

## Results of a Study of Recent Migration into Samoa

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### Introduction

With the popularity of seasonal worker schemes that invite Pacific Islanders to work in New Zealand and Australia, the study of Pacific region migration is a growing field of research. Studies on migration movements for Samoans have largely focused on out-migration to metropolitan centres of New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America (Fairbairn 1961; Pitt and Macpherson 1974; Shankman 1976; Macpherson 1999, 2002, 1985, 1994; Janes 1990; Va'a 1995; Brown 1998; Hanna 1998; Liki 2001; Brown and Connell 2004; Macpherson and Macpherson 2006; Lilomaiava-Doktor 2009; McGarvey and Seiden 2010; Uperesa 2014; Faleolo 2019). The emergence of communities and social structures abroad continues to be an area of interest as Samoan migrants adapt and integrate into their host countries (Tuimaleali'ifano 1990). While these studies document the characteristics of the growing Samoan community abroad and their sociocultural and economic commitments to family and village in their mother land, research on recent immigration into Samoa is deficient. Existing studies include studies of the movement of professional Melanesian-Samoan women (Liki 2009), experiences of Samoan deportees in Samoa (Pereira 2011), and diverse motivations of Samoan returning migrants (Macpherson and Macpherson 2009a). Beyond these studies, data on Samoa's immigration experience especially of non-ethnic Samoans is very limited.

To address this research gap, a group of researchers at the National University of Samoa (NUS), initiated a project to explore the characteristics and experiences of non-ethnic Samoans who migrated into Samoa over the past ten years (2007-2017). Our project team was composed of five lecturers with different disciplinary backgrounds. All of us were ourselves the people who migrated into or out of Samoa. Three were non-ethnic Samoans who migrated to Samoa for various reasons; one was ethnic Samoan who returned to her mother land, and one was local born Samoan who had migrated overseas for study. Our personal experiences of being an immigrant, made us aware of the sensitivity of the project objectives and we anticipated the unwillingness of the targeted population to participate in our study. The challenges the project faced, however, were more complicated than what we initially anticipated. The purpose of this article is to share our experience of conducting a pioneer research project on labour migration in a small, tightly connected and ethnically homogeneous society like Samoa. It highlights the multidimensional challenges faced by the project and suggests the need to develop more effective methodologies for future studies on labour migration into Samoa.

## **Proposed Study Purpose**

International migration into Samoa is not a recent phenomenon. Prior to consistent contact with the Western world, Samoa's immigration flows came from Tonga, Fiji and other groups from the Asia and Pacific region (Tuimaleali'ifano 1990). By the early 1800s, as whalers, traders, beachcombers, and settlers began to settle in Samoa, a multicultural community thrived with many foreigners marrying local Samoan women (Gilson 1970). With the establishment of commercial enterprises from the 1850s onwards, the number of immigrants increased from two major sources. Migrants from Europe, New Zealand and Australia continued, and later Melanesian and Chinese labourers were recruited for the German plantations in Samoa (Meleisea 1987).

Several studies have documented plantation labourers in colonial Samoa (Moses 1973; Mosel and Mühlhäusler 1982; Meleisea 1987; Munro and Firth 1987), but data on recent labour migration to Samoa is very limited. According to the UNICEF Migration Profiles (United Nations and DESA-Population Division and UNICEF 2014), since 1990, Samoa's international migration stock, which refers to a number of foreign born residents, increased from 3,200 (1990) to 5,708 (2000) and 5,628 (2013). In 2013, most of the migrants came from neighboring American Samoa (1,812), New Zealand (1,704), the USA (418), Australia (382) and Fiji (156), but historically there has been significant migration from China (see Leung Wai in this volume).

While these figures provide limited statistical information about migration movements, the migrants themselves remain largely undocumented and understudied. To better understand the broader issues related to human mobility for Samoa, this study aimed to explore the characteristics of recent migrants in terms of their ethnicity, country of origin, purpose of migration, and experiences. The first phase of the project focused on labour migrants, that is, foreigners working in Samoa. It sought to document experiences of labour migrants during a recent 10-year period (2007-2017) and their impact on national development. The issues of low-skilled laborers (e.g., domestic helpers), the factors attracting high quality personnel (e.g., ICT specialists) in critical areas, and the ways in which the migrants influence development was of particular interest. Overall, the goal was to map the trends of foreign workers in the recent past and identify the pattern of labour migration movements. Documenting these movements would assist in analysing the economic, social and policy implications of immigration for Samoa. Unfortunately, the study did not achieve its expected goals for various reasons, which will be covered in this paper.

## **Proposed Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-method approach to obtain a range of information on the experiences of recent migrants working and living in Samoa. The following questions framed this study:

- 1) What factors influenced decisions of recent migrants to consider Samoa as a destination country?
- 2) What perceptions do recent migrants have of Samoan society before and after migration?
- 3) From what sources do recent migrants form these impressions and perceptions?
- 4) What experiences do recent migrants have in relation to political, cultural, economic, and social values?
- 5) How do these experiences shape recent migrants' inclinations and decisions to remain in Samoa?

- 6) What challenges did recent migrants encounter in relation to political, cultural, economic, and social values?
- 7) How do these challenges shape recent migrants' inclinations and decisions to remain in Samoa?
- 8) What factors lead Samoa's business owners to employ foreigners?
- 9) How do Samoa's business owners recruit highly skilled foreign workers?
- 10) What challenges do Samoa's business owners encounter in hiring foreigners?

To elicit responses to the research questions, we initially planned to use the following four methods to gather data: (1) focus group workshops, (2) questionnaire-based survey, (3) semi-structured interviews, and (4) collection of existing quantitative data. First, a series of focus group workshops with five to six participants was planned to be held at NUS to elicit information about participant experiences, attitudes and beliefs (Punch 2014). Secondly, a survey was designed to collect background information, migration history, settlement experiences and future plans from a range of migrants working in Samoa. The survey included a set of simple questions with a multiple choice answer format and a few open-ended questions to allow participants to provide more detailed information. These questions included:

- What factors have motivated you or your family to migrate to Samoa?
- What has influenced your decision to stay in Samoa?
- How have you been able to adapt to Samoan society?
- What challenges have you faced while living in Samoa?
- Will they likely stay in Samoa for the next five to ten years?

Thirdly, semi-structured interviews were planned to collect more in-depth information about migration stories of selected participants. While structured interviews focus on key thematic questions to guide the interview phase, semi-structured interviews encouraged participants to share their own narratives. A 'snowball' sampling method was planned to identify potential participants and to invite them to nominate interested friends and relatives. This method was deemed an effective way to identify labour migrants through their networks rather than tracking them through census or other available data. Lastly, the collection of quantitative data involved statistical information from census records, immigration data, policy papers, reports, employment rates, and proceedings published by government ministries, international agencies, and regional associations.

With the collection of different streams of data, the study planned to explore Samoa's immigration policy, regulations on foreign labour, areas of labour shortage, language acquisition, cultural maintenance, interethnic marriage, and migration influences on labour markets as well as political and social institutions, educational aspirations, and local attitudes to recent migration. In addition, the formal and informal spaces in which migrants engage with Samoan society were to be examined, the ways in which these interactions shaped their experiences, and their future intentions explored. In short, these methods were intended to yield a broad representative picture of the experiences of recent labour migrants. However, the project encountered expected and unexpected challenges, which included the definition of labour migrants and the unwillingness of participants, as well as citizenship and permit status issues, which necessitated the modification of initially proposed objectives and research methods.

### **Different Definitions of Labour Migrants**

According to the United Nations' International Organization for Migration (IOM 2021), international labour migration refers to the movement of people from their place of origin to another place across

international borders for the purpose of employment. In the recent flow in Samoa, three key groups have represented the international labour migration movement of non-ethnic Samoans. The first group include highly skilled foreign workers who are in key positions in private companies (e.g., both the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Marketing Officer of Vodafone Samoa are from India) as well as in public sector (e.g., non-Samoan lecturers at NUS). The second group comprises low skilled workers such as Filipino seamstresses and Fijian domestic helpers. The third group comprises the migrants who aim to obtain Samoan citizenship through investment such as Chinese business owners. As the UN definition of international labour migrants fit well, these three groups were the initial targeted population of our project. However, other groups of non-Samoan descendants including those in the expatriate community currently work in Samoa.

Samoa's foreign aid per capita, which accounts for more than 15% of GNI, is one of the highest in the world. Bilateral donors are represented by several high commissions and embassies in Samoa while multilateral donors include the World Bank Group and UN agencies. Samoa also hosts regional organizations such as the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program. Diplomats at high commissions and embassies as well as expatriates and specialists working for regional and international organizations are usually sponsored by their respective development partners or organizations. While diplomats and expats are often not considered as immigrant or foreign workers, this study classified them as labour migrants because their foremost reason for moving to Samoa was work related. Although most of them are paid offshore and do not pay income tax in Samoa, their living expenditures have contributed significantly to the national economy and development.

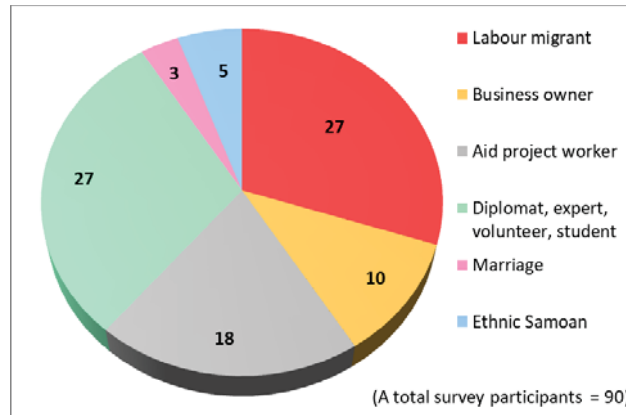
For similar reasons, our study included foreign volunteers from key bilateral aid donors, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the USA, and People's Republic of China (hereafter referred to as China) as well as multilateral aid donors including the UN and other organizations. They may not have moved to Samoa initially for employment but actually work in Samoa, so were classified as labour migrants for this project. Christian missionaries in the country as well as international students studying in Samoa were also incorporated into the study. Although neither of the groups migrated to Samoa for employment, they are pursuing work in a broad sense—the former group works for their faith and the advancement of God's Kingdom while the latter works for higher academic qualifications.

The inclusion of these groups as labour migrants, however, has affected the course of the study especially in terms of mobility patterns. One of the objectives of this study was to identify the societal factors that influence migrants to settle temporarily or permanently. Since diplomats, experts, missionaries, and students usually moved to Samoa on a few-year contract or scholarship, one can infer they did not migrate with the intension of permanent settlement. Moreover, their experiences of obtaining the required visa differ from that of labour migrants in the traditional classification. A non-Samoan citizen wishing to work legally in Samoa is required to hold a temporary residence permit for employment or to conduct business. The process of obtaining a work permit is rather complicated and expensive compared to the visas required for diplomats, experts, students, and missionaries.

Consequently, out of 90 survey respondents, only 30% were labour migrants (27) in the traditional classification (Figure 1). Combining labour migrants together with business owners (10) still accounted for

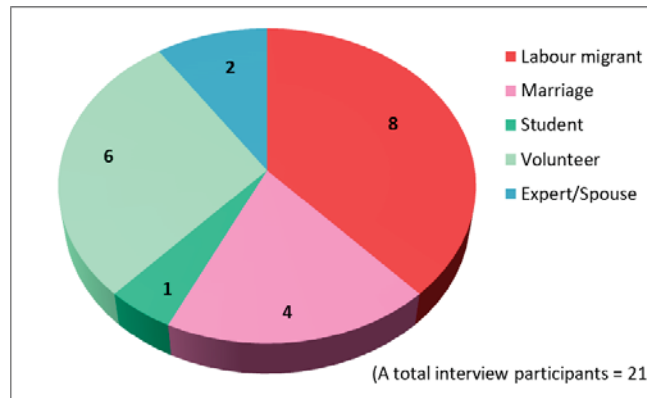
less than half of the total respondents. The group of diplomats, experts and their spouses, volunteers, and students accounted also for 30% (27). The rest of the survey respondents were comprised of aid project workers (18), the individuals who had migrated to Samoa for marriage (3) and ethnic Samoans returning to Samoa (5). Therefore, our study samples were not representative of traditionally classified labour migrants residing in Samoa.

**Figure 1. Survey respondents by category**



Interviews were conducted with 21 participants, but only 38% (8) were labour migrants in the traditional classification (Figure 2). The remainders were the individuals who moved to Samoa for marriage (4), for study (1), as volunteers (6) or for expert assignments (2).

**Figure 2. Interview participants by category**



Experts, volunteers, students and their spouses contributed significantly to this study primarily because of their willingness to participate and approachability. In other words, the study’s initially targeted population—those who migrated to Samoa for the purpose of employment— were not willing to participate in the migration study. Several labour migrants approached refused to participate mainly out of fear of being identified.

### Unwillingness and Visibility

The difficulty of gathering a representative sample from targeted populations has been discussed in another migration study (Johnston and Malekinejad 2014). Often migrants are without legal status in their

host countries or stigmatized by host societies. These situations make them hesitant to participate or collaborate with research activities. We therefore decided to use our networks to identify potential participants with legal status. Participation was completely anonymous and involved very minimal risk of being identified. NUS Research and Ethics Committee granted ethical clearance for the project. Nevertheless, some migrants were still fearful of being identified and declined to participate in the study. This was understandable given anonymity is not easy in this ethnically homogenous society.

Over time, descendants of labour migrants from China and Melanesian Islands of 19<sup>th</sup> century were culturally and ethnically assimilated into local communities through interracial marriages. For instance, a substantial number of Samoan families have English and German family names (Macpherson and Macpherson 2013) while many big business owners carry Chinese family names. To this day, the descendants of these immigrants are described as *'afakasi* (part European), *'afa Solomona* (part Melanesian) or *'afa Saina* (part Chinese). In spite of these commonly used descriptive terms, those who have genealogical ties to Samoan land and titles are usually not discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity. As a result of these assimilations, until recently, the population of Samoa remained ethnically and linguistically homogeneous.

According to the Migration Data Portal (IOM 2020), as of 2020, approximately 4,000 foreign born individuals were residing in Samoa. This international migration stock accounted for about 2% of the entire national population. The accuracy of this data will be discussed later, but 'foreign born' does not differentiate between ethnic and non-ethnic Samoans. Some non-ethnic Samoans have similar physical attributes and speak Samoan fluently but in general migrants are quite visible in the society and could be identified through this study even though they were anonymous. This lack of anonymity no doubt impacted on the willingness of some migrants to participate.

The initial survey sheet, which may have appeared official and linked to the immigration office, may have frightened some potential participants. Although the survey was reformatted to look more academic, it was still difficult to gather information especially from Chinese migrants. Initially, only three Chinese labour migrants agreed to participate. One business owner who migrated from China via American Samoa, was assisted by an ethnic-Chinese translator from another Asian country who is married to a Samoan. The translator answered the interview questions on her behalf. Two others were volunteer teachers funded by China's development aid. No other Chinese migrants agreed to take part in our study. To address the challenges for Chinese participants, the survey was translated into the Mandarin language and the Director of Confucius Institute at NUS agreed to help distribute the survey sheets within the local Chinese community. With his kind support, 50 additional migrants from China completed the survey.

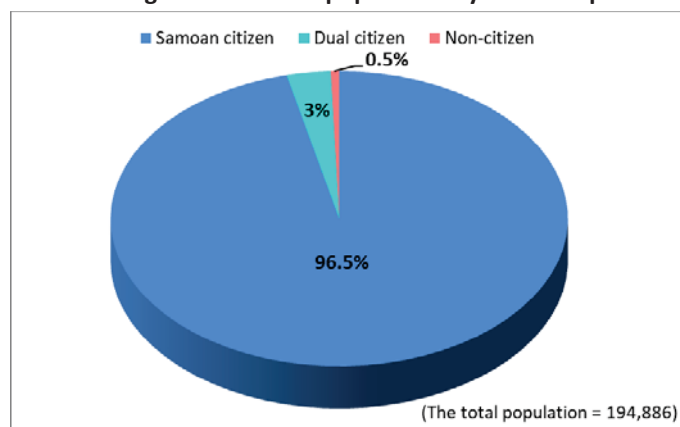
Nevertheless, the project did not gather sufficient representative samples due in part to the lack of anonymity and the fear of being identified. Such reluctance is understandable and is a reason we did not conduct focus group workshop with participants as planned. Had the researchers had more time to establish rapport with prospective informants and build trust, more pertinent data may have possibly been collected. This is an important lesson for the future.

### Ethnicity, Citizenship and Work Permits

Another major challenge the project encountered was inconsistency across data sources and limited information on key migrant attributes. For example, numbers for international migrant stock in Samoa are not consistent. UNICEF Migration Profiles (United Nations and DESA-Population Division and UNICEF 2014) as of the year 2000 cites 5,708 migrants while the Migration Data Portal (IOM 2020) indicates approximately 4,000. This inconsistency can be attributed to the lack of effective mechanisms to periodically record the ethnicity, citizenship and visa status of migrants. It was therefore difficult to quantify particularly labour migrants in the traditional classification.

Ethnicity could provide valuable information about people's movements. Unfortunately, current census data does not indicate the ethnicity of the migrant, so mobility patterns are difficult to analyse. According to the 2016 population census, Samoa's population in 2015 was 195,979. Samoan citizenship holders accounted for 96.5% with an additional 3% holding dual citizenship (Figure 3). The remaining 0.5% are non-citizens who can definitely be classified as international migrants. The 99.5% does, however, include labour migrants who earned citizenship through naturalization.

