

Background Note

Regional Technical Consultation for Advocacy on Population & Development 2011

UNFPA Pacific
SubRegional Office



Foreword

There is no doubt of where one stands when one chooses to go down the path of advocacy, but to go down this path however is to have something, a cause or belief, to advocate for. How one actually goes about advocating then requires a framework which can ensure access to the target audience, which is often an intermediate or gatekeeper to what one would like to actually achieve.

For Pacific island countries, this concept of advocacy implies diplomacy and brashness, the antithesis that is part of two fundamental aspects of Pacific societies: the 'pacific way' of doing things by consensus and the continued adherence to its communal psyche and structures.

Consensus in this context is not about the majority winning but rather the result of a *talanoa* session or 'ceremonial' discussion carried out with mutual respect and sincerity; where dissent is allowed its voice and compromise is envisaged its outcome.

However, the globalized world thrives on trade which requires governance structures translates of another order, whereby agreements are reached in a different way and along a different rationale.

One of the sources of such governance structure that are acceptable to the way our globalized world does business is the United Nations. Its member states sign international

agreements which ideally put them all on the same page, at least theoretically.

The end of last century was punctuated by several intensive international forums in which all member states of the United Nations were invited to, to map humanity's progress as world leaders and prepare for the new millennium. In adopting these international instruments for good governance, Pacific governments were then to deal with vibrant traditional structures and influential faith-based organizations.

That translates into a dual existence of living in a constitutional governance structure that is steeped in spiritual or religious enlightenment.

In order to better valorize both systems, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) explores the applicability of triangular leadership alliances for traditional chiefs, ministers and faith-based leaders working together to advocate for a common goal. The meeting was organized to deliberate on innovative ways of advocacy on population and development issues, incorporating the best of Pacific's leadership practices.

Apt to this approach is the sentiment of the late Queen Salote of Tonga who said Tongan customs "... *should be improved to fit in with the times ... if there is a good substitute then change something that seems to be useless but do it gradually, not hurriedly for haste will lead to too many things being abandoned.*"

It is in this spirit that the Lami Technical Consultation for Advocacy on Population and Development in the Pacific was organized in collaboration with the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (AFPPD) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). The spirit recognizes the dual person that is the Pacific islander, the tripartite governance that informs his or her decision-making process, the need to consolidate social and human capital that is at the Pacific's disposal to change the language of development, and to make true what 'sustainable' and 'effective' means in the global slogan of sustainable development.

"The strengthening of democracy: the process is still evolving in the Asia-Pacific region, and it need not conflict with age-old values we hold dear. The secret is, as always, to find an acceptable balance. That search is a constant challenge."

Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, 2005



Introduction

Organizing a regional consultation of parliamentarians, church leaders and chiefs in one room was an attempt by UNFPA to seriously consider an alternative approach that was truly all-inclusive; the writing was on the wall for a new development language.

'Tripartite' delegations from six Pacific islands countries met in Lami, just outside Suva, Fiji, from 10 to 12 July 2011 to deliberate on effective advocacy for sustainable development.

The consultation was premised on the need to rethink advocacy on population and development and more in particular on the vision that two programmes of action

resulting from two global conferences should be 'married' and advocated for in an integrated manner.

The Barbados Programme of Action (PoA) represented the first ever conference for sustainable development of small island states held in Barbados, in April 1994. The meeting brought to the fore and onto the global development agenda the unique needs of small islands states. It was followed up by a conference held in Mauritius in January 2005 that focused on the natural resource base and needs in respect of technology and trade; the 'hardware' so to speak for achieving sustainable development.

Five months later, the second PoA was borne out of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). It introduced a new paradigm of population and development that places well-being and rights of individual women and men at the central stage; the 'software' so to speak for achieving sustainable development.

That it concerned an *avant-garde* software that should be saved for humanity was confirmed by the UN General Assembly adopting on 23 December 2010 - 16 years following its inception - to extend the ICPD PoA beyond 2014.

Delegations took note of the important complementarities and spent much time on sharing experiences and knowledge from three leadership perspectives - the constitutional, the traditional and the faith-based. A recurring theme was

reference to young people and concern for the future that today's challenges imply.



Country experiences highlighted that 'tripartite' leadership arrangements actually applied in the Pacific for rendering advocacy effective. The consultation was only the symbolic vehicle

which was going to ascertain the new development language: it was a question of how exactly population and development issues were to be incorporated into the existing trinity of gatekeepers to sustainable development.

