



Solution Exchange for the Development Effectiveness Community Consolidated Reply

Discussion: Poverty, Youth Employment, and Resilience to Crime

Compiled by [Beatrice Olsson](#), [Alfred Schuster](#), [Patrick Tuimalealiifano](#), [Jennifer Namgyal](#), and [Priya Chatter](#), Pacific Solution Exchange (PSE) Facilitation Team
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"Having a good opportunity to work full time changes my situation. Staying at home and doing nothing can cause me to steal things and just be really frustrated with my life. But since I got a job, I'm always looking out for the good of my family and friends."

These are the words of a young Pacific Islander quoted in a recent joint study of urban youth and crime by UNDP and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (<http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/newsroom/publications/urban-youth-in-pacific.html>). The study has found a correlation between increasing youth joblessness and rising crime rates in the Pacific. The research suggests that high levels of youth unemployment can lead to socio-economic and political marginalization and give rise to social unrest particularly for urban youth. For example, youth, while not the instigators of unrest, were active in the 2006 riots in Tonga as well as ethnic tensions in Solomon Islands from 1998 to 2003. Raskol gangs in Papua New Guinea are also notorious for serious crime and are an ongoing challenge in Port Moresby.

The report finds that the rates of youth unemployment in the Pacific are consistently much higher than adult unemployment rates across the region and can reach up to 50 percent. In addition, *underemployment* results in low wages, inadequate social safety nets and, harsh and hostile work conditions, which put further pressure on young people. With population growth outpacing job market in the Pacific, the youth finds it harder to find decent employment. Countries with a large percentage of young people are more susceptible to unrest, crime and conflict especially when combined with lack of employment opportunities, low rates of secondary education and economic hardship, which are all apparent in varying degrees throughout the region.

The purpose of this discussion is to stimulate thinking around how Pacific island countries can create and promote co-benefits between youth inclusion and sustainable development. What will high-return and labour intensive economic development mean in the Pacific in the context of tackling unemployment, particularly among youth? Are there tried solutions or good practices in creating employment opportunities for youth and building resilience to crime which can be usefully shared among Pacific island countries? Please click "reply" to this email with your contributions. We look forward to hearing from you.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Stuard H. Penias](#), Department of Health Services & Social Affairs, National Government, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia
2. [Shaun Kennedy](#), International Labour Organization (ILO), Port Vila, Vanuatu
3. [Patrick Tuimaleali'ifano](#), UNDP Multi-Country Office, Suva, Fiji
4. Grant Percival, Samoa Manufacturers Association, Apia, Samoa ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
5. [Leonie Kila](#), Department of Health, Papua New Guinea
6. [Yolanda Lodge](#), Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands

Further contributions are welcome!

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Summary of Responses

In an attempt to stimulate thinking around how Pacific Island Countries (PICs) can address the issue of youth unemployment and building resilience to crime, members explored the root causes of socio-economic and political marginalization of youth, discussed strategies for tackling unemployment, particularly among youth, and identified benefits to including the unique needs of youth in sustainable development efforts.

Respondents recognized that in many **PICs poverty levels** have risen sharply, most notably due to the local food and fuel crisis coupled with the Global Financial Crisis and the affects of recent climate change related disasters i.e. drought, flooding, cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis, which have negatively impacted economic growth. The lack of decent work opportunities often permanently compromises a young person's future of employment prospects. Moreover, the failure to create enough decent employment for young people is causing outward migration and contributing to higher crime rates and an increase in social problems, such as alcohol and substance abuse, domestic violence and in some countries civil unrest. Teenage pregnancy, which often results in low levels of formal education, is members pointed out another root cause of poverty. This issue is constantly in the foreground, and needs respondents recommended dealing with issue through counseling and education on family planning.

In addition, the education system in most PICs only offer traditional academic courses, best suited for students going on to administrative careers, with little emphasis on developing basic skills. For the majority of students who do go on to become degree holders, basic skill development is more useful. For example, schools in the past provided courses that taught students metalwork, carpentry, cooking, sewing, and technical drawing/drafting. Development of these skills is essential for vulnerable groups, including youth who rely on subsistence production and cannot afford to hire skilled labour to do repairs and maintenance work.

