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Renewal in Samoa: Insights from life skills training

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Abstract

Faced with certain pressing social problems in rural Samoa, a local NGO, Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc (METI) is mounting programmes in life skills training (LST). An evaluation of several recent courses suggests an overall positive response to the training, mixed with some indifference, negatives and backsliding. Analysis of the participants' responses reveals a series of inter-related discourses: distress; problem-solving; renewal; awareness of others in society; and the efficacy or need for the LST. Overall, the evaluation suggests some movement towards regeneration, with increased awareness of social issues and willingness to address them. The analysis is a contribution to addressing sensitive social matters in the South Pacific in need of continuing inquiry.

Keywords: life skills; rural Samoa; fa'asamoa; discourses of social issues

Introduction

Samoa has a high rural population and a high number of youth leaving school with no qualifications (sometimes called "premature school leavers"). In 2010, of a total population of 183,081 there were 140,240 living in rural villages, which equates to 74% of the population (Rural Poverty Portal, 2014). A UNICEF report on the state of youth in the Pacific (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011) asserts:

> *. . . young men not-in-education or work may be contributing little to their community. The issue is particularly serious in Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Samoa, where around half or more of young men aged 20−24 years are not engaged in productive activity (58 per cent of males 20−24 years in Kiribati, 44 per cent in Marshall Islands and 46 per cent in Samoa). (p. 14)*

The report continues:

> *Getting an up-to-date and comprehensive picture of education completion rates is difficult because many PICTs (Pacific Island countries and territories) do not collect or make public data on their school drop-out rates and, for those which do, the data are usually out-of-date. . . . In Samoa in 2009, the gross secondary enrolment rate shows that one in four young people did not go to secondary school. . . . The absence of 'second-chance' opportunities for school drop-outs makes it extremely hard for young people with little or no education to escape a cycle of poverty caused by having limited options to earn a livelihood. (p. 17)*

The Government of Samoa has identified the unqualified leavers as a considerable group of society who have been "un-reached" (Education for All, 2007). Boys especially are "at risk" in Samoa, as identified in research into underachievement of males in education in Commonwealth countries (Jha & Kelleher, 2006). School leavers who lack formal education may often have an insufficient knowledge base to become confident participants in the social, cultural and democratic processes of the country, with potentially troubling consequences for society. Often these school leavers also have low self-esteem, lack problem-solving skills and have short attention spans – "soft skills" (Urciuoli 2008, p. 212) that can be addressed in life skills training.

A significant feature of Samoan life (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2004) is the extended family within a village setting. "The *aiga* or extended family forms the basis of the framework called *fa'asamoa* or the 'Samoa way'," says Va'ai (2011, p. 22). She elaborates that *fa'asamoa* is "the basis of the social and organisational systems governing family and village behaviour and the source of individual and group identity" (p. 30). But there can be strains and constraints within such a structure, recognised in the 1980s in the work of Bradd Shore. "Far from a carefree existence geared only to the requirements of the moment," says Shore (1982), "a well-run village defines for its residents an intricate system of long-term social and economic obligations, strictly enforced by the chiefs and their power to levy fines for noncompliance" (p. 98). Hardship and change currently put pressure on family and village life, as a recent report by World Vision NZ testifies: "There are few economic opportunities in rural communities and as a consequence there has been an increase in migration to urban areas, negatively affecting agricultural production and intensifying social problems" (2013, p. 16).

Further, Tuafuti (2010) reports a "culture of silence" in Samoa, by which many people neither ask questions nor speak up about inequalities, but acquiesce to authority figures. One danger of such culture is that it can enable numerous inequities to take place without check. It is claimed that Samoa has a relatively high level of violence and domestic abuse in families, which is often not acknowledged. Schwalger (2003), for instance, writes, "Violence against women cuts across all racial, social, cultural, economic, political and religious boundaries. It is endemic [in Samoa]" (p. 39). She therefore calls for a range of actions to confront the issue: "Addressing domestic violence involves individual assistance, attitudinal change, education and legal and institutional change" (2003, p. 40).

Faced with such issues, the Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc (METI), an NGO in Samoa, has been offering a programme in life-skills training (LST) to improve the wellness of individuals, families and villages in rural Samoa. The following discussion analyses and interprets information from the evaluation of several recent life-skills courses in the villages focusing on findings that offer insights into social issues and renewal. It includes responses to the outcomes of the course; commentaries of participants and their family members; results of the evaluation; and interpretation of social challenges. It argues that an outcome of the courses is some serious attention to addressing social problems, even amidst the faltering and lapses of certain participants, along with some prospect of promoting social justice in the community.

The reflections are based around interviews, first with the course participants

after their training, and second, with two of their family members. Findings from the interviews underlying these reflections could be relevant to subsequent planning, course design, curriculum design, materials development, assessments and evaluations of such adult second-chance education courses. It is hoped that the discussion contributes to the addressing of social distress issues and a culture of violence in a rural Pacific Island nation.

The Concept of Life Skills Training

Over ten years of its operation in Samoa, METI observed the above pattern of young people leaving school with very low, or no, formal qualifications, thereby creating imbalances and limiting potential in society. In response, having already introduced training in permaculture, they added LST courses which they believed could also help to reverse social problems like increases in family violence and poverty. They recognised that there was a context of societal changes, such as increasing costs for electricity, transport and food; tensions in secondary and tertiary education; and ongoing pressures to maintain the traditional gifting system at cultural events such as weddings, funerals and title bestowals. METI hope to enable young people to help their families socio-economically and become role models for change. METI invoke Wilber (1996) as a foundation for LST programmes in Samoa:

> *We cannot build tomorrow on the bruises of yesterday…. This means a new form of society will have to evolve that integrates consciousness, culture and nature, and thus finds room for arts, morals and science – for personal values, the collective wisdom, and for technical know-how. (p. 336)*

Adult LST is recognised as a way of providing progressive informal education for unemployed youth and village people (Allen et al., 1995; Botvin & Griffin, 2004; Forneris et al., 2007). LST for adults comes under the umbrella of second-chance adult education. The training addresses social, cultural, language, business and entrepreneurial skills that will help people live more happily in their families and contribute more to the economics of the family unit (Wilber, 2000). "Life skills" have been defined as "problem-solving behaviours appropriately and responsibly used in the management of personal affairs [and applying to] self, family, leisure, community, and job" (Curtiss & Warren, 1994, p. 21).

Several main themes characterise literature on LST for adults. First, descriptions of the teaching of LST courses and the direction they take, e.g., through sports (Danish & Nellen, 1997; Gould & Carson, 2008). Second, there is a focus on neglected areas of learning in formal education systems such as learning to be, and learning to live with others (Wilber, 2000). One element of life skills is sustainable development, which Meadows, Randers, and Meadows (2004) point out can succeed only in a peaceful environment.

Third, there is evaluation of how useful or how effective LST is for different groups of adults, particularly disadvantaged groups such as alcoholics and long-term unemployed youth. Indeed LST is recognised as a way of providing progressive

informal education for various groups. The courses cater to unemployed youth (Allen et al., 1995; Botvin & Griffin, 2004; Forneris et al., 2007); alcoholics treatment and prevention programs (e.g., Botvin & Kantor, 2000; Van Hasselt, Hersen, & Milliones, 1978); smoking prevention among Hispanic youth (Botvin et al., 1989); and substance abuse (Gorman, Conde, & Huber, 2007) among American Indian and Alaska Native youth (Hawkins, Cummins, & Marlatt, 2004). Four researchers in Jordan evaluated how soft skills (LST) training compared with a wage subsidy to employers in helping young female youth to find employment (Groh, Krishnan, McKenzie, & Vishwanath, 2012). These two treatments resulted in equivalent positive outcomes.

In passing, it might be noted that the term, *life skills* can be appropriated in misleading or reductionist ways. The world-wide OECD study, Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), for instance, is routinely presented as life skills, when the actual focus of the study is *literacy* (see, for instance Lawes, 2009; OECD, 2005). The implication from the survey results is that ALL is more encompassing than it actually is.

The current discussion, fitting into evaluation, the third main theme above, focuses on interpreting an evaluation of LST in the context of identifiable social tension in a Pacific Island nation.

The Training in Samoa

LST courses are delivered by a range of providers in Pacific Island countries, such as schools, polytechnics, churches or community training providers. In Samoa, METI has been working since 2001 in the area of non-formal, rural agricultural education. In 2006, it moved into semi-formal, second-chance education.

In 2006, consultant academics from George Brown College, Toronto, Canada, advised METI on LST. After the period of six weeks training and consulting, METI staff became "Life Skills Coaches" to mentor adult learners in life skills and set up farming co-operatives. As a prerequisite to becoming fully fledged trainers, the coaches had to complete the elementary LST course themselves, then the Certificate in Adult Teaching (CAT) from the National University of Samoa, over their first six to twelve months of employment. Once working at METI, the coaches were given the Samoan name *taiala* which translates as "path breakers" or "front-line education and sustainable development workers."

The LST course delivered in Samoa employs a participatory training methodology. The course has ten units, delivered either as a one-week intensive or a four-week part-time course. Units cover such items as self-disclosure; thinking and feeling; choices and consequences; vertical and lateral thinking; trust; creativity; consensus; working cooperatively; and notably, forgiveness. Participants also reflect on pressing social problems (like climate change, the culture of silence in a society), events or experiences (e.g., tsunamis, family violence, cultural events) and technical agricultural issues (like adopting permaculture principles and practices). Groups of between 12 and 30 villagers meet for periods of 2–4 hours at a time. The ultimate outcome is for participants to develop independent, flexible thinking and "balanced and self-directed behaviour" (Nelson, Low, & Hammett, 2012, p. 243).

To introduce the LST to a village, METI makes a formal presentation to the *pulenu'u*

(village mayor) and other village leaders about the purpose and objectives of the *taiala* programme, after which the Village Council decides whether to accept the programme. If accepted, the *pulenu'u* goes around the village to inform the people, advising amongst other items, that entry is free and open to anyone aged over 18 years.

To date, the LST course has been delivered in 30 rural villages in Samoa with the goals of trying to break the "culture of silence," to lead to more of a "culture of peace" in villages and society at large and to counter the country's emerging social problems. METI finds support for its approach in a finding by Smith (2000):

> *Problem solving, critique and praxis are crucial for empowerment. In these can lie the seeds of impetus to empowerment, through the awakening of dissatisfaction with the status quo. (p. 151)*

The discussion below reports on an evaluation of the LST of 2009 and 2010.

Study Design

The main aim of the evaluation was to assess the efficacy of METI's LST in Samoa by studying the effects of the training on the graduates' behaviour, for them as individuals, and for their families, six to twelve months after the course was completed.

To prepare for the evaluation, on a field trip to Samoa in 2010, one of the authors (Brown) gathered basic information about the LST and METI staff's perceptions of its benefits. There followed a literature review of relevant research, and ethics approval for the evaluation from a large polytechnic in Auckland, New Zealand. Then on a subsequent field trip in 2011, 22 Life Skills Coaches (who had delivered the LST), were trained in data-gathering and interviewing. Over three days in an open house (*fale*), the training on how to conduct evaluations covered topics such as ethics, objectivity, types of questions, asking questions, listening to responses non-judgmentally, note-taking and politeness strategies in evaluation procedures. Brown presented main principles of evaluation in English, then moved to Samoan to explain the information.

Of the 22 *taiala* conducting interviews, 20 were female; ages ranged from 28–55. Women were more available for the work because men were usually working elsewhere, either in town or on family plantations. Part of the interview training was to role-play an interview in the village in groups of three. To prepare coaches to work in pairs in the village interviews, two people took the part of interviewers and one played the interviewee. One person in the pair asked the questions (always in the local Samoan language) and the other person wrote down the answers, which, in the subsequent evaluation proper, appear as quotes in this paper.

Interviews were conducted in Samoan, in ten villages (a total of 182 participants) completing the METI LST course between 2009 and 2010. Held in local village houses, interviews focused on participants' responses to the LST and possible changes in behaviour and outlook. Separately, interviews also took place with two family members of each course participant (e.g., a brother, a sister, a father, a mother, an auntie), in total, 360 family members. These encounters asked family members for their perceptions of participants' responses and change. Given some cultural sensitivity to intervention, one of the interviewers took notes of the conversation rather than recording the discussion.

To conduct the interviews, the evaluators went back to their own villages where they were well known and had strong relationships with the participants they had taught in the elementary LST course.

Of the 182 course participants, 25% were males and 75% were women. The 3:1 ratio in favour of females was consistent with the pattern among *taiala* and for the same reasons. The average age of the men was 45 years and of the women 48 years. They had on average of 2–6 children, 60% were married, 20% divorced or separated and 20% single. In education, 60% had up to standard 4 at primary school, 30% had completed fifth form (equivalent Year 11 secondary school in New Zealand and Australia), 10% had completed sixth form (equivalent Year 12 secondary school in New Zealand and Australia), and none had a tertiary qualification. Results were then analysed for trends, drawing on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The focus in the analysis of the evaluation data is on the trainees, in order to explore the way these participants addressed the dynamics of the social context they were a part of. The interviewees and staff of METI use English a second language, which accounts for certain variations in the form of their statements.

Results

In between the LST and the evaluation, anecdotal reports suggested that some participants were showing a new drive in life and village activities, with notably less verbal and physical aggression. In nine of the ten villages, the participants of the Life Skills course banded together to set up a Farmers and Producers Cooperative. These indications coincide with responses from the interviews. A majority (80%) of the interviewees, both participants and family members, had positive responses about the LST, saying that the course participants' behaviour had, in fact, changed for the better as a result of the course. One further sign of engagement is that 90% of the graduated trainees took up the offer of further training by METI, in this case, in Permaculture. The discussion below extracts themes from the findings, which shed more light on the usefulness of such a second-chance education course for adults.

Discourses of the Evaluation

Examining the language of the evaluations reveals a number of related discourses running through the comments of the participants. A key commentary is a *discourse of distress*, revealing disagreement, argument and violence. A related discourse is of *problem-solving*, usually claiming a willingness to resolve identified issues. Consistent with such an outlook is a discourse of *renewal* or *regeneration* in the face of personal or social distress, addressing changes to behaviour and reversing previous trends. A societal discourse shows an *awareness of others in society*, either acknowledging a need for positive action, or complaining at a lack of action. A final discourse comments on the *efficacy or need for the LST*. In describing extracts from the data, we bear in mind that the comments are part of a retrospective account of the training, and that some are the co-interviewers' accounts of the participants' responses, rather than first-person quotes from the participants.

Some key terms, *aggression*, *disagreement*, *dislike* and *violence* characterise the

discourse of distress. Referring to members of a certain village, for instance, a participant claims, "they always hit their kids and use bad language when they hate their kids," and another, in almost identical terms, says, "they always swear most of the time, they also hit their kids when they were angry." Another highlights the context of disagreement: "they didn't know how to make their family member calm down when having a family *misa* (argument)." Likewise, one participant identifies conditions that contribute to disagreement: "Some of them are very happy [following the LST] because the family member are very selfish before. . ." Similarly, another calls for the LST "[so] that there won't be able to have too much *fa'alavelave* [Samoan for issue, problems, lack of calm] in the village." Others explicitly recognise violence in the society: "they don't want any violence also." Some see the LST as an antidote to perceived problems in society: "This training [LST] helps the members of the family to change their behaviour and helped to protect them from violence."

Closely related is the discourse of problem-solving: "This training helped them to know how to solve different problems in their families," says one report. "They can stand on their own to solve their own problems," says another. A third talks of "preparing a way to communicate with other members of our family for problem solving." Several of these comments point to ways of creating a more harmonious future: "They learned new ideas from the training to solve their family and individual problems."

These two themes of social unrest seem to prompt a counter-discourse of renewal or regeneration, often expressed in terms of peace, with positive outcomes for family and other sectors: "We want to have a culture of peace." "We can develop the family by delivering peace." "It will also bring peace in our village and especially our family." In some cases, the participants explicitly identify areas of progress, with echoes of the earlier discourse of distress: "There's a big change in the family, they love each other and support each other. They never use strong language or swear words any more." Some comments invoke "virtue," a major aspect of the LST: "most of them changed a lot in their family and they apply some virtues in their lives." There is an element of hopeful expectation in some of the claims: "Most of them changed their lives or renewed their lives and try to solve their own problem." "[T]hey want to encourage the youth of their village to have more knowledge to live with a happy life like the other[s] ha[ve]."

Certain comments reveal a concern for wider elements of society, as summed up in the following brief statement: "We want to have a Life Skills Training in our village again." The village is consistently present in commentaries: "Life Skills Training is very important in rural areas, so we want all our family members to attend this training so that we will stand together to solve different problems in our village." Some comments claim sharing or extending skills to others and consequently an ability to act as agents: "They shared the life skills learning to other family members, their friends and other members of the village. They can stand on their own to solve their own problems." "They also said that they have some new ideas to help them to solve their own problems." In contrast, one points to a failure to follow through: "But there are two members from Village D that have not been changed, they always hit their kids and use bad language when they hate their kids."

As suggested above, participants engaged in critiquing the LST course and its effects. One such is almost a back-handed compliment: “Not enough time, because we only have two lessons within a month, but we really want to have the training twice a week.” Some are more forthright: “Saw some big changes and they know that this training helped them to know how to solve different problems in their families.” “Big changes in their lives. They are so happy and love to have that training again.”

In contrast, some are equally categorical about lack of progress: “People don’t understand what we are trying to share about the problem solving with Life Skills lessons. They think we’re not good enough to maintain the programme that we had have [sic].” Certain comments suggest a mixed picture, at times noting little or no change as a result of the LST:

> *He didn’t share any ideas with his family, He is a smart person but he doesn’t want to expand it, he wasted his time by doing unimportant things and he always go out with his friends.*
>
> *He didn’t change a lot in our family. He doesn’t want to help others in the family.*
>
> *Some family agree that their relatives/parents are using life skills in their families but some don’t [their] old behaviour and old attitudes are still [the] same.*
>
> *Some Life skills people are now changed and some need to have the training again or repeat the course because they’re not using the skill and forget what the life skills training is.*

Discussion

Some of the participants’ comments are first-person quotations and others are third-person records by the interviewing team. There is therefore the possibility that the evaluation team constructed the commentaries according to their own interpretation of either the interviews or of the LST itself. So some of the comments cited may reflect the kinds of concerns that characterised the tutoring side of the course rather than the true voice of the participants. While we should therefore read the comments cautiously, two factors suggest a certain veracity to the data. One is that the kinds of discourse analysed above are consistent across the data, including the direct quotations and the reported (third-person) remarks. The other is that there are some sharply differing opinions offered, which does not tend to imply an overall script or an imposed frame.

Taken together, the discourses identified above suggest an awareness of inter-related social issues and an apparent openness to confront them. The pivotal discourse is arguably problem-solving, which both acknowledges that there are areas that need attention and at the same time suggests an orientation to attend to them. Whether or not participants are actually expressing intention to deal with issues, their remarks lay the groundwork for focusing attention on perceived problems around them. As such, they recall Va’ai’s (2011) discussion of the complex, paradoxical concept of *fa’asamoa*.

> *Fa'asamoa is a framework of perceptions and action because it encompasses the whole social system. It is regarded at various times as a philosophy, a burden, a problem, a buffer, an excuse, a cause, a saving grace. Different contexts determine how it is perceived, and more importantly, it continues to change with time. (p. 32)*

In this connection, the discourse oriented to others in society suggests an acknowledgment of community that goes beyond the individual. Throughout the data, there is constant reference to the family as a central entity, and to the village, an important interactive context for families, and a significant element in the concept of *fa'asamoa* described above. In short, various comments hint tangentially at the prospect of promoting socially just relationships, to the extent that those remarks confront issues of anger, harsh language, violence and beating. Families and communities that can address and limit such negativities presumably thereby allow for the productive development of both individuals and groups. "We want to have a culture of peace," says the participant quoted above, moving into the discourse of renewal. "There's a big change in our family nowadays." Another participant sums up these crucial elements: "We really want this training to be held again in our village, because it helps a lot in our families, our village and also the new generation of our village in the future. It will also bring peace in our village and especially our family."

Coupled with the discourse of renewal, there is then the prospect of building social justice, which by one definition, consists of "equal chance to acquire equal capabilities" as Merkel (2009, p. 45) puts it, quoting Dahrendorf's reference to "a just distribution of life chances." In the scope of the current study in Samoa, one could argue that the social distress identified would restrict life chances, whereas constructing more positive life-styles should create potential for acquiring equal capabilities. Put simply, if participants reduce or eliminate violence in the home, there is the chance for all parties, partners, spouses and children, to develop their own potential. Such benefits could then presumably advantage larger entities like the village.

In the light of this relatively optimistic perspective, it is not surprising that a majority of the participants welcome the LST: the training offers hope in the midst of a certain social distress. What to make, then, of those who are unconvinced or negative? Here several related factors may play a part, ranging across psychological, social and educational spheres. It is understandable that some participants would not respond very positively. It is a big call for a short course of the above kind to counter patterns of behaviour that are presumably well-entrenched. Perhaps addressing such a background, one participant suggests, as noted above, "we really want to have the training twice a week." The orientation of the LST would likely challenge the previous lifestyle of numerous participants, including those with a strongly male-control outlook. And, if indeed the analyses of violence and aggression are correct, we would do well to remember the pervasive effects of dominant social norms, reinforcing previous behaviour and reluctance to change. Meanwhile, it may be that some participants were pressured by family members into joining the course, but without strong commitment. On the other hand a substantial number of the participants voluntarily repeated the

course which implies that they wanted to deepen their understanding of the issues raised in the LST.

