

THE PACIFIC JOURNAL OF  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

VOLUME 4, EDITION 2, 2018

# WHANAKE



Whanake: The Pacific Journal of  
Community Development

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Cover photograph: Dianna Fuemana

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Unitec Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

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John Stansfield

# About

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*Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development* is a bi-annual ejournal for practitioners and academics who love community development. The journal mission is to serve as a crucible of democracy, where people come together to share their dreams and plan their common futures. It has refereed papers of 3000-6000 words, reviews, practice notes from the field, and opinion pieces. The journal provides space for posing questions, documenting emerging trends in research and practice, and sharing case studies and biographies.

Community development journals exist in the UK, USA and Australia. We see this as a journal for Aotearoa New Zealand and the wider Pacific. As such it reflects cultural diversity and is about the WE, not the I.

# Editorial

In lieu of an editorial for this edition I offer this report from the practice exchanges associated with the World Community Development Conference held this year in Maynooth, Ireland. Gavin, our editor, has been globetrotting and escaping the worst of our winter.

## *What is a practice exchange?*

I participated in my first International Association for Community Development IACD practice exchange in India in 2015 and reported this to an earlier volume of *Whanake*. A practice exchange is a tour by community development enthusiasts, led by local community development workers. An IACD practice exchange, as the name might suggest, involves people from all around the world coming together to participate in local community development initiatives under the guidance of local community development leaders. You might call it travel with meaning, or a classroom on the move.

The first practice exchange I went on this year was to Dublin and a 'classroom on the move' is an apt description – a group of us were dispatched to various community development initiatives in Dublin city via tour-bus. I was fortunate enough to visit the Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre ([www.paveepoint.ie](http://www.paveepoint.ie)). Irish travellers have been a feature of Irish life for many centuries but have only recently had their rights and ethnicity recognised by the Irish state. Visiting the Pavee Point Centre was a rich intercultural experience. In an open hall surrounded by incredibly poignant photographs and artefacts we were taught by leaders of the Travellers community about their history and modern-day existence. In this I learnt that although I had come halfway around the world I was one of the settled people. For Travellers there are only Travellers or settled people. The centre is devoted to the preservation of Traveller culture and the ongoing fight for Traveller rights.

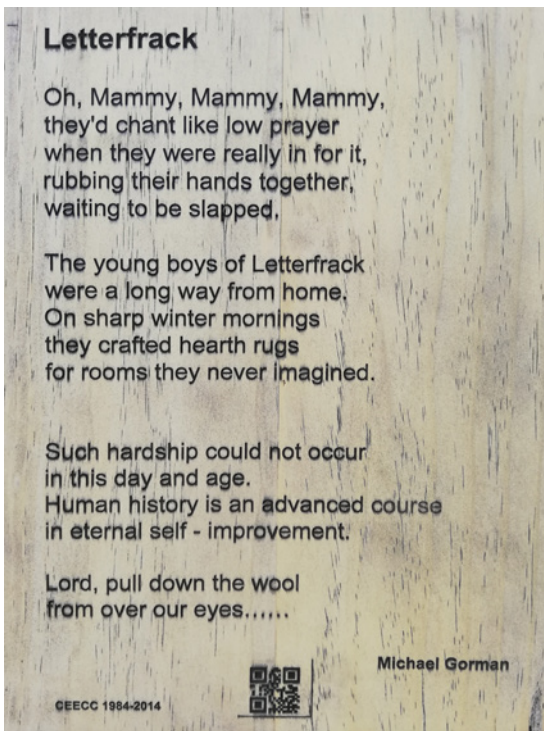
The second stop was the Fatima Groups United community-development organisation. This was gritty urbanism and the people rising up at its best. The Fatima Family Resource Centre ([www.fgu.ie](http://www.fgu.ie)) has a proud history of success in rebuilding a community which had been devastated by poverty and drug abuse. The centre has provided the focal point to create real government of the people by the people for the people and has initiatives in education, health and social services, boasting sports teams, a café and childcare centre. It was fabulous to see really solid community-development principles in action. Organisers realised that the social isolation of modern urban high-rise developments was the problem they needed to deal with most, and have successfully engaged a community to take control of its own future.

The independent Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission ([www.ihrec.ie](http://www.ihrec.ie)) was also an inspirational visit. Ireland is the only country in Europe that has a smaller population today than it had in the 1800s. This can be fairly pinned to the oppression experienced in this divided nation, violent conflict, and the enormous toll of the Irish potato famine. One response to this has been an enormously generous approach to new migrants and refugees, with almost one million new arrivals in the last 20 years. The commission is a proactive response to building an inclusive culture based on equality and human rights, and right on target in its community-development practice; and it is, as a result, a very busy organisation. The quality of some of the resource materials being produced was outstanding, and it was heartening to see so many young people of multiple ethnicities driving the organisation forward.

My indulgent second practice exchange was the wild Atlantic Way tour. This took us from Maynooth through the Irish countryside to visit some rural community-development initiatives, before the city of Galway and ultimately the Aran Islands. Deep in the countryside of Connemara we came to Letterfrack, a small country village where education had been contested on religious grounds for many years. We visited the former industrial school buildings and looked at a range of initiatives which arose to keep the community together following the closure of this notorious school. A community radio station, much like the one in my own community of Waiheke Island, in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf, a gallery and a renowned furniture making and design enterprise sit in austere stone buildings in the pretty countryside. A solitary stone plaque spoke of the dark past.

A small youth centre in a rural country town bore great similarity to projects in our own community in New Zealand: here too was the problem of access for rural youth, where little public transport exists, a lack of facilities for young people with low population density, and the ever-present fear for parents that children will migrate to the cities and never come back. I was struck by the similarities in programmes and problems in what could be a sister organisation operating in Wellsford, New Zealand.

As an island-dweller myself, the jewel in the crown of my travelling had to be the visit to the Aran Islands. We stayed on Inis Oirr, the smallest of the islands (population 250, three pubs). In the midst of an Irish heat wave and drought we sunbathed on the beach during our break and followed our Irish cousins diving into the Atlantic Sea. I may at some future date forgive my practice exchange colleague Huston Gibson for egging me on. Honestly, I thought my heart would stop it was so cold, but families were having a fabulous time enjoying what must be in this climate a very rare treat. The island is managed without police by a community committee and has several fabulous public facilities. In addition to the ruins of a 15th-century castle and a 3rd-century church



there is a great community centre, a community-owned and operated cinema, and a fascinating art and craft gallery. The place was hauntingly beautiful and the people very generous with their conversation. The ferries, which are relatively frequent during the short tourist season, are quite small boats, and I could not help but imagine how the island might cope if some of the large, fast catamarans which visit Waiheke were to disgorge their load of tourists – they would easily outnumber the resident islanders.

The harshness of the existence in that climate is extraordinary. There is no natural soil and it is built up by islanders gathering seaweed which is dug into sand in tiny paddocks surrounded by stone walls to stop the wind erosion. The traditional boats or currachs are tiny lattices of timber covered with animal hides – fishing and farming were hazardous existences. Community development was everywhere, the collective spirit and way of understanding generated by such a harsh climate continues to influence the development and preservation of the island.

If you ever have an opportunity to do an IACD practice exchange I thoroughly recommend it. You will make friends for life and have a real refresh of your CD perspective. Paul LaChappel, IACD president, and practice exchange junkie has just returned from a practice exchange in Bali and reported extensively on the IACD Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/IACDglobal](http://www.facebook.com/IACDglobal)). Further exchanges are planned for Scotland, and possibly Mexico, next year.

John Stansfield

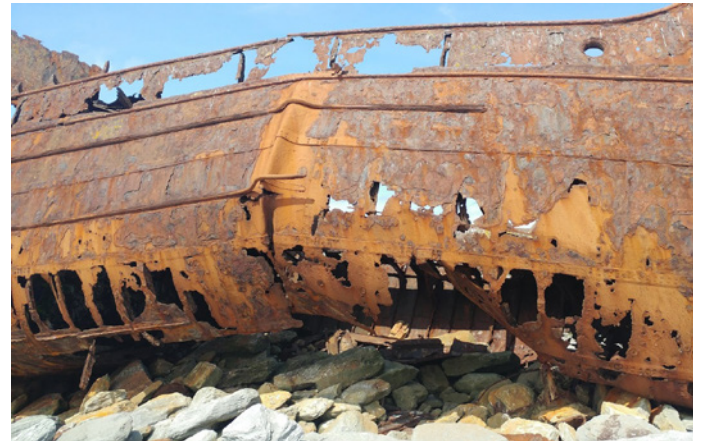












The experiences of diverse-gender tertiary students: Structural discrimination and microaggressions

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This publication may be cited as: Powell, C., and Gremillion, H. (2018). The experiences of diverse-gender tertiary students: Structural discrimination and microaggressions, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 4(2), 10–30.

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

An ePress publication

[epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz)  
[www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/](http://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/)

Unitec Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

# The experiences of diverse-gender tertiary students: Structural discrimination and microaggressions

CATHERINE POWELL AND HELEN GREMILLION

## Abstract

This paper documents forms of discrimination that students with diverse-gender identities face within the New Zealand tertiary environment, and reports on students' suggestions for strategies to support the normalisation of gender diversity. Findings from this qualitative study are based on data collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with seven participants. They indicate that although participants did not generally experience discrimination through direct attacks or violence, the negative effects of gender-normativity and of administrative processes that were not suitable, as well as a lack of staff awareness about the needs of diverse-gender students, comprise discrimination through ever-present microaggressions. Findings also highlight the resilience of diverse-gender students and their ability to develop personal strategies to manage their experiences of being part of a marginalised group. Strategies that participants identified to help create authentic inclusive tertiary environments include increasing the visibility of diverse-gender identities within policies, processes and curricula, and developing educational programmes for staff on the unique needs of the diverse-gender population. This paper evidences structural discrimination that pervades most of society in relation to gender diversity, and suggests that it could be addressed fairly easily within the tertiary sector by those who manage its systems, pending education and awareness.



## Introduction

This study investigated the experiences of students with diverse-gender identities within the New Zealand tertiary environment. It was undertaken in partial fulfilment of a Master of Education degree at Unitec Institute of Technology in New Zealand, from which the primary author, Catherine Powell, graduated in 2017. The second author, Helen Gremillion, was Catherine's principal supervisor. The aim of the study was to hear directly from the participants whether they had experienced discrimination in relation to their gender identities; what kinds of discrimination, if any, were occurring; and whether participants believed specific strategies might support an inclusive tertiary environment for diverse-gender students. As the diverse-gender community is becoming increasingly visible, a growing awareness is developing about the issues these people face (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). Due to this visibility, New Zealand tertiary education providers are among the many communities seeking to create inclusive environments so all can find their place to belong within these institutions.

Gender diverse people do not fit into the binary model of gender. Gender diversity is inclusive of, but not limited to, people who are intersex, trans, transsexual, transgender, takatāpui, whakāwahine, tangata ira tane, fa'afafine, akava'ine, fakaleiti, māhū, vaka sa lewa lewa, fiafifine and genderqueer.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of their specific identification, they share the experience of challenging traditional gender norms and because of this, face high rates of discrimination and marginalisation (Case, Kanenberg, Erich, & Tittsworth, 2012).

The New Zealand Youth '12 survey found that one in every 25 high-school students either identifies with a diverse-gender identity or is questioning their gender identity (Clark et al., 2014). The survey showed that young diverse-gender people face discrimination in their day-to-day lives that impacts on their wellbeing in many ways. Some of the ways this discrimination occurs are: increased levels of bullying, exclusion, and lack of access to health care. More than half of diverse-gender high-school students are afraid that someone at school will bully or hurt them, with 50% having experienced violence. The report from this survey also notes that these experiences follow students into tertiary study.

Numerous studies and reports demonstrate the discrimination and marginalisation diverse-gender people face around the world (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Burdge, 2007; Case et al., 2012; Cegler, 2012; Clark et al., 2014; Courvant, 2011; Effrig, Bieschke, & Locke, 2011; Otago University Students Association, 2003; Rands, 2009; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012). This study is the first research project to focus solely on the experiences of diverse-gender tertiary students in New Zealand or Australia.

1

These are terms that describe some of the many different identities within the diverse-gender community. They include Māori, Samoan, Fijian and Cook Island terms.

## Research Aims

The following objectives framed the study:

1. To examine whether diverse-gender students experience discrimination related to their gender identities within tertiary settings in New Zealand and, if so, to identify the ways in which this discrimination occurs.
2. To identify strategies that support the inclusion of diverse-gender students within tertiary settings.

Because this study sought to understand the experiences of diverse-gender tertiary students, it was important to ensure that the voices of these students were central to the research. Beemyn and Rankin (2011) report that members of the diverse-gender community often experience a reduced sense of personal agency. The design of this project focused on ensuring the participants could actively engage and decide which stories they wanted to share about how their gender identities impact on their experiences in tertiary settings. The chosen method of data collection, in-depth semi-structured interviews, allows for an evolving dialogue and the creation of space for participants to share not only their experiences of discrimination, but also the strategies that they created in response (Gamson, 2000).

## Literature Review

This area of research is an emerging one; there are a limited number of studies available within the New Zealand context. Several overseas studies include diverse-gender identities along with diverse sexualities when looking at the experiences of tertiary students (Renn, 2007; Skene, Hogan, de Vries, & Goody, 2008; Valentine, Wood, & Plummer, 2009). In addition, two studies in New Zealand cover the experiences of diverse-gender tertiary students (Riches, 2011; Woods, 2013). However, all these studies tend to focus more on the experiences of students with diverse sexual identities.

A few overseas studies report specifically on the experiences of diverse-gender tertiary students (Case et al., 2012; Effrig et al., 2011; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012). Although the current study is the first in New Zealand to focus solely on tertiary environments, a New Zealand report was published identifying the discrimination faced by diverse-gender people in all areas of society (Human Rights Commission, 2008). Also a study of the health and wellbeing of diverse-gender students in New Zealand high schools has been published (Clark et al., 2014).

Below is a discussion of three significant broad themes that figure prominently in this literature. These are: the power of gender normativity, and how diverse-gender students challenge these norms; the discrimination that occurs when social norms are not adhered to; and the strategies that have been developed by diverse-gender people and their allies to navigate the challenges they face as a minority group.

## Gender normativity

### GENDER NORMS

The first step in a discussion of gender norms is to define what is meant by the term 'gender'. It is useful to clarify the distinction between sex and gender. Sex is a term used to describe the biological body and is usually assigned at birth. Two main options are currently available: male and female. Gender, however, is a set of socially prescribed roles and attributes. Fryer (2012) states that the "social roles taken on by men and woman are not rooted in biology but are, rather, products of socialization" (p. 41).

Rands (2009) describes how gender norms are maintained through a "system of power relations with privileges and punishments" (p. 420). This description indicates that gender norms are not only socially constructed, but also kept in place by rewarding those who conform and punishing those who deviate. The underlying assumption that motivates gender normativity is the belief that gender should map neatly onto sex, and that both are binary categories. Fryer (2012) notes that "even within the arguments about whether gender is an 'internal essence' or an 'outer category' the assumption is still that there is male and there is female" (p. 41). The idea that only two natural biological states exist – male and female – has been a dominant discourse within Western culture that has shaped understandings of gender for many years. However recent research challenges this discourse. Fausto-Sterling (2016) reports findings of a research project that explored alternative ways of studying biological sex, moving past a binary model of sex and showing how gender can articulate with sex in multifarious ways. She argues that sex exists on a continuum, and that "behaviours and biology are different manifestations of the same complex system" (p. 13).

### DIVERSE GENDER IDENTITIES

Diverse-gender people do not fit into the binary model of gender, which is, as noted above, typically understood as flowing 'naturally' from a binary model of sex. They may identify as transgender, intersex, genderfluid, genderqueer or in other ways. In one American study of diverse-gender students, over 100 different gender identities were discovered among participants (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). Regardless of their specific identification, they shared the experience of challenging traditional gender norms (Case et al., 2012). Beemyn and Rankin (2011) found that under-20-year-olds identifying as gender diverse still go through the discrimination, harassment, and assaults of previous generations; however, they also have more connections to resources and are more aware of their needs than were previous generations.

## Discrimination

### DISCRIMINATION IN RELATION TO DIVERSE GENDER IDENTITIES

Discrimination towards diverse-gender people occurs when the majority consciously or unconsciously holds an idea of gender normativity and treats



those who do not adhere to society's gender norms differently compared with those who do conform (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Effrig et al., 2011; Human Rights Commission, 2008). Burdge (2007) states that behaviours and beliefs that do not conform to socially-imposed gender roles attract discrimination from the dominant group. Thus, it is gender non-conformity that puts diverse-gender people at risk.

Often such discrimination is justified by the belief that diverse-gender individuals deviate from the rules of nature; that is, they are seen as unnatural (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013). Many studies provide evidence of the marginalisation and abuse of diverse-gender people in all areas of society (Case et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2014; Effrig et al., 2011; Human Rights Commission, 2008; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012; Rossiter, 2014). Generally, this discriminatory behaviour from the majority could be described as diverse-gender people receiving negative attention for behaving in ways that are considered inappropriate for their presumed gender in terms of clothing, manner of speech, bathroom use and so on (Rands, 2009). Marginalisation can also occur because diverse-gender people are misunderstood, overlooked, or invalidated, again for not behaving in line with society's gender norms (Burdge, 2007).

As well as individual discrimination, there are many examples of institutional discrimination. Diverse-gender tertiary students often do not have access to appropriate housing, bathrooms, health centres, or administrative systems (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Clark et al., 2014; Human Rights Commission, 2008; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Spade, 2011). For example, when an application form asks for one's gender but offers only 'male' or 'female', not only are sex and gender conflated, but also anyone outside the gender binary is rendered invisible and receives the message they do not belong. Another difficulty can occur when students wish to change their name and/or sex on academic records (Human Rights Commission, 2008). These changes can be difficult to implement because the relevant staff are unsure of the process or there are simply no systems in place to facilitate the required changes.

Another example of institutional discrimination is the lack of content that includes diverse-gender people within the courses and programmes in which students are participating (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Rands, 2009). This gap in material means that it is challenging for diverse-gender students to see themselves reflected in curricula.

#### MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions is a term that describes small but regular insults, dismissals, and general hostility experienced by racial minorities (Fleras, 2016). Recently it has also been used to describe the negative experiences of diverse-gender people. Microaggressions describe the kinds of comments and experiences that, on their own, do not create significant harm, but when repeatedly experienced can cause stress and anxiety.

New Zealand diverse-gender high-school students reported receiving negative comments from both other students and staff when they used bathrooms that others felt did not match their gender (Human Rights Commission, 2008). There are also examples of staff who have failed to intervene when other students have made hurtful comments (Rands, 2009). Varying degrees of inappropriate comments have been reported, ranging

from unintentionally hurtful remarks to intentional harassment and bullying. Diverse-gender tertiary students overseas report experiencing the former – microaggressions – in all aspects of their day-to-day interactions on campus, whether it be within the curriculum content and delivery, when seeking career advice and health services, or simply socialising between classes (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). This form of exclusion and marginalisation creates stress in people who are constantly exposed over long periods.

#### MINORITY STRESS

Minority stress is a concept that was developed to explain the experiences of racially marginalised groups. Meyer (2003) also started applying the concept to people of diverse sexualities when examining their health outcomes. Minority stress is a recognised response when a person's values are in a state of conflict with those of the dominant culture. It stems from experiencing discrimination, expecting rejection and enacting concealment (Dispenza, Brown, & Chastain, 2016).

Studies have shown that diverse-gender tertiary students have elevated rates of distress compared with their gender-conforming, or cisgender,<sup>2</sup> counterparts (Effrig et al., 2011; Human Rights Commission, 2008). A New Zealand survey reporting on the health and wellbeing of high-school students found that although the diverse-gender group is numerically small (around 5% of students) its members faced significant wellbeing disparities compared with cisgender students. Their experiences included lower confidence levels, higher depression and suicide rates, bullying, and lower rates of perceiving that a parent cares for them (Clark et al., 2014).

### Strategies to create inclusive environments

#### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

When considering the various strategies suggested in the literature, focusing on the physical environment consistently appears as a priority, and includes appropriate access to bathrooms, housing and healthcare (Case et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2014; Effrig et al., 2011; Human Rights Commission, 2008; Otago University Students Association, 2003; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012). By creating a physical environment in which students can use a bathroom without fear, and have access both to living environments that are safe from harassment and to healthcare providers who are knowledgeable about the unique needs of diverse-gender people, tertiary providers are removing the first level of barriers to diverse-gender students' inclusion and engagement (Effrig et al., 2011; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012).

When looking at the lives of diverse-gender young people, studies have also noted these students often arrive at institutions with an expectation of being excluded because of their experiences in high school and in the wider society (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011; Clark et al., 2014). Ways to provide a sense of connection with others, whether in a physical 'rainbow space' or through social connections via groups and activities, are suggested to assist in addressing the need for acceptance and belonging (Case et al., 2012; Cegler,

2012; Effrig et al., 2011; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012; Skene et al., 2008; Woods, 2013).

The literature also points to the need for overt inclusion of diverse-gender identities within tertiary institutes' policies and practices (Case et al., 2012; Cegler, 2012; Effrig et al., 2011; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012; Skene et al., 2008). Policies and practices are linked to the physical environment in that they protect its safety. Most tertiary providers have anti-harassment policies; however, few directly mention gender identity and expression. This omission leaves the 'sex' category within such policies open to interpretation and adds to the invisibility of this group of students.

#### ABILITY TO SELF-IDENTIFY

Burdge (2007) states that "it is empowering for oppressed groups to control the language representing them" (p. 244). There are many occasions when tertiary students are asked to identify their gender, however often there are usually only two options from which to choose. Such a limited choice does not acknowledge the fact that there is a huge range of gender identities currently in use. As noted above, in one American study of diverse-gender students, over 100 different gender identities were discovered among the participants (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011). A key strategy for supporting diverse-gender students is to create processes in which they can choose appropriate words to describe their gender identities.

#### AWARENESS OF DIVERSITY AND CHALLENGING GENDER NORMS

It is recognised that even when changes are made to physical environments, policies, and practices, if the people within tertiary institutes are unaware of gender-conforming privilege and its impact on the diverse-gender community, the required culture shift will not occur (Rankin & Beemyn, 2012). One way to increase awareness and challenge gender norms is to use gender-inclusive language (Burdge, 2007; Burford, Lucassen, Penniket, & Hamilton, 2013; Case et al., 2012; Macdonald, 2011). Burdge (2007) suggests that those wishing to create inclusive environments need to use inclusive language and challenge others when they use gender stereotypes. If enacted effectively this strategy can educate others but also create alliances. It points to the importance of education occurring not only in the classroom, but also through individual actions in all areas of people's lives.

## Methods and Methodology

This qualitative study employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews. It has been suggested that for a study of this nature, a sample size of five to eight participants is large enough to provide a rich data set (Tracy, 2012). Notices were circulated via social media and other electronic networks; respondents self-identified as gender diverse and volunteered to be part of the study. Seven participants were selected, from seven different institutions.

An inductive analysis model was chosen that could allow the data to drive the analysis, and could enable patterns to emerge from the many different



concepts and insights in the data (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). Thematic analysis allowed identification of themes both within the individual data sets from each participant, and across the entire data set (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013). The six-phase analysis process set out by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to create a transparent process: 1. Familiarise self with the data; 2. Generate initial codes; 3. Search for themes; 4. Review themes; 5. Define and name themes; and 6. Produce the report.

## Findings

### DISCRIMINATION

The first research question asked whether participants experienced discrimination, and if they did, what kind(s). Discrimination is often described as someone being treated unfairly or as 'less than' another person in the same situation. The most interesting finding from the interviews is that six out of seven participants reported no discrimination experienced. This response reflected the fact that the six participants had not experienced people behaving towards them in directly unkind or violent ways. As one participant put it, "...there are no tomatoes being thrown, I've never had any slurs thrown at me that I am aware of". However, what became apparent when analysing the findings was that all participants were treated differently, and in unwelcome ways, from their gender-conforming peers in a variety of ways throughout their tertiary education. Despite reports of not experiencing discrimination, there is consistent evidence in the data that all participants have been discriminated against because of their gender identities.

Participants' experiences of discrimination were wide ranging; however, three main areas stood out as impacting all of them: the effects of gender normativity, problematic administrative processes, and a lack of staff awareness. It also became apparent that ongoing, mostly covert, discrimination had a negative impact on the participants, creating the experience of minority stress.

### GENDER NORMATIVITY

Gender norms can lead to incorrect assumptions and comments reflecting an expectation that everyone should conform to a binary model of gender. Participants reported the impact of incorrect pronoun use as well as being challenged for using the 'wrong' public facilities. They also reported the need to 'self-edit' to avoid confrontation in the face of others' incorrect assumptions.

One way these assumptions manifest is others using a pronoun that does not match the gender identity of the person referred to. This phenomenon can be described as 'misgendering'. Lennox,<sup>3</sup> who identifies as genderqueer<sup>4</sup> and uses they/them pronouns, spoke about the effect of people using female pronouns to refer to them:

I feel that female pronouns are much too heavily weighted in terms of gender. To me, it feels like the pronoun takes the societal expectations of what we consider to be a woman and places it upon me like a mantle I'm

3

Pseudonyms are used for all participants; gender identities and pronouns remain unchanged.

4

A person who identifies with neither, both, or a combination of masculine and feminine genders.

supposed to uphold. It makes me very uncomfortable, especially when referred to as 'that girl' or 'that lady'.

Most of the participants spoke about the need to speak up about their gender identities to avoid being misgendered. Due to gender norms, it is often assumed that people are cisgendered and if they are not, it is seen as the responsibility of those with a diverse gender identity to disclose to the person making the incorrect assumption. In addition to needing to disclose their gender identities, participants also reported incidents in which, even after such disclosure, they still experienced staff making inappropriate assumptions about pronouns. Tatum, a transmasculine person who uses they/them pronouns shared their experiences in the classroom:

I did have a few problematic incidents like I had one of my lecturers who thought it was alright to call trans people "it" and that we liked being referred to as "it". So, I had to basically give the class a lesson in pronouns that day.

In addition to incorrect pronoun use, many participants talked about their fear that others would challenge their use of a bathroom. Jay, who identifies as agender<sup>5</sup> and uses he/him pronouns, described an incident when he was trying to use a bathroom that had a wheelchair sign on it as there were no other gender-neutral toilets available:

I remember one woman, you have to push the door button and wait for [the toilet door] to close and I pushed the button and I was waiting for it to close and this woman pokes her head in and goes, oh are you allowed to use the handicapped ones? And I go, it's also for gender neutral stuff. And the door is closing and I'm bursting and really uncomfortable and she's like, what? [and I think] I have to pee! Can you get your head out of the door because I just want to pee in peace! And this is not your business!

Although this question about bathroom use may seem appropriate to some, the above is a clear example of how incorrect assumptions about gender, due to gender norms, create intrusions into diverse-gender people's lives that often result in embarrassment and frustration. One coping strategy participants developed in response was 'self-editing': at times, they would consciously choose to conform to gender norms to avoid being challenged. This response often led to the experience of a dual identity with different names and pronouns being used in different settings. Jay explained:

I've got two mes. There is the legal me and then there is the real me. And because of certain legalities I'm stuck with the legal me and can't quite shake it but I try to keep it in the background as much as possible.

Overall it was clear that gender normativity created a range of challenges including others making incorrect assumptions about the participants, the issue of when to disclose one's gender identity to others, and the self-editing that occurred as participants navigated their way through their educational experience.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES

All participants spoke about the challenges they faced navigating administrative systems in tertiary environments. Three areas emerged as the most commonly reported areas of concern: the correct recording of gender and names during the application process; the rigidity of current enrolment systems; and a general sense that including the diverse-gender population within administrative processes was not a priority for tertiary staff.

Many of the participants are known by names that are different from their legal names. While it was acknowledged that what constitutes a legal name is outside the direct influence of the tertiary provider, participants often verbalised frustration about a perceived lack of willingness by staff to solve the problem of how to prioritise chosen over legal names. Jay spoke of his experience working with staff to record a name that is different from that on his birth certificate, and of his frustration when told that it was not possible:

I think, my personal feeling is, as a university administrator you really do want to stick to the legislation ... you want to be seen to be doing what you have to do by law and I would characterise them as relatively conservative in terms of legalities ... so people are sticking to what they know rather than trying to branch out into new things where there is no legislation around it.

Similar bureaucratic challenges were also mentioned in relation to how tertiary providers record gender during the application process. Most participants commented on their discomfort at being presented with only two options, male and female,<sup>6</sup> when completing the application forms. Jay sums up the participants' overall reactions when describing his response to seeing these two options on forms: "Actually I can't answer this question because there is no option for me!" This sense of being either invisible or excluded was mentioned by many of the participants when discussing requests to identify their gender on different forms and surveys.

Participants also reported that administrative systems were often inadequate when it came to ensuring they were referred to by the correct name. Some tertiary systems had a process in place for listing a 'preferred' name; however, this option did not always ensure the student was referred to by this name. A number of participants identified the practice of passing around a roll for students to sign at the start of class as problematic, as it often had legal names recorded instead of chosen names. These uncomfortable situations also seemed to create opportunities for diverse-gender students to support each other. Consider, for example, Lennox's response to their friend's legal name being on the class roll:

... I usually sit next to them, and every time that roll comes round it's always wrong. It's always under the name that they are registered under, not their preferred name. I have taken to getting it before they do, erasing it as much as I can and writing it in correctly and making a note for them to please change it and then passing it [on]. They appreciate it because it is literally every time we go to the workshop. They shouldn't have to deal with that.

Several participants talked about their preferred name being listed but lecturers still reading out their legal names. When asked why they thought this happened, participants attributed the behaviour to lack of awareness about the importance of the student being referred to by their correct name.

#### LACK OF STAFF AWARENESS

Another key finding from the study is the general lack of staff awareness in relation to the diverse-gender population. All participants reported providing gender-diversity education to staff simply to give a basic understanding about their needs in relation to their gender identities. Participants reported that although some staff did demonstrate a level of awareness about diverse-gender people, this knowledge was probably attributable to their field of expertise rather than any general teacher-education programmes.

Several participants reported challenges when interacting with staff. For instance, Tatum found it challenging when explaining to a staff member the importance of using they/them pronouns, finding that “she was more focused on the grammar than using gender neutral pronouns and the effect it has on students.” Tatum went on to talk about their hesitation in taking on the role of educator:

If I knew they were all getting diversity training I would probably be more open to speaking. I don't think the students should be the ones to educate their lecturers ... because I don't think it's our job. You can just go on Google.

Many participants reported that this educational role was an energy drain that distracted them from their own studies.

#### MINORITY STRESS

Minority stress occurs when a person is part of a marginalised group and their values conflict with those of the dominant, or majority, culture (Dispenza, Brown, & Chastain, 2016). This stress response and the hypervigilance linked to it stem from experiencing discrimination, working to conceal a part of oneself that is not in line with majority values, and the expectation of rejection if concealment is not successful. All participants reported some level of stress directly related to how others interacted with them, and a need to remain on ‘high-alert’ for possible discrimination.

All those interviewed were aware that prejudice and discrimination occur in other settings and all were, to varying degrees, on guard and ready for such occurrences during their tertiary experience. One of the ways this hypervigilance manifested was through participants not doing certain things that would disclose their gender identities, for fear of future consequences. Lennox explains why they do not disclose their genderqueer identity to everyone. “People would probably start avoiding me, because when people don't understand something, often times they will just avoid it altogether ... to avoid trying to understand it or just because they are frightened about a new concept, which I understand.”

Most of the participants reported some level of awareness about how these experiences negatively impact their confidence levels. Tania reported feeling concerned even when the comments being made were

meant to be positive: "...I came in and one of the lecturers ... said, 'Oh you bring flamboyance to [tertiary provider]' And I said, 'Oh my gosh am I overdressed?'" Although the staff member reassured her that this remark was meant as a compliment, Tania's immediate response was to assume she had done something wrong. Tania's response mirrored other comments from participants who often reported a desire to 'fit in'.

Jay described how the feeling of many small but hurtful interactions builds up during the day:

It's when it piles up all day. That's exactly what microaggressions do. If you say to me, "Is your name really [name omitted]?" I can laugh it off but if you are the 50th person to ask me that today, that piles up and it's hard. And it's chipping away. That's what microaggressions do. You can't legislate against microaggressions because people don't know they are doing it. And it's so hard to pin it down too. ... You can't legislate it ... you can only educate.

In addition to the negative comments and questions participants reported experiencing, unspoken expectations also became apparent. A few of the participants reported feeling that others expected them to disclose their gender identities and that if they didn't they would be perceived as being deceitful. Tatum spoke about this issue in relation to both sexuality and gender identities:

Queer people in the class always have to come out but ... it's just assumed that you can stay silent if you are a heterosexual or cisgendered. It's not a big thing but we are almost expected to declare our [identities] every single time.

Participants regularly expressed frustration that they would often be treated differently from those in the majority, along with a sense of resignation that nothing would change.

Overall the study found that much of the discrimination experienced was connected to how societal gender norms are woven throughout tertiary education structures and appear in staff attitudes. As Lucy says:

It's silent. The discrimination is silent. It's evasive ... and the minute you are not heard or you are not represented, that is when this invisible discrimination starts to happen. And there is no more insidious discrimination than people forgetting you are there.

Although the participants did not use the term minority stress to describe their experiences, there is clear evidence that a heightened sense of vigilance was required for them to move through their tertiary studies in ways that worked for them. They developed many helpful strategies for managing this stress, but they were also often left tired and at times frustrated or even anxious.

## STRATEGIES

In addition to identifying the types of discrimination that were occurring, this study identified strategies that support inclusive practice for diverse-gender tertiary students (research question 2). These findings can be divided into



two categories. First are the personal strategies participants developed, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability required to succeed in the current tertiary environment. Second are the strategies participants identified as being useful for creating inclusive environments. These latter fall into two main groupings: visibility of diverse-gender people within policies and processes, and education for staff about the needs of diverse-gender students.

#### PERSONAL STRATEGIES

All participants created ways to develop strong social connections with other students and staff. For some participants, creating social connections meant finding places where they could go to relax and feel comfortable. Lennox described how one space at their university felt like being at home, where they could focus on studying. "I actually just really liked the environment there. It's quite comfortable; I don't feel pressured by any of the students around me." Sam joined the queer group on campus to find a space that felt comfortable and enjoyed the social activities and charity work the group arranged during the year. Sam found in that environment she could relax and did not feel the need to self-edit in the same way as with other groups, due to the level of acceptance. Sam described the queer groups thus: "It's like a safe place to go so you don't have people judging you or getting up in arms about [your gender expression] as well."

However, not all participants wanted to belong to a queer group because of the dynamics that can occur within such groups. Tatum talked about finding the queer groups on their campus "quite cliquey", noting that "competition starts arising between the different queer groups on campus so I have just stayed away from those."

Tatum went on to describe a phenomenon that almost half the participants raised during the interviews – gay students who were not inclusive of diverse-gender students directing the queer spaces:

I notice in the queer groups on campus you get the same thing, you get queer groups of people who are happy to reinforce cisnormative stuff because it suits them. All the groups that are like, pro-gay marriage or something which is good for them but they won't engage in any activism which will actually help other people.

Another strategy many participants often discussed was their awareness that other people's opinions about them do not need to have a bearing on how they see themselves. Tania describes clearly how she focused on not letting others' reactions upset her:

I think for me I don't really care if they watch me or if they don't. I'm at the stage where I am just concentrating on my studies and what is important to me. I don't really care what people say, I've got to that stage where I am strong enough to not care, it doesn't matter what they think or what they say, it doesn't matter to me anymore. What matters are the people ... I care for and who care about me. I used to care a lot before.... To be strong ... I just block it out ... and you have to learn all those things to survive.

For several participants such as Tania, the ability to set clear boundaries was reported as an effective strategy for remaining positive and staying focused on personal study goals. Along with the ability to create strong social connections with others, participants thus demonstrated a high level of personal resilience to address the challenges they faced due to their diverse-gender identities.

#### VISIBILITY OF DIVERSE-GENDER PEOPLE

When participants were asked what strategies support inclusive practice in tertiary education, the strongest response was related to visibility of diverse-gender identities in all areas of tertiary life. They reported that visibility promoted a sense of belonging and feeling valued.

Several participants mentioned that having their correct gender and name recorded in the system makes a big difference. Lennox described an example of how tertiary institutes could ensure the correct data are gathered.

University forms should have a third option for gender with a box for preferred label (if any), along with a dropdown menu for preferred pronouns and a space beside your legal name for your preferred name if it hasn't been changed legally. That way, your academic transcripts would be correct for you and who you are.

While most participants wanted the ability to have their correct gender identities recorded on their files, some participants challenged the need for collecting data regarding gender at all. Jay suggested those gathering the data should consider not only how they collect gender details, but also whether they were relevant for each situation.

I think that a lot of the forms that you end up having to fill in online have a binary gender option on them and I think there should either be another option or they should scrap gender completely. Because why do you need to know?

However, overall, participants reported that increasing the visibility of diverse genders is a way of demonstrating to this population that they are considered important and that the tertiary provider is genuinely committed to creating inclusive environments.

#### STAFF EDUCATION

A strong link was found between the need to increase the visibility of diverse-gender students and the importance of providing diversity education for staff. All participants reported the positive impact of encountering staff who have an awareness of diverse-gender identities. Staff demonstrated this awareness through their language and behaviours, and these actions contributed to an environment where the participants felt acknowledged and supported.

Tania was taught by a staff member who could link her to suitable health providers through the institute's professional networks when she was having problems accessing appropriate medical support.

Actually [name omitted] was really good in helping, in fact, she was very good at helping me get onto my pills ... she talked with one doctor at the [tertiary provider] clinic ... that's how I came to be on the hormones, so I

just started this year.

Although all participants reported some positive experiences in relation to staff awareness about diverse-gender identities, they also acknowledged that these were not representative of their experiences with most staff. Jay's comment reflects the general feeling of all participants: "She's an inclusive person who happens to work for the university, it's not that the university happens to be inclusive."

The findings demonstrated the importance of ensuring a wide range of voices were heard when creating educational sessions that increased staff capability for the diverse-gender population. Tania highlighted the importance of ensuring multiple perspectives were heard to increase the effectiveness of inclusive practice. She suggested "more training which actually involves the students because a lot of the time training is provided by one person who gives their viewpoint on the issue and it becomes one-sided". Matua also commented on the challenge of recognising that the diverse-gender community does not speak with one voice:

Everybody is different. Even [within] our trans community [people] are extremely different. I find it hard because the spectrum is so broad, I could say one thing and the people next to me who are trans could say, "No that's not what I want." It's really tough.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings demonstrate that participants experienced discrimination – primarily microaggressions – within the tertiary environment because of their gender identities. These microaggressions were primarily related to gender norms, administrative processes that were not suitable and a lack of staff awareness about the needs of diverse-gender students. These findings align with the literature that reports diverse-gender people experiencing discrimination in all areas of life (Case et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2014; Effrig et al., 2011; Human Rights Commission, 2008; Rankin & Beemyn, 2012; Rossiter, 2014). The current study also shows that participants developed comprehensive personal strategies to manage the stress that discrimination creates. Finally, participants demