence of pertinent offices in varying countries. The equivalent of Social Welfare office was visited to gain information about support systems available to families hosting children from outside their nuclear family, resources for children living away from home, whether it be in a government run institution or on the street, as well as any current or future programming addressing children living away from home. Members of the education sector, as well as the criminal justice sector were engaged to learn about their interaction and perceptions of children living away from parents in each country.

Data were collected from government departments to the extent possible, such as both raw and manipulated data related to housing and education to provide an overview of the scale of separation of children. Availability of such data was contingent on Government agreement and timeliness in responding to formal requests. Such data were received in both Fiji and the Solomon Islands and are incorporated throughout this report.

Staff of non-government organizations

Staff of non-governmental organizations engaged in work related to children, particularly children living away from home, was identified through initial interviews with UNICEF staff, government, and other NGOs. Interviews explored active and planned programming related to children separated from their parents, research and perceptions about trends in movement, vulnerability and safety of various environments in which children might live if they do not live with their parents.

Focus Group Discussions

Participatory focus group discussions were conducted to learn about the circumstances, opinions, and priorities of the participants, as well as to observe the interaction between the group members, including children, youth, and caretakers of those young people. Groups were segregated according to age and gender and conducted in private settings, group size ranged from five to ten participants. While focus groups were used to obtain preliminary impressions about separation, exploitation, and trafficking in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati, they were not conducted in Fiji, as discussed previously. Participatory ranking exercises and brainstorm sessions, both written and oral, were used to encourage interaction between participants and to identify the value and importance given to certain ideas and opinions, as well as to explore the range of perceptions and ideas present throughout different ages, genders and settings from rural to urban.

Participants for focus groups were selected purposively, often with the help of local community members. For example, when looking to conduct a focus group with children in Honiara, Solomon Islands of young people who had moved from outer islands and were not being hosted, local community members with connections to youth organized the group. Snowball sampling was used in this case, where one young person who is known to live with relatives is asked to refer others who have similar living situations. These types of sampling yield groups that directly reflect the goals of research, and while neither random nor representative, they are fit for purpose in that this was an exploratory exercise, so working directly with those interacting with youth moving, or youth themselves, was the highest priority.

Each focus group was conducted by a moderator trained in qualitative data collection, using a semi-structured question guideline to ensure all basic information is collected in each focus group, but to also allow the freedom to explore issues that arise that the researchers may not have anticipated⁸. All participants gave oral consent for participation before the group began and were assured that they did not have to answer any questions unless they wanted to and that their identities would be kept confidential. Additionally, the purpose of both the focus group discussion and the

⁸ See Annex Number for copy of questions used

research as a whole was explained in each instance, to ensure that consent was only given with full knowledge of the function of their participation.

Groups were given broad questions that they worked together to answer, free-listing ideas, then explaining them and working with the facilitator to rank them in order of importance when appropriate. The groups generally took approximately an hour and participants were compensated for their time and transport costs when appropriate.

Summary of Data Collected

Data Collection Methods	Participants	Places	Numbers
Focus Groups x 17	Children, Youth, Men, Women.	Solomon Islands & Vanuatu (Rural, Urban, Peri-urban) Kiribati Urban and Peri-urban)	127 (76 children and youth)
Key Informant Interviews	NGOs, Government, UN, Churches	Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati	66
Community Group Discussions x2	Adult Females, Males, Children, Youth	Solomon Islands	69 (25 children and youth)
Total Persons			262 (101 children and youth)

Community Forums

Community forums were conducted to engage large groups of people and hear about various experiences and beliefs about children living away from home. Participants in these groups were self-selecting, in that they consisted of all community members who chose to come to a gathering point in response to an initiation from village leaders. These groups were conducted by researchers and facilitated by members of government and moderated by community members. Questions similar to those used in focus groups were presented to a wide group, who were then encouraged to contribute ideas to the discussion, which were written where all members could see them. As ideas arose participants clarified them. The limitations of using a

community forum to gain a wide variety of perspectives is acknowledged, particularly in communities where there is a clear hierarchical power structure, segregating those with and without power, potentially limiting the participation of those without power, most often women, children, and young people. However, the importance of engaging an entire community cannot be underestimated, particularly in gauging the importance of these issues to a community as whole and allowing everyone in a village to understand the presence of the research team and offer their input. Particular attention was paid to ensuring the participation of women and children where applicable and to the extent possible. Separate groups were also held which were segregated by gender and age to ensure that opportunities existed for sharing thoughts and ideas in a more familiar and private setting.

Data Analysis

Notes were recorded during and after each focus group or community forum. After each focus group discussion or community forum researchers used written conclusions, generally written by participants, to frame notes from the sessions, which were then cross-checked by both researchers to ensure consistency and that all information was recorded. Themes across groups were identified, particularly those that might be unique to a particular demographic, such as gender, age, or rural/urban location, as well as those that recurred across diverse demographics. Additionally, any anomalies were identified, as they could potentially signify divergence in opinion or practice. Responses were then tallied by group, country and overall to ensure that themes within and across countries could be identified. Given that this was an exploratory exercise qualitative data was not coded or analyzed formally, but could be in the future if necessary.

Discussion

Before beginning a discussion of the nature attempted in this report, it is essential to ensure that the language used is understood not only by those actively involved in shaping the dialogue, but also that the terminology appropriately and accurately reflects the context of the conversation. In approaching this complex issue, it was necessary to develop terminology that aptly and accurately described not only the Pacific, but also the phenomenon of children living away from their parents in a non-emergency context, which occurs rarely in literature.⁹

Given the location and nature of the study within the Pacific, and within Fiji, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, and Vanuatu in particular, it is worth considering the influence of regional, national, and local culture on the issues addressed, both those inherent in the terms and language used, and the actual context in which the study takes place. The definitions of family and childcare are not understood in a consistent manner across, and even within, countries addressed here.

Understanding Children in the Pacific Context

It is particularly important to consider the role and status of children in Pacific families when trying to understand the process by which they move away from parents. Except in instances of running away from home, children and youth who participated in key stakeholder interviews and focus groups rarely described themselves or their peers as having a prominent role, or often any role, in determining their destination and future caretaker when leaving their nuclear family. Decisions about their lives were most often made to ensure family stability, to enhance extended family ties, to help a family cope with financial difficulties, to compensate for previous financial investment, such as bride price, to continue their education, or to help members of the extended family who wished to raise those children as their own.

Children could be described as a commodity or form of social property within the Pacific context. This commoditization of children is often tied to the ongoing tradition

⁹ The vast majority of child protection literature refers to “separated and unaccompanied minors” in the context of conflict or instability. See for example UNICEF Technical Notes: Special Considerations for programming in Unstable situations 2003

of bride price, particularly in the Solomon Islands. A women's bride price is often paid communally, with many members of the groom's extended family contributing significant sums, both in kind and in cash. In turn, the woman whose bride price is paid by that group is beholden to all its members. An often mentioned consequence is that, when that woman has a child, any extended family member who contributed to the payment of her bride price has the right to demand custody of her child, as that child is an extension of her, and she "owes" those family members. This leads to what is called *customary adoption* where the infant is removed from the mother's care and is raised by extended family members and incorporated into that family as a full member, most often with equal rights as biological family members. Another example of commoditization of children is also associated with bride price where, again because of the money "owed" by the woman whose bride price was paid, a member of the family may claim one of her daughters when that child becomes a teenager. This girl is then moved to live with another member of her extended family, often as a babysitter or housekeeper, and often out of school. The family who has brought their niece to live with them then has the right to claim some or all of her bride price to reimburse them for paying part of her mother's bride price.

This is an example of where, despite the longstanding presence of bride price in both tradition and culture, the modernization of many of these historical practices, from traditionally consisting of non-cash payment, to its monetization today, can have detrimental effects for child protection, as well as the rights and demands placed on girl children and women.

Using the terms *tradition* and *culture* can imply that both are stagnant concepts within a particular society, which should not be changed, as their preservation is paramount. The use of these terms can also imply that new behaviors are aberrations, wholly outside of the traditional and the cultural, and are not expressions of the "real culture".¹⁰ In fact, shifts in culture are ongoing, as new generations and influences are incorporated into existing practices and conventions. There is often a tendency, particularly among elder members of communities or societies, to rely on tradition,

¹⁰ Sally Merry 'Human Rights and Gender Violence' (2006) in Steiner, Alston, Goodman, Henry J. Steiner, Philip Alston, and Ryan Goodman, *International Human Rights in Context* (3rd ed, 2007) 370

seen as inherently good, despite the fact that traditional practices may be harmful to children and outside of International Human Rights standards.

However, what is good for a family and what is good for a child need not be mutually exclusive. It is surely possible for the wellbeing of all members of families be taken into consideration without undermining traditional community structure. This space would seem to be fertile ground for those wishing to undertake attitude and behavior change, or indeed strengthening those practices in which the treatment of children can be broadly understood as consistent with international norms found in the CRC and its optional protocols.

When examining the rights of the child and the rights of the community or extended family, it is neither necessary nor advised to juxtapose them, as rights can be conceived as both collective and individual. Dilemmas may emerge, however, particularly within the Pacific context, where collective rights do not always best serve individual rights, particularly those of women and children.

When the rights of the group conflict with the rights of individuals, international legal norms suggest that individual rights should prevail.¹¹ However, this suggestion ought not be applied without considering the local conditions of its application. Despite the fact that children's rights are often prioritized in international and Western decision making, this standard is not universally applicable, without adapting it to local contexts so that it will be locally accepted and utilized, rather than merely ignored as an imposition of outsiders' ideas.

Approaching child protection from a largely Western perspective, one sees immediate conflicts with the way children are viewed and cared for within the Pacific context. A child protection system that largely constructs rights individually, such as those outlined in the CRC, is in obvious conflict with community systems in which the rights of the collective family and community are prioritized over those of the individual. The challenge for international child protection programmers is how to adapt to, or build off of, local conceptual frameworks so that they are enhanced and refined without being diminished and replaced by entirely Western conceptions of

¹¹ International Committee on the Rights of the Child

child protection, which will surely conflict with existing values and have trouble gaining traction in communities and even government.

A practical example of how an incorporation of both international standards and local conditions and customs may or may not occur is found in the current promotion of child rights in the Pacific. Key informant interviews suggest that attempting awareness raising and promotion of child rights without reference to parental and collective rights is not well received by community members. In fact, confusion and even resentfulness can result, as the direct translation of “rights” into local languages is often “power”. It is then easy to understand why community members would think that awareness raising about child rights is essentially promoting the power of children over that of adults, a particularly unsavory concept that would be wholeheartedly rejected in societies where power is determined by age, gender, and inherited privilege. Participants described such dissemination as threatening to adults and the clan family structure, and potentially part of a process to undermine their standing and influence, which they already see occurring with modernization and globalization, and which, in many circumstances, they actively reject.

Terminology

During the course of data collection and consultations with key stakeholders, including members of government, NGOs and communities, the research team encountered resistance on many levels to some of the terminology currently in use to describe children living away from their parents. Rather than continue to use terminology that does not resonate with those being described, the team opted to explore new terms that better describe the current circumstances, as they are understood locally. It is recommended that the UNICEF office move away from the original terms and focus on those that better represent local conditions.

Separation

To many, particularly those in the humanitarian community, the term separation is most often associated with emergency and conflict, where children may be unaccompanied, apart from their parents not by their or their parents’ choice, but because of influences outside of their control such as conflict or a natural disaster.

Additionally, in the case of separated children, in the traditional sense, the goal of programming is to address the separation itself by reuniting children with their parents, and ensuring appropriate care of children in the absence of parents. From the Western child protection perspective, largely based on notions borrowed from the Anglo Social Work tradition, there is an underlying assumption that those children will be better protected and cared for if returned to the custody of their parents.¹²

In the Pacific, however, movement of children is most often by choice, either that of the nuclear or extended family, or occasionally that of the children. Describing children as being separated when they are away from their nuclear family negates the strength and ingrained nature of children living with extended family. In order to more accurately describe the circumstances surrounding the informed separation of children from biological parents in the Pacific, the researchers prefer the term *supplementary care* to describe children living with extended family or friends of family. To describe the arrangement of a family providing supplementary care is best described as *hosting*, rather than informal adoption, or other similar terms, as they are often considered by local communities to be anything from inept to insulting.

Supplementary Care and Hosting in the Pacific

From a Western perspective movement of children outside of the nuclear family is generally considered atypical and often a response to family difficulties, such as abuse or inability to provide. Decisions to alter nuclear family arrangements in the West are typified by formalized, often legal, agreements where parents playing a pivotal role in the decision making process, or alternatively, as a punitive action by the government in response to parents' failure to provide for their children. Indeed the entire process can be understood as a balancing act between children's rights, adult rights, and state responsibilities for care and protection.

However, in the Pacific, an exploration of tradition and culture shows differences in the cause and perceptions of the movement of children away from their parents. Given these differences, it is understandable why Pacific conceptions of supplemental

¹² See UNICEF Technical Notes: Special considerations for programming in Unstable situations. UNICEF publication 2003

care do not reconcile with those most prevalent in the West. In the Pacific it is most often the case that extended family hosting arrangements are significantly more informal, whereby children and young people move to live with extended family and friends, for short or extended periods of time, through loose agreements based on ingrained traditions of clan structure and obligation. Culture and tradition in the Pacific dictates that extended family must always provide food, shelter, and care to their relatives, such that taking in the child of a family member would not require an arrangement beyond a conversation or letter given the commonness of the practice.

