

GENERALLY, THERE ARE FOUR GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS IN SĀMOA. THEY RELATE TO THE FOUR TYPES OF SERVICE (*TAUTUA*) A SAMOAN WOULD NORMALLY RENDER IN ONE'S LIFE TIME.

[ SERVICE TO ONE'S FAMILY, VILLAGE, CHURCH AND THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. ]

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### 1. Introduction

The theme and goal of this report is *sustainable livelihoods in a changing Sāmoa*. To help achieve that goal, it is important to examine in some detail the subject of governance because it is one of the most important aspects of life in Sāmoa. Governance is an authority system with its associated structures and rules that define not only the relationship between these structures but the manner in which they operate for the achievement of identifiable outcomes. Generally, there are four such governance systems in Sāmoa and they relate to the four types of service (*tautua*) a Samoan would normally render in his or her life time. They are service to one's family, village, church and the national government. It is these four kinds of *tautua* in the context of their respective authority systems that are discussed here.

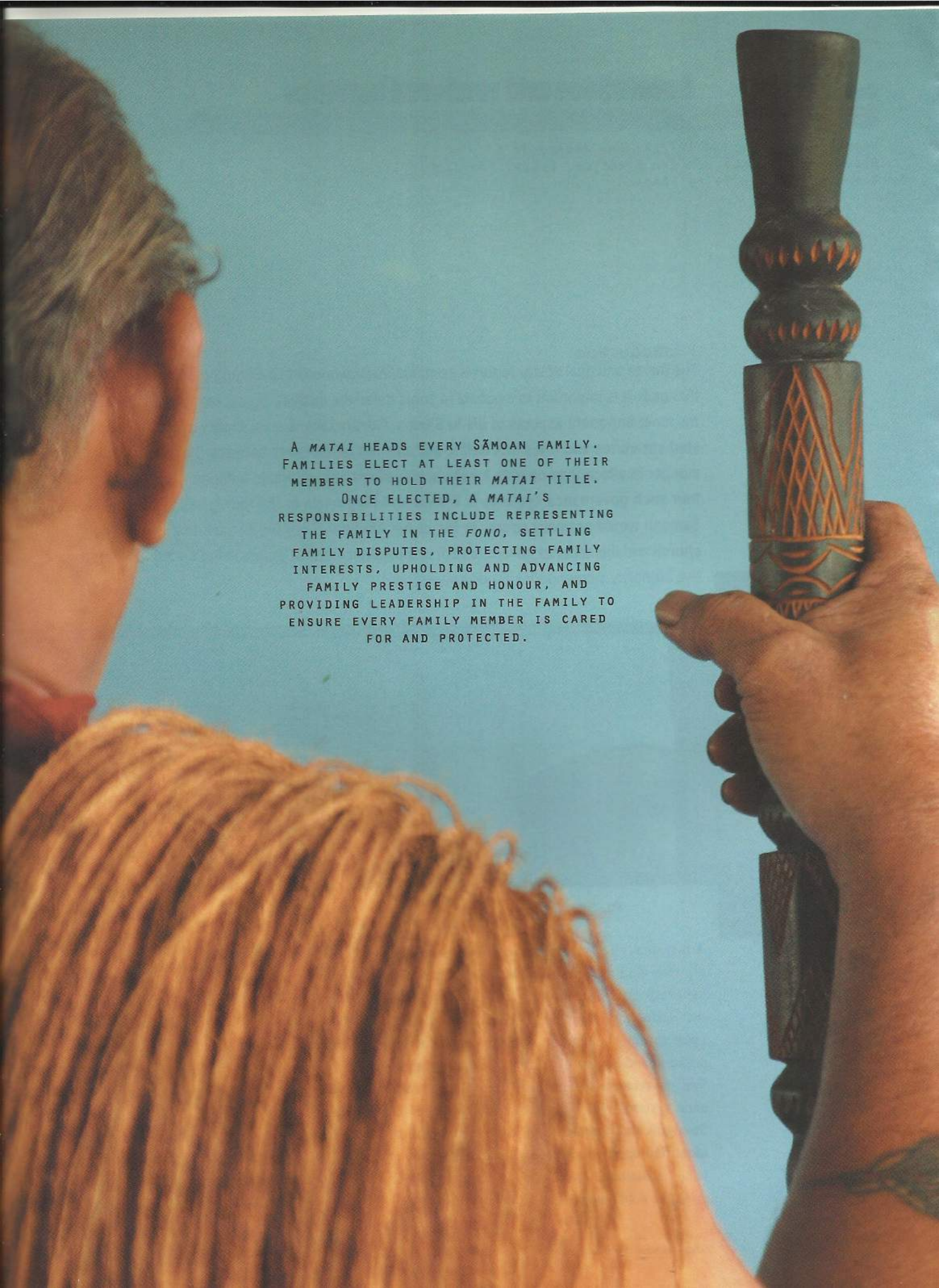


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THE FAMILY, VILLAGE, CHURCH AND GOVERNMENT imply four distinct types of authority systems with their respective organisational structures and rules that define the relationship between those structures and their operation. A Sāmoan can be exposed to and be part of at least one or all of those four governance systems. All these four governance systems will be discussed in this chapter. Strengths and weaknesses of each system will be identified upon which recommendations relating to how sustainable livelihood in a changing Sāmoa might be achieved will be given.

### 1. Family governance

A *matai* (titled person) heads every Sāmoan family. Families elect at least one of their members to hold their *matai* title. Once elected, a *matai's* responsibilities include representing the family in the *fono* (village council of *matai*), settling family disputes, protecting family interests (such as lands and titles), upholding and advancing family prestige and honour, and providing leadership in the family to ensure that every family member is adequately cared for and protected. This ideal of the *matai* looking after the collective interests of his/



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her family should be expressed in the allocation of family land for the use of family members, the re-distribution of goods obtained in the reciprocal process of gift giving, and so forth. The bottom line is to uphold and perpetuate collective values for the benefit of all family members *vis-à-vis* individualistic values. Lessons on respect for one's elders, upholding mutual respect between brother and sister, knowing one's place in the family rank and position of responsibilities, respect for the *matai* and his wife, among others, are initially taught and learned in the family context. Successful achievement of these family objectives contribute to order, peace, security and well-being of family members, which would in turn contribute to order, peace, security and well-being of the village and the country generally.

Ideally, all family members should have a say in the election of their titleholders. However, the reality in some families is that only senior members speak in such discussions. Given this situation, it is important that before these family meetings, each family branch must meet to discuss their choice of candidate before their senior representative(s) speak on their behalf in family meetings. Two obstacles can prevent this from taking place. First, it could be that members who reside permanently on the title's residential land refuse to be involved in such a meeting because of personal differences. Second, it could be that members who reside permanently overseas could not be present in such meetings. Family members must try and work out a way of ensuring that these family discussions at branch level take place.

Samoa has not only grown (and is still growing) in size as clearly shown from the population counts in its periodic censuses, but it has spread out far and wide within and outside of Samoa. This reality has had an impact at the family level as well. Because the majority of most family members now reside in other villages and in overseas countries like New Zealand, Australia, the United States of America and so forth, most families find it very difficult now to arrive at a consensus at election time to identify a single candidate to hold a family title. The last resort to arbitrate on these issues is the Land and Titles Court whose decisions often result in the splitting of the title among

more than one candidate as a compromise to please the disputing parties. Following this conflict resolution strategy of the Land and Titles Court, families, when they are not unanimous in their support of one candidate, would split their title themselves, to please all branches of the family and avoid having the issue settled in court.

Thus, splitting the family title among several holders has now become the strategy in some families to keep everyone happy, thereby avoiding the family having to resort to the Land and Titles Court to decide who their titleholder should be. Title splitting has its advantages. More holders than one means more people to contribute to family functions. More holders than one ensures there is at least one titleholder who resides permanently on the title's residential lands who would also represent the family in the village *fono*. A family representative has to be present in the *fono* to represent, defend and advance the family interests at that level. Disadvantages of title splitting, on the other hand, include the difficulty in arriving at family decisions. Titleholders who reside overseas would make it difficult to have everyone in one place to hold meetings and make decisions. Sometimes titleholders who reside overseas would unfairly insist on their involvement in all family decisions, which sometimes delay family decisions, when they know that they could not make it to family meetings in Samoa. Some understanding between all titleholders must be reached that *matai* who reside permanently on family land must have the freedom to make certain family decisions.

Once a *matai* is motivated to do things for his own immediate interest, he/she is not upholding nor advancing collective family interests and values. For example, a principle holder of a family title (*sa'o*) published in the official government newspaper (the *Sāvali*), in accordance with the *Land and Titles Act, 1981* a notice whose ultimate effect was for his granddaughter to inherit an important portion of family land. This particular piece of land is the traditional house site of that title. This particular title belongs to a huge family of several descendants residing in and outside Sāmoa. By cultural implication, this same public notice meant that the granddaughter would succeed to the family title currently held by her grandfather,

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whose election to the title was by members of the family. The Land and Titles Court is doing a good job protecting collective family properties against self-interests such as the case cited here. It was only when that notice by the family *sa'o* was published in the *Savali* that other family members knew about their *sa'o*'s selfish intention. Thus, the legal procedures of the Land and Titles are preventing selfish head *matai* from abusing their traditional influence and power to the disadvantage of other family members. In some cases, however, family members either do not have the resources to fend off such selfish practices or did not notice in the *Sāvāli* newspaper these public notices. Such

notices are given three months during which objections to it could be lodged. One way of preventing these self-interested *matai* exploiting family trust to promote their personal interests is full understanding of existing laws. The Land and Titles Court can play a role in this by conducting seminars/workshops in rural areas to explain laws relating to customary lands and titles, which is something they are not doing now and have probably not done in the past either.

Care for family members through contribution of various gifts will remain a part of custom for a long time to come. Several factors are taken into account when deciding what family members

should contribute. In the present author's experience the most fair and acceptable strategy is to set a minimum amount to contribute, whether in cash, fine mats or other goods. That would not necessarily prevent others from contributing more should they so wish. Likewise, when re-distributing reciprocated goods received from functions, it should roughly follow the principle of fairness on the basis of what was put into the gift that was presented. However, there should be room for flexibility because of several other competing factors like seniority of title, seniority in age, seniority in status, quality and quantity of fine mats contributed, among others. What should be avoided ultimately is the extreme where the person re-distributing the obtained goods gives it all to himself, his immediate descendants, or people who did not contribute anything at all, thereby leaving those who contributed with nothing. This bad practice is not an incentive for perpetuating this good welfare practice, which is part and parcel of Sāmoan custom.

This discussion of gift contribution and re-distribution of reciprocated goods should not imply that this is the only task, or even the most important responsibility of the *matai*. Instead, it is the *matai*'s responsibility to see that every inner family unit within the extended family is able to cater to its basic needs, that parents are able to service their obligations in respect of their children (rights of the child), or similar other causes that improve the quality of life of each household and the welfare of the extended family as a whole. Gift giving is one of the issues in family governance. For example, whilst this practice seems to have started and institutionalized as a means of traditional social welfare measure to ensure every family member in his/her needy times has the attention of the family, it is also a generally accepted fact that gift-giving in cultural ceremonies is a burdensome practice for many family members. Setting a minimum level of contribution is of no help at all if you do not have or cannot afford the minimum. It follows from this logic that good family governance would be greatly aided by the head *matai* working towards making sure that the kinds of gift-giving and exchange that now typify Samoan cultural ceremonies will **not** "remain a part of cus-

tom for a long time to come". The opposing and an equally strong argument is that because gift giving is a means of upholding family ties and kinship relationships, ending the practice of gift giving could also result in the breakdown of family ties resulting ultimately in the disappearance of that means of family support. A compromise must be found that would result in the perpetuation of the practice of gift giving without necessarily becoming a burden to family members.

## 2. Village governance

The substantial majority of Sāmoans live under the traditional authority of the *fono*. There are 238 village governments in Samoa now.<sup>1</sup> Each of these villages has structural elements and practices that are either similar to other villages or unique to them. These differences in structural elements and practices are further illustrated by the two cultural concepts *aganu'u* and *aga'ifanua*.

*Aganu'u* refers to aspects of the *matai* system that are shared with and generally understood by other Sāmoans outside the context of village settlement. Examples of *aganu'u* include the custom that *matai* are elected by members of their respective families, that *matai* speak on behalf of their families, that there are generally two categories of *matai* (the *ali'i* and *tulafale*), that *ali'i* and *tulafale* have distinct roles to play in the traditional governance system, that there is a rank of *matai* titles and associated roles, that there are systems of gift exchange to reciprocate hospitality, among others.

*Aga'ifanua* (literally, practices that are specific/unique to a particular land), on the other hand, refers to elements of a village's socio-political structure and/or practices that are particular to a village. For example, while in some villages *tamāli'i* have the final say in decisions, in other villages *tulafale* have the final say. While in some villages the founders are *tulafale* and only later on in their history *tamāli'i* were introduced, in other villages it was the *tamāli'i* that originally founded the village and only later on *tulafale* were introduced. The concept of *aga'ifanua* also applies to families within the same village. Although generally, most - if not all - families elect their *matai* (much like the concept of *aganu'u* already

explained), in some families only certain branches or particular lines of descent have the final say in deciding their titleholders.

In most cases, variations in *aga'ifanua*, whether in relation to village or family practices, have identifiable historical origins. Similarly, most *aganu'u* practices have identifiable historical origins. The stories associated with the historical origin of these practices are passed down from one generation to the next through oral traditions. In most cases they are kept as village and family secrets. Like the origin stories of *aganu'u* and *aga'ifanua*, the origin stories of villages and titles are sometimes well-kept secrets. They belong to Sāmoa's body of esoteric knowledge. Justification of authorities pertaining to certain titles over other titles and certain villages over other villages is sometimes kept in this body of esoteric knowledge. One who is well versed in such knowledge can easily be a powerful person in Sāmoan society because of his/her mastery and appropriate application of that knowledge.

A *fono* governs every village. Like the modern state, the *fono* performs the three functions of legislative, executive and judiciary. The ultimate responsibility of the *fono* is the village's well-being and security. A generalized *fono* structure consists of several *matai* numbering between 20 to 60 or even more. Most *matai* titles belong to the two main categories of *ali'i* and *tulafale*. Generally, *tulafale* give traditional speeches on behalf of the *ali'i* and perform the general functions of an executive while *ali'i* deliberate on important village decisions and uphold the prestige and dignity of the village as a whole. In most cases, they are the village's genealogical link to the country's 'royal' lineages. In ancient times when most serious issues of dispute were settled in the battlefield, it was around these families that support for war and candidates for titles of high rank and authority were organized.

In the context of the modern state, *fono*<sup>2</sup> are indispensable. It is through the *fono* that several government projects in rural areas are imple-



mented. *Pulenu'u* (village mayors) elected by their respective *fono* are paid a modest salary by the government through the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They are the intermediary between the government and *fono*. Village governments are an asset to the State. For example, escaped prison inmates were captured and returned by one village to the custody of the Ministry of Police and Prison following public appeals by that ministry to that effect. Moreover, the implementation of government social services programmes relies on the cooperation of *fono*. For example, the government provides salaried teachers for village schools while the villages are responsible for the construction and maintenance of their own schools. Most villages also provide accommodation, morning tea, lunch and dinner for teachers on a daily basis. Similarly, the government provides salaried district hospital doctors and nurses, medical equipment and medicine while districts (comprising several villages) provide hospital buildings and are responsible for the personal safety and security of doctors and nurses.

Village honour and prestige are jealously guarded by villages. These aspects of village governance (which are also present in family governance) have both positive and negative implications. Because a village is an autonomous socio-political unit, it would want to have its own school and its own church. These material possessions are expressions of village pride and identity. Government programmes taken to villages to be implemented for the benefit of their members are carried out willingly. Collective village mentality ensures that the village should not fail in this project as it would implicate a divided village that is weak and without pride and honour, and prestige. On the other hand, the same village pride and honour have resulted in fatal situations, examples of which are discussed below.

Below the village council level are other sub-village organisations comprising the *auluma* (daughters of the village who no longer attend school), *taulele'a* (sons of the village who no longer attend school and are not holders of *matai* titles), *faletua ma tausī* (wives of *ali'i* and *tulafale* respectively, that is, wives of *matai*), and *fafine lāiti* (literally, junior wives, who are the wives of untitled men residing in the village). Government programmes that encourage the construction and maintenance of village plantation roads, among other programmes, are the responsibilities of *taulele'a*. Government beautification programmes to encourage village cleanliness and provision of several village necessities such as the various categories of mats plaited from pandanus and coconut leaves are the combined responsibilities of wives of *matai* and *taulele'a*, and the *auluma*. Widely acknowledged as the *mālosi* (strength) of the village, *taulele'a* uphold and defend the honour and strength of the village by going to war, if necessary, with any individual or group of people who might undermine or challenge village honour and authority.

It is also the *fono's* responsibility to ensure a sufficient supply of resources for the village. Occasionally, the *fono* specifies a day on which all untitled men's gardens would be inspected. The purpose of this exercise is to make sure that all village families will not run out of food. The *fono* could also put a ban on the fishing of its lagoon, the harvesting of coconuts, the hunting of a particular species of birds, and so forth. Such bans allow time for coconuts to ripen before the next harvest, allows time for fish to grow in size before the lagoon is fished again, and allow a particular species of birds to multiply and grow in size before they are harvested again. Thus, such bans are a traditional strategy in resource management. For the same reason, *fono* have also made

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public announcements in the media to ban people from other villages fishing their lagoons or hunting the birds of their lands, and so forth.

Settling village disputes and ensuring village protection from outside threat are among the most important security responsibilities of *fono*. Disputes that could not be settled at the family level are brought before the *fono* whose responsibility

it is to try and solve them by first examining the course of the dispute, identifying the people in the wrong, then either reprimanding or punishing the culprits. Village punishments can range from cash (given to the *fono* to fund various village projects) of any amount between \$ST50 and \$ST500, demanding the family of the culprit to provide food for the village, suspending the culprit from par-



participation in village affairs, or expelling the culprit from the village either for a specified time period or indefinitely. The kind of punishment given and severity depend on the seriousness of the offence as determined by the *fono* collectively.

Qualification for village protection, secure supply of resources and guarantee of peace is the rendering of *tautua* (village service). *Tautua* is rendered to all traditional village organizations of which one is a member. For example, if one is a *matai* his/her service is rendered to the village council; if one is a member of the *taulele'a* organization, his service is given to that organization, and similarly with villagers who are members of the *aualuma*, *faletua ma tausii*, or the *fafine lāiti*. Rendered service (*tautua*) could be in the form of financial contribution, provision of food for ongoing village functions and activities, among others. *Tautua* as such in return for village protection and security could therefore be equated to paying tax in the modern state in return for all state services for which its citizens are entitled.

Despite its many positive contributions to Samoan society, a village government has its weaknesses. Arguably, weaknesses in a village government are associated with some of its traditional structures and processes, which, ironically, are the same aspects of that system that have enabled it to survive down to the present. The issue here is how to reconcile differences in values and expectations associated with a village government with expectations and accepted values of modern society. As long as the two supplement each other, there is no problem. However, experience has shown that irreconcilable elements of the two systems have sometimes resulted in fatal outcomes. Aspects of village governments and suggested ways of improving and/or reconciling them with values of modern society are discussed here.

*Matai* rank stipulates the duties, influence and authority pertaining to a particular title or to certain titles collectively. For example, Village V comprises five *matai fa'avae* (foundation or principal titles). Historically speaking, *matai fa'avae* are the names of the five people who either founded the village together at the same time or are currently acknowledged in the village as its established titles. Of the five such titles in Village V, three are *ali'i* and two are *tulafale*. The holders of these five titles make important *fono* decisions as follows. Although deliberations in the meeting bring out issues relevant to the discussed subject, the participants in the discussion are holders of those five titles. The other 75 per cent or more of *matai* in the council who hold titles of lesser rank are restricted to listening to the discussion only. This situation is acceptable if all relevant issues are discussed and decisions are arrived at rationally.

On the other hand, if a decision is arrived at because of the respect for the view of the oldest of the five *matai* or because of the traditional status of a particular title even though it has become abundantly clear to the majority of *matai* in the *fono* that such a decision was not to be in the best interest of the village, then there is a problem with this type of traditional decision-making process. In which situation, holders of lesser titles should also be part of the discussion. In extreme situations, which is nevertheless the reality in some villages, only one or two *matai* decide (or more appropriately, dictate) the affairs of the whole village because of the rank and authority associated with their titles.

Opening up the decision-making process to holders of lesser titles would provide the opportunity for some educated and better informed *matai* on certain issues to contribute to collective village decisions, and this indeed is the situation in

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most villages now. It thus allows flexibility in the otherwise rigid traditional village structure and its associated rules. Appointments of village mayors and their associated duties is a good illustration of how villages have been able to accommodate changes. Every village elects its own mayor whose appointment is endorsed by the government. The mayor, who is paid a government salary, is the intermediary between the village and the government through its Ministry of Women, Internal Affairs and Youths. Village views on government programmes they implement are relayed to the government by the mayor, and government programmes to be implemented in villages is effected through the mayor. Over the years the position of mayor has acquired village respect to the extent that an appointee has the right to call village meetings where he relays to the village collective programmes to be implemented. In this humble way, village mayors who hold lesser titles can become influential in village affairs. Recently, the government has given the right to villages to elect female mayors in addition to their existing male mayors.