**Figure 3. Samoa's population by citizenship**

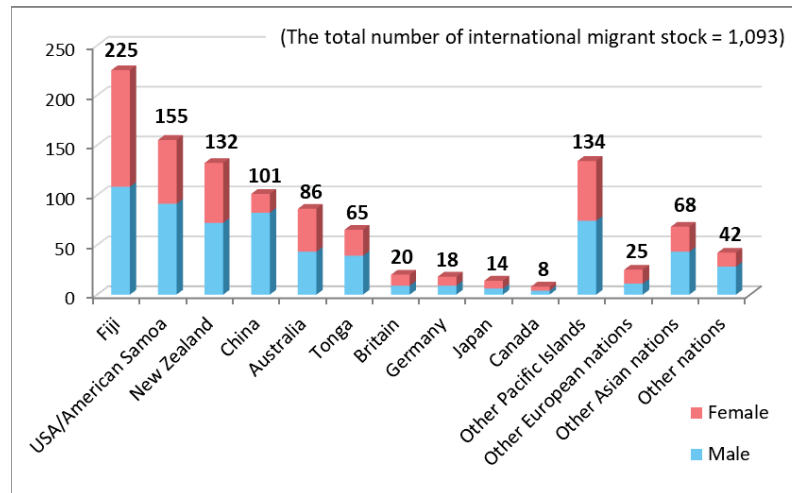


(Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census)

Currently, Samoan citizenship can be obtained by birth, decent, marriage, permanent residence permit, or investment. The last option adopted recently under the Citizenship Investment Act 2016 grants citizenship status to an individual who meets specified investment requirements (Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labour 2016). A growing number of Chinese businessmen fall into this category, but they can also be considered labour migrants in the traditional sense because they migrated to Samoa for employment and business. Further analysis of these naturalized citizens was difficult without the information to identify their ethnicity or nationality.

The citizenship of the remaining 0.5% of the population who are non-Samoan varies and is illustrated in Figure 4

**Figure 4. International migrant stock by country of citizenship**



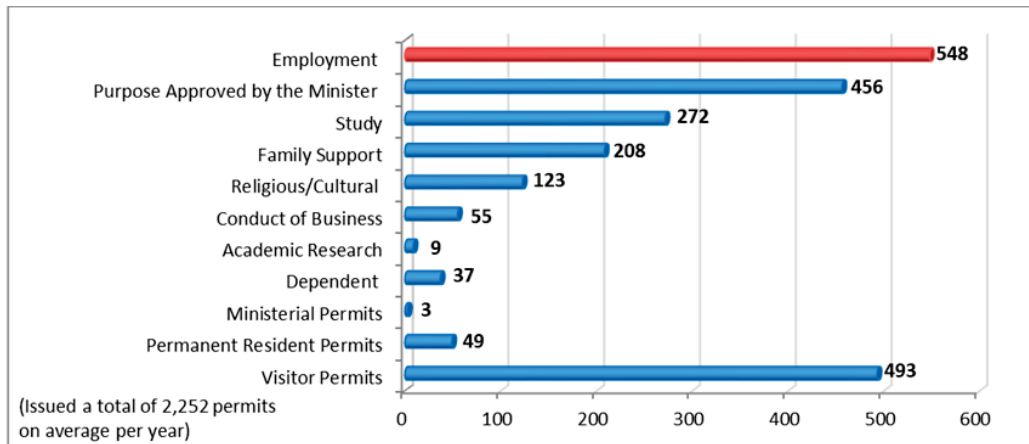
(Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics, Population and Housing Census 2016)

Diaspora studies suggest many ethnic Samoans from New Zealand, Australia, the USA, and American Samoa who were born overseas return to Samoa to live. It can be inferred that the migrants from these countries include returned ethnic Samoan who live and work in Samoa, but have not yet obtained Samoan citizenship. Given the fact that their countries of citizenship are industrialized countries, their foremost reason for moving to Samoa may not be employment. In this regard, they are not the labour migrants of traditional classification. On the other hand, New Zealand and Australia, two of Samoa's major largest aid donors, annually dispatch many diplomats, experts, and volunteers to Samoa. Those who migrated for such mission are classified as labour migrants for the purpose of this study. The lack of ethnicity indication, however, obscures the features of citizens and non-citizens, making it difficult to identify labour migrants.

In addition to the population census, immigration data could have been useful in studying the labour migrant. According to the Samoa Immigration Office (Minister of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2020), currently, the government offers four type of entry permits: visitor, temporary resident, permanent resident, and ministerial. Non-citizens are required to apply for a 90-day visitor's visa on arrival. Individuals who are employed and paid offshore may apply for a business visitor's permit to enter Samoa for business purposes. A temporary resident permit can be issued for seven different purposes: employment, conduct of business, study, academic research, cultural and religious missions, family support or reunion, or purposes approved by ministries. Individuals, who may apply for the permit approved by ministries are experts and volunteers from foreign missions, who will stay in Samoa for longer than 90 days for their respective tasks. Temporary resident permits are issued by the Samoa Immigration under the authority of the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Special ministerial permits approved by Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of Finance are mainly used for diplomatic missions. In addition to these temporary permits, the government offers annually a small quota of permanent resident permits (Minister of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2021). Between January 2016 and January 2019, the government issued over 6,700 permits of different categories or 2,252 permits on annual average (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Annual permit issuance by type**