Supplementary care arrangements in the Pacific exist along a continuum with elements varying including length of stay, reason for stay, and anticipated permanence. This may range from a short term or interim arrangement to what has been referred to as informal foster care and informal adoption, but referred to here as customary adoption. Differences in quality and extent of care exist, influencing a child's exposure to risk and ability to succeed. The extent to which the hosting family welcomes, accepts, and prioritizes their non-biological child influences whether the supplementary care arrangement is successful, including whether the child remains in school, receives psychosocial and physical support and protection; essentially whether the child thrives or fails to do so.

Understanding the array of factors that contribute to the success or failure of supplementary care is essential in understanding the ongoing and progressing phenomenon of children living away from parents; and this understanding should contribute to the development of programs that prevent and respond to sub-standard supplemental care arrangements, as well as support and enhance those that function well, providing assistance for both the children being hosted and the families with which they stay.

Stakeholder consultations suggest that new and increased pressures are being placed on supplementary care arrangements, particularly where children are hosted in urban areas, often due to the monetization of needs and demands. The tradition of hosting developed in the Pacific when there were few, if any, urban centers and most families lived in rural areas where adding an extra person to a home or table was feasible in what was a largely agrarian society. However, in urban areas, where little, if any, food can be grown, cash is necessary for everything from school fees to bus rides to

meeting the demands of young people in quickly modernizing societies for things like cell phones and new shoes. This need for cash strains both the families providing supplemental care as well as the children being hosted, both of whom are forced to find new ways to earn cash, or find areas where expenses can be cut, often leading to the prioritization of needs of children in the nuclear family. Additionally, because the tradition of hosting developed within an agrarian context, extended families often are unable to turn away additional children or young people who wish to stay with them, as doing so would be contrary to their cultural obligations, despite the fact that they may have neither the resources, space, or capacity to care for them. Understanding the interplay of these factors, all of which influence the level and quality of care children in supplementary care receive, is essential so that particular circumstances that often increase risk and vulnerability can be identified and mitigated or avoided.

Adoption

A conflation of all supplementary care scenarios into titles such as informal adoption carries numerous connotations, many of which are unpleasant and even offensive to the local population, as they do not fit with local interpretation of the practice. Adoption, whether informal or otherwise implies an abdication of responsibility and influence in the child's life by parents, and is often permanent, rather than consisting of fluid or transitory arrangements, as is the case in the Pacific. It also suggests immediate parents holding the key to decisions to move children, and having the right to choose whether their children stay with them or go elsewhere, when in fact, in the Pacific members of the extended family may be the decision makers. Moreover in Western contexts children are usually adopted because parents are unable or unwilling to care for children, rarely for educational reasons. On the whole, the process of adoption, both in the Western and Pacific lexicon, tends to be marked by radical change with a limited connectivity between biological and adoptive parents, which exemplifies why the term is inappropriate for the this context.

Additionally, calling the adoption that does take place in the Pacific “informal adoption” gives the impression that those caring for the child are doing so without the

consent of the child's biological parents or do not have authority or play an important role in the child's life. This term gives the impression that this type of adoption is improper in some way or operates outside of the formal, or in this case governmental, system for adoption. In fact the term *customary adoption* is much better received locally, as the practice of adopting the children of relatives has been in existence much longer than the formal system of adoption through the government. It also demonstrates that this type of adoption has a place within Pacific custom, rather than making it appear as though operating outside of what is acceptable practice because it does not operate through the country's government. The place of custom and tradition and its relation to the formal national level government will be discussed in greater detail further on.

Trafficking

For the purpose of this research the possible existence of trafficking, and risk for trafficking, will be considered according to the definition accepted by the United Nations, outlined in the Palermo Protocols which define that:

“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.¹³

Whether or not the abuse and exploitation of children occurring, particularly to children living apart from their nuclear families, demonstrates a pattern associated with trafficking has not been established and bears further investigation, particularly in relation to CSEC. Additionally, it must be noted that while this is the internationally accepted definition, it is not necessarily universal in its use and application and several countries considered in this exercise are currently involved in developing anti-trafficking legislation, and thus in defining trafficking.

¹³ *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crimes*

Given that part of the terms of reference for this study was to examine the potential connection between children living away from their families and an increased risk for CSEC and trafficking, it is discussed in detail here. However, the authors are very careful to use the above international definition when referring to trafficking. While trafficking is a serious crime that has very harmful consequences for its victims and survivors, not classifying other abuses as trafficking here, particularly CSEC, including child prostitution and child sexual abuse (CSA), is not meant to diminish their importance, the need to address them or their harmfulness, but rather to support a common understanding and language about what trafficking is, and is not and to ensure that all programming is fit for purpose in that it addresses the actual issue at hand.

Findings

Trends Within Countries

While there are many differences between countries, it is worth stating that these were identified in the context of broad similarities. For example in all settings one of the major reasons for children moving from parents is education. The main destinations are relatives and boarding schools, however within and between those reasons and places are complexities, some of which are country specific, whether due to culture and tradition, differences in urbanization and development, or even government structures and geography.

Country differences are expressed both as distinctly different findings and marked accentuations of patterns across different countries. For example, while school fees were stated to be a factor in deciding to move children to different locations away from parents, this was most striking and more frequently reported in Vanuatu, which, was the only place where children were mainly moved from urban to rural areas for school, as fees were lower there. Alternatively some reasons for and patterns of children living separately from parents are reported only in particular countries. For example, children living away from parents in preparation for exams and sporting/cultural events were only reported in Kiribati. In hopes of appreciating these differences, as well as their implications for future programming, countries are examined individually here, as well as collectively by issue later on.

Fiji

Involvement of children in CSEC in order to cover education related fees was only reported in Fiji. Adults involved in this process include persons such as taxi drivers as “clients” and means of transportation to school as well as organizers of CSEC and parents, also as organizers of CSEC for their own children. The potential that CSEC is linked to tourism is more likely in Fiji than other study countries, however no proof of this was found, aside from the congregation of sex workers near hotels frequented by international travelers.¹⁴ A former UNICEF regional director has cited the existence of sex tourism in Fiji, with claims that Fiji was becoming a major destination for child sex tourism, especially for Australians.¹⁵ The reason this is particularly likely in Fiji is because of the relatively large scale of tourism in Fiji as well the organized nature of CSEC, where young girls and boys have cell phones, on which organizers of CSEC call them to tell them when and where to meet “clients”.

Children living away from their parents due to unplanned pregnancy were reported more frequently in Fiji, and largely within the Indo Fijian Community.¹⁶ Girls who become pregnant out of wedlock may run from home or are sent away to allow families to save face and avoid shame. These girls most often go to relatives, friends, or in a residential facility if one is available. Residential facilities for children and girls are far more common in Fiji than other settings, are better equipped, and have more space, though are still insufficient to meet demand. The formal adoption of children is more common in Fiji, with babies often being placed in orphanages before adoption; again this is most prevalent in the Indo-Fijian community, as unwed mothers may leave home, have their child, place it in an orphanage and return to their original home.

¹⁴ The research team did not visit major tourist destinations.

¹⁵ See Mehr Khan presentation at Proceedings at International Conference 2003 “Impact of Global Issues on Women and Children” <http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/slru/ic2003/Background.pdf>

¹⁶ Based on interviews with shelter and orphanage management staff and shelter and orphanage records.

During the period of field work a great deal of government and media attention was centered on the US State Department Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. Fiji had previously been ranked at Tier 3, the lowest ranking, with implications beyond reputation, including an obligation for the US to vote against Fiji at the International Monetary fund (Fiji was applying for a loan in early 2010). The 2010 improved ranking to Tier 2 Watch List is due to steps by the government and civil society to improve the legislative framework via the new crimes decree legislation, resources available to victims, prevention activities and training on the issue of human trafficking.

Solomon Islands

The capital of the Solomon Islands, Honiara, contains the closest Pacific equivalent to what might be internationally considered as street children. Children are more frequently reported as moving away from parents in search of economic opportunities and “bright lights” of the big city in Honiara than in other locations. Young men are living in shop fronts, engaging in drug and alcohol abuse and related crime. Given the relatively large presence of international security personnel such youth “issues” are more likely to be seen through the lens of law and order than other explanations, and described accordingly.

While bride price is practiced in other countries, the Solomon Islands was the only study site in which the practice was given as a reason for children leaving their parents, aside from for the direct purpose of leaving to be part of an arranged marriage. Specifically, when male relatives contribute to the bride price of a woman, that women’s children are then, essentially, community property. When daughters of that woman are teenagers, uncles who paid part of the bride price may then move those daughters to live with his family. That way, when that daughter, the uncle’s niece, marries, he collects her bride price and is thereby “reimbursed” for contributing to her mother’s bride price. This movement of young girls is transactional in nature and additionally, when girls are seen as a means to get cash, rather than as the nieces of their host family, they are reportedly at greater risk for abuse, although this evidence was anecdotal. Finally, foreign loggers were reported as likely to leave their “brides” behind when returning to their home country, often leaving behind children as well, with no form of support.

There were reports that communities living in close proximity to logging sites were allowing foreign men to enter into bride price contracts involving girls under 18 who were sometimes being forced to marry against their will, and being held against their will after the marriage had taken place. Such an appropriation and misuse of a longstanding cultural practice is the closest practice found that could meet the definition of trafficking, if girls are held against their will after the forced marriage. As per the Palermo protocol the transaction involves receipt and harboring, the use of force and is ultimately harmful/exploitative.

There is an apparent need to continue and expand work with communities on raising awareness of the risks and consequences of children becoming involved in CSEC in more remote communities nearby logging sites, as well as educating families about the potentially harmful nature of marriage to a foreign logger, particularly for very young girls. Given the local understanding of children as part of families, rather than vulnerable individuals in need of protection, it is recommended that such efforts refer directly to the long term disadvantages to families of encouraging or allowing abuse, such as lost family strength, status and future earning capacity. In addition there should be steps to engage directly with logging companies on their corporate responsibility as well as raising awareness, on site, with working staff, in addition to increased regulation on the part of the government, including associated punishments for individual loggers and corporations for any violations.

Vanuatu

As with the Solomon Islands, in the capital of Vanuatu, Port Vila, there are young men with limited prospects who are engaging in anti-social behavior, though it is *less* clear that this has any correlation with having moved to the city to live separately from parents, as similar behavior occurs with groups of young men still living in their villages. There is less evidence that such youth are living independently (e.g. streets, makeshift houses) though this was referenced by youth but not verified, and are more likely to be staying with relatives, friends or other acquaintances. Rape, including that committed by gangs of youth, was reported as widely occurring in and around Vanuatu, to the extent that descriptions of it from both young men and young women verged on describing it as normal and expected.

While in all other settings the vast majority of movement of children away from parents was from rural to urban settings the same is not true for Vanuatu. All groups interviewed indicated that children are frequently moving from urban to rural settings because of the cost of living in Port Vila, particularly related to the high cost of school fees. This is because school fees in Vila are twice as high as those in rural areas and cost of living is higher, so education on the islands is more economical. But similar to other instances is the willingness of children and parents to live apart from one another for the sake of continuing education.

There appear to be limited linkages and communication between sexual assault service providers, including shelters, in Port Vila and agencies working with disadvantaged and at risk youth such as Wan Smol Bag, which should be priority as this sector of youth is often at high risk for assault. UNICEF could facilitate strengthening coordination between such agencies; such coordination could include referrals between the organizations as they offer complementary services.

Kiribati

Along with the Solomon Islands, Kiribati respondents reported children living separately from parents due to international travel, with children being left with relatives as parents establish themselves, normally in New Zealand, before sending for children. Given the potential for increased migration due to climate change, it is likely that without correct planning from immigration authorities, greater numbers of children will spend time apart from parents in the near future.

There was no apparent correlation between children living away from parents and school drop out (push out), as seen by talking to both out of school and in school youth living both with parents and outside of the nuclear family home. There is however, consistent with other countries, a concern that a correlation exists between children leaving parents due to family breakdown, divorce, or separation and increased vulnerability to negative outcomes and exploitation. Such children may leave or be sent to relatives, without the level of planning or organization required for a successful hosting arrangement. Moreover they may not be received with the same attitude as those coming for education, receiving diminished support.

Young adults interviewed who are involved in sex work in Kiribati were very likely to have been living away from their parents at the time they first became involved.¹⁷ The vast majority indicated they were from the outer islands, though it was not clear whether they first moved for education, family work, or because of family problems.

Some respondents suggested that communal attitude toward children and young people going to international fishing boats for sex work was shifting towards a kind of collective resignation. However, the shame felt for those children and their families, as well as the sentiment that they are “ruining culture” by going against traditions of marriage and virginity were continually expressed, including by sex workers themselves. Donor and government staff suggested that this attitudinal shift could lead to an increase of numbers of those involved, as parents are more likely to support or even encourage their children to get involved because of the reciprocal benefits for the family, of money and fish. Key informants indicated that a lack of economic opportunity, life prospects, and exposure to local violence and sexual abuse were driving both young men and young women toward the boats. Currently there are approximately 80 individuals visiting foreign fishing boats regularly, with about 30 of them being under 18. A vote conducted with young men and women going to the boats in Tarawa showed that while most girls ranked staying on ships as a superior option to others including local bars and relatives; whereas boys expressed their preference as being to stay with relatives. This is likely related to the difference in treatment for girls and boys both at home and when staying with relatives, but could be investigated further.

Reported numbers of children engaging in CSEC are increasing, for example, from 52 total individuals in 2009 to approximately 80 in 2010, as cited by an NGO working regularly with young people going on foreign fishing boats, where they exchange sex for money, alcohol, goods, and food, the numbers of children under 18 are rising along with them. Possible reasons given for the increase were a rise in divorce, which often puts children at risk of being forced out of their home; this could occur in the family or origin or hosting family. Current interventions are often focused on the morality of the young people going on boats, hoping to persuade them to follow their

¹⁷ More than 80% of sex workers participating in focus groups indicated they had been living away from parents at the time they became engaged in sex work.

culture, which focuses on marriage and virginity. The other pervasive intervention is the criminalization of boarding ships, including in the case of children. Without more engagement and innovative interventions for children and young people involved in CSEC or sex work on the upward trend in young people, and particularly children, going on boats will continue.

There is an urgent need for a strategy on CSEC to be developed in Kiribati that involves children and youth, in conjunction with the community, the governments of both Kiribati and the countries from which the boats originate and the fishing industry. Given the range of stakeholders and varying opinions and interests concerning the issue, and especially the relative level of organization within the community of sex workers, it is recommended that external support be provided for such a process, to ensure that all voices are heard and that the best interests of young people are the central issue. The UNODC could assist in such a process, providing technical assistance regarding required steps to increase the protection of children, both of those who go on the boats and those who are victims of CSEC in local bars, as well as Kiribati to the United States TIP program. Finally, there is need to communicate with the United States consulate office responsible for compiling TIP country ranking information in Suva, Fiji, so their office will be aware of the efforts made by the government of Kiribati, as well as the status of children and young people who could potentially be victims of trafficking according to the definition used by the United States. In the absence of such updates demonstrating the active role of the Kiribati government in preventing trafficking and responding to it by supporting victims and prosecuting perpetrators, there is a distinct likelihood that Kiribati will move to Tier 3 when countries are reassessed for the 2011 TIP.¹⁸

Importantly, any strategy to address these issues must include CSEC occurring onshore in Kiribati, as well as that offshore. Children and youth involved in CSEC report far better outcomes on boats than in formal and informal local bars, where a

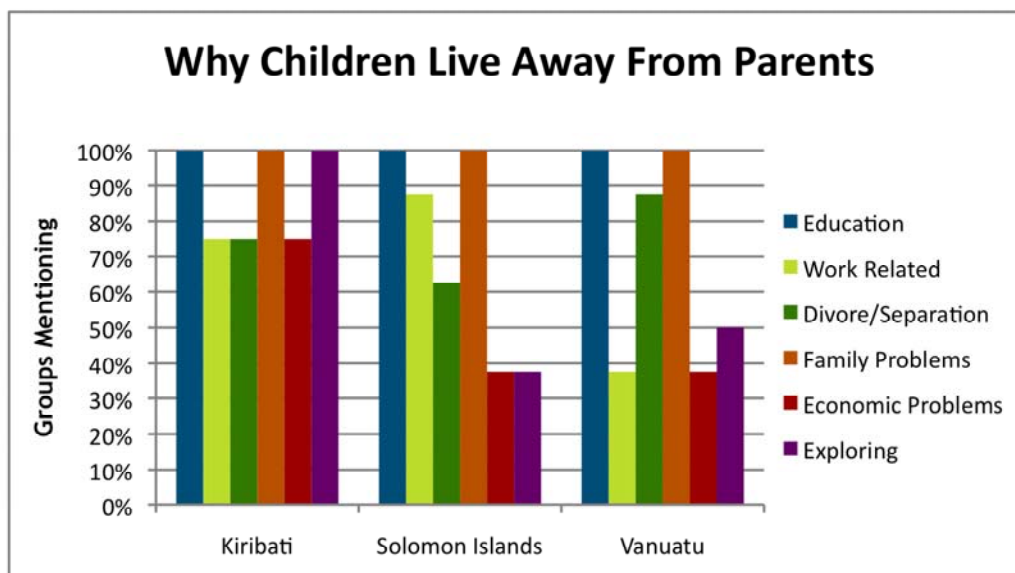
¹⁸ See the US State Department website for more detail: www.state.gov/g/tip/ At the time of writing UNICEF Kiribati had begun discussions with the US State Department.

constant threat of rape and physical violence exists, often connected with sexual transactions or abuse perpetrated while young people and children are intoxicated. If interventions were to target high profile offshore CSEC with international components only, local scenarios, which are far more dangerous, would be overlooked. It might be easier to think of men on boats who pay young people and children for sex as the sole perpetrators of CSEC and as international “corrupters” of culture. But doing so is more rooted in convenience than reality, and overlooks the pervasive, ingrained, and extreme nature of the local abuse of women, children, and minority groups. Worse, if only CSEC and sex work occurring on boats is targeted, the young men and women and children who are victims of or engaging in such behavior will be limited to working in/being exploited in local bars, where it is far more dangerous and outcomes are likely to be worse.

Trends Between Countries

Reasons Children Live Away From Parents

In the Pacific children move away from their nuclear family for a variety of reasons, and it is important to note that there are often multiple reasons for a single child leaving. These reasons are often inherently connected to the extent that they are inextricable, for instance if a girl is being abused at home, she may be sent away to relatives or boarding school, ostensibly for education, but also to remove her from the reach of her abuser, although this second reason will most likely never be expressed. Understanding the relationship between the variety of influences that lead children to leave home or parents to send them away is essential to understanding the circumstances surrounding this movement comprehensively and responding to them appropriately, if need be. Many of the categories listed below can be thought of as interrelated push and pull factors, and will be explained as such.



1. Education

The most commonly cited reason for children moving away from their nuclear family is to seek education. This migration is most often from rural to urban areas, as schools in urban areas tend to offer more years of schooling than in rural areas, teachers tend to be better trained and boarding schools are accessible, which is often not the case in rural areas. Education is both a push and pull factor, as a lack of educational opportunities in many rural areas makes it necessary for children to leave home to continue their education, as does the perception that education in rural areas is of lower quality. The education systems continuing to higher levels and, again, being perceived as offering better quality education are a pull factor, most often drawing children from rural to urban areas.

Worthy of note is the value placed upon education in the Pacific, to an extent where both families and children are willing to make significant sacrifices to pursue their education. Almost all participants expressed the belief that despite the fact that children often must live away from their parents to receive a secondary education and beyond, this is preferable to stopping their education and staying at home.

1.1 Moving to Attend Primary School

In some areas it is reported that children as young as primary school age leave home to pursue better quality education, or because primary education is not available in

their areas. They may move to urban areas to stay with relatives, or they may migrate from one rural area to another, staying in an informal boarding school, largely independently and generally unsupervised during the week, then returning home on weekends to stay with their families. The research team did not have a chance to visit one of these informal boarding schools as they are generally very rural and difficult to access. Authorities from the government and NGOs in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Kiribati all informed the researchers that while such schools may have existed in the past, they did not any longer because there was good coverage for primary school. However, upon consultation with youth about where they had attended primary school, several cited informal boarding schools.

The potential risks for children living in or near communities they are not part of with little supervision are high. Given the disconnect between the actual existence of these schools and the government and NGOs seeing them as an issue, more research is warranted to determine the extent of their existence and attendance, as well as to look into the relative safety, or lack thereof, for children residing there.

1.2 Moving to Attend Secondary School

The most commonly cited age for children to leave their nuclear family to attend school was at about 13 or 14 years when secondary school begins, as in many countries there are few if any secondary schools outside the cities, so if children want to continue their education they do not have a choice but to relocate. Children may also be moved to a different school when they enter secondary school if there is a perception that they will receive a better education elsewhere, most often in urban areas. Also, this is the age at which most children begin boarding school.

1.3 School Fees

School fees are a very important determinant in the movement of children away from their nuclear family, and can influence this decision making in various ways. Irrespective of the language adopted such as “contributions” or “fee free schooling” the fact remains that such costs exist and are having an impact on children’s movement away from parents, highlighting the need to hasten the progressive realization of truly free education. Whilst Government counterparts are aware of some consequences associated with school fees it is recommended that the relevant findings of the study are broadly disseminated to Pacific Education stakeholders. ,

If parents are unable to pay their children's school fees and related costs, they may see sending them to live with relatives as a better option than ending their schooling. There is a general perception in non-urban areas that those living in urban areas are better off and the hope is that the relatives will cover the child's school fees. Alternatively, the parents of the child may promise to pay the fees if relatives will look after the child, which saves parents the cost of providing room and board; however parents often do not follow through with the promise of ongoing financial support.

One notable deviation from the norm of sending children from rural to urban areas to attend secondary school is that of Vanuatu. School fees in Port Vila are twice as expensive as those in the outer islands, so if parents cannot afford school fees in the capital they may send children to outer islands to stay with relatives so they can attend secondary school for a lower price.

1.4 Presence or Absence of School

As mentioned above, the reason for leaving can be as basic as the presence or absence of school in a particular location. Usually this leads to movement of children when there is not a primary or secondary school in a very rural area, and there is a school in a different region. While most government representatives claimed that this type of movement is unnecessary at the primary school age because school coverage and access are adequate, talking to children, youth and parents gave the impression that it happens occasionally at primary school age. More commonly, children move to attend secondary school, simply because junior or senior secondary does not exist where they live. Given the geography of Pacific countries, where rather than going from one town to another, children must migrate from island to island to attend school, the actual presence, or lack thereof, of a school has a large impact on the decision to move a child for schooling.

1.5 Quality of School/Teachers

In addition to the existence of a school at the level a child needs, the quality of that education is also one of the considerations in whether or not a child should move away from parents for education. The perception exists that teachers in rural areas are

less likely to be trained and schools themselves are less likely to be well equipped. In the Solomon Islands data was available for review concerning issues such as whether teachers were trained and certified and the numbers of textbooks per student. While the perception that teachers in rural areas are less likely to be well trained appeared to be correct, most schools in rural areas had equivalent or lower student/teacher ratios and equivalent access to textbooks, among other indicators.

1.6 Need Quiet Place to Study

Home life was often described by children and young people, especially girls, as being hectic with chores to complete, water and firewood to gather and young siblings to look after. The decision to send children away from their parents to complete schooling may, in fact, be so that they have more time and space to study so they can get higher marks in school and be more successful. However, when children are moved from their nuclear family home to a relative's home, these demands are unlikely to decrease, and in fact, are likely to increase, especially for girls. However, sending children to boarding school to remove these demands and allow them to study was cited as a cause for movement by both parents and young people.

2. Economic Problems

Moving children because of economic problems within the nuclear family is a common occurrence in the Pacific, as it relies on the tradition of unconditional support from the extended family. In interviews and focus groups the monetization of Pacific economies was often cited as a reason why young people move away from the rural areas where their families live to move to the cities. In rural areas, while it is possible to be successful and care for a family through agriculture, there is very little cash to be earned. However, young people now, as opposed to a generation ago, are exposed to global goods and media, and the only way to access things they see and hear on television and radio is with cash. Often, relatives and friends who have migrated to urban areas return during holidays with cell phones and music and clothes that leave rural youth wanting access to them as well.

2.1 Too Many Children (also considered a Family Problem)

A family having "too many children" was named as a reason children might be moved to stay with extended family, as their parents are unable to care for them. The

reasons cited for having “too many children” ranged from poor family organization to lack of access to family planning. Many children in the home can cause a number of problems, from a lack of resources, to a lack of funds for school fees, to a lack of time or space to study for school.

It is often perceived that relatives living in urban areas will be able to care for these children because the city is viewed as prosperous. However, upon consultation with these urban families, accepting additional children is a struggle for them, as all things including food, unlike in rural areas, must be paid for in cash, which is often hard to come by where jobs are scarce. This disconnect from rural to urban, where rural relatives view their urban counterparts as successful and well off, whereas these urbanites in fact also struggle to provide, but cannot turn down relatives who wish to stay with them, leads to children being placed in situations that may not provide as much support as children and young people need.

2.2 Not Enough Food/Hungry

A lack of food can persuade a young person to leave home if they believe they are a burden, or if their parents express that they may be one. This is important to note because there is a pervasive thought within the Pacific that people do not go hungry in rural areas because the economy is largely agrarian. However, it appears that there are families who do not have enough to eat, which can act as a push factor out of the home, particularly as they get older and are expected to earn money for the family, they may instead choose to leave and make their own way, regardless of their skill set or preparedness for living on their own.

2.3 Cost of Living Too High

Connected to the monetization of Pacific economies, many families, especially those living in urban areas, are finding that they are unable to cope. Important to note is that the ability to cope is partially dependent on the number of people in the household needing support, so that taking in extra children from relatives can stress the family’s financial situation significantly. However, when children are sent away from home, particularly from rural areas, the consideration that relatives in urban areas are having trouble coping is often not recognized. When people living in urban areas return to their home island or village they make a point of how well they are doing, leading

their relatives to believe they can support extra children in their household. Additionally, because culture and tradition dictate that you cannot refuse to help extended family members, or take in their children for that matter, families will take in their relatives children, despite the fact that they have neither the space to house them, the funds to support them, nor the time to care for them. This is not always the case in when relatives host children and young people, some families either have the means to care for additions to their family, or manage to increase their income through extra work for family members and the children being hosted to make ends meet. However, the cost of living, and the misconceptions about urban family's ability to cope can lead to increased risk for children being hosted.

