

# Leadership, Innovation and Partnership for Green/Blue Pacific Economies.

## Introduction

Warmly welcoming you into the rhythm of this paper, let me begin with a *talanoa*<sup>1</sup>. Bishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia held a conference in June on Pangaimotu off Nuku'alofa, the small island of my childhood fishing expeditions. As local Bishop and a Church leader, I facilitated the event. Each day we began at the dawn with *lotu* (worship). We gave thanks for the beauty of the island. At the same time we became aware of the impact of the climate



change. A morning service was held deliberately against the backdrop of palm trees with damaged branches which showed the impact encroaching sea water due to rising sea levels. Significant feedback from this conference included the importance of worship in the reality of Pangaimotu. The beauty of creation and the devastation caused by climate change were held together. This made a profound impact on Bishops who did not keep the experience to themselves. Use of technology meant communication to different parts of the world immediately after the *lotu*. It is one thing to talk about the abuse of creation, another to encounter the reality. Out of this encounter, my fellow leaders of Churches viewing the flatness of Tongatapu from Pangaimotu raised the question: 'What will happen if a tsunami hits Tonga?' The question was not for myself only. It is for all of us.

The story of Pangaimotu represents where I belong and stand. It is important in meetings in Oceania that there is understanding from where we are speaking. The story has wide implications. The grave threat of climate change is a reflection of a world which is lacking in community. In this paper there is emphasis on gifts of community which we may bring to the region and our green/blue planet.

The impact of humanity on our fragile earth and promotion of a healthy environment are central to our concerns as leaders of Governments, civil society, the private sector and the public sector. I am addressing the role of communities and groups in Green Economy. This paper explores ways forward in addressing the urgent need to awaken to realities and to care collectively for creation. To help towards engaging our diverse communities in working creatively towards a future for ourselves and for the environment, this paper will explore: **1. Understanding ourselves as "Moana People". 2. The Privilege of our Identity as People of Community. 3. The Challenge of Creating Deeper Awareness, Furthering Action and Maximising Opportunities.**

## Understanding Ourselves as “Moana People”.

We are people with a significant heritage, in history, culture, languages, wisdom, spiritualities and religious traditions. We are a people who live closely with our environment, the *Moana*<sup>ii</sup> being a vast feature. Many have a deep sense that the environment that has been passed on to us and that we are custodians of a legacy. The environment is a living gift, not mere commodity.

Nurtured by our forbears, we have an affinity with creation, with its rhythms and seasons. This affinity needs not to be lost with the impact of Westernisation and development. Although, we may be short sighted as to the impact of actions on creation, within us is the potential for respect for people and all living creatures.

Ancient wisdom is ours to use and pass to future generations. There is wisdom which comes from within Pacific cultures. There is wisdom that honours the mystery, beauty and provision of creation in faith communities of different traditions. Speaking from the Christian tradition, I believe Churches have an urgent responsibility to further teaching on the care of creation in congregations and schools and in Seminaries. At the heart of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and within the Scriptures is the belief that creation is God’s gift. We have stewardship of that gift.

We are *Moana* People, people who live by and on the vast Pacific Ocean, our sacred home. Open sources of wisdom ancient and new, we will honour our heritage and our environment and move towards new courage and effectiveness in developing ways forward. *Moana* People hold responsibility for the well being of future generations, just our ancestors held responsibility for our generation. Today in the Pacific region a high percentage of the population are young people. We need to care to give them a future.

Years of working alongside and within different communities has sharpened a conviction. This conviction is that hurdles to overcome in forwarding the wellbeing of communities are entrenched beliefs that we have very limited power both locally and in the wider world. Some Pacific leadership models promote dominance resulting in a sense of inferiority and passivity among groups. Pacific leadership models need to be encouraged which promote respect for creation, deep listening and participation of all members of a community in decision-making and furthering action. Through enabling of communities, waves are set in motion which will benefit planet earth widely. It is a recognised sociological phenomenon that small movements have huge potential.

Negative forces within Pacific cultures hinder *Moana* People working for change and growth. These need addressing and other positive forces harnessed. There are also external factors shaping attitudes and behaviour in negative ways. There is a tendency to accept imposed views which are ideological corruptions encouraged by outside perceptions and attitudes. Violence and injustice are perpetrated by advocating ideas, subtly or more overtly, that we who live on Pacific Islands are isolated and insignificant, having little say in the global village we all inhabit. This acceptance promotes a sense of powerlessness and helplessness. The late Professor Epeli Hau’ofa in the book

*The New Oceania, Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands* (1993) contributed a significant way of reframing our thinking about ourselves. Hau'ofa emphasized that as people who inhabit small islands we are also people of the vast ocean which provides food and means of communication and untapped resources.

Our people in the past moved out of narrow environments and crossed the Pacific. Today there is need to encourage wide visions and to tap modern ways of communication and technology in order to venture courageously, forging creative ways forward.