Barbados and Cairo: perfect match or blind date?

Fiji's Minister for Health Dr Neil Sharma officially opened the consultation and while sharing some powerful statistics related to issues such as the youth bulge, urbanization, the ageing population and other demographic challenges that his colleagues and delegates are experiencing in their island homes as dynamics that may bring many people on the brink of poverty.

The passing of the regional 10 million population mark requires affirmative action and a repackaging of family planning, a Pandora's Box as critical to economic development as it is to social and family well-being.



AFPPD Representative Nancy Norma entertained the participants on the *raison d'être* of the Forum and the relevance of its partnership in the Pacific with the former Pacific Parliamentary Assembly for Population and Development (PPAPD).

UNESCAP Representative Iosefa Maiava presented the 'green economy' in the context of sustainability and as a new way of conceptualizing development that revolves around the 3 Ps of people, planet and profit.

Mr Maiava suggested a return to traditional food sources to beef up sustainable practices to which the renaissance of traditional ways of utilizing the land is implicit and the recognition of traditional leadership proving its relevance to today's world.

UNFPA Director and Representative Dirk Jena emphasized that it is the sovereign right of all 179 country signatories to determine ways and means to implement the ICPD PoA in accordance with the 15 principles that encourages government and civil society to:

- Achieve freedom in harmony (Principles 1 to 2)
- Promote equality in and quality of life (Principles 3 to 5)
- Manage resources responsibly (Principles 6 to 8)
- Strengthen the role of the family (Principles 9 to 11)
- Respect human rights for all (Principles 12 to 14)
- pursue resourceful livelihoods sustainably (Principle 15)

Discrepancies between realities and principles espoused in such agreements cannot be denied as societies continue to be plagued by social inequality, unbalanced population growth, disintegrated household resource management, lack of family planning services and a general disempowerment of the family.

Mr Jena emphasized the visionary integration of the great conference declarations in the 90s and pointed out how Principle 8 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) - *To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies* - was two years later complemented by Principle 8 of the Cairo Programme of Action (1994) - *Everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. (...) All couple and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so.*



Mr Jena pleaded for placing these important principles in the context of the people's everyday shores and joys. Building on the advocacy alliances between political, traditional and faith-based leaders in the Pacific is certainly a vehicle with great

potential. Such alliance would also help to bring in the essential conceptual simplification which demystifies global agreements to what makes sense at community level. For example, why isn't breast feeding promoted as one of the most effective and greenest of all technologies in baby feeding?

The role of constitutional legislature – Marshall Islands

“Population and development issues such as poverty reduction, universal education and maternal health are at the heart of every country’s development plans (...). Parliamentarians can do this through enactment of laws that provide access to resources and opportunities, (...). They can use their position to champion all of these issues at all levels, whether it’s at the grassroots or national level. People will listen to them.”

Ambassador Amatlain Elizabeth Kabua

The capacity of constitutional-based leadership to set the stage for successful partnerships with traditional leaders is embedded in the way that the *Iroj* or the Council of Chiefs works alongside the national parliament, as they remain key in resolutions that affect people and land.

Nitijela’s Chaplain Reverent Enja Enos pointed out Pacific island nations are experiencing similar population and development issues such as fragmentation utilization of social and natural capital; the new generation’s loss of cultural and traditional identity; and violence that women and

girls suffer at the hands of their own families and communities.

Particular though is the Marshallese exodus to the United States of America which has costs to society that may outplay the benefits of remittances as emigration affects traditional governance systems such as the inheritance of land rights, leaving not only the land unattended but also the obligations toward the elderly unmet.

As most of these challenges are addressed in the Constitution, it is the role of the Parliamentarians to establish the effective legislation through enactments by the Nitijela.

Despite the numerous acts such as the Education Act, the Health Act, the National Training Council Act and the National Environment Act, and the better levels of socio-economic improvements that go with it, there exists a real need for better implementation, collaboration and communication by and among all institutions involved, including the *Iroj*.

Rev Enos pointed to the situation of the woman as an indicator of a possible weakening of the traditional chieftainship. The Marshall Islands is a matriarchal society holding women in high regard though this is no longer reflected by the rather grim reality of today's prevalence of violence against women.

Young people, it was suggested, should perhaps be encouraged to serve as interns at government offices.

Participants also agreed on the need for targeted intervention that balances power dynamics and strengthens institutional structures such as through the establishment of parliamentary quota for women's participation in the constitutional legislature.

Role of faith-based leadership – Samoa

“Political, traditional and faith-based leaders have always worked alongside each other in executing each one’s duties for the betterment of our society and one which we believe must continue or all else will fail, given the authority and influential roles of each party associated with their leadership roles on the different arenas.”

Minister Tolofuaivalelei Falemoe Leiataua

Religion is engrained in everyday life in Samoa including in the professional arena. Regardless of the event, whether meeting, conference or workshop, it is now tradition in Samoan offices to begin with a prayer.

The alliance of faith-based organizations and traditional chiefs existed long before Samoa's independence (1962). As a Christian nation, the state considers faith-based organizations as a bridge to the people as far as delivery of social development is concerned.



Faith-based leaders have been the 'faces' of two major campaigns in

Samoa. As advocates for child protection, church leaders led outreach programmes and facilitated dialogue on child protection issues with their peers. Another campaign involved church leaders developing key themes and messages towards a community facilitation package on health promotion and prevention of non-communicable diseases which they then delivered themselves in their respective communities.

Acknowledging that discussions on population and development issues were critical to the public discourse, the meeting heard that it was imperative for existing tripartite structures to take advantage of their advocacy support to the national implementation of the ICPD PoA.

In his capacity of *Fofoga Fetalai* or Speaker of Parliament, Hon Tologuaivalelei Falemoe Leiataua was very well placed to make the important suggestion to use in the context of a partnership for strengthened advocacy the concept of 'triangular' rather than 'tripartite' which is reserved to describe the legislative, executive and judicial branches of a democratic government structure.

Great similarities exist between contemporary and traditional governance structures when one observes the triangular power dynamics at play among traditional chiefs, orators and village councils, whereby the government is often reliant on the church leaders to spread the word and maintain law and order.

Role of traditional chieftainship – Vanuatu

“We used to follow the Mama but as of 1839 we had to follow Papa.”

By this statement, Efate Chief Kalkot Mormor captured in a powerful way the changes the indigenous government system in Vanuatu went through since foreign interference came in and missionaries arrived.



The Naflak, the group was important and the individual's belonging was passed on to its members through Mama, and such groupings and related knowledge systems constituted the essence of governance, balance and harmony. The chief has land because he lives on it and he is not elected because it is passed on through Mama.

Chieftainship is now organized through village, area, island and national councils, and it is of a voluntary nature with the chief travelling on a *G11*. However, when real problems occur, chiefs are called upon as they lead by heart rather than expertise, and they can sometimes say no to the passing of a bill by Parliament.

The existing structure of governance in Vanuatu is hybrid as the three 'gatekeepers' do find themselves in a factual precarious relationship, with church leaders buying land

because of their money and traditional leaders owning land because of their belonging, the church leader preaching monogamy and the *arnabat* traditional chief being known for his many wives.

Discussions stemming from Chief Mormor's presentation confirmed that a triangular advocacy alliance was inevitable; despite a constitutional mode of governance, island communities still adhere to their religious and traditional leaders to effectively govern everyday life.

The meeting affirmed the longevity of traditional structures and systems in the Pacific and how the United Nations could leverage their potential in support of responsible governance. Engaging for a triangular advocacy alliance is particularly apt for UNFPA because of its focus on what is most intimate to human mankind, its sexuality and reproduction and the complex ways these are governed by custom, tradition and taboo.

Role of non-government organizations - IPPF



Speaking on the role of civil society organizations - rather than non-governmental organizations - in the promotion of population and development, IPPF ESEIOR acting director Archana Mani described CSOs as facilitators, policy champions and connectors who utilize the traditional structures to empower people with information on sexuality and reproduction.

Participants heard that with presence in nine Pacific island countries, IPPF assists and supports its members for the provision of effective and relevant services, youth programming, national level advocacy and representation of Pacific concerns at regional and international level.

Participants heard of the fear within certain island communities for a diminishing population to the extent that a ban on contraceptive use was considered by the Legislature in Palau. Palau's dilemma stems from a fall in fertility from an average of 14 to 3 children per family combined considerable emigration.



Civil society must also be part of this triangular leadership as participants want to see civil society as a cooperative body moving national development further, thus pleading for a role that is rather passion than rival

driven. Therein, an important role is reserved for the chief to mediate an often fine balance that is the key to conflict resolution.

A federation of constitutional treasures

FSM Senator Paliknoa Welly entertained the audience on the differences between the state legislatures due to the relative power each of the pillars in the triangle has been able to establish. In Kosrae for example, membership of a church is a precondition to obtaining a seat in the State legislature.

The story of the Yap State Constitution (1982) is of particular importance in this consultation as it designed a government consisting of a fourth branch composed of traditional leaders. The fourth branch was given veto power over the Yap State Legislature, thus giving traditional leaders a very real rather than a merely symbolic position in government.

In addition, the Yap State Constitution mandated a balanced state budget which makes it completely unique in today's world government by deficits rather than by credits.

Towards a national alliance for population development - Tuvalu

The Tuvalu government's commitment to population and development issues has been affirmed in its decision to 'localize' the PoA principles which guided the newly-established Population Task Force that is working on the first ever National Population Policy.



Minister of Finance Lotoala Metia shared his opinion that - while the Tuvalu Family Health Association was complementing work of the Ministry of Health to carry out

sexual and reproductive health related services - the educational institutions such as the technical and vocational schools would also be effective entry points for population and development-related programmes.

Minister Metia discussed how the Tuvalu National Youth Policy mission statement and its seven key principles all reflected population and development concerns. Governance in Tuvalu, he confirmed, is happening by way of a triangular leadership alliance, though it is not put down as such in writing.

All national consultations include the three types of leadership though there are not really mechanisms in place where they regularly meet and time may indeed have come to bring in the faith-based organization on a more systematic and formal basis.

Association of Pacific Islands Legislatures

APIL President Rebluud Kesolei presented the history and work of the Association which has 12 Pacific countries and states as members, i.e. Marshall Islands, Palau, Nauru, Kiribati, Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Yap, American Samoa, Marianas, Hawaii and Guam where it holds its Secretariat.

APIL grew out of the PIDB banking structure in 1989 to become a service platform and a meeting forum for the members of the legislatures of its members. It is governed by a Board of Directors appointed, meets twice a year and is funded from the annual subscriptions paid by its members.

APIL is active in the social development sector and stands ready to cooperate on issues of population and development that are of particular relevance to the 'North Pacific'.

Pacific Legislatures for Population and Governance

PLPG Programme Coordinator Tangata Vainere presented the organization which has 17 PIFS members plus Tokelau and is funded by several development agencies including UNFPA.



PLPG established in the Cook Islands in 2009, born out of a merger of the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly on Population and Development (PPAPD), founded in Nadi in 1997, and the Forum of Presiding Officers and Clerks (FPOC), founded in Nadi in 2000.

Mr Vainere described the four-pronged framework for action consisting of a youth framework focusing on HIV prevention, a climate change framework, a gender focus on elimination of violence against women and a benchmarking framework for democratic legislatures.

Thematic coverage of population and development issues was to be revamped in a meeting later in the year, therein guided by Chapter 13 and paragraph 87 of the ICPD PoA.

Discussions ascertained that this type of forums were being formed both upstream and downstream and that there was a need for mapping of existing regional networks in which to date only elected parliamentarians meet.

Outcomes

Working towards alliances that focus on the family: the consultation recognizes the importance of advocating for empowering the household and family as the key manager and beneficiary of the natural and other resources abundantly available in the Pacific.

Working towards alliances that advocate for resource planning: the consultation considers that establishing a country-level alliance between constitutional, faith-based and traditional leadership is the way forward in advocating for households and families to effectively take on the role of resource managers for planning of a sustainable future.

Working towards alliances that network upstream: the consultation considers that regional cooperation with the New Zealand Parliamentarians' Group on Population and Development (NZPPD) and the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PDPD) of Australia adds additional strength to mobilizing the triangular leadership alliances for advocacy on population and advocacy at country level.

Working towards alliances that mobilize downstream: the consultation asserts that the alliances are a means of outreach for the National Groups of Parliamentarians on Population and Development in the Pacific, therein supported by the respective Member Associations of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

Working towards alliances that green the blue: the consultation recommends the alliances are to benefit from the integrative development approach applied in environmental conservation and engage in the UN's Green Growth Partnership for wealth creation that is consonant with the 15 Principles guiding the implementation of the ICPD PoA.

"In our headlong rush for modernity, we have been far too eager to embrace foreign constructs in preference to our own. It is when the reality of the foreign has not matched the promise, that some of us have begun to take stock and revisit the reservoirs o of knowledge and practice that are our heritage." Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, 2006

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