2.4 Poor Family

Although this cannot be confirmed with more than anecdotal evidence, it was expressed in various interviews and focus groups that poor families are more likely to send their children to live with relatives. Given the strong connection between economics and sending children to live with relatives, this is a plausible scenario. However, it would be remiss to assume that only families in experiencing economic stressors are inclined to send their children to live with relatives.

2.5 Cost of School Fees and Related Costs Too High

The cost of school fees and other related costs such as uniform, money for lunch and snacks, transportation, "voluntary contribution" which is in fact mandatory. This particular reason for children being sent away from home exemplifies the close relationship between valuing education highly and strains on economic resources. In this case, families value their children's education but realize that if the children remain at home they will not be able to continue their education, and are thus sent to live with relatives or to boarding school.

3. *Work (To Find or To Avoid)*

3.1 Seek Jobs

Generally there are one or two islands with relatively small urban areas in each of these countries, and then the rest of the outlying islands are extremely rural with little economic opportunity available beyond agriculture. It is therefore necessary to migrate to urban areas to find jobs and particularly to earn cash.

3.2 Sent to Work for Relatives

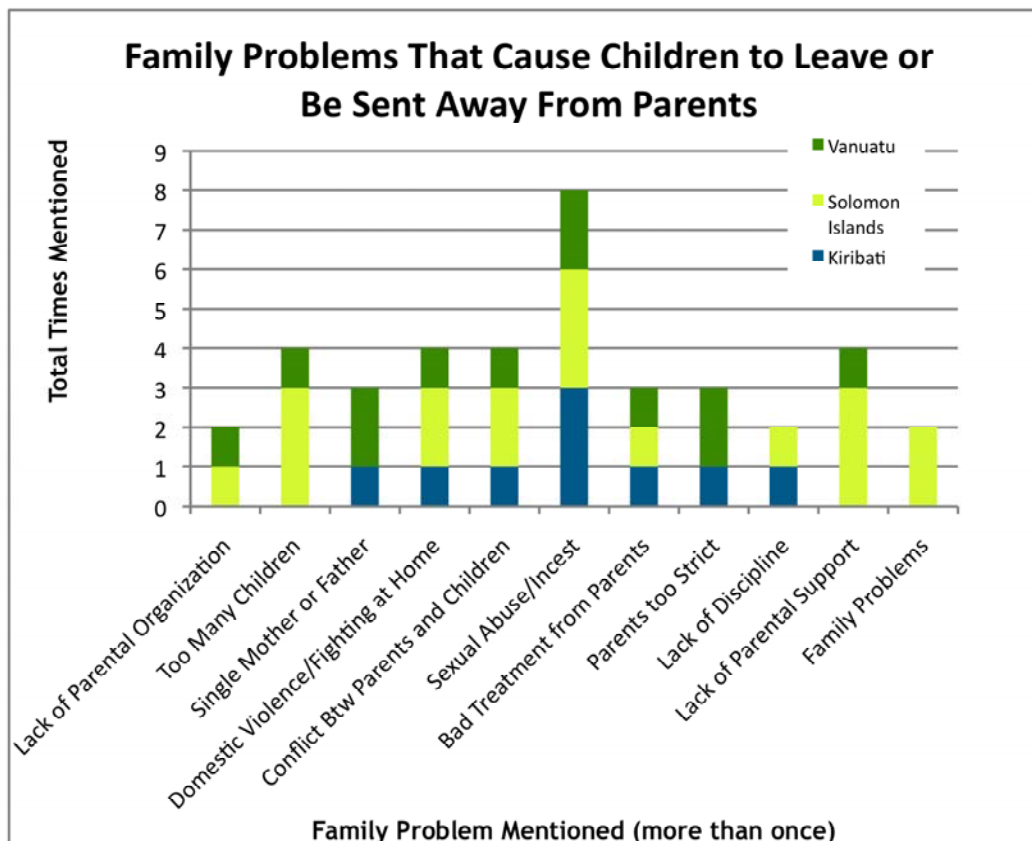
Employment also influences movement when children are sent by their parents to live with relatives. However, in some cases children are sent to live with relatives to work for them, rather than to be assisted in going to school or making their own way. Sometimes teenage girls are sent to live with relatives where they are expected to be babysitters for the young children in the family, but do not attend school, nor are they paid.

3.3 To Avoid Heavy Work

Alternatively, another reason for children to leave home, in this case mostly by choice, is to avoid heavy work assigned to them by their parents. This work can involve gathering water, gathering firewood, working in a garden or other agricultural work. There is a perception that life is easier in urban areas because this type of work does not exist. While this may not be the sole reason for children leaving, it was cited as a motivating factor for young people leaving home.

4. Family Problems

Issues within the nuclear or extended family, are also often the cause of children moving, even if the outward rationale for the move is for education or economic reasons. There are many elements categorized under family problems because there is such an array of issues that could cause children and young people to be sent away, or to leave home on their own. It is also important to note that many adults and young people simply cited “Family Problems”, but when asked to expand upon the idea were unable or unwilling to do so. Given the potentially sensitive nature of further discussion, the issue was not pursued, especially with children. However, given the wide range of responses that were gathered, the “Family Problems” listed run the potential spectrum of issues, and the problems cited by less forthcoming participants are, in all likelihood, mentioned below.



4.1 Poor Treatment or Abuse (Parents call you names, abuse, uncomfortable at home, bad treatment)(Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Incest)

Many participants in data collection cited poor treatment or abuse as a reason children might choose to leave home or be sent away. This poor treatment ranged from yelling to a lack of emotional support. As is elaborated earlier in this report, children are not the focal points of many Pacific families, as they are in most Western families. In fact, while children are a part of the family, they are in many ways the least consequential of its members as they do not have power, and because they are young, they contribute little to the family income. Given this low status, their wellbeing, whether physical, emotional, or otherwise, is not always the priority of their caretakers. Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse were all cited, sometimes directly by name and others by description, as reasons children might choose to leave home or be sent away, either to live with extended family or elsewhere. While a child might leave home to escape any kind of abuse, it can also happen that they will be sent away from their community to resolve the conflict caused by having them in ongoing contact with their abuser, as it disrupts the community and family's ability to

function. On the other hand, if a relative knows about ongoing abuse, they might insist on removing a child from the abusive home.

It appears that the prevalence of abuse has only begun to come to light in the past 10 years or so in much of the Pacific, but this study along with others¹⁹ found such abuse to be widespread, with little recourse or protective mechanisms available to victims. In many instances, beyond this lack of available response, there is not an acknowledgement that children should be safe from abuse and that, if abuse occurs, that punishment beyond compensation to parents is in order. In fact, particularly victims of sexual abuse, are often sent away from home in order to reestablish equanimity within a community and between the abuser and members of the family of the abused. Rather than punish the abuser, he or she often gives some sort of payment to the family of the abused, and the child who has been abused is sent away to lessen tensions within the community and further isolating the victim of abuse from their traditional support system.

4.2 Lack of Family Support/Family Organization

Lack of family support was described as both emotional and economic support. If the family discouraged a child from studying or from pursuing a goal, he or she might see it as a lack of support, and choose to leave home, perhaps to move in with relatives, who they envision to be more supportive.

Many young people perceived lack of economic support, in addition to being an economic problem, as a familial problem. They blamed their parents for not having the skills to plan for or foresight to expect financial difficulties. They chose to leave home in this case because they either believe they could receive more support living with relatives or friends, or because they simply believed that they could do better on their own and moved away.

4.3 Not Looked After Properly and Neglect

¹⁹ High profile reports including the 1999 report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Ms. Ofelia Calcetas-Santos refer to Fiji's then growing problem with CSEC

If either children or their relatives feel that the care they are receiving from their biological parents is inadequate then the children or their relatives may deem it best to change the situation. This could mean the child chooses to leave or that their relatives take them in because they feel they can offer better care.

4.4 Fighting at Home

All types of family fighting and violence were listed as reasons children leave home including: domestic violence or violence between parents, violence between parents and children, including physical abuse, or violence between children living in the household. Of note was that young people described the reason for leaving as parents “hitting too hard” or “too often”, implying that they believe that some hitting of children is acceptable. While the commonality of the reporting of inter-family violence may not necessarily be indicative of high rates of violence, the topic was met with agreement from group members and brought up by every demographic group, implying that for many children and young people, home can be a dangerous place. This is one of several reasons why it is impossible to say that children are always at lower risk when being raised by their biological parents, because parents may, in fact, be the greatest risk their children experience, and being away from them could be a change for the better.

4.5 Lack of Discipline

Lack of discipline was cited as a reason why relatives, most often grandparents, or aunts/uncles might take in a child. In some cases the grandparents or relatives may actually insist that a child come to live with them if they do not believe he or she is receiving an appropriately disciplined upbringing. On the other hand, lack of discipline can also be interpreted, when cited by parents as a reason for children leaving home, as meaning that parents were not strict enough so the child felt it was all right to leave home, because he or she would not face consequences.

4.6 Parents are Too Strict

On the opposite end of the spectrum, children could choose to leave home if they feel that their parents are too strict and they want more freedom. It is unlikely that children would verbalize that this is the reason they would like to leave, as it is rare that

children have a say in where they go. But if children are given the chance to leave for education or to live with relatives, this could be a motivating factor.

4.7 Single Mother – No Father

The presence of many of single parents in the Pacific is a relatively new phenomenon and from what participants said, is on the rise. This is due to the rise in separation and divorce rates; one reason for this increase was described as more men seeking alternative, and often younger, companions to their wife. In this case either separation or divorce ensues, leaving the wife to raise the children, or the second woman (02 in Solomon Islands) may become pregnant and not receive support from the father of the child. In either case, support systems for single parents are few and far between in the Pacific.

4.8 Sent Away for Making Problems

Children and young people who get in trouble in their local community may be sent away by their parents to live with relatives or to a boarding school in hope of changing their behavior. It's also possible that a family member could insist on a troublesome child coming to live with them. The types of problems that children could be sent away for include smoking, drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, disobeying parents, or for girls engaging in sexual relationships before marriage.

4.9 Unfair Treatment or Bias from Parents

Being treated unfairly by parents was mentioned as a reason that children would want to leave home, whether that bias is reflected in whether the child is, in fact, sent away is less clear. This unfair treatment could mean that one child has to do more work, receives less food, or generally feels as though they are less of priority for their parents than other children. This can serve as an incentive for moving away to live with relatives, if the children believe that they will be treated better there.

5. Adventure, Exploring, and Greener Pastures

Beyond the necessity of leaving one's nuclear family to continue schooling, to earn money, or being sent away because of family problems, there is a lure of urban areas. Described by different groups as leaving to seek "greener pastures" or to pursue the

“bright lights of the city”, migration, particularly from rural to urban areas, often has to do with aspirations for bigger and better things, which in the minds of those moving, can only be found in the cities. Some participants, particularly adults in more rural areas described this type of migration as something that needs to be stopped; that if youth could be entertained and could earn cash in rural areas they could be kept from leaving. Youth on the other hand were often eager to try their hand at success in the city, particularly after hearing stories of success from family and community members. The actuality of that success is often not in line with the stories that are told, but nonetheless, as in most places, youth in the Pacific move to urban areas to find opportunity and the intangible something that does not exist where they come from.

5.1 Influence from Urban Lifestyle/ To Experience Town Life/City Lights

The arrival of international television, movies, and visits from relatives who have left to move to urban areas creates a draw for young people. Both adults and young people recognize the urge to move to a place where it is modernized, where it is urban, and where access to goods is greater. The city is seen as a place where fun and pleasure lie around every corner, and access to them is open and unlimited, unlike in rural areas. While these may be urban myths, as city life is described as harder than rural life by the people living there, especially because it is possible to go hungry in urban areas because of lack of money, whereas that rarely if ever happens in rural agricultural areas.

The opportunity to leave to move to the city is more often accessible to boys and young men, as it is often considered inappropriate for young women to move to an urban area alone. However, as a motivating factor for moving to live with relatives or going to boarding school, the draw of the city is certainly a factor.

5.2 For More Independence/Don't Want to Be Controlled

As with young people in most places, those the research team spoke to in the Pacific were anxious for independence, particularly as they got older, and the opportunity to move away from their parents and their often small and insular villages was a motivator in the movement. However, for young people under 18, this would be a

secondary reason for movement, as they would not be able to make the choice to leave on their own.

5.3 Bored or Lack of Entertainment at Home

Viewing rural areas as boring or unexciting is connected with modernization and access to international entertainment and stories from cities. This was particularly cited as a reason to leave home by adults in rural areas who wish to stem the flow of youth to urban areas. They spoke about ways to provide entertainment for young people, like soccer clubs, in rural areas that might prevent them from leaving.

6. Pregnancy

The movement of girl children out of the nuclear family due to pregnancy was only cited in data collection with reference to the Indo Fijian community. Specifically, girls go to shelters during their pregnancy if they are available, or at least away from their home, have the child, place the child in an orphanage and return to the family home. Fijian (as opposed to Indo-Fijian) girls present at such homes, some with children, were reported to be present because of abuse, rather than because their families did not want the shame of having an unwed mother in their community. The process of moving pregnant Indo Fijian girls during pregnancy and delivery is reported to largely serve the function of “saving face” or shame for the family, and allowing the girl to be married “successfully” in the future

6. Custom or Tradition

6.1 Arranged or Traditional Marriage

In all countries visited the practice of arranging marriages is still practiced, including for girls under 18 years old. These girls rarely have a choice about whom they marry, and in most cases, with the exception of matrilineal islands, these girls leave home to live with the men they marry. Bride price is exchanged before the marriage, with men and their families giving money, shell money, gifts and/or animals to the families of their wives. This practice is reportedly practiced with more frequency in rural areas. There are reports of girls who have been in arranged marriages who have run away, either back to their parents, to other family members or to other places, in order to

escape abusive husbands, however the researchers did not hear any such stories firsthand. However, whether abuse is more common in arranged marriages than in non-arranged marriages cannot be speculated upon. As described earlier in the section about the Solomon Islands, the practice of traditional marriage, including that of girls, has been manipulated by foreign members of the logging industry. The researchers were told about girls who were “married” to loggers and their family receives bride price from those men, but a formal marriage ceremony did not take place. The loggers left the girls behind when returning home and did not give support for any children they had fathered. Additional research into what is happening in and around logging camps is warranted, as that which has already been conducted is insufficient and this report is unable to expand upon those findings as logging camps are in very rural areas and were not able to be incorporated into this research.

6.2 Enhancing Familial Bonds and Traditions

One of the major causes of rural to rural and urban to rural migration is the desire of either parents or extended family to keep family ties strong and to teach children about their relatives and customs in the rural areas. Children may leave their parents to live with other extended family members to learn the traditional language, or particularly to live with their grandmother before they are of school age, if she believes they need to learn traditional values. These types of movement are often short-term, ranging from a few weeks or months during school vacation to a few years before the child begins attending school. Recognizing the existence and commonality of this type of movement is important because it dispels the notions that all children who are moving away from parents are landing in urban areas, when in fact, movement within and between islands described as rural occurs frequently as well, simply because of the varying opportunities present in each location.

6.3 Custom for Boys to Leave Village at 15 (Vanuatu)

Male youth in Vanuatu reported that in traditionally oriented or “kustom” villages a tradition exists whereby male youth leave their parents home as they enter adulthood. Young men at 15 – 16 years are expected to leave the house of their parents to reside with relatives or in groups. Police and adults interviewed in peri-urban settings who have relocated from rural areas indicate such practices continue in a new form. Young

men are found living together in shelters made of local materials and may be linked to substance abuse and crime.

6.4 Swap Girls Between Villages After a Marriage to Maintain Gender Balance (Vanuatu)

In Vanuatu, especially in small communities, maintaining a balance of gender and population is important for stability. When a girl is married to someone from another community, she moves to live with him there. In return a girl from the groom's community is sent to live where the bride is from to maintain gender balance and numbers of residents.

6.5 Make a Mistake and are Afraid to Go Home

The type of “mistakes” that were described included being caught smoking or drinking or having a boyfriend. It was particularly girls who would be afraid to go home after making such “mistakes” The mandate of girls and young women maintaining their virginity until marriage is very strong in Pacific culture and can be the cause of everything from expulsion from the home to abuse. In Kiribati young women talked about how, if a young woman engaged in a sexual relationship and her father or uncle found out, she might be beaten severely if she returned home. This includes if her boyfriend raped her, the girl would still be blamed and would be beaten upon returning home. The result of this is that many young women are unable to return home because of shame and because their family might not accept them.

7. Gay, Lesbian, or Transgender Issues

The issue of whether gay, lesbian, or transgender young people are more likely to leave home, whether kicked out by parents or choosing to leave, was not explored in depth. However, in several cases it was mentioned as a reason that young people might not live at home. Additionally, in Kiribati the researchers learned that there were houses where gay and transgender men, both young and adult, live together, as they are not accepted in the community at large. This isolation, and associated lack of access to support and health services, is certainly a risk factor and should be recognized and integrated into programming.

8. Divorce or Separation or Remarriage

Both separation and divorce were named as causes of children living away from not only one biological parents, as might be expected, but from both parents. Because divorce is a relatively new practice within the Pacific, there is neither extensive custom nor legal systems that dictate how and by whom children will be cared for. After separation or divorce, called a broken marriage in the Pacific, the place of children is often unclear. Many stories were told of situations where children end up being unwanted by any extended family members after their parents had split up. Or where, after remaining in their mother's care, they were then sent away after the mother remarried, as her new husband saw them as a threat. There is very little in the way of social or legal protection for children whose parents have divorced, nor are there standards for how children are cared for afterwards, nor for anything similar to child support, or payment from the non-custodial parent to the custodial parents to supplement childcare costs.

10. Peer Influence or Own Choice

Young people, particularly young men, may choose to leave home because of influences of their friends or peer pressure. Groups of them may migrate to urban areas together to find jobs. Particularly in the Solomon Islands this can mean a lack of permanent housing, sleeping in unprotected areas, and working informally, if at all. Though there is a fascination in rural areas with the young men who go off on such an "adventure", in fact, it appears that these young men are often unable to find work and turn to petty crime to allow them to eat and purchase alcohol. Support systems for youth who arrive in urban areas, such as vocational training, could help stem the rise in gangs of youth committing normally petty, and sometimes serious crimes. One such serious crime that was described as often being committed by gangs of young men that must be mentioned is gang rape. It was commonly mentioned and poses a serious threat not only to the health and safety of young women, but also to their future ability to function successfully in society, as the young women may be blamed

for the rape and be unable to marry in the future, which can be detrimental as husbands are generally described as women's only way to access income.

Unique to Kiribati, both young people in CSEC and sex work spoke about youth who leave home specifically because they have heard or been told that life is easier and better on the foreign shipping boats than it is in the rest of the country. Specifically, it is one of the only ways that young women have access to cash, due to a severe shortage of employment in Kiribati, and low education levels of women. Additionally, it gives them access to food and other goods. Finally, because of the epidemic levels of family violence and violence experienced in personal relationships, the prospect of engaging in CSEC or sex work aboard boats can be safer than staying ashore.

11. Drugs and Alcohol

References to drug abuse in the study countries normally pertained to marijuana. Being caught using marijuana can result in a young person being kicked out of their home by parents or whomever is caring for them. Young people kicked out because of drugs may be less likely to be taken in by relatives. Alcohol use by young people, especially young people, was described as increasing. Also, "home brew", or alcohol made of yeast, sugar, and whatever else is available, is present in the Pacific and can be very dangerous as levels of alcohol are unknown and can be high enough to be lethal. Additionally, some see the presence of kava, primarily in Fiji and Vanuatu and increasingly in Kiribati, as an issue for young people. Drinking kava is sedating and while it is not generally viewed as harmful by most people in the Pacific, it is of concern if consumption is high among young people, as it is an added cost and may prevent them from engaging in productive work.

12. Adoption

The research indicates that in the Pacific very young children are most often adopted by family members who take children because they want them, take them from mothers who are deemed unfit or incapable, or because they can't have children of their own. This adoption almost always occurs when children are infants, and they are then raised as a member of the family that adopts them.

The findings of the research suggest that most adoption in the Pacific is customary adoption rather than formal.²⁰ This means that members of his or her extended family who have de facto guardianship care for the child, but rarely are legal steps followed to formalize the adoption.

Especially in Fiji and the Solomon Islands customary adoption is associated bride price. Any member of the groom's family who has contributed to the payment of a woman's bride price then has a kind of claim over that woman and whatever is hers. This can range from having her work for her extended family without pay, or to the guardianship of her children. Essentially, if members of the extended family decide that a woman, whose bride price they have helped pay, should not raise a child she is carrying or has given birth to, or that they would like to raise that child, the woman does not have the right to contest the decision. This is generally related either to a woman being deemed as having too many children so another member of her husband's extended family will adopt her child and raise it as their own. Or, if a member of her husband's extended family has not been able to have children of their own, they, through the elders of the family, may claim her child and raise it as their own. This generally occurs when the child is still very young, and that child is then able to inherit land and other rights that come to members of the family into which he or she is adopted.

Formal adoption by foreigners was cited as potential reason that children might leave home, and certainly holds the potential for adverse outcomes. However, despite the worry expressed by interviewees about this type of adoption, very little is known about its actual existence, nor was there any mention of it beyond isolated incidents known from media stories. While the potential for the occurrence of international adoptions that lead to abuse occurring does exist, and should be monitored, it is much less frequent, if occurring at all, than customary adoptions occurring regularly in both urban and rural communities in the Pacific.

²⁰ Whilst focus groups included parents who had informally adopted there were not reports of formal adoption.

The one place where more frequent international adoption was confirmed was in Kiribati. This occurred several years ago when the South Korean government went to Kiribati in attempts to locate children fathered to i-Kiribati women who had relationships with Korean men working on fishing boats. The mothers of these children were then given the opportunity to send these children to live with their fathers in South Korea.

13. Natural Disaster

Natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes, and flood occur in the Pacific and can result in mass forced migration. This can lead to separation of children from parents, or if one or both parents die children may be moved to live with relatives. This is where the traditional terminology of separation can apply and while it is concerning, emergency response in the Pacific appeared relatively robust and measures to prevent family separation were described during interviews.

14. To Practice or Perform in Sporting or Cultural Events

In the Solomon Islands young people go to the island of Guadalcanal, where Honiara is located to play in sports tournaments. They may go for extended periods and there were cases mentioned where young people decided not to return home after the end of the sporting event.

In Kiribati there is a unique practice, where secondary aged children gather in schools or communal areas for weeks or months at a time to prepare for cultural events including dancing, school exams or sports. During this period the young people live together, often in the school, and have little supervision. This practice was mentioned by several different participants and may be a high-risk environment due to the lack of supervision, mixed boarding of genders, and the isolated nature of the place where the young people stay.

15. Prison

If one parent of a child goes to prison, this could lead to the child being moved to live with relatives. This is because men are usually the sole income earners for a household, so that if the father of a family is imprisoned, the mother will have to

choice but to move in with relatives, whether her children stay with her or are taken care of by other relatives depends on the particular circumstances.

16. Diseases and Health Issues

Movement to the city may be if a child or member of the family has serious health problems and needs to be close to an urban hospital. Other health issues that could lead to children being sent away or leaving home include contracting HIV, having a mental illness, or having leprosy. The commonality of children being sent away for such medical conditions is unknown, but as these young people are considered members of vulnerable groups it is certainly worth investigating further and ensuring that support programs are accessible to these populations.

18. Parents Leave

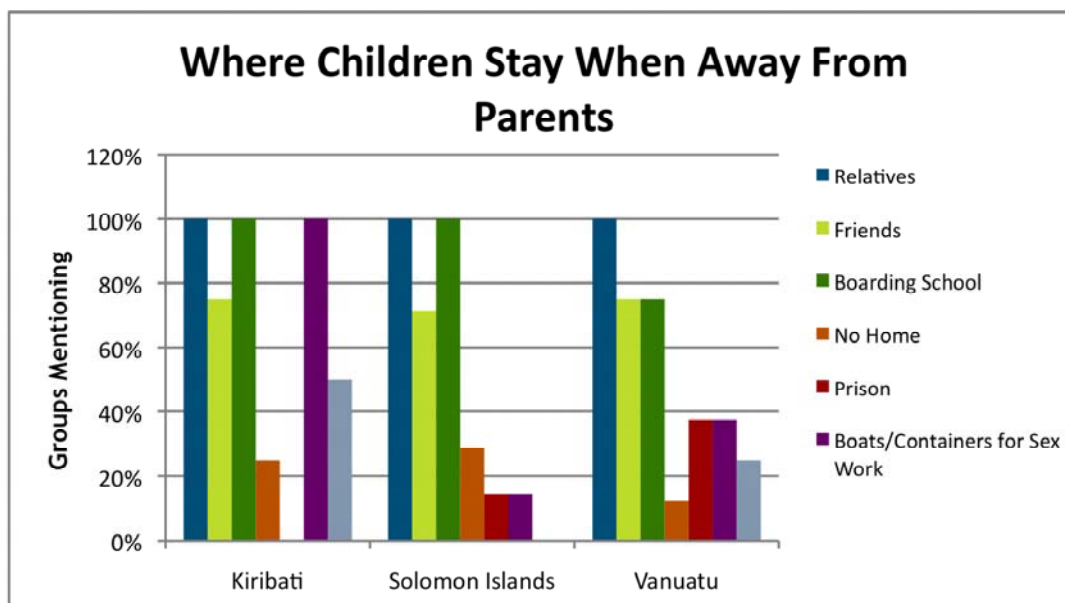
One or both parents may leave, most often for work, in which case children are often sent to boarding school or to live with relatives. Parents may leave on work programs to New Zealand or Australia, or may migrate to another Pacific country, most often Fiji for greater work or education opportunities.

Typology of Separation

Where do children live if they are not with their nuclear family? What are the potential benefits and drawbacks about each living arrangement?