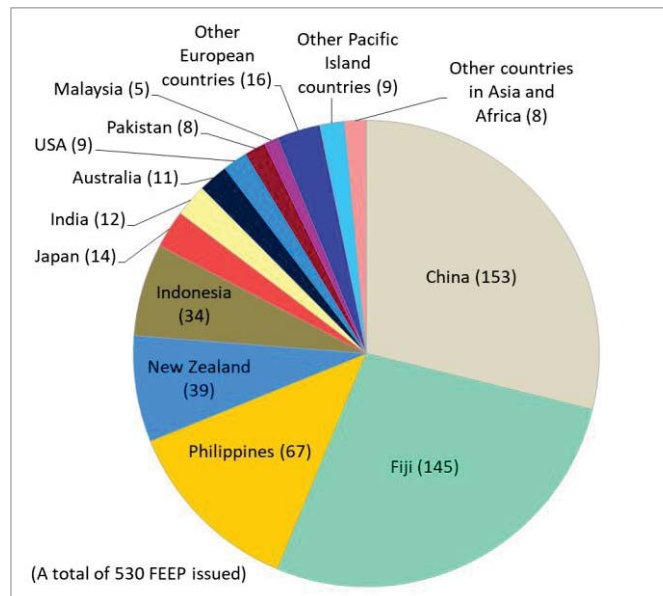


(Source: Summary of Entry Permits January 2016 to January 2019 provided by Samoa Immigration Office)

Employment is not permitted on a visitor permit or a temporary resident permit granted for academic research or cultural and religious missions. A student visa holder can take part time employment if authorized. Persons married to a Samoan citizen can apply for a temporary resident permit for family support, which permits employment. Otherwise, non-citizens who wish to work in Samoa must hold either a permanent resident permit or an employment permit specifically authorizing employment. A Foreign Employee Employment Permit (FEEP) is issued under the authority of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour (MCIL) for non-citizens who have relevant professional qualifications, industrial experiences and special skills that are lacking in Samoa (MCIL 2018). The permit is valid for two years and is renewable. Between 2013 and 2016, an average of 540 FEEP permits were issued annually (MCIL 2016a).

In 2016, MCIL reported 530 FEEPs issued to citizens of 33 different countries (Figure 6). Holders of these permits could have served as a sample to study labour migrants.

**Figure 6. FEEP issuance between July 2016 and June 2017 by country of citizenship**



(Source: Information provided by Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour)

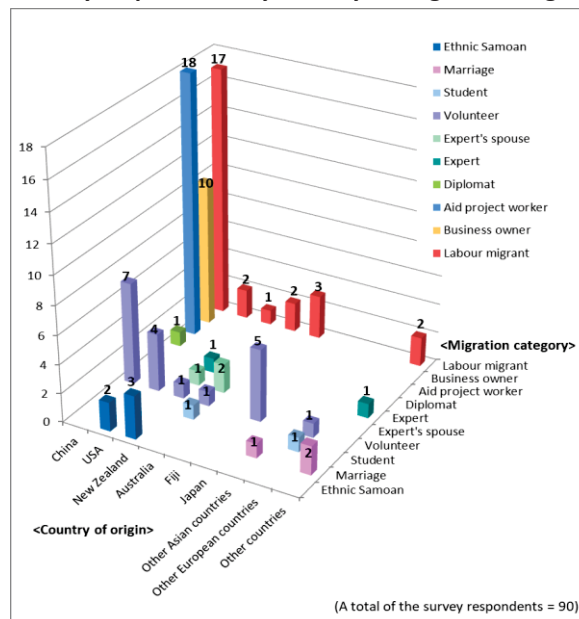
However, an effective system to confirm the actual number of FEEP holders at any one time is lacking. Both the employer and the FEEP holder are responsible to notify the MCIL of early termination or resignation from employment permitted under the FEEP. Nevertheless, employers often fail to report accurately and many FEEP holders leave the country without notifying the MCIL. Such factors made an accurate picture of labour migrants in Samoa illusive.

Consequently, although some statistical data on Samoa’s international migrant stock was available, it did not contribute to a substantial analysis of labour migrants. To improve this area, more support from government ministries including MCIL, the Immigration Office, and Samoa Bureau of Statistics is needed. Data on international migration stock should document ethnicity, purpose of migration, and country of origin. Including ethnicity also as part of population census would facilitate Samoa’s labour migration studies.

### Study Outcomes

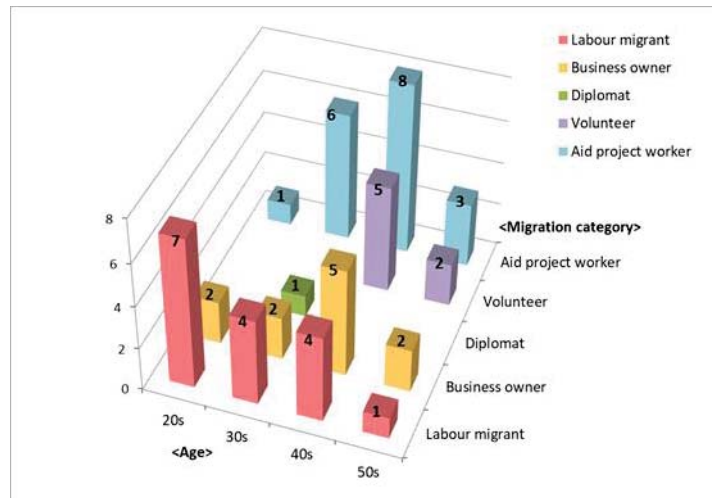
As discussed heretofore, this project was unable to gather adequate information on labour migrants in the traditional classification to identify their characteristics and mobility patterns. Out of 90 survey respondents, only 27 were labour migrants who have migrated from China (17), the USA (2), New Zealand (1), Australia (2), Fiji (3), and other countries (2) (Figure 7). All the 10 respondents in the business owner category were from China. The remaining respondents included aid project workers (18), diplomats (1), experts (2), experts’ spouses (3), volunteers (19), students (2), individuals married to Samoan citizens (3), and returned ethnic Samoans (5). They were from 13 different countries; 47 were male and 43 were female. Although the study did not gather sufficient information from the targeted population, the survey outcomes suggested some interesting trends related to some non-ethnic Samoan workers particularly from China