As long as the decision-making process excludes *matai* who hold titles of lesser rank, that group of titleholders would never be effective decision makers on issues that not only affect their lives but the lives of those who depend on them. Nor would their talents, education and experience be utilised fully for the benefit of the village. Dissociating decision-making from rank will understandably be difficult as the two have been part and parcel of custom. A realistic way to achieve this goal is for the *fono* to understand fully the distinction between the two cultural concepts and the merits of separating them in some cultural contexts. For example, a *fono* resolution could uphold and even venerate rank in some contexts while allowing free discussions of issues relevant to decisions for the general good of the village in some contexts. Success of this other strategy would hopefully minimise the chance of ranked titleholders making decisions that may not be in the best interest of the village. On the other hand, if the decision by one *matai* or two *matai* of high rank is genuinely for the benefit of the whole village and not merely for their own selfish gains, then

traditional aspirations match those of modern society. As long as people believe that decisions made are for their good, they are likely to uphold and perpetuate that system.

The limited number of people involved in decision making, because of title rank, can have an adverse effect of another kind on the majority of the village. The case of a decision made by the council of Faleālupo village in the period leading up to the 2001 general elections comes to mind. The incumbent Faleālupo Member of Parliament (MP) wanted another term in parliament. The best way of achieving that aim was for the *fono* to declare officially that the incumbent MP was the only candidate from the village to contest the constituency's seat. If only one candidate is put forward, he/she is declared elected unopposed by the Chief Returning Officer. This seems to be the plan one or perhaps two *matai* of high rank in the Faleālupo *fono* had in mind. When the plan was put to the *fono*, the rival candidate and his supporters raised objection. Because the *matai* who were executing the plan held positions of influence and power in the *fono* structure, the rival candidate was given the ultimatum of either withdrawing his candidacy or face *fono* expulsion.

Expulsion from the *fono*, so the 'friends' of the incumbent MP believed, would minimize the rival candidate's chance of winning the constituency's seat. The rival candidate would not bow to the high-handed demands of the chiefs in the *fono*'s positions of influence and power. He wisely exploited the feelings of the "rebellious" members of the same village who had recently been expelled after contesting successfully in the Land and Titles Court their constitutional right to establish a new Christian church in the village. Bad publicity of the incumbent MP's political ambitions and his seemingly selfish and power-abusing supporters helped the rival candidate's cause tremendously. In the end, the rival candidate defeated the incumbent MP by 613 votes 601.<sup>3</sup> The rival candidate's victory could be interpreted as a defeat of the whole concept of village government and traditional governance generally. Nor was it a pleasant impression to paint for the preservation of village and traditional governance generally.

Another example of unwelcomed *fono* govern-

ance follows. Although the example discussed here to illustrate this point is fairly common throughout the country, I shall use the case of Village V in the present discussion. In the period leading up to the general elections in 1991, Village V made a *fono* decision to support only one of the candidates for the upcoming parliamentary elections. After the general elections, evidence was submitted to the *fono* indicating that some village members voted for a rival candidate. Those voters were punished.<sup>4</sup> The case of Village V is an example of how traditional values associated with collective *fono* decision clash with modern ideals of freedom of choice. Ideally, Sāmoans would prefer that once a *fono* decision is made, everyone should abide by it. It shows the extent of village unity, the strength of village solidarity and so forth. From

the perspective of the modern state and human rights principles, however, the collective village decision of Village V had interfered with one's freedom of choice. It was in this context that the Government's Commission of Inquiry appointed to examine Sāmoa's principal *Electoral Act* (1963) and its amendments recommended that never again should custom interfere with the electoral process.<sup>5</sup> In other words, custom and tradition should be divorced from the due process of parliamentary elections. Stated differently, village governments should be discouraged from exercising undue influence in the electoral process as stipulated in the *Electoral Act 1963*, Section 98.

Another example of a *fono* decision infringing on human rights issues was the case of Lona village in September 1993 described in Box 1.

#### BOX 1

Māta'utia, a *matai* of Lona village, had had an ongoing dispute with his village going back ten years. After years of trying to reconcile these differences, Māta'utia (who had been banned for life from the village during all that time) and his family were in the process of making peace with and rejoining the village when Nu'utai Māfulu returned from New Zealand where he lived for 20 years.<sup>6</sup> A member of Māta'utia's family in his 40's, Nu'utai's attitude was to continue his family's stand off with the *fono* against the wish of the majority of his family. Upon returning from New Zealand, Nu'utai ran a small shop in the village and operated a bus business.<sup>7</sup> Nu'utai's defiant attitude against the village angered the *fono*, which resolved to expel him from the *fono*. Villagers were ordered by the *fono* not to buy from Nu'utai's shop or ride in his bus. In the district cricket championship match, Nu'utai played in the team of a village that beat the team of his own village, Lona.<sup>8</sup> As far as the *fono* was concerned, the last straw came on the Saturday night, 25 September 1993.

On the evening of 29 September, one of the villagers was sent to ring the bell to signal the start of the village's evening curfew. He could

not get to the bell. Nu'utai stopped him from reaching the spot where the bell was claiming that because the bell was hanging on land that belonged to him (even though authority over that land was at the time disputed), he would not allow the bell ringer on to his land because the *fono* had stopped villagers from buying from his shop or riding on his bus. He told the bell ringers: 'if you don't use my shop then don't come on to my land'.<sup>9</sup> That was too much for the *fono*, which called an urgent meeting that night to decide Nu'utai's fate.

The urgent *fono* meeting at about eight o'clock that evening followed Nu'utai's gesture of personal challenge against the *fono*'s ruling and authority. It resolved to summon Nu'utai to the *fono* and that his shop and cars (bus, jeep and another vehicle) be burned down. *Taulele'a* acted promptly upon receiving their instructions. Nu'utai's personal belongings were burned to the ground and destroyed.<sup>10</sup> As stones were pounding Nu'utai's house, he got down on his knees and pleaded with *taulele'a* not to harm his wife and their four children who were with him inside the house. The order for his wife and his children to be tied up as well was fortunately prevented by a village pastor intervention. Nu'utai was then tied up and led to the village. He was followed closely by his wife and their children (*Observer*, 29

Sep 1993).<sup>11</sup> Just before he got to the place where the *fono* was waiting, he was shot in the forehead at pointblank range by his first cousin, Selesele, who was in his 30's. Nu'uta'i's body was then carried to the *fono*.

In the aftermath of this sad incident, Selesele was charged with Nu'utai's death. Forty-two members of Lona village appeared in court to face charges. Of the 42, six pleaded not guilty. The other 36 admitted to the charges, which included throwing stones, burning Nu'utai's bus, Suzuki jeep and another vehicle, burning Nu'utai's house and store, and for willfully damaging Nu'utai's properties.<sup>12</sup> The six *matai* who were charged in the Supreme Court with Nu'utai's death were aged between 52 and 77 years.<sup>13</sup>

Interpretations of the broad causes of the Lona incident are manifold. According to the highest-ranking titleholder of Lona, Talamaivao Niko (who is also a former police officer, former member of parliament and former Minister of Cabinet), the cause of the incident was Nu'utai's attitude. Because Nu'utai had been in New Zealand for a long time and had money in Sāmoa, he acted differently. Moreover, given that boundaries in Fagaloa are unmarked, 'Nu'utai's action in stopping the ringing of the curfew bell was probably too much'.<sup>14</sup> Talamaivao also blamed Nu'utai's death on the late Prime Minister, Tofilau Eti Alesana, whose HRPP government passed the *Village Fono Act, 1990*. According to Talamaivao, the Village Fono Act gave the *fono* the right to mete out punishments. Talamaivao had always maintained that this Act would encourage *fono* to invoke traditional punishments, which in the present age would be considered barbarous and primitive.<sup>15</sup>

#### BOX 2

Tāriu's relationship with his village Falelātai was a cordial one initially. However, it changed for the worse after Tāriu lost the defense in the Land and Titles Court of the title recently conferred on him by the Falelātai *fono*. Tāriu's cordial relationship with Falelātai changed after he realized that some of the *matai* who were present in his title conferring ceremony sided with the parties that successfully challenged the conferral of the title on him. Tāriu refused to attend church. When the *fono* punished him for this he refused to pay his fines. Eventually Tāriu was banned from the village and village people were ordered by the *fono* to boycott Tāriu's buses. Tāriu successfully challenged his village ban in the criminal court. Falelātai village was ordered to pay Tāriu money for the loss of his earnings, among other costs. Falelātai *fono* was furious. They refused to pay Tāriu the money the court ordered them to pay. They also refused to accept Tāriu back to the village.

Against this background, one of the Falelātai *matai* – Nanai Likisoe – was seen riding on one of Tāriu's buses. The order was immediately issued to have him tied up and brought before the *fono*

What is more interesting in the context of traditional village governance is the argument that *fono* would go to any extreme to enforce their authority. It would be an insult to a *fono* if people under its authority successfully oppose that authority. The *fono* is also concerned that as soon as village people successfully oppose its ruling, it would be the end of *fono* authority. Though, ideally, the liberal architects of Sāmoa's constitution would prefer it that way, realistically; the limited number of police to enforce law in the country requires the assistance of *fono* in law enforcement, protection and security in villages. As a former Commissioner of Police once said: 'the *matai* system is still the best one offering assistance to police'.<sup>16</sup> This statement was made not long after the fatal shooting at Lona. Referring to a case where *taulele'a* of one village caught for the police five escaped prisoners, the same Police Commissioner commented: 'you won't find this sort of assistance anywhere else in the world'.<sup>17</sup>

where a fire was lit upon which Nanai was to be placed. A stick was put through Nanai's tied up feet and hands. Nanai's treatment resembled the normal manner in which pigs are carried to be cooked in an oven. Nanai was dragged all the way from his residence to where the *fono* was waiting. The intervention of the village pastor prevented Nanai from being placed on the red hot village oven. As Meleiseā<sup>19</sup> has argued:

Clearly the Matāutu [Falelātai] *fono* [village council] was acting in protection of their authority, and the severity of their punishments was to ensure that defiance of that authority – particularly by someone like Tāriu, a "modern" man, a businessman, a man who had been to New Zealand – would not be imitated by others

Meleiseā<sup>20</sup> goes on to quote Gilson who has also pointed out that the importance of upholding the authority of *matai* in their own villages is the reason for many of their punishments, and it does not really matter what the offence is; rather what matters is that 'if left unpunished, [it] weakened Sāmoan confidence in village government'.

Meleiseã has also discussed the incident at Falelãtai, described in Box 2, which was also directly linked to *fono* authority.<sup>18</sup>

Even though Lona and Falelãtai instances are not everyday happenings, the fact that their *fono* have gone to those extremes to enforce their respective authorities signals a problem calling for solutions. *Fono* do not exist in isolation. Instead, they exist within the legal boundaries stipulated in the country's constitution. It would be extremely radical and downright unrealistic to call for the dissolution of *fono* throughout the country because of their valuable contributions to the security, protection and wellbeing of society. *Fono* would not want the state to interfere with their authority, nor would they want their authorities reduced. A compromise has to be reached somewhere. One of which would be for *fono* to observe by-laws that define parameters of their authority and stipulate types and extent of village punishments they could administer. Currently section 6 of the *Village Fono Act 1990* legalises a *fono* to impose punishment on its residents. The only way of checking the extent and appropriateness of that punishment is when the adversely affected person appeals that *fono* decision under section 44 of the Land and Titles Court Act 1981.<sup>21</sup>

The *Village Fono Act, 1990*, symbolically represents a dilemma between Samoan tradition and modernity. It was passed at the same time parliament passed the legislation to introduce universal suffrage. Hence, while on one hand the government was giving to Samoans aged 21 years and over the right to vote in parliamentary elections, it was also mindful that the traditional authority of village *fono* to control their activities and discipline their residents would remain intact. It was not to be. The original provisions in the *Village Fono Act* to uphold these traditional powers conflicted with the Individual Rights provisions in the country's constitution. The result was a symbolic Act that pretends to uphold 'full' traditional authority when really it does not have those powers, as already explained. Nevertheless, it is this legal/traditional dilemma wherein a realistic path for a future Samoa lies. Democratic institutions and practices have not only been stipulated in the country's constitution but they have been part and par-

cel of Samoan life since European contact more than 200 years now. The legal path has now been laid down where village governments are being incorporated into the formal state structure, thereby bringing them under the state orbit from which democratic values are being encouraged and enforced through the legal instruments of the state.

Whilst Lona and Falelãtai show examples of how things could go wrong in the governance system of traditional villages, new settlements springing up in the outskirts of the capital Apia, such as Vaitele, present a different set of governance issues. Vaitele is a non-traditional village in that it does not have a traditional council of *matai*, which in traditional villages would be in charge of the village's affairs on a daily, short term and long term basis. Without such a platform the Vaitele community and the Samoan government have faced problems such as high crime and employment rates. The population of Vaitele is also dominated by youth and there is little opportunity for people to pursue subsistence or cash-crop farming. It is also physically dislocated from other urban villages and distant from many of the services an urban centre like Apia usually provides. Against the backdrop of these governance issues, the Government of Sãmoa has already approached the UNDP Apia in 2005 to consider providing assistance to complete a sustainable management plan for the Vaitele village area, as provided in the Planning Urban Management Act, 2003 (PUM Act).<sup>22</sup>

### 3. Church governance

Church governance is discussed under the two levels of central administration and village parishes. To illustrate the points made in this section, I shall use as case studies the three biggest Christian denominations in Sãmoa: Catholic, Methodist and the Congregational Christian Church (CCCS)<sup>23</sup>. This section also tends to emphasise weaknesses in the governance systems of these churches in order to understand their respective situations and suggest ways of improving existing weaknesses.

#### *Catholic*

The Sãmoa diocese<sup>24</sup> follows canon law. The bishop is the head of the church and what he says is final. He reports to the Pope and the CEPACK,

which is a meeting of bishops in the Pacific. Below the bishop are two executive committees, one for Upolu Island and one for Savai'i Island. A deputy bishop who reports to the bishop heads all executive committees. There is also a senate of priests that looks after the interests of the priests and *fesoasoani* (catechists). The bishop selects from the senate of priests members for the various church committees he consults on various issues relating to the administration of the church. Theoretically, the bishop must always consult the senate. In reality he only does this occasionally.

Other committees provided for in canon law include the financial council, land board, fundraising committee (which has only recently been established) and a pastoral committee. There is also a finance officer who in the past was the only signatory to church funds. Generally, therefore, there is enormous opportunity for corruption in the church as past experience has shown. Although there have always been a budget and a plan, they have not always been strictly followed.

Although these committees are stipulated in canon law and some of them have been estab-

lished, they have always been inactive and some have had only two or three members in it. The reason stated for the existence of this situation is that during the time when priests were recruited from overseas, they often fundraised for the church outside Sāmoa. As such they probably felt that they were not accountable to members of the local church. Most of these old church practices, therefore, lack transparency and accountability.

There have been great improvements under the recently appointed bishop. He has not re-activated existing committees but has also made them more accountable. For example, rents of church land leased out several years back have never been systematically collected, and several land blocks that have already been sold out have never been properly valued. They were therefore sold in unrealistically low prices. Even now, the rent for most domestic properties in the middle of town are unrealistically as low as \$ST30.00 per year. The church land board is still trying hard to collect rent arrears going back to 1995. Tenants strongly resist the idea of the church trying to collect rents from them. Even tenants who were told that rent

Main Catholic  
church at Mulivai,  
Apia.



arrears before 2002 would be counted as bad debts and that rents from after 2002 would be collected still refused to pay their rents. They have become accustomed to living on church lands and not having to pay rents. The present push of the church to collect rents follows the new trend in the church where most of the priests are Sāmoans who, therefore, could no longer resort to overseas help to fund activities of the local church. As long as funds are raised locally, the local members demand accountability from their leaders on how their money is spent. A recently introduced additional strategy to raise church funds is to have every nuclear family have an annual levy for the church of \$ST300.00. The church is also finding it difficult to collect this amount from its members.

### **Methodist**

The constitution of the Methodist Church<sup>25</sup> provides for a governing body called the *koneferenisi* (annual conference). It comprises heads called *Sea* (Chair) of administrative divisions called *Sinoti* (synods), pastors, deacons and church members, president, secretary, treasurer, standing committee (*komiti tīmau*) and the ministerial Committee whose function is to handle matters relating to the pastors' work. The *koneferenisi* elects the president, secretary, treasurer and members of the standing committee.

The standing committee, which comprises members of the clergy and lay people, meets between conferences. Among its responsibilities is the implementation of decisions of the *koneferenisi*. Its decisions are more often than not approved by the *koneferenisi*. As such, the standing committee is one of the most powerful committees of the church. It acts like the executive of the *koneferenisi*.

The president is not only a powerful position in the church but has a lot of discretionary powers as well. For example, he could make decisions on his own on how to spend church funds. Only occasionally does he consult the treasurer on financial matters. The wide discretionary powers of the president allow him to get away with spending of church funds on certain projects and for the use of certain individuals even though the church budget

did not provide for these expenditures. Often, the exercise of the president's discretionary powers in these matters is justified from the stand point of care for the church and its members in accordance with general Christian principles. On the other hand, it also provides opportunities for corruption and non-repayment of church funds to which other members of the church contributed under financially difficult situations.

A strong and vigilant finance committee would ensure that spending of church funds follows church policies and the approved budget. It would also be in the best interest of the church that on major policy decisions the president should consult a committee of three comprising himself and perhaps the treasurer and the secretary before exercising his discretionary powers. Such consultation would be an effective counter to undue outside pressure on the president of the church.

### **Congregational**

The most administratively organized of the three main churches in the country is the Congregational Christian Church of Sāmoa. It is governed under the constitution approved by its governing body, the *fono tele* (great council). *Fono tele* comprises all church members, which include pastors, lay preachers, deacons, lay members, office holders of the church like the chairman, secretary, treasurer and members of the church's sixteen committees. The *fono tele* elects church officers such as the chairman, secretary and treasurer. The secretary and treasurer take their instructions from the *fono tele* and are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of *fono tele* decisions. They are also responsible for the running of the general affairs of the church on a daily basis.

The chairman is not as powerful as that of the Methodist church. His responsibilities include chairing the *fono tele* and the *fono a le 'au toea'ina* (council of church elders), and presiding at ceremonial functions associated with his position as the top official of the church. In the past, lay people of the church could be elected to the position of chairman. When at one time a lay person of the church was elected chairman (who also happens to be the prime minister of the country at the time),



the *fono tele* decided not to have any more lay persons eligible to contest the position of chairman of the church. The argument was that lay people do not have the true interest of the church at heart like pastors. It was and still is a debatable issue. However, it was acceptable in some circles at the time as some believed that the chairman at the time was bringing the church into his orbit of state politics. A significant number of church members detested this subtle intrusion of state politics into the affairs of the church. Thus, there has never been another lay person elected to the position of church chairman.

The constitution provides for the establishment of the church's 16 committees, which include the general purposes committee, finance committee, development committee, education committee, missionary committee and the committee of elders. All committees report to the *fono tele* annually. Church members of their respective *mātagaluega* elect members of the 16 committees. A *mātagaluega* comprises several *pūlega* and each

*pūlega* comprises as many as 10 or more parishes. Membership of parishes ranges from a few hundreds to several thousands. Parish pastors of *mātagaluega* elect one of their number to be its administrative head called *fa'atomu* who automatically becomes a member of the committee of elders. The pastors of each *pūlega* elect one of their number to be its administrative head called *fai'au toea'ina* (elder pastor). All church members of a parish elect its own pastor from theological students who have qualified from the church's theological college at Mālua in Sāmoa. Once convened, each of the 16 committees elects from their members their own officers, which include a chairperson and a secretary.

#### Parish level

All the three Christian churches have church-wide women organizations. They provide fora where issues directly related to women are discussed, thereby addressing to some extent the relatively male-dominated structures and appointments in the

THE  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
OF SAMOA'S  
CHURCH-WIDE  
WOMEN'S MEETING  
AT THE MALUA  
FONOTELE, MAY  
2006.



three churches. Women organizations at the parish level are concerned mainly with church development in terms of providing furniture and cooking facilities for the pastor (among other necessities), as well as maintaining the general hygiene and cleanliness around the church and the pastor's compound.

Parish governance blends traditional governance under *matai* leadership with introduced organizational structures and processes. For example, at Parish V, the congregation holds annual general meetings (AGMs) at which all parish members elect their chairperson, secretary, treasurer and committee members, who have always been *matai*. The elected officers are responsible for the daily running of church affairs. All the parish's four committees prepare reports that are submitted and deliberated upon at the AGM. The practice ensures transparency and accountability to parish members.

Never before has a non-*matai* been elected to these positions. Rendered church service means contributing on a regular basis to all parish functions and activities. Although no individual church member is prevented from contributing to the parish activities, the norm is that contributions are given under a strict structure. Families to render church *tautua* are identified at the start of the year. Normally, a *matai* or a parish deacon heads families with rendered service. Parish families not qualified under these criteria have only recently been allowed to contribute to church functions and activities in Parish V. Given that there has not been any collective parish complaint against this innovation, it has established a precedent in this particular parish.

Although parish decisions follow closely the democratic principle of majority rule, arguments presented and individuals presenting those views are dominated by *matai* who hold ranked village titles. There is also a general cultural expectation that only the more senior members of the parish, in terms of age and held titles, are the 'proper' people to make decisions for the parish. It would be a good practice to involve more junior parish members (non-titleholders and holders of titles of lesser rank) in parish decisions.