1. Supplementary Care

In the Pacific, extended family care can function in ways both similar to, and distinct from, the way such care functions in the West, often to augment or replace nuclear family care when those families are struggling. A primary difference is that, in the Pacific, the movement of children out of the nuclear family is not marked with stigma or necessarily viewed as synonyms with an inability to cope. While children may be moved to ease the burden on struggling families, they may also leave for aspirational reasons including education and economic advancement. Arrangements are largely informal, with the extended family taking an active and at times dominant role in the



decision making process, particularly when concerning younger and single parents. Once children have been placed in new settlements extended family relatives may be authorized to take on disciplinary roles including rule making and punishment, assigning them household tasks, and making significant decisions about their household roles, including whether or not they attend school, and future including marriage prospects, often with little consultation with the nuclear family.

The vast majority of children moving away from their parents live with extended family or members of their clan or cultural group. Focus groups suggested that in some instances, family friends may also be considered as appropriate caregivers, though this was seldom suggested as a regular alternative to biological relatives.

With adequate support relatives can accommodate children successfully, receiving care and support, while also contributing to the family hosting them. While parents, children, and relatives hosting children all cited the difficulties inherent in sending children away, living with unfamiliar relatives, and caring for another's children, they all also appeared to be coping rather well. Stressors they were faced include: overcrowding in the home, lack of economic capacity to accommodate all people in the household, and with that a lack of food, school, fees and petty cash for things like bus rides and snacks for children. Relatives hosting children need to make decisions about the allocation of their funds, which often results in the prioritization of the

wellbeing of their biological children, rather than those they are hosting. Some families seem extremely well organized and make necessary adjustments in order to cope. Children are given work within the household, domestic and agricultural, and in some instances sent to work outside in order to contribute to the household economy to accommodate for their presence. However, hosted children may be less regular school attendees, or at the very least attend less regularly than the biological children of the family providing supplementary care. They may be pulled from school during hard economic times in order to boost household income, and spare the family school fees and other school related costs for that day. Girls seemed to fare worse in such situations.

Another potential risk in supplementary care arrangements is the potential for conflict between the children being hosted and those in the family providing care. Jealousy and fighting was reported between biological and hosted children, largely linked to an apparently well-founded belief that they were not receiving equal treatment. On the part of biological children, they may be bitter because they receive less food, goods, and time from their parents because of the addition of children to the household. On the part of hosted children, they may be angry when biological children are prioritized, given more to eat, less work to do, more time to study, and more often attend school. Severe arguments may result in boys who are being hosted leaving the house, in pursuit of a better living situation. In some cases they may move to other members of their extended family and in others they may chose “moving freely” on the streets, sleeping in shipping containers and in shop fronts. Despite the negative connotations of homelessness in much of the West, many youth described such a situation positively, associating it with freedom and self-determination. Focus groups also described a kind of downward spiral, where children may begin by moving from one relative to another in search of one that can meet their basic needs, occasionally spending a night or two on the street, then progressing towards homelessness, which has its own inherent risks, described later.

Despite the fact that biological children are often seen by all parties to receive priority treatment from hosting parents, those parents often work very hard to provide for all members of their household. They do this in order to fulfill their cultural obligation to care for members of their extended family. They also do this because, once hosted

children have completed school and found a job, they are obligated to repay those who provided them supplementary care while they were attending school. Thus, older and formerly hosted children will provide additional support to their host family, which in turn can be used so that family can provide for the children they are currently hosting. This reciprocal relationship works in the favor of both the hosting family and hosted children when it functions well, and so supporting the ability of both parties to be successful best supports the supplemental care relationship.

2. Boarding Schools

Boarding schools are quite common in the Pacific, although their quality varies widely. Some schools are government run, have competitive entrance procedures, and attendance is considered prestigious. On the other hand, other boarding schools may be under limited regulation by any government body and run by churches or other organizations. Due to the wide variance in quality of education and care received in boarding schools it is difficult or not impossible to generalize about the risks that exist for children who attend them. However, by better understanding the different types of boarding schools, and what exists in each that may increase or decrease risks faced by children, intervention, if needed, may be more easily targeted to those at greatest risk.

2.1 Formal Boarding Schools

Two broad categories of formal boarding schools exist, those that are subject to government oversight and regulation, most often those run by the government, and those that are private and run by other bodies or religious groups, and are not government regulated. The level of regulation to which non-government formal boarding schools are subject varies greatly by country, with some countries inspecting at least schools if not boarding facilities, whereas others see non-government boarding schools as entirely outside their jurisdiction and have little to no interaction with them. Most formal boarding schools exist for secondary education, where it is the norm for children to leave their nuclear families. Some formal boarding schools do exist for primary education, however, those these are significantly less frequently found, and are more likely to cater to children from extremely rural areas.

Given the lack of secondary education opportunities, there are many benefits to children attending boarding schools. They are able to attain a higher level of education and continue studying for longer. As they are away from home they have more time to study because they are free from household chores and tasks. They have what both young people and adults perceive to be a safe place to learn, as well as a bed and meals, which can lighten the parents' economic burden of care. They also experience a social freedom, which is very different from the often strict environments from which they've come, which allows them more time to socialize and make friends.

However, there are many risks to attending boarding school as well. Children may be ill supervised by teachers and those looking after them, and may be more likely to become involved in early sexual activity, alcohol or drugs; all parts of peer pressure which was often cited as a downside of boarding school. Also, because there is little communication between parents and children attending boarding school, they may attend class little or not at all and parents might not be aware for some time. They also may miss their parents, as well as the emotional and physical care they receive from them, which could cause them to perform poorly in school.

Finally, the risk of abuse from teachers or school staff is also increased when students are boarding, and they may have little recourse in the case of abuse. Also, some young people cited the risk of suicide, which although not addressed in this study, but may be valid given the high incidence of suicide in the Pacific.

2.2 Informal Boarding Schools

Informal boarding schools exist mostly in rural areas, where, despite the fact the school is not equipped for boarders and has neither the facilities nor the staff to take them on, children live on site during the school week. Informal boarding schools exist mainly at the primary school level, with very young children traveling, by foot or by boat, many kilometers to school each Sunday evening, living in basic buildings of local materials or classrooms during the week, then walking home again on Friday afternoons. These schools are highly unregulated, and children generally look after themselves, preparing their own meals, and even tending to their own gardens. In some instances a teacher living on site or community members will look in on the children. But depending on the distance of the school from the community,

community members may feel more or less ownership of that school and responsibility for the wellbeing of children and their level of involvement will vary accordingly. Although the research team did not visit the schools, their existence was confirmed by youth in several locations. On the other hand, members of the education sector, government, and NGOs all denied the existence of such schools. Further investigation is warranted to examine the presence and prevalence of such schools and the health and safety status of children residing there.

3. Institutions

3.1 Orphanages

Of the four countries visited orphanages only exist in Fiji. Much has been written about the benefits and risks associated with orphanages and group homes and need not be reiterated here. The emphasis is that, despite the fact that orphanages do not exist in all countries targeted by UNICEF Pacific's Child Protection program, this does not mean that they should not be part of a targeted intervention in Fiji. According to members of government and NGO staff the majority of children living in orphanages in Fiji are of Indo-Fijian descent, as placing children in orphanages is generally considered unacceptable to Fijians. Encouraging the government to establish standards for children's homes and ensuring that they maintain such standards is an important part of the role of social welfare and can be supported by UNICEF.

3.2 Juvenile Justice Facilities

Juvenile justice facilities were not a focal point of this report as UNICEF has undertaken considerable research on the topic previously. It is mentioned here simply to ensure it is within the frame of reference for places children might reside when away from their parents and merits involvement to ensure that children are treated well.

3.3 Shelters

The research team visited shelters and spoke to shelter staff members in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. These shelters are run by NGOs or by the church and have the capacity to serve very different sizes of populations. The existence of such shelters is

essential for the safety of women and children, so they have someone to go if they are leaving an abusive situation. However, particularly in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, all members of NGOs and government were not always aware of the existence of such shelters or the services they provide. Connecting these shelters with organizations that serve vulnerable populations is essential to ensure that they are utilized and that populations in need can access them.

An alternative type of shelter that the research team encountered only in Fiji was that for youth and young men and women who do not have a permanent home. This shelter was run by a church group and despite what appeared to be good intentions, appeared as though it could be a high risk setting, particularly for girls and young women. Sleeping arrangements were co-ed, with several large single mattresses where many people spanning a wide age range slept together. Additionally, homeless youth who were official members of the church group were able to sleep inside the main building, whereas “visitors” slept outside in a space with a roof but no walls. The existence of such a place points to a need for additional shelter space, however that space should be well regulated with particular attention paid to the needs and vulnerabilities of females and young people, irrespective of their religious beliefs or affiliations.

4. Independent

4.1 Homeless and Transient

From what the researchers learned, it is very rare for any young people to be entirely homeless in the Pacific. It is more likely that they will be transient, moving from the home of one relative to the next, sometimes sleeping in communal outdoor spaces, other times in the homes of relatives or friends. Whether youth who do not have a permanent home are more likely to have been living away from their parents before they became “homeless” is hard to say, but it was reported that if a hosting situation is unsuccessful, sometimes youth end up being transient rather than to continue trying to live with other relatives; other causes of homelessness were not explored. Reaching this population, which appears to be mostly comprised of young men, is important as the risks associated with this cohort are numerous, including becoming involved in crime and excessive alcohol and drug use.

Of particular concern is a situation concerning young girls in Port Vila, Vanuatu, who reported “wandering” to befriend an older person (male or female) who may take them into their house. Recognizing the advantages of securing resources and shelter they were also able to identify the potential of future sexual abuse.

4.2 With a home, but without supervision (staying with friends or own apt)

The likelihood that young people in the Pacific might live with their friends or stay in their own apartment is minimal. Young people under 18 are unlikely to have the resources to pay for their own apartment unless they come from a wealthy family, and parents are unlikely to pay for such a place as it would be unsupervised and considered unsafe for children. However, there are instances where such arrangements occur, particularly if young people have older friends with whom they may stay. These arrangements were described by youth as preferable to staying with relatives in that there is more freedom and there will be less work to do around the home, on the other hand they are more at risk for being victims of crime or to go hungry.

A notable example of such housing was found in Kiribati, where there are several abandoned or vacant houses where groups of young people live together. One of these houses is where groups of gay and transgender men live, both under and over 18. There are also several houses where sex workers and young people involved in CSEC reside. This group housing is cited by residents as preferable as it gives them freedom to pursue income and other activities as they please, but also can be dangerous and lacks any type of support system other than that provided by other residents. The existence of separate housing for young people who do not fit into the traditional i-Kiribati view of acceptable behavior speaks to their isolation from the community and certainly puts them at greater risk of exploitation. Additionally, it makes them easily identifiable as the other, living outside the boundaries of much of society, making it seem acceptable to deny them services and support. This is a vulnerable group that merits particular intervention to ensure their protection and to minimize social exclusion.

Recommendations

The following recommendations span interventions from prevention through to response. The final section outlines recommendations from communities. Whilst most recommendations in the section relate to children living separately from parents there is also coverage of noteworthy issues that simply arose as part of the research.

Targeting supplementary care arrangements for support

The extended family is a crucial mediating factor in increasing or reducing risk for children living away from their nuclear family. Targeted support for hosting families could greatly reduce the potential for a range of negative outcomes including illness, social disruption, and commercial sexual exploitation. Support might be provided through enhancing social protection for particularly vulnerable families, including those hosting extra children, which stretches what is already a strained family budget and household. An example would include the Fiji Department of Social Welfare distributing cash grants to parents taking in additional children. The World Bank and UNICEF are currently reviewing criteria for cash transfer schemes; results of that evaluation should be incorporated into any future hosting family support system.²¹ Potential for expanding this kind of support in the Pacific would benefit from collaboration and information sharing between the Bank, UNICEF, and AusAID, who are currently undertaking a Pacific study on Social Protection.²²

Support to host families could be best achieved via coordination between different agencies working cross sectorally. For example hosting families meeting agreed criteria might benefit from support that enables them to maintain or increase household income. Small business and livelihood support training may prove useful, and avoid difficulties with direct cash transfers which may not reach children, sometimes due to male headed households favoring other forms of expenditure.

²¹ At the time of undertaking field work the World Bank had dispatched a technical team to Fiji to review technical aspects of their support to the Department of social welfare, engaging UNICEF has part of the process.

²² See Terms of Reference for AusAID social protection study provided by UNICEF Solomon Islands. At the time of field work the UNICEF office in Honiara was in discussions with the consultant team to explore possible synergies.

Notwithstanding the need for action, a note of caution is also recommended in relation to targeted social protection support. A risk may exist that targeted assistance for child support, particularly in the form of cash, can inadvertently cut into and damage social fabric by placing a price on the extended family responsibility. Families may become unwilling to take on relatives' children without assistance, or alternatively seek out children as a means to boost income rather than responding to genuine need.

Messaging Focusing on the Strength of the Family

Messaging to improve the protection of children would be best served by first mapping out existing practices that are largely beneficial to children. In order for messaging to be successful it will need to be presented in a way that will promote ownership by local people. Accordingly, describing children as separate entities to families would not seem to be useful, as children in the Pacific context are viewed as part of, but not the center or focal point of, families. Mining the common ground of what might be understood to be beneficial for the family unit or community, and which is also good for children is suggested. Government social welfare staff in the Pacific suggested that messages about strong children and strong families would resonate with local communities. At a basic level this may mean appealing to longer-term visions that include the reward of mutual support, and status of having children who are successful, evidenced in education and employment.

Such suggestions could be construed as undermining the absolute nature of child rights, as they would not be enumerated in a direct way, as they are now through Child Rights and CRC campaigns. However, critics should consider the need for pragmatism and the end goal of promoting child rights, rather than focusing on the rhetoric that is used to achieve the final outcome. The Committee on the Rights of the Child makes special mention of the potential for children's rights and their best interests to be conceived as both collective and individual.²³ Recognizing the need to consider the collective cultural rights of communities in best interest determinations, the specific or individual child should be prioritized.

²³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Indigenous Children and Their Rights Under the Convention*, General Comments No.11, CRC/C/GC/11 (2009) para 25.

Registering Children Living Away from Parents

From a cost benefit analysis the benefits of registering children living separately from their parents is not worthwhile. Given the logistic and resource constraints of the Pacific context and the high volume of movement there would need to be more conclusive evidence that the process of moving has any causal relationship with risk. Moreover given the broad typology of movement it may be better to focus on efforts on specific kinds of movement. Focus groups participants and key informants indicated consistently that children whose parents had separated or divorced or in which fathers took on mistresses are of grave concern. Children moved from these families seem to do so without the equivalent planning and consideration found in other movements, and thus experience poorer outcomes. Children moving to step parent's houses, once mothers or fathers remarry, may not be well received and were perceived to experience heightened risk of physical and sexual abuse.

However, in spite of evidence that certain kinds of movement may warrant greater attention this should not be construed as an argument toward a kind of registration. Firstly, this would be extremely expensive and time consuming. Secondly, it would ignore the fact that most families and local service providers are already aware of such families, particularly given the relatively low level of divorce, and that even if the government had such a registry it would not guarantee appropriately targeted resources. Perhaps if such resources are developed but have difficulty targeted services such a registry could be created, but given the size of the population it does not appear warranted now or in the near future.

While registering adoptions may seem like another possible protection measure, it is again worth considering the practicalities and costs compared with potential for positive change. To begin, a number of key informants suggested that in deeper rural areas marriages might not be registered, adding a layer of complication for registering children. Most important though was the fact that apart from NGO references to heightened risk for "customary adoption", there was not evidence from interviews and focus groups to suggest or confirm this risk. Focus groups suggested that adopted children were treated as biological children, meaning for example that they received preferential treatment to hosted children, just as biological children would.

The exception to such arrangements would seem to be found in Indo Fijian families. Data suggests that teenage Indo Fijian children are actively encouraged to place children up for adoption outside of the family; young girls move away to give birth, place their children up for adoption, and then return to families, free to marry without shame. The vast majority of children in Fijian orphanages are from Indo Fijian families.

Targeting Children from Broken Families for Support

On the whole parents seem aware of the risks they are taking in sending children away, whether to boarding school, friends or extended family. Decisions are taken on the basis of necessity, with factors including education, parental demands, finances, extended family requests, and future returns. A degree of planning and negotiation takes place, which is not seen when children are moved due to family separation. The movement of children due to parental separation is marked by a lack of planning and negotiation, with those accepting children less likely to be either willing or able to cope. Children are moved outside of the normal considerations of obligation and perceived social and financial capital linked to children. Data suggest that children moving because of broken families fare worse than others, with a possible correlation between movement and increased risk of abuse and exploitation.

Given the general lack of a causal relationship between moving away and risk plus the overall immense scale of movement, it is sensible to consider targeting children from broken families. Such children are easily identified in communities and broadly understood to be in need of support. Government, NGO and community based programs could target such children for support in terms of altering existing selection criteria as well as beginning family support programs to assist hosting families. This could include any moves toward social protection interventions mentioned above.

Support Services Responding to Family Violence

Family violence including domestic violence was reported in all country settings with respondents describing alarmingly brutal levels of violence toward women. Services to support women and their children are limited and relatively isolated, operating without networks or adequate support. In the case of Kiribati such services are vital,

yet overloaded, struggling to provide the range of health and psychosocial support required. In other instances such as Vanuatu, agencies dealing with abused young women were not even aware they could refer to such agencies, in the same town. Increased support in the form of funding, training and networking is recommended.

Broader Engagement on Trafficking

Whilst Fiji has been granted an improved ranking of Tier 2 Watch List there is, by implication, the possibility that this can be reversed to Tier 3 in the next reporting period. Though the 2010 State Department TIP report heralds the improved legislative framework and steps toward training and workshops, there will be need to show sustained efforts to avoid relegation or indeed improve rankings.

The UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provides free technical assistance to countries needing support in reviewing or upgrading legislation and policy to comply with International Standards. This can be provided out of the Bangkok office of the UNODC via a request from the state party. UNICEF could play a role of facilitating such support via contacts in government. The consultants' assessment is that the current legislative framework would not be viewed as adequate by the US Government, and would require changes to be viewed as sufficiently active in prevention of trafficking, prosecution of traffickers and providing support and redress for victims.

While many countries seek support in an attempt simply improve their TIP rankings there is also an opportunity to engage in dialogue and move toward addressing a broader range of issues. Even though the motivation of US ranking may be odious to some stakeholders, it has generated a great deal of attention and possible resources to address issues. Importantly, UNICEF engaging them in the process could rightly direct resourcing and attention toward CSEC.

Indications are that the US Embassy is keen to rank the Solomon Islands, and based on reports of CSEC this may be at the Tier 3 level. There is an opportunity to engage with the US in this process, to request that an "audit" of sorts occur in the Solomon Islands. Such a process could involve a more rigorous assessment of the facts on the ground, and an overview of current legislative and policy framework. This could help

bring a higher level of professionalism to the research and ranking process, and would provide a platform for the Solomon Islands to “get its house in order” before moving to punitive measures on the part of the US. Engaging with the US embassy in Suva would also have the advantage of providing another source of information, to move beyond their current sourcing which appears to be relatively narrow. US embassy staff have expressed interest in receiving UNICEF reports on the issue and seem willing to discuss the issues.

Targeted CSEC Programming

Notwithstanding the need for holistic and integrated programming it is worth considering the need for targeted CSEC programs. All countries visited reported increasing levels of CSEC with limited evidence that existing programs offered by UNICEF are having either a preventative or remedial impact. Examples of alternatives might include cooperative agreements with NGOs and more specific support to government to enforce legislation toward adult offenders exploiting children, recognizing children as victims rather than offenders. Given UNICEF’s links across government, NGOs, and civil society alike the agency is well placed to facilitate the development of basic, practical, country specific action plans. Such plans could be based around the current framework of regulation, service provision and attitudinal change, and straddle prevention through to response. Importantly plans need to include both local and international components of CSEC, thus avoiding the convenience of allocating all blame to external causes. Finally, the development of plans needs to be broadly inclusive, for example involving children involved in CSEC, incorporating their views and advice on appropriate responses. The private sector should also be engaged, particularly those industries such as tourism, logging and commercial fishing, known to have links to CSEC.

There are good opportunities for UNICEF to embark in a range of awareness raising and advocacy initiatives with industry, via a collective approach with government. This might include risk mapping with industry, facilitating training and awareness raising to industry staff on standards and legal obligations, reviewing licensing frameworks to include social responsibility, and strengthening government surveillance, community awareness raising and ensuring that laws are in place to

enable prosecution of offenders (see Solomon Islands). Industries that could be included are Fisheries, Logging, and Tourism.

In terms of preventative programming it is recommended that support to establish comparable programs to Won Smol Bag in other locations, such as Honiara and Tarawa, be investigated. Their comprehensive approach and broad access to at risk youth is laudable and worth scaling up. At present there is very little by way of non-formal education, life skills, or recreation for youth who have moved to the capital, finding themselves with limited options. Given the cross sector linkages such programs could be considered as part of education or child protection sections initiatives or jointly.

Increased Understanding and Regulation of Educational Residential Facilities

A number of the more concerning types of child/parent separation are linked to education, both as a driver (quality, access, school fees) and a destination (boarding, dorms, events). It is recommended that UNICEF Pacific Education and Child Protection approach these issues collaboratively.

Costs associated with education, including fees, mandatory contributions, uniforms and materials, are playing a role in the movement of children away from their families (Vanuatu) and in CSEC (Fiji). The cost of fees is also a critical loading factor determining the ability of hosting families to cope with increased economic burden. Such occurrences need to be brought to the attention of UNICEF education colleagues, and in turn to their Ministerial counterparts.

The highly concerning nature of primary aged children staying in largely self-managed dormitories needs further investigation. Despite government suggestions to the contrary community statements suggest these settings continue, linked directly to a lack of educational facilities. Recognizing the responsibility of parents and communities in such centers, there is clearly a role for government in increasing registration and regulation. This can only be achieved through first establishing the facts on the ground, both in terms of quantitative and qualitative data, which will require time consuming rural work. Where possible the government should be

involved in this process, limited the possibility of overly defensive responses and increasing buy in to solutions.

Finally, it has been established in Kiribati that secondary aged children are spending months away from families as part of preparations for exams and sporting and cultural events. Children are sleeping in classrooms used for day students and not designed for boarding. Day-staff are charged with responsibility to care for students though their willingness, suitability, and training is not known. Given the potential for abuse and exploitation in such settings it is recommended that this be taken up with education counterparts in Kiribati and investigated in other locations.

Recommendations from Communities and members of NGOs and Government

- More schools with better trained teachers in rural areas
- Reduce the number of people coming to urban centers, many would stay at home if they had educational opportunities.
- Awareness raising about the risks of youth migration in rural and urban areas.
- Raise awareness with families about the dangers of sending your children away
- Better communication with parents and relatives at home when children are living away from home would be useful.
- Start programs that would encourage children to stay at home with their families: educational, economic and recreational opportunities.
- School inspections should look at dormitories
- Lack of access to shelters, if survivors of abuse want to leave and don't have a family member to take them in, there are very few options.
- Focus on families that are vulnerable, that results in children being moved around; give support to families in regions where children who move originate to help them not move away.
- More places for children to stay if they go to school away from home (if they don't have relatives or relatives are not a good option)
- Hard to report problems in small communities or to police (can be complicit), a place where you can report things like abuse or child prostitution would be helpful.
- No technology for monitoring of things like child pornography.

- Organized prostitution of children via taxi drivers, family members and the like is increasing and relatively unmonitored, a strategy to address this and methods.
- Support for families hosting children – cash or help with school fees

Areas for Further Research and Investigation

Reports in the Solomon Islands and Kiribati suggest that a growing number of parents are moving to more developed Pacific countries such as New Zealand, with their children remaining behind, sometimes for extended periods. This was reported in relation to scholarships, study, and seasonal work. In the case of Kiribati this may be increasing as the Government and regional partners seek to preempt climate changed induced displacement. Migration schemes need further investigation, particularly the use of criteria and implications for children. The place of children in such plans needs to be highlighted and taken into account to ensure that efforts are not placing children at greater risk. Of concern is the potential that parents may falsify their status, claiming to be single in order to gain access to overseas opportunity. UNICEF could begin by engaging with various New Zealand High Commissions.

Hosting arrangements are a key in mediating the risk children face when away from their parents, whether positively or negatively. A families' ability to host successfully has direct impacts on education, health, risks of abuse, and CSEC. The household economy is a pivotal factor in ultimately determining the success or failure of a hosting arrangement. Targeted social protection interventions for families hosting children are worth investigating. Clearly this would need to be sophisticated and avoid the pitfalls associated with cash transfers to male-headed households. Support could build on existing social welfare systems such as those currently in place in Fiji, with expanded or revised criteria. At present there is interest in Social Protection interventions from both AusAID and the World Bank, with both recently conducting Pacific reviews.

Annexes

Focus Group Discussion Format

Collect: age, gender

Introduction of Study

Verbal consent from participants, Confidentiality Statement

Begin with introductions

Age, where you're from originally and when arrived here (and who you live with now) (we'll record gender)

- 1. What are the reasons children live away from their parents in [Vanuatu/Kiribati/Solomon Islands]?**
- 2. Where do children go once they leave?**
- 3. Where do children stay?**
- 4. What are the positives and negatives of each place listed under places children stay?**

Questionnaires

Caregiver Questionnaire

Date _____ Place _____

Participants _____ # F _____ #M _____, Ages _____

Introductions: Where are you from originally? How did you come to live here?
How long have you been caring for these children?

1. What are the reasons children are living away from their parents here?
 - a. Why do parents send children to live elsewhere?
 - b. Why do children leave?
2. What kind of support do you think children living away from their parents might need?
3. If not able to live with immediate parents what do you think is the best option for them?
4. What kind of dangers or bad things may happen to children when they are separated from their parents?
5. What were the most common negative consequences of children living away from their parents two years ago and this year? (ask for a # of cases if available)
6. Do you know of such cases? What are some commonalities between them? Would you describe the likelihood of children living away from their parents experiencing these dangers as very unlikely, somewhat unlikely, likely, somewhat likely or very likely?
 - a. Have you ever heard of children being forced to do things they don't want to do by someone? Like a particular type of work that they couldn't leave if they wanted to? Taken somewhere they couldn't leave if they wanted to?
7. Are there any factors that make children who are living away from their parents more vulnerable or likely to experience these negative consequences?
8. What kind of programs do you think there should be to deal with these issues?
9. What kind of programs do you have/ exist here at the moment?

Questions for Institutions and Government

Date _____

Name of Interviewee _____ Organization

1. What are the reasons children are living away from their parents here?
2. What kind of support do you think children living away from their parents might need?
3. If not able to live with immediate parents what do you think is the best option for them?
4. What kind of dangers or bad things may happen to children when they are separated from their parents?
5. Do you know of such cases? What are some commonalities between them? Would you describe the likelihood of children living away from their parents experiencing these dangers as very unlikely, somewhat unlikely, likely, somewhat likely or very likely?
6. What were the most common negative consequences of children living away from their parents two years ago and this year? (ask for a # of cases if available)
7. Are there any factors that make children who are living away from their parents more vulnerable or likely to experience these negative consequences?
8. What kind of programs do you think there should be to deal with these issues?
9. What kind of programs do you have at the moment?
10. Are there any guidelines or standards you follow in caring for the children who come here?

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONSULTANT AND RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Requesting Section: Child Protection

Date: February 2010

Programme Area / Project Involved: Study on root causes, effects and consequences of children being separated from their families in the Pacific region and recommend future programmatic interventions for UNICEF Child Protection Programme.

1. Purpose of Assignment:

To review existing studies and assessments and undertake brief primary research on issues causing separation of children from their families in the Pacific. The research will also involve undertaking stakeholder consultations to learn about current practices and forms of separation of children. Such practices will include informal foster care arrangements and boarding of children for educational and other purposes, including institutional care arrangements. The issues will be analysed in the context of potential for trafficking and exploitation of children.

2. Background/Rationale

Children in the Pacific face many factors that may render them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. These include gender-based and other forms of discrimination that affect children; dysfunctional families, violence and abuse in the family and community, social and economic marginalization, a lack of livelihood opportunities for children and young people as well as attitudes, perceptions, social norms and structural factors.

The Child Protection baseline research conducted in 2008 revealed that many children live away from their parents for a number of reasons. The proportion of adult respondents who reported that they have biological children living away from home ranges from 6% in Vanuatu to 25% in Kiribati and in the Solomons. In Fiji, the proportion is 11%. The majority of the children living away from their families appears to be girls. The baseline confirms that parents do not always have means to verify the well-being of their daughter/son directly but often take for granted that the care-giver provides proper care and protection. The baseline studies did not further elaborate on the risks faced by the children living away from their families but global research has confirmed that children living away from their family are generally at higher risk of violence, abuse and exploitation. Finding out more about the situation of those children living away from their families - be it with other families or in residential care institutions - and what can be done to better safeguard the rights and protection of these children is a recommended area of research.

Many children are undertaking their education by boarding in boarding schools although it is not known to UNICEF how many children are actually boarding in the Pacific island countries. However, indications are that numbers of children are 'at-risk' and may be harmed from large numbers, insufficient supervision, emotionally satisfying care, inadequate nutrition, poor standards of buildings and facilities. The risk of abuse by staff cannot be underestimated. Boarding schools are subject to similar risks and harms associated with institutional care of children. Quantitative and qualitative assessment is warranted to determine the situation of children attending boarding schools. It is also not clear to what extent the responsible Ministries, i.e. Ministries of Education, have established guidelines to regulate the standards of care provided in boarding schools, nor what monitoring system is in place.

It is believed that only Fiji has residential care institutions run by the Social Welfare department. In recent years, the Fiji Government has initiated a process to issue licenses to those residential care institutions that meet minimum standards, to provide training to staff etc. However, there is a need to ensure that children are only placed in institutions as a matter of last resort and that other, alternative family based care options are made more readily available.

In many Pacific Island countries, there are frequent reports of children being informally 'adopted', both by foreign nationals and by national citizens. The practice of 'giving' one child to another family member (sometimes involving some form of remuneration for the child) has been noted in many countries. In the Solomons, the practice of informally "adopting" girl children for the purpose of obtaining unpaid workers appears to be quite common and there are examples of such cases where the girls have ended up being mentally, physically and sexually abused in their adopted homes.²⁴ In Fiji, adoption has also been identified as a form of possible exploitation of children.²⁵ It appears that a review of informal adoption practices is urgently needed along with identification of recommendations for suitable controls on the practice; and recommendations for alternatives to adoption of children, including family-based kinship and foster care arrangements for Pacific island countries. While the Pacific is fortunately not (yet) having to deal with a large number of children being orphaned by HIV/AIDS, it appears that a strategy for establishing more formal, child-rights sensitive forms of kinship and foster care arrangements would be beneficial in the light of children who may be orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.

The issues outlined above may (or may not) be linked to trafficking of children. According to the Palermo protocol "*Trafficking in persons*" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the

²⁴ *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Sexual Abuse in the Solomon Islands*, Christian Care Centre of the Church of Melanesia and the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), 2004

²⁵ *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children in Fiji: A Situational Analysis*, Save the Children (Fiji), 2004

*purpose of exploitation.*²⁶ A combination of factors, including poverty and separation from families, increase their vulnerability to being trafficked. In the Pacific, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) has been highlighted in several reports and there are known risk factors that contribute to making Pacific children highly vulnerable to sexual violence, including gender discrimination, lack of educational and employment opportunities, lack of protective legislation and protective services. It has not been established, however, to what extent children involved in commercial sexual exploitation have also been trafficked. The possible link between commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Pacific and trafficking should be established as well as the potential risks of trafficking for children living away from their families.

3. Scope of Work/ Work Assignments

The study must provide definitive answers to the following three questions through the steps outlined below and provide a comprehensive final report with recommendations for the UNICEF Child Protection Programme. In doing so, the report should take into account its programmatic approach of building a protective environment, outline in what way the programme should address the issues of girls and boys separated from families (prevention/protection/response) and what collaboration must be sought with other UNICEF Programmes (i.e. Education Programme; HIV/AIDS programme) to address the issues.

The study will provide an overview of the situation in the Pacific region, but with focus on Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

1. What are the root causes to girls and boys living away from their biological parents either in other family-care settings or in residential homes, including boarding schools?

- Undertake desk review of existing studies, reports, assessments;
- Undertake consultations with relevant stakeholders;

2. What is the situation of girls and boys separated from families and what potential risks (including risk of trafficking) are they facing and why?

- Undertake desk review
- Consult relevant stakeholders, including key informants and children and young people, for example through interviews and focus group discussions. In conducting field research, ethical guidelines for interviewing and consulting children must be followed.

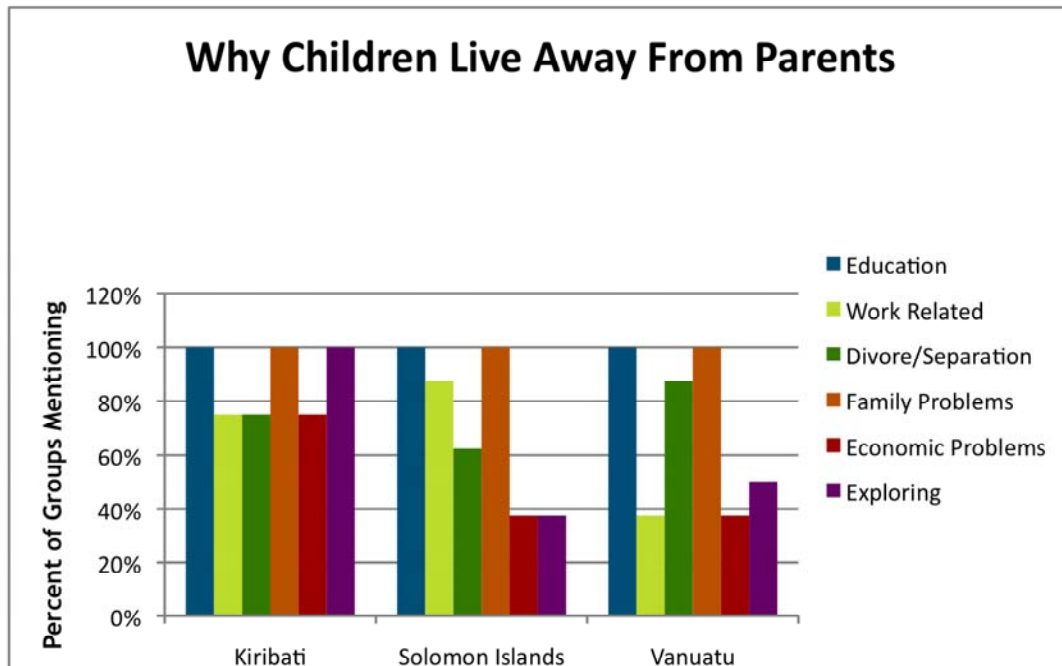
3. To what extent is trafficking an issue related to the issues of separation of children and known forms of exploitation of children in the Pacific, including Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children?

²⁶ *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crimes*

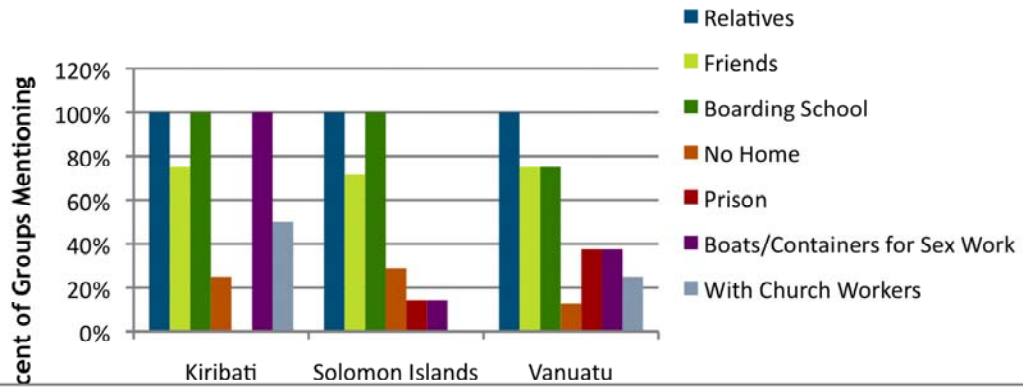
4. Report of findings and recommendations.

- Write a report (25,000 words) providing comprehensive responses to the three questions above;
- Based on the results, develop recommendations at the end of the report explaining what specific activities UNICEF Pacific's should be carrying out in regards to the issue of children being separated from their families.

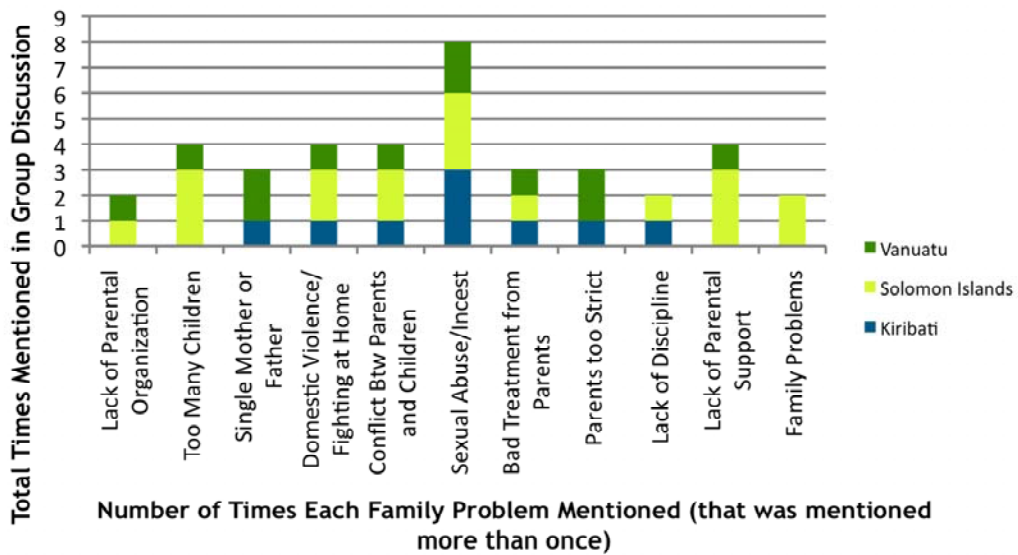
Charts



Where Children Stay When Away From Parents



Family Problems That Cause Children to Leave or Be Sent Away From Parents



Resources

Fiji

Ark of Hope
Chevalier Boys Home
Criminal Investigation Department/Police
Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS)
Fiji Social Welfare Office
Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
International Labor Organization
Homes of Hope
Ministry of Education Planning Office
Rescue Mission
Save the Children
St. Christopher's Orphanage Fiji
Treasure House Fiji Orphanage
UNICEF – Child Protection Section
- Education Section
United States Embassy
University of the South Pacific

Kiribati

AusAID
Australian High Commission
Fisheries, Natural, and Marine Resources Development Office
Kiribati Association of NGOs (KANGO)
Moroni College
New Zealand High Commission
UNICEF

Solomon Islands

Church of Melanesia, Christian Care Centre
Development Services Exchange (DSE)

Police

Save the Children

Solomon Islands Social Welfare Office

UNICEF – Child Protection

Vanuatu

Ministry of Education

UNICEF – Child Protection

Vanuatu Association of NGOs (VANGO)

Vanuatu Society for Disabled People

Vanuatu Teachers' Union

Vanuatu Women's Center

Wan Smol Bag

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