Figure 7. The survey respondents by country of origin and migration category



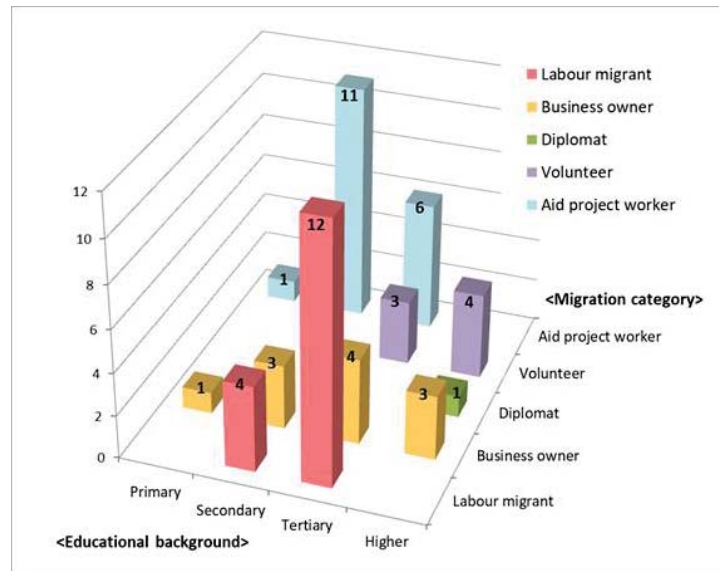
53 of the 90 who completed the survey were migrated from China. Their ages ranged from 20s to 50s; 38 were male and 15 were female. They were divided into five migration categories: labour migrants in traditional classification, business owners, diplomats, volunteers, and aid project workers (Figure 8). Aid project workers work in Samoa on specific projects, commonly infrastructure construction funded by Chinese aid. Some of these aid workers are paid offshore while others are paid locally, but both groups were included in this study

**Figure 8. Chinese respondents by age and migration category**



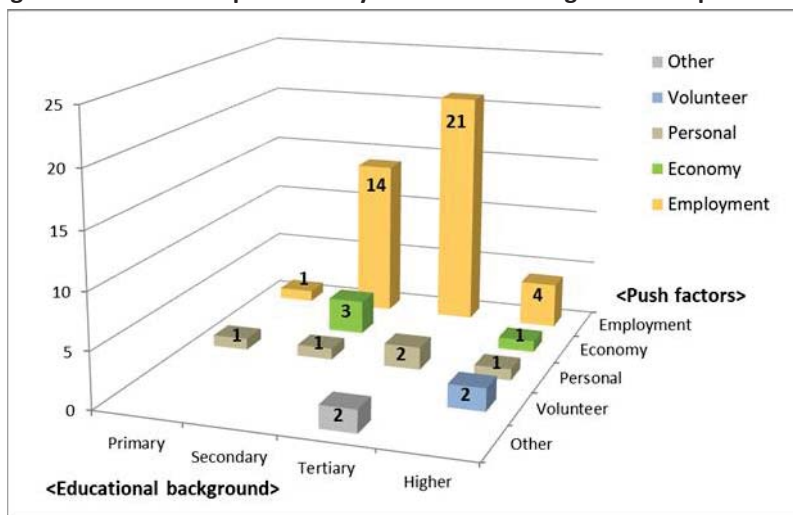
According to the survey results, the educational background of Chinese migrants working in Samoa was relatively high (Figure 9). 75% of the labour migrants in traditional classification (12) held tertiary education qualifications and 94% of the aid project workers (17) had secondary or higher education. On the other hand, the educational background of Chinese business owners ranged from primary to post tertiary education, which suggests not all Chinese business owners in Samoa are academically trained businessmen and businesswomen. Educational background, per se, did not seem to be a significant push factor of Chinese migrants.

**Figure 9. Chinese respondents by educational background and migration category**



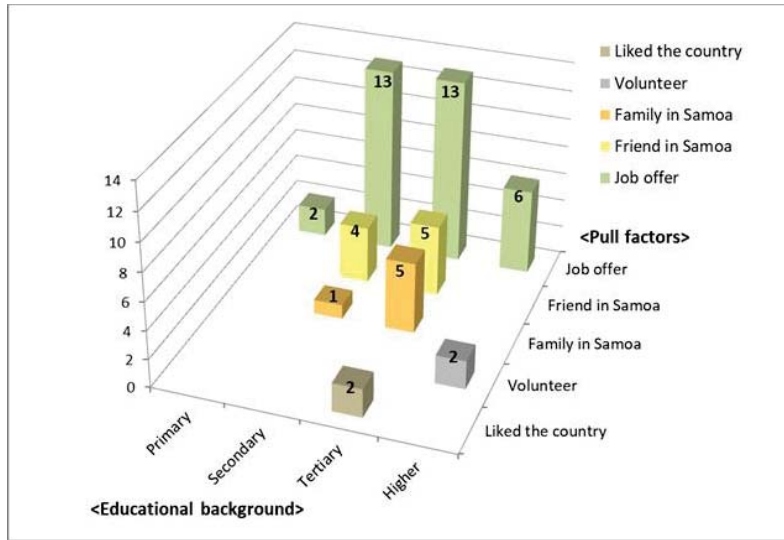
At all educational levels, on the other hand, the lack of employment was selected as the top reason for leaving China (Figure 10). 40% of the Chinese respondents (40) indicated lack of employment in China was the foremost push factor regardless of their educational background.

**Figure 10. Chinese respondents by educational background and push factor**



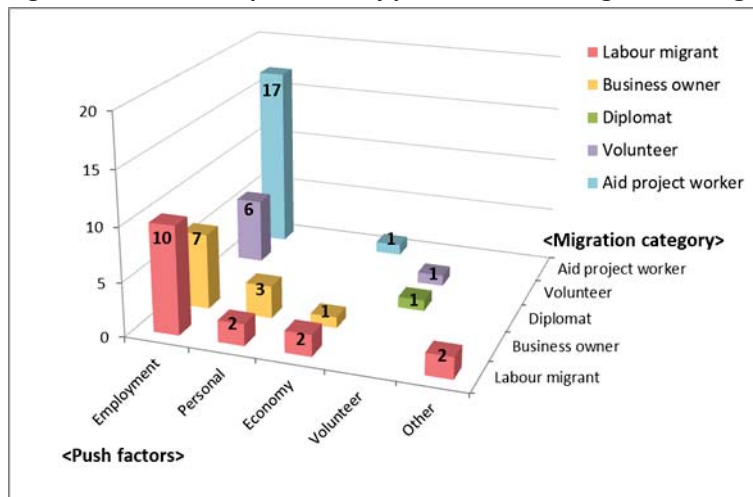
Similarly, educational background did not show a specific relationship with pull factor. In each migration category, a job offer in Samoa was selected as the foremost pull factor of migration (Figure 11). About 65% of the respondents (34), regardless of educational background, had a job offer to migrate to Samoa.