Members also highlighted the fact that employment in the agriculture sector has drastically declined over the past few decades. In Samoa during the 1960s, over 50% employment was generated from the agriculture sector, today only 1% of the jobs come from agriculture.

To fight the negative impact of poverty, members recommended Governments develop recovery plans, stimulus packages, and long-term strategies. They also listed several possible ways Governments can better integrate young people into mainstream society:

- Create job incentives and promote poverty-reducing efforts targeting youth at risk
- Reaffirm the value and contribution of young people to avoid making them feel alienated from work
- Foster an environment where young women and men are inspired to become responsible and self-reliant members of their community
- Look at developing new industries or improving existing industries with distinct comparative advantages and/or niche markets to create more decent employment opportunities for youth and other disadvantaged groups
- Improve the working conditions and workers compensation and benefits in compliance with the [International Labour Organization's \(ILO\)](#) framework for decent employment

Discussants suggested learning from resilient Pacific Island communities, such as communities living on small coral atolls surrounded by miles of seawater. These communities developed life skills to adjust to their unique surroundings, including the lack of cash generating opportunities. Often it is not just about youth getting a job; it is also about ensuring employers treat employees with dignity and respect in the workplace. One story shared, highlighted this point. A young man from Vanuatu, who experienced negative treatment in the workplace, become disillusioned with his life and his work, and become involved petty crime. Fortunately, the young man was then provided with an opportunity to participate in a construction skills course, and a Life Skills for Employment workshop, and has since managed to find a more meaningful job where he felt respected and treated with dignity. An ILO report reported similar findings, and implemented a skill-building project in [Port Vila](#) to help youth find skilled employment.

Another suggestion was to invest in troubled youth by providing training on basic life and social skills. This, members felt could serve as a long-term strategy for alleviating poverty, by creating positive behavioral changes over the generations as youth who have managed to break out of the poverty cycle will then be able to teach their children the same skills. In time, this approach could then reduce the pressure on Governments to provide basic social protection assistance.

Discussants also recommended revising school curriculum to make it more relevant and better able to meet the demands of the labor market. They advised putting more focus into skills training in trades that are in high demand within emerging industries such as mining and tourism. Additionally, governments could encourage entrepreneurship and small business ownership.

In addition, members advised looking at the potential of labour mobility schemes to reduce unemployment amongst youth. However, for this to be successful, more long-term access to labor markets in Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. as well as other Pacific Rim industrial nations need to be further explored. PIC governments also need to improve labor mobility between PICs to encourage a freer flow of labour.

Finally, respondents recommended a business contract modality which involves business owners (in this case a manufacturing company of value added food and flora) also rewarding the traditional owners of the land/property, and the village council that provide the management and governance of the area. However, the bulk of the funding is provided to the producer that supplies the manufacturing company to pay their employees and reserve enough resources to repeat the process yearly. This will ensure that resource owners, their families, and districts will earn a fair and sustainable income through transparent means.

Overall, members stressed governments need seize the opportunity to invest in young men and women, to address the systemic issue of poverty, crime, and violence in the Pacific. To achieve this decision makers need to:

- have a better understanding of the factors that put and keep young people in cycles of poverty that could lead to crime and violence,
 - identify factors that contribute to the resilience of young people as a strategy to reduce poverty among young people and to reduce the risk of becoming involved in crime and violence,
 - explore the gender dimensions of youth crime and violence, and
 - identify examples of good practices of ongoing policies and activities relevant to unemployment, youth crime, and violence.
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Comparative Experiences

Dignity at Work Important to Ensuring Youth Employment, Port Vila, Vanuatu (from [Shaun Kennedy](#), *International Labour Organization (ILO), Port Vila, Vanuatu*)

The ILO implemented a small youth employment project. A study related to the project, found 53% of the 300+ unemployed youth interviewed had left jobs due to bad treatment at the workplace or from employers. To address youth unemployment, the project offered entry-level skills training and work opportunities. A 2007 M&E exercise showed participants benefited from the project, building their skills and self-confidence, and highlighted importance of being treated with dignity at work. Read [more](#)

Related Resources

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Office (CO) for the South Pacific Island Countries, Fiji (from [Shaun Kennedy](#))

FNPF Place, 8th Floor, 343-359 Victoria Parade, Suva, Fiji; Tel: +679-331-3866; Fax: +679-330-0248; SUVA@ilo.org; <http://www.ilo.org/suva/lang--en/index.htm>; Contact David Lamotte, Director

CO covers Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and other South Pacific Islands, and working on youth employment issues in the region

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Multi-Country Office, Suva, Fiji (from [Patrick Tuimaleali'ifano](#))

Level 8, Kadavu House, Victoria Parade, Suva, Fiji; Tel: +679-331-2500; Fax: +679-330-1718; http://www.undp.org.fj/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18&Itemid=39

Office covers 10 countries in the Pacific, strives to support the Pacific by coordinating UN activities at country level and through direct policy in poverty alleviation & achieving the MDGs

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Suva, Fiji (from [Jennifer Namgyal](#) PSE Facilitation Team)

The Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji; Tel.: + 679-3312-600; info@forumsec.org.fj; <http://forum.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/about-us/guiding-principles-values/>

Along with the UNDP Pacific Centre, and other partner agencies, produced a report on youth violence, crime and unemployment in the Pacific.

Recommended Documentation

Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk for Involvement in Crime and Violence (from [Jennifer Namgyal](#) PSE Facilitation Team)

Report; by Cameron Noble, Natalia Pereira and Nanise Saune; UNDP Pacific Centre & Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji; June 2011

Available at: http://www.undppc.org.fj/resources/article/files/UrbanYouth_in_the_Pacific.pdf (PDF, Size: 9 MB)

A report identifying risk & resilience factors that shape youth involvement in crime & violence

Related Consolidated Replies

Graduation of Children/Youth Labor into the Formal Sector, from Obaidur Rahman, Save the Children Denmark, Dhaka (Experiences; Advice). Urban Poverty Reduction Community, Solution Exchange Bangladesh. Issued 26 May 2011

Available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net/repository/bd/uprc/cr2-en-18042011-1.pdf> (PDF, Size: 185 KB)

Sought inputs for developing a collection of best practices to address children/youth employment in urban areas and looking suggestions on designing programs to tackle youth unemployment

Entrepreneurship and Career Development Program for the Youth, from Lars Voskukjl, Bhutan Youth Development Fund, Thimphu (Advice, Experiences). Solution Exchange Bhutan. Issued 14 March 2011

Available a: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.bt/ConsolidatedReports/cr-se-bhutan-14031102-1.pdf> (PDF, Size: 119 KB)

Provides views on entrepreneurship and career development program to address the problem of youth unemployment in Bhutan

Grappling with Youth Unemployment, from Ugyen Lhendup, Royal Institute of Management, Thimphu (Advice). Solution Exchange Bhutan. Issued 14 September 2009

Available at: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.bt/ConsolidatedReports/CR%20youth%20unemployment.pdf> (PDF, Size: 156 KB)

Offers feasible measures to overcome problems regarding youth unemployment and suggests ideas to encourage self-employment among the youth

Generating Youth Employment through Waste Management Efforts, from Linn Milligan, Youth Development Fund, Thimphu (Advice; Examples). Solution Exchange Bhutan. Issued 27 March 2008

Available at: <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.bt/ConsolidatedReports/cr-se-bhutan-07010801-1.pdf> (PDF, Size: 107 KB)

Explores the potential of successes of projects designed to create employment opportunities for youth through waste management

Strategies to Motivate Youth for VET, from R. S. N. Sharma, Functional Vocational Training and Research Society, Bangalore (Experiences). Work and Employment Community, Solution Exchange India. Issued 14 May 2007

Available at: <ftp://ftp.solutionexchange.net.in/public/emp/cr/cr-se-emp-17040701.pdf> (PDF, Size: 187 KB)

Outlines successful strategies to motivate and orient youth for vocational training and experiences on changing attitude of youth to attend vocational courses

Responses in Full

Stuard H. Penias, Department of Health Services & Social Affairs, Federated States of Micronesia National Government, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

The question today would be how are the global downturn of the financial crises affecting young people? You and I know that without a committed, educated, and engaged youth, the chance for a new, sustainable, and fairer globalization that put young people, jobs and their livelihoods at the center will not be achievable.

While in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), I believed that experiences at an early age of a lack of decent work can often permanently compromise a young person's future of employment prospects and what is more, the relative disadvantage of young workers is even more pronounced.