The seven Oceans are the cradle of life for this blue/ green planet. As people of the largest Ocean, we have unique responsibility to speak and act in arenas locally and internationally so that the vital life-giving environment is protected and honoured. We have responsibility within the Pacific region, also globally.

### **The Privilege of Celebrating our Identity as People of Community**

In June 2012 I joined the crew of the Uto Ni Yalo, one of a fleet of drua on the last stage of a voyage crossing the vastness of the Pacific, beginning from and returning to Fiji after visiting different island groups and South America. The fleet of traditional drua, powered by wind, voyaged with a message. The intention was to further awareness of the threat facing the peoples of the Pacific Ocean by climate change and the threat to the Ocean by the violence of exploitation and pollution.



This adventure brought me in touch with the vastness of the *Moana* which surrounds and sustains us. Crews depended on each other, vulnerable in the vastness, at the mercy of wind and waves. A learning curve was to discover how energies could be creatively utilised for the purpose of the voyage. The sun, moon and stars gave directions. The ocean brought food. Winds filled the sails and gave power to glide over the waves. The importance of the vital contribution of each member was brought home. To survive and to reach our destination, it was essential to work together.

Voyage on the Uto Ni Yalo reinforced appreciation of the profound reality that all above in the heavens and beneath, around and within are interconnected. Nothing and no one exists apart from the togetherness of all. The whole earth with its place among the stars is community.

Voyage on the Uto Ni Yalo strengthened regard for the importance of teams, of becoming vibrant communities with a sense of purpose. It strengthened appreciation of our togetherness with one another and with all creation. Our forbears sailed in great canoes learning to depend on one another and creation. This is a lesson in today's context. Pacific peoples are called to learn to work

effectively together to reach new destinations. We are called to learn togetherness with the greatness of creation.

## **The Challenge of Creating Deeper Awareness, Furthering Action and Maximizing Opportunities**

We are blessed with communities, organisations and faith-based groups. Common reliance on the gift of creation and our cultural and spiritual heritages help forge the dynamics of our life together.

*Tapa*-making is an example of cooperation of women for the well being of the community. Women gather today, as in the past, to make *tapa* by beating the bark, pasting pieces of bark and painting it. Women work for the benefit of one member in particular need. Each member in turn is honoured by the group. This is the sharing of resources, skills, time and the honouring of relationships. A *Tapa*-making model of working as community has potential to inform our ways of approaching development. It has potential to challenge our approach to development and the sharing of resources in small communities, from household to household, village to village, region to region and nation to nation. Applied widely, the model calls for the identifying of particular needs in an area and calls for other groups or communities to respond. It calls for deepening awareness of neighbouring communities and the identifying of resources to help meet needs that will be honouring of relationships and of the environment. It calls for an interconnectedness and interdependency. One area's needs is the concern of the wider area. The benefit of one community will extend to all.

The role of groups and of *talanoa* in forwarding creative development is vital. The fostering of cooperation between communities is important so development projects are not in isolation. Modern technology will assist. Leadership with wide vision of the importance of forging links with and between communities and galvanising action for the benefit communities, nations and the region will aid the maximizing of opportunities in promoting Green Economy for Oceania and beyond.

### **Conclusion:**

#### **A Broad Interpretation of Green Economy –A Radical Ethic of Sharing**

This paper promotes the enlarging of perspectives. We are people of island and vast ocean. Seeing ourselves with fresh eyes, we will speak with confidence and act with courage to forward the well being of communities. “A Green Economy” deserves wide interpretation. We need to resist ways of forming policies which fail to tap the profound wisdom within our communities and to link community with community.

In conclusion, I put forward:

1. We are *Moana* people, people of the largest Ocean which holds abundant resources.
2. We are a people of community, people with a rich heritage and relationship to all species and all creation. This is to be celebrated. Economic growth may bring some material well – being but it should not be at the cost of community.
3. The voices and wisdom of people within our many communities are to be heeded. *Talanoa*, part of Pacific tradition, from ancient times has a vital role at the present time.
4. The notion and use of “policies” need re-examining in the light of the reality of communities. “Policies”, however benevolent, should not to be seen or devised as the imposition of impersonal organisations. Policies, ways forward, are to be owned from within using *talanoa*, with sensitivity to present context and actual environment.
5. “Green Economy” needs broad interpretation. All the Oceans have gifts. Their flowing and interconnectedness means a sharing of gifts which sustains and gives life to the world. There is call for the development of radical ways of sharing in which human relationships and natural resources are honoured. Ways of sharing are found on a small scale. Ways of sharing on a larger scale, honouring human relationships and relationship with the environment, are to be developed that will benefit communities, the region and the green/ blue planet earth.

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<sup>i</sup> Talanoa is a Polynesian word. Tala refers to sharing stories or news. Noa means space which indicates space for listening.

<sup>ii</sup> Moana is a Polynesian word for the Ocean. It is an ancient word but it continues to be used very widely throughout the Pacific region.