Figure 11. Chinese respondents by educational background and pull factor



The push factor by migration category also does not show any unique patterns. In all categories, the lack of employment in China was the foremost factor for leaving the country (Figure 12).

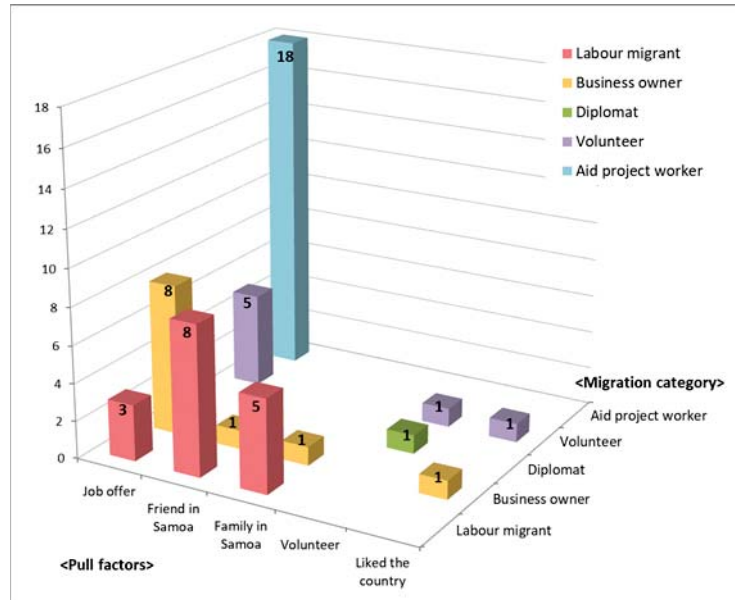
Figure 12. Chinese respondents by push factor and migration category



Six pull factor choices were listed in the survey: job offer, economy, family in Samoa, friends in Samoa, politics, and other. While 65% of the 53 Chinese respondents (34) selected job offer in Samoa as the foremost pull factor of migration to Samoa, the respondents in the traditional labour migrant category cited having family or friend in Samoa more often than job offer (Figure 13). Business owner respondents selected job offer as their key pull factor. For them, a job offer was more significant than having family or friends to help them set up their business in a foreign country. These results, however, may be attributed to the lack of appropriate multiple-choice selection in the survey. Business opportunity might have been a better selection to include, as the capital for investment required by the government of Samoa seemed a stronger factor than support from family or friends. Chinese labour migrants, on the other hand, may have needed the support from family or friend in country to assist them in obtaining a work permit and hence selected Samoa as their migration destination. For all respondents in the aid project category, job

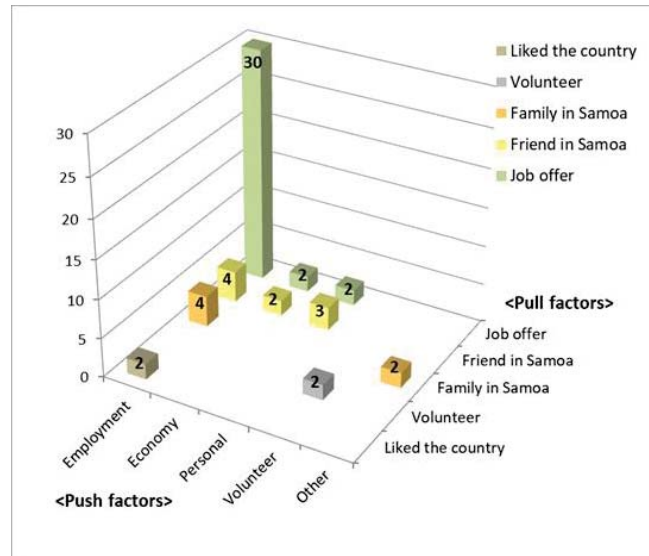
offer was the key pull factor as they moved to Samoa specifically to undertake the aid project related work.

**Figure 13. Chinese respondents by pull factor and migration category**



The relationship between push and pull factors among Chinese migrants was straightforward in a sense that their movement was driven by the availability of employment (Figure 14). For 56% of the respondents (30), lack of employment was the reason for leaving China and a job offer in Samoa was the foremost reason for their international migration. Another 15% who left China due to the lack of employment (8), migrated to Samoa because they had family or a friend in Samoa

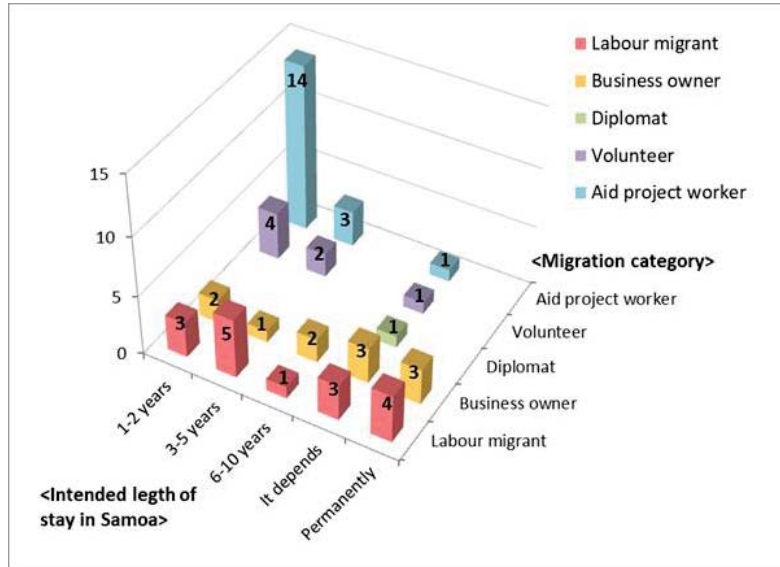
**Figure 14: Chinese respondents by push and pull factors**



Questions about future plans indicated that 77% of the aid project workers (14) plan to stay in Samoa for one to two years to complete short-term contracts for aid funded projects (Figure 15). Similarly,

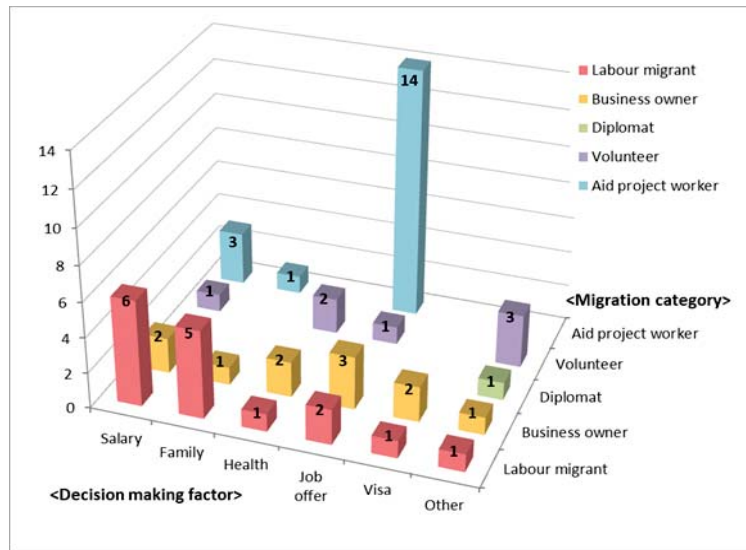
Chinese volunteers intend to stay in Samoa for two or three years, depending on the length of their contract. Neither labour migrants nor business owners necessarily plan to stay in Samoa for a long term. Only 25% of the labour migrants (4 out of 16) and 27% of the business owners (3 out of 11) indicated that they planned to stay in Samoa permanently. Why they do not intend to stay longer or permanently is an area to explore but Chinese migrants in Samoa may see Samoa as a stepping stone to the next destination.

**Figure 15. Chinese respondents by migration category and intended length of stay in Samoa**



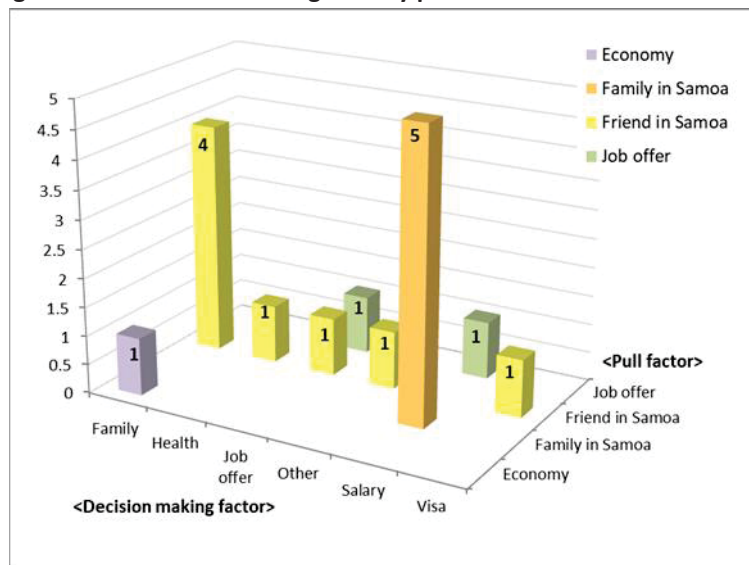
Chinese migrants' decisions to stay in Samoa seemed to depend on the reasons why they migrated. 77% of the aid project workers (14) indicated they would move by with job offers, as per their contracts (Figure 16). Business owners, on the other hand, indicated a variety of factors for staying in Samoa spread evenly over salary, family, health, job offer, visa, and others. The three who selected job offer as their reason to stay in Samoa would have selected investment opportunity as their decision making factor had it been included as a possible multiple-choice response. 37% of the labour migrants (6) indicated salary was their decision making factor while 30% (5) indicated family was both their pull factor to Samoa and the reason for remaining in Samoa.

**Figure 16. Chinese respondents by migration category and decision-making factor**



For Chinese labour migrants, the most influential decision-making factors to remain in Samoa were salary and family (Figure 17). All five respondents who migrated to Samoa because they have family in Samoa based their decision on salary. The four who migrated to Samoa using a friend network indicated their future plan was based on family. This may indicate that Chinese labour migrants tend to move internationally to earn higher incomes for family using family and friend networks. Such a trend occurs with other studies on Chinese migrations (Redding 1990; Wei-ming 1996).

**Figure 17. Chinese labour migrants by pull factor and decision-making factor**



### Conclusion

This article has described the challenges of studying migrants, particularly of non-ethnic Samoans, in Samoa. As a pioneer study of labour migration in Samoa and in the Pacific, it struggled to find a definition of labour migration suited to a country whose per capita aid figures are high and aid funded expatriates



account for large portion of foreign residents. Data collection mechanisms useful for a migration study are yet to be developed. Each government ministry collects pertinent data, but consistent statistical data is limited. More information about the characteristics of migrants and their mobility patterns could be collected with the establishment of a system to periodically update data and add more categories. Improved data collection methods may be forthcoming as more studies on the migrants in Samoa are conducted and more information is gathered from a wider range of sources. The homogeneity and smallness of the society that makes migrants of non-ethnic Samoans visible will remain a challenge and limit the number of informants willing to participate such studies. Researchers will need to be more cognizant of the fears of potential participants and design methods that establish rapport and earn the trust of more migrants. Such would be the objective of the next phase of our migration project.

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