The FSM Youth Policy defines 'youth' as all persons (male and female) between 15 and 34 years of age. The purpose is to ensure effective focusing and monitoring of programs and activities as well as planning for the resources required for the future livelihood to support such programs.

In 2004, the FSM has about 34,740 youth (15-34 years), comprising of 32.9% of the total population. According to the FSM 2000 National Census of Population and Housing, the youth population had increased to about 36,854, representing 34.4% of the total population. The population for 2004 stands at about 38,603, which is nearly 35.4% and the projection for 2010, puts the youth population at just over 41,200 - about 4,300 additional persons over a period of nine years, or about 477 person/year. During the years, the economic growth in the FSM has failed to create enough decent and productive jobs for young people, causing a great number of unemployed youth and even a greater number of out migration to the U.S. and her territories.

Today, it is clear that the negative effects will be long-lasting and the challenges that young people are currently facing are many, education school drop outs, deterioration of livelihoods due to financial constrains, unsafe working conditions with low salaries, growing inequities and falling labor force and there will be even more negative social impacts.

Let's look at FSM (the National Youth Policy 2004-2010 on Youth Definition and Profile (<http://www.paddle.usp.ac.fj/cgi-bin/paddle?e=d-010off-paddle--00-1--0---0-10-TX--4-----0-11l--11-en-50---20-png---00-3-1-000--0-0-11-0utfZz-8-00&a=file&d=fsm008>, PDF, Size: 2.61 MB) - the implication of youth population prepared by the National Office of Planning and Statistics in 2004, and the growing population, can mean an increase in:

- High school enrollment – the number of students eligible to attend high school will increase by about 100 per year, which means that education services will need to provide additional resources (classrooms, teachers, materials, etc) to cater to the increase in students;
- College enrollment - the number of students eligible to attend colleges is expected to increase by 250 per year, which will pose a similar situation to that described in the previous paragraph;
- Labor-force participation – the number of young people entering the workforce is expected to increase by 495 per year, which means there will not be enough employment opportunities for all youth, this will have negative social impacts, and
- Fertility – with an increasing youth population, the number of young women at risk of getting pregnant will increase by about 265 individuals per year; this will have an impact on economy.

In the FSM, it is difficult to say but we do not expect economic growth to re-emerge, which is causing a great number of our young people to migrate out, seeking employment opportunities, and taking part in the human trafficking in an effort to seek better opportunities. In some worst cases, despair leads to suicide. Our young women and men are getting ready to enter the labor market, but jobs are disappearing, incomes are failing, salaries are under constant pressure and the social protection system fails to cover where they are most needed.

The future looks grim for youth. 'A father once asked his young son, why did you become a citizen of another country? The son answered, dad what do my own country prepare for me and what do they have for me that I should remain a citizen of it? There are no opportunities for young people like me, and what about my own children's future?'

To fight the negative impact of the financial crisis, recovery plans, stimulus packages and long-term strategies have to be initiated by the government. The despair among young people is clearly visible. They are not to blame for the financial crisis and yet, those who are employed are being asked to cut

down on hours, salary or endure a worsening of working conditions. The opportunity cost of investing in young women and men will be lost if urgent measures are not taken.

Possible ways to better integrate young people can include the following:

- Temporary youth programs should be put in place to target a large vulnerable group and to further avoid a deterioration of livelihoods
 - Create job incentives and promote poverty-reducing recovery efforts
 - There is a need to consult and talk with young people and workers to avoid making young people feel alienated from work
 - Create an environment in which all young women and men are inspired to becoming responsible and self-reliance members of their communities
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Shaun Kennedy, International Labour Organisation (ILO), Port Vila, Vanuatu

Thanks to the Solution Exchange for facilitating an online discussion on this interesting topic. My name is Shaun Kennedy. I work for the International Labour Organisation Office for Pacific Island Countries. I am based in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

In 2007, as part of an M&E exercise for a small ILO youth employment project in Port Vila, I interviewed a male youth who had participated in the project activities related to entry-level skills training followed by a one month work experience.

The youth's name was Tom T. He came from the Ohlen community in Port Vila and was twenty-one years old. Tom had a relatively good level of education up to Year 12, and he had also graduated from the Vanuatu Institute of Technology with a diploma in Hospitality. After this education, Tom had got a job in a well-known tourist resort in Port Vila, but had left after six months due to the negative treatment he received at work, which included poor conditions, very low pay and long hours with no benefits.