Because of the often negative comments from the participants about violence, unseemly behaviour and a lack of peace in villages of the particular LST course evaluated, there is a danger of distorting the picture of wider Samoan society. The concept of *fa'asamoa* suggests strong and enduring positive aspects of society, amongst contradictory social cross-currents, as would well apply in other nations. Hence, to the extent that disturbing social issues are real and unsettling, Samoans could readily point to dimensions of culture that would address identified problems.

The outcomes and findings of the evaluation may have useful implications for other such courses in the LST (e.g., intermediate life skills training where topics such as emotional control and stress reduction are taught) and possibly for other forms of second-chance education. If, for instance, the above kinds of discourse are valid descriptors of the participants' interests and outlooks, they might well be drawn on for course content, following, for example, a cycle of distress →awareness of others →problem-solving →renewal. Each area of discourse could prompt questions for relevant inquiries during a course:

> *Distress*: What causes distress? What are the contexts in which this occurs? What is the nature of the distress?
>
> *Awareness of others*: In what ways do problematic social issues impact on others? Who is involved? Who is/are otherwise ignored, sidelined or dismissed?
>
> *Problem-solving*: How to address identified problems? Who can be involved? What support is available?
>
> *Renewal*: What kind of "imagined community" could emerge? What sound models already exist? What existing institutions might be involved?

Conceivably, processes of this kind might also inform other forms of adult education.

Limitations

Certain limitations should be noted about this evaluation study. First, after only three days' training, the coaches were taking up the role of official interviewer for the first time. Hence they were novice interviewers, which means there may have been lapses in their note-taking and/or in their judgment of the relative importance of information.

Second, this is a small exploratory study and the note-taking took place without the advantage of voice-recording. Third, both course participants and the family members interviewed may represent an engaged cross-section of Samoan villagers. Course participants joining voluntarily might have been highly motivated and their family members might have been just as keen for the training to succeed.

Fourth, interviewees may have wanted to please the interviewers and therefore give answers that the interviewers wanted to hear. Finally, while the interviews were carried out six to twelve months after the LST, it would be an advantage to conduct follow-up studies after 18 months and even two years, to see if behavioural change had held up.

Conclusions and Implications

Participants' comments indicate that the LST has been effective in enhancing and enlightening a key segment of Samoan life. Many of the responses show that individuals are more tolerant of each other and have the capacity to reflect more before responding to life's challenges. If this is true, then social cohesiveness and a "climate of peace" in their homes and villages will have been advanced. A sign of collective cooperation is that graduated trainees also rallied the support of sufficient farmers to set up a Farmers and Producers Cooperative in nine of the 12 villages. The incentive for METI to prepare an LST programme was an expressed concern at social issues. The catalyst for the reasonably positive outcomes was the LST courses that were delivered.

The data from the evaluation suggest a certain momentum among the participants and families, deriving from a number of inter-related responses converging on some significant social issues. Throughout, there is acknowledgment that there are matters of social distress to address. This recognition in itself is an indication of signs of awareness of unsettling situations and a need to act not only in personal, individual terms, but within families and wider social structures in the villages. These developments prompt moves for renewal, displaying signs of dynamism rather than say, resignation or apathy. There is then some pro-active engagement involving goodwill, when there might otherwise have been withdrawal or denial. One distinguishing feature of the METI intervention is that it is home-grown, offering a made-in-Samoa integrity, even though drawing to some extent on invited overseas advice, a very normal aspect of a globalising world. The net effect is a form of conscientisation and/or consciousness-raising, in this case with attention to social forces, though implicitly bearing upon the political dimension of power relations. These moves are possible because of glimpses of attaining an alternative, imagined community, centred around peace.

There is a need in Samoa to further investigate these graduated trainees and their positive, mixed and "no change" responses. Such study could involve deeper interviewing, extended follow-up studies, with a comprehensive research design. Further inquiry of this kind may unlock other doors through providing training for rural residents who are committed to improving their lives.

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