The intellectual debate about the church in Samoa infiltrating Samoan custom and vice versa is still being played out across the board in the everyday life of the church, although in varying degree between churches. There are both arguments for and against this situation. On the negative side, custom is perceived as intruding into issues such as human rights, equality, and equity, among others, that religion is supposed to champion. Given that the everyday running of most parishes follows the traditional structure and its associated value system where ranked *matai* have the most influence in the way church affairs are run, the interests of non-*matai* do not take priority. Furthermore, the continuation of gift giving in church activities that most church members believe to be dictated by custom mentality, under the custodianship of custom leaders, rather than religious altruism can and has affected individual parish families who are already struggling to keep up with a constantly increasing cost of living. Given that in most parishes individuals do not earn regular income, particular church members of parishes in the rural areas, it is a tough life for those people trying to make ends meet.

On the positive side, "acculturation" is seen as a trend to be further encouraged. It follows the philosophical logic that introduced religion that Samoans have adopted since first European contact in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century has to be made meaningful and relevant to the lives of the Samoans. Thus, blending it with local custom and practices is a wise and necessary local adaptation that should be encouraged if introduced religion is to survive in Samoa.

Clearly the way to sustainable livelihood in a changing Samoa is finding a balance between the competing weights of custom and religion whereby the localization of introduced religion does not turn out to be a physical burden to church members who are supposedly in that institution in search of spiritual gratification. It calls for a collective effort of both the church and custom leaders. Sensitivity to the situation of church members is not enough. The biggest challenge is for custom leaders in church and the church leadership generally to ease off on custom gift giving

"The most critical issue in state governance relates to the power of cabinet versus parliament. In accordance with democratic principles and as provided for in the country's constitution, cabinet is responsible to parliament. But in Samoa the reality is that parliament merely rubber-stamps decisions by cabinet. Thus the executive seems to be dictating to parliament rather than the other way around. Remedies to this problem need to be investigated."

and church contribution supposedly for the needy world out there but in reality to the detriment of the church members struggling to make ends meet right here and now.

The relevance of current practices in the 'established' churches should also be questioned against the influx and relatively quick growth of newly introduced religions. Figures on religions in Samoa recorded in the 2001 census clearly point to this trend. Leaders of established church are often unhappy with this new trend. Either the leaders of these smaller and newly introduced religions are accused of the unacceptable charismatic approach in which they spread their message, and which has 'blindly' dragged the 'superficial believers' into their groups, or the 'new believers' are accused of following the 'false' prophets, not knowing better, or not been entrenched enough in Christian belief taught in the established churches that they could be so blindly enticed to these 'new'

and 'artificial' religions.

Perhaps the leaders of the established churches should stop the defensive manner in which they have reacted to these new challenges and instead assess the situation objectively in a positive light in order to see where their churches are failing. One thing is certain though, most established churches are still clinging steadfastly to church practices, policies and philosophies that were formulated and established almost 200 years ago when their introduced religions were trying to find their feet on local soil. Two hundred years later is hugely different to the situation back then. Perhaps the established churches need to drastically adapt themselves if they want to keep the membership they used to enjoy four decades ago. Perhaps church members who are leaving the established churches in droves are doing so because they find the new churches more meaningful to their lives, that there is less dictation from the



church hierarchy, that they are finding it increasingly tough to make ends meet if they stay in the established churches, or perhaps the established churches are only surviving for their own sake and not for the wellbeing of their members and the communities for which they are supposed to care, not just spiritually but economically and psychologically as well. Whatever may be the reasons for the recent drop in membership in the established churches, it should be taken as a call for their leadership to shape up and adapt to the new situations prevailing in Samoa now.

#### 4. State governance

Sāmoa has adopted the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy into which selected elements of custom and tradition are incorporated. Elections are held every fifth year to select candidates to fill parliament's 49 seats. The 49 seats represent the country's 41 constituencies, six of which have two representatives each because of their large populations. The other two seats are occupied by representatives of the Individual voters, who are Sāmoan citizens of mixed descent who have opted out of traditional rights to customary land and titles. The political party that wins the majority of seats in the general elections forms the government. Once elected by parliament (which comprises the Head of State and the Legislative Assembly), the Prime Minister selects 12 other members of his parliamentary party to form his cabinet.

The most critical issue in state governance relates to the power of cabinet *vis-à-vis* parliament. In accordance with democratic principles and as provided for in the country's constitution, cabinet is responsible to parliament. The reality in Sāmoa (as in most other democratic countries that have adopted the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy) is that parliament merely rubber-stamps decisions cabinet has already made. Against this background, it would be beneficial

to Samoa and democracy generally that a substantial study be carried out in Sāmoa and internationally to come up with remedies to this general problem of the Westminster model where the executive seems to be dictating to parliament what to do instead of the internationally acknowledged ideal that parliament checks the executive.

Although it is family, village and church governance with which people relate more directly on a daily basis because they are part and parcel of people's lives, state governance has also had a similar impact, if not more so, despite being relatively distant from people's daily lives. For example, the cost of living, a general national salary increase, an increase in petrol price, the availability of employment, the presence or not of an effective school and health system, the impact of information that is broadcast on the government's main media organizations and so forth can affect people's lives. The citizens of Samoa can suffer under its state authority system or enjoy life fulfillment brought about by national policies that are geared towards the satisfaction of people's requirements and needs. A positive indication of the extent to which state leadership has recognized and accepted its role in the wellbeing of Samoan citizens is its dedication to meet the United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Policies aimed at achieving the MDGs are being implemented through the work of government ministries and state-owned enterprises as stipulated in the government's Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS) 2005 to 2007.

With its theme "enhancing people's choices", the vision of the SDS 2005-2007 is the achievement of an 'improved quality of life for all'<sup>26</sup>. As stated in that document:

The achievement of the vision relies on the effective implementation of priority strategies to achieve a thriving and profitable private sector; a strong and diversified agriculture sector, a dynamic and sustainable tourism sector; a coherent, stable

*New Cabinet Ministers in the 2006 Human Rights Protection Party government. L-R: Hon. Niko Lee Hang, Minister for Finance; Hon. Toleafoa Apulu Faafisi, Minister for Police; Hon. Gatoloaifaana Amataga Alesana Gidlow, Minister for Health; Hon. Tava Tavaga Kitiona Seuala, Minister for Agriculture; and Hon. Unasa Mesi Galo, Minister for Justice.*

PHOTO SKIV JOHNSTON



**'LIVE THE DREAM!'**  
Welcome to the  
Samoa Aquatic Centre

FACILITIES  
SUCH AS THIS  
IMPRESSIVE  
SWIMMING POOL  
BUILT BY THE  
GOVERNMENT OF  
THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF  
CHINA FOR THE  
SOUTH PACIFIC  
GAMES IN 2007  
DOES ENHANCE  
PEOPLE'S  
CHOICES IN  
SAMOA.

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**'LIVE THE DREAM!'**

and entrepreneurial community; and an efficient and effective education and health services. Achieving the national vision will also result in the attainment of Samoa's MDG targets.

In support of that vision, the theme for the 2005-07 SDS is **"Enhancing People's Choices"**. The theme underscores the national commitment to the need for every Samoan to have access to every opportunity he or she desires. Enhancing access to those opportunities is the underlying focus of the priority strategies and associated activities.<sup>27</sup>

Having identified the key sectors upon which its effort will be focused in order to achieve its vision by the target date, the present government (2005) has stated alongside those key sectors their respective goals. Thus, to strengthen the private sector - there needs to be increased investment to create employment opportunities; to boost agriculture development - there needs to be accelerated agricultural growth; to ensure tourism development - there needs to be increased tourism development within a balanced and sustainable framework; to ensure community development - there needs to be increased economic and social opportunities; to ensure the development of education - there needs to be improved student learning outcomes with specific emphasis on raising numeracy and literacy levels; and to ensure health development - there needs to be improved health standards.<sup>28</sup>

Although the work of some ministries may have been genuinely intended for the benefit of the women's community, they have nevertheless invited public criticism. For example, the heavy involvement of village women in community programmes initiated by the Ministry of Women Affairs and the Women in Business non-governmental organization have prevented women from attending to the welfare of their families and their children in particular. Another criticism associated with these outside initiated women's activities is that they have duplicated work with which traditional village women's committees (*komiti tūmama*) and local parish youth programmes have always been involved. There is, therefore, a kind of community confusion as to when to attend to 'normal' community activities and when to attend

to 'outside initiated' and funded programmes. An additional headache associated with this duplication of work is that it takes away the community initiative to be involved in these types of activities. The critics of local developments initiated from without (to which funding incentives are normally attached), have argued that such initiatives are not genuine. Instead, the involvement of those organizations has been motivated by the fact that it would entitle them to apply for aid funding. Reliance on such aid funds is not only unsustainable in the long run but it could also kill local initiative, which would in turn result in the perpetuation of the so called 'hand-out mentality'. An additional criticism related to the same practice is that the government through the work of its ministries should be confined to policy formulation and regulation, thereby leaving the initiative and implementation phase to the community. Initiative is conducive to genuine and sustainable development as the community will only be interested, in the long term, in developments that arise from and controlled by them. Therefore, the government should be aware of these issues in order to continuously revise their development strategies if those programmes are to be effective at the community level.

Unlike the family, village and church governance whose boundaries and perimeter of authority and influence are relatively limited, that of the state is overarching in that it transcends the boundaries of those governance systems. As such, state governance has the responsibility to ensure sustainable livelihood in a changing Samoa for all Samoan citizens. Its legal guide is the country's constitution. The government's forward-looking policies as stipulated in its SDS 2005-2007 are to be commended, and even more so if they are fully implemented by its target date. In the area of individual and human rights, the country has had a positive record in that it introduced universal suffrage in the 1991 general elections giving everyone aged 21 years and over the right to vote and not just the *matai* as was the case before that, and it has ratified the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the similar convention for the rights of children, among other positive developments. Although the

GOVERNANCE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF SAMOAN LIFE



state still needs to improve its performance and service delivery in a number of sectors, it is particularly needed in the area of the economy. For example, in 2002, twenty per cent of households at the national level had incomes below the basic needs poverty line and were therefore experiencing some degree of financial hardship on a daily or weekly basis. Generally, such hardship is characterised by poor access to quality services and opportunities, or the ability to realise their potential and aspirations. The youth and elderly in rural areas are being iden-

tified as the most vulnerable groups.<sup>29</sup> The government in its recent June 2005 parliamentary session announced a huge increase in salary for everyone in the employment sector. This salary/wage increase would also result in an increased cost of living. Those that will be most adversely affected by this increase in prices will be those who do not earn a salary/wage, the bulk of whom are already in that 20 per cent of the population under the poverty line. It is a big challenge for state governance, therefore, to come up with economic policies and strategies that would ensure a sustainable livelihood in a changing Samoa for **all** Samoans.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Governance is one of the most important aspects of Sāmoan life. Normally, Sāmoans see themselves to be rendering four types of services daily in their lifetime. They are service to one's family, village, church and government. These four types of services imply the same number of governance systems to which they are subject. An examination of these governance systems shows the positive and negative aspects of each. Recommendations herewith presented follow discussions in this chapter relating to the positive and negative aspects associated with each of these four governance systems. It is therefore recommended that:

1. In relation to family and village governance systems, positive aspects already indicated need to be encouraged and perpetuated until such time they need modification. Negative aspects, on the other hand, need to be modified or corrected in the manner already suggested.
2. In relation to the growth of non-traditional village settlements, such as Vaitele, government policies must be formulated and implemented to put in place appropriate governance structures and processes as remedies to the governance issues associated with these new settlements such as growing crime and unemployment rates, among others.
3. In relation to church governance, positive aspects associated with each of the three main Christian denominations need to be encouraged and perpetuated. Negative aspects associated with each, on the other hand, need to be modified or corrected in the manner already suggested.
4. In relation to state governance, a substantial study be undertaken to find solutions to the persisting democratic problem of parliament being relegated to the role of endorsing executive decisions instead of being a check on executive power. Government must also continuously revise its policies to cater for the changing requirements of its citizens.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Official information from Head of the Division of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, 13 September 2004. In addition to the 238 Sāmoan villages, there are 28 other settlements, which are not administered as traditional village governments. These settlements have been formed around the Apia area comprising communities that live on privately owned land (ibid.).

<sup>2</sup> Fono can be in both singular and plural forms. In this context, it is used in plural form.

<sup>3</sup> So'o 2002:228-9.

<sup>4</sup> So'o 1993:11.

<sup>5</sup> Commission of Inquiry, Report on the Electoral Act 1963 as amended, 11 October 2001.

<sup>6</sup> The Samoa Observer, 6 October 1993.

<sup>7</sup> The Samoa Observer, 29 September 1993.

<sup>8</sup> The Samoa Observer, 1 October 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in The Samoa Observer, 1 October 1993.

<sup>10</sup> The Samoa Observer, 29 September 1993.

<sup>11</sup> The Samoa Observer, 29 September 1993.

<sup>12</sup> The Samoa Observer, 6 October 1993.

<sup>13</sup> The Samoa Observer, 2 November 1993.

<sup>14</sup> The Samoa Observer, 8 October 1993.

<sup>15</sup> The Samoa Observer, 8 October 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in The Samoa Observer, 22 October 1993.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in The Samoa Observer, 22 October 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Meleisea 1987:214-220.

<sup>19</sup> 1987:218.

<sup>20</sup> 1987:218.

<sup>21</sup> Village Fono Act, 1990, Section 11.

<sup>22</sup> UNDP Pacific Governance Programme, Governance in Non-Traditional Villages in Sāmoa, Vaitele Pilot Case Study, DRAFT Project Proposal, February 2006.

<sup>23</sup> For information on the other religious denominations in Samoa as recorded in the last Census of Population and Housing (2001), refer to the section in this report on Background Information.

<sup>24</sup> This information on the Catholic Church was given in an interview with two local church officials.

<sup>25</sup> Information on the Methodist Church was given in an interview between the author and his co-researcher and the secretary of the Methodist Church.

<sup>26</sup> Government of Samoa, Strategy for the development of Samoa 2005-2007, p 2.

<sup>27</sup> Government of Samoa, Strategy for the development of Samoa 2005-2007, p 2.

<sup>28</sup> Government of Samoa, Strategy for the development of Samoa 2005-2007, pp 4-26.

<sup>29</sup> See chapters in this report by Fiu Mata'ese and Wood Salele.