Tom became disillusioned with life and work in the tourism sector. Over several months he and some of his friends had drifted into a life of petty crime around Port Vila, usually stealing from properties. As time went by he had become a ringleader in his local criminal gang and was 'blacklisted' in his community as being a troublemaker.

After participating in the youth employment project, Tom reported a change of life. He did the two-week basic construction skills course and then participated in the Life Skills for Employment workshop. While on his work experience, he described how proud he felt to be going to work every day. People would shout to him in the mornings "hey, where are you going?" and he was so proud within himself to be able to reply that he was going to work. Tom enjoyed his practical experience on a construction site. He felt respected and was treated with dignity, and at the end of everyday he would share with his friends all the things he had done that day in work.

However, as a result of this he said he had 'lost face' with his friends because he no longer wanted to engage in their criminal activities. He lost his old friends but he didn't mind because now he could sleep well at night. He felt free in that he knew no one would come knocking at his door looking for him after a local crime had been committed. Tom said his family also felt free because they were no longer ashamed of him and his actions.

To this day (June 2011), Tom has maintained his positive direction in life. He is holding down a full time job, and is an active member of youth groups within his community.

In a small research survey related to the project, 53% of the 300+ unemployed youth interviewed in Port Vila had previously had a job, but had left it due to bad treatment they received in the workplace or at the hands of their employer.

The lesson from this brief case study is that it is not just about youth getting a job; it is also about youth being treated with dignity in the workplace. The positive work experience Tom had in early 2008 – when a project screened employer treated Tom with respect and gave him a chance to apply his newly learned skills and paid him properly for his labour, made the world of work a positive experience which helped Tom feel proud of himself and changed his life for the better.

Patrick Tuimaleali'ifano, UNDP Fiji Multi-Country Office, Suva, Fiji

Besides going through an important period of affirming their role and identity in their local community, most youth in the Pacific are financially dependent on their parents or guardians and are also very susceptible to peer pressure partly because of the strong communal culture predominant in the Pacific.

The rate of youth unemployment is significantly higher than the rate of adult unemployment. One could argue that without financial security and support from the family unit during this critical period of social, emotional and mental development one is more susceptible to a life of crime. Youth from poorer families are more likely to succumb to peer pressure, participate in crime activities and less likely to find decent employment and live a life of dignity.

In many Pacific island countries levels of poverty have risen quite sharply in recent years due to many factors most notably the food and fuel crisis coupled with the Global Financial Crisis and the impacts of natural disasters i.e. drought, flooding, cyclones, earthquakes Tsunamis affecting economic growth. More families have been forced into a life of hardship and poverty and it is the most vulnerable members of the community such as the youth that are the first and most affected victims of the shocks.

Investing in youth (especially the most poor and vulnerable youth) can be seen as a long-term strategy to alleviating poverty. Developing social skills and basic livelihoods skills will provide troubled youth with the necessary tools to find and sustain decent employment. This could create positive behavioral change over generations as the youth who have managed to break out of the poverty cycle will in turn teach their children the same set of skills and this in time will reduce the pressure on governments in terms of social protection assistance and basic livelihoods skills training to troubled youth.

Labour mobility schemes are often promoted as having the potential to benefit the sending country and the recipient country in multiple ways. For the sending country, they are presented as part of a development perspective, which focuses on the potential to provide developing communities with employment opportunities, the benefits of regular remittances and the chance for skills enhancement. For the receiving country, labour mobility schemes are seen as meeting labour shortages in developed economies, especially in labour intensive seasonal industries where employers may find that a reliable workforce is lacking.

Recent improved access to seasonal labour markets in Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S. has helped ease youth unemployment issue within the Pacific Region to a small degree and increased remittances. However, for labour mobility schemes to reach their full potential, more long term opportunities to access labour markets in these countries as well as access to markets in other Pacific Rim countries with aging populations, most notably Japan, may be needed. Labour mobility between island countries themselves may also need to be further opened.

That said, young Pacific islanders need to have the knowledge and skills to match the needs of labour markets locally and abroad. In many parts of the region, education is focused on academic knowledge for administrative careers and is not aligned with emerging labour market opportunities. For example, there is a growing demand for skilled tradespeople both locally and abroad in emerging industries such as mining and tourism. Moreover, the spirit of entrepreneurship and small business has potential if

developed. In some countries, the stigma to vocational and self-employment being seen as less important work will also have to be overcome.

Grant Percival, Samoa Manufacturers Association, Apia, Samoa *(response 1)*

Great - Someone recognizes that our education system is set up to fail 98% of its members.

Life skills like metal work, carpentry, cooking, sewing, technical drawing were all taught when I went to school and some of these skills I use every day. Today few if any schools teach it from the primary levels and that was when we were exposed to it. At the time, they were the manual skills for those considered not to have the requisite cerebral skills. I did some of the courses because I felt I needed to know how to do these basic life skills.

Now we do not really offer them at these levels. WHY? Is it because they are not needed - we all know that is not the case - is it because it is more expensive to run and not so sexy - yes. However, in the end of the many that enter at the primary level how many become degree holders - the rest could be considered "failures" and they are not - the failure is our systems and the way we approach teaching the basics of literacy, numeracy and communication and basic life skills somewhere we have lost a few of these in the jargon of education. We are set up for the elite and that is good for them but what about the dexterous, competent and to say the least, handy. Don't they have a right to be educated to be useful members of the community?

Samoa has been in recession for the last two years and counting so hardship and jobs are hard to come by. How do we address this in the Pacific because even the skilled are struggling? I am not sure how investing in youth creates opportunities when there are none to be had, especially when we seem to have an open door immigration policy for skilled and unskilled labour. Maybe if we are serious we need a longer-term time frame and the introduction and valuing of life skills and recognise we need to teach it in the schools. Tools electrical, pneumatic and electronic controlled have become really cheap compared to 10 years ago.

If you were take the funds to be spent on one regional conference each year and then buy tools in one of the South Pacific Country you would outfit at least three primary schools as an example and this would enable at least 100 children to learn some invaluable life skills so as to enable them to become invaluable members of society. These would be children with manual aptitudes and the ability to read and write. Not all want to become office workers, consultants or employees.

Just some food for thought.

Leonie Kila, Department of Health, Papua New Guinea

I am from an island called Rossel Island in the eastern tip of Milne Bay Province in Papua New Guinea.

The population now is like between 8-9 thousand people on the island.

It is very difficult for transportation from our Provincial Headquarters, Alotau to reach Rossel taking 3 to 4 days by bigger boats. Unfortunately, services for transport, education, communication and health are very poor. For social activities, we have soccer tournaments but it all depends on the weather and the transportation in the islands.

People on Rossel play sports, especially the youths both male and female because the females play netball and volleyball. However, they need equipment such as team jerseys and soccer gear.

Occasionally, they play for trophies when they are sponsored by people who can afford to buy them and all teams come around to where I come from called JINJO and more than 15 teams appear to be interested but most of them don't have soccer shoes, socks, (all soccer gears) but they have interest in playing.

I work as a Personnel Assistant to the Secretary for Health in Papua New Guinea and have sponsored couple of teams on the island with soccer jerseys but they have become very expensive nowadays therefore, have stopped sending them.

I feel very much for my people out there, but who knows where the Island ROSSEL is? So not many people are interested in going out there because it is very far and closer to the Solomon Islands.

This is just few things, which are very important I see when I go home.

Yolanda Lodge, Majuro, Marshall Islands

The Marshall Islands also has a very high rate of high school dropouts and youth unemployment has skyrocketed. The education level, it seems to me, has become less, not more, in the 19 years since I graduated from Marshall Islands High School (MIHS).

My son, for example, recently graduated from Marshall Islands High School and his senior math was Algebra II, which I took at MIHS when I was a sophomore. Clearly, there has been some kind of educational recession in this school, which is the biggest public high school in the country. On the other hand, computer skills and knowledge have intensified as illustrated by the introduction of SYSCO computer lessons, which includes learning networking and such.

However, one area that we need to aggressively deal with is teen pregnancy, which has its own root causes in the social-economic issues of poverty and under-education of the masses. It would seem, and forgive me for not having the proper figures to provide, that we haven't really ever gone over the bump of teen pregnancy, ever. It is constantly in the foreground and unless this issue is dealt with by educating and providing the proper opportunities for a life of integrity and empowerment to the people, we cannot and will not overcome this issue. Recently, I went in for a maternity check-up and I was the only one in my age group of mid-30's in the room, all the rest (about 20 people) were high school aged pregnant kids.

I agree with [Grant](#) from Samoa who asked a question on the open immigration policies of the region. I would add to this, but directing that to foreign investment policies. It would seem to me, and again, I have no number or figures, except for what my eyes and brain tell me that foreign investment needs to undergo more regulations so that the establishment of businesses benefits equally the people and the foreign business people.

There must be a partnership so that Marshallese skilled and basic labour is not undervalued or exploited for the benefit of the privileged or the foreign investors. People who've had to survive on small coral atolls surrounded by miles of sea water are creative and resilient. They have a proud heritage, however, if education does not re-awaken their sense of SELF, they will become lost, they will become graceless and their sense of worth will become subject to all types of manipulations.

My two cents, thanks.

Grant Percival, Samoa Manufacturers Association, Apia, Samoa *(response 2)*

I manufacture snacks, flour, and teas from a variety of flora and fauna in Samoa. We have decided to improve what we are doing by disciplining ourselves under the ISO 9001-2008 and to even upgrade this for food processing to ISO 22000-2005. This has been a difficult and arduous route of developing standards for products that have not really been studied or even understood, but it was commitment we made. As a result, we are better able to meet the market needs of the developed countries and are starting to make inroads. We have developed one small export market but this small export market is enabling us to increase the production and supply of products within our own market. We are trying to source our raw materials from the farm gate and through commercial operations. We have difficulty getting raw materials but there has been a slow improvement over the last 18 months as we have produced a circular to go out to the villages on our deliveries and have produced standards for the raw materials that we require.

We have noted the increase in demand for revenue from the villagers and how the need for money has caused an increase in criminal activity even outside Apia. We notice this because when we measure the maturity of the raw materials it is obvious it has not been allowed to progress to full term and when we ask why the answer is if we don't take it someone else will.

Why and what does this have to do with poverty, youth employment and resilience to crime?

To address these issues I am proposing a modality that farmers enter into a contract to supply me - this contract shall have an element of reward for the traditional owners of the property - the extended family, it shall also have funding for the community that provides the security, the governance of the area - the village council but the bulk of the finding shall be for the producer so he can comply with paying for his workers and also ensuring he is able to conserve resources to do this for me year in and year out. This then provides an incentive and mindset changes to developing sustainable livelihoods, investing in the resources that are all that are available in Samoa, seeing that the system and culture is met under a broad agreement. A good farmer with the right tools, mindset, and support of his/her family and village shall earn for his/her district and himself/herself up to \$60,000 an acre. This is because we do not rely on the traditional products of taro, cocoa, and copra. Although they have their place, the returns are not as strong as some of the other products that are wanted.

If he/she can earn this money on a sustainable basis year after year and at present, I am paying farmers around \$150,000 to \$200,000 for raw materials a year but the export business is growing and we need to be able to sustain that growth by continuity of supply. We would contract for about 20% of the weekly production and would like to see assistance to the rural small holders of agronomy advice, some material assistance to implement the advice for best returns and agreements between the farmers, their families, and their districts that shall see a transparent means of assisting them.

We can talk about poverty, youth, and employment but urban drift has set in as a result of the poverty of opportunity in the rural community and areas and we need to turn this around. The last 20 years of increasing technical regulations and industry standards such as the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement (SPS), and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and other bio-security barriers have demonstrated clearly the problems that exporting from the small holders is almost impossible and Samoa has attempted to address this with the Scientific Research Institute of Samoa. In the end it has to be the value-added food and fauna processors that shall have to lead the way and when we do we need the asset rich communities to be enabled to supply us otherwise we shall all fail.

I have attended too many meetings where well-meaning dialogue continues down paths that inevitably lead to failure, as it does not recognize the need to accommodate the realities on the ground.

Formal employment measures have changed but when in the 60s it was recognised that over 50% of gainful employment was in agriculture and today only 1% are employed formally in Agriculture (MCIL Labour Department and SBS data) then something is very wrong with our systems.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this discussion!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Development Effectiveness Community in the Pacific at pse-dec@solutionexchange-un.net with the subject heading "Re: [pse-dec] DISCUSSION: Poverty, Youth Employment, and Resilience to Crime. Additional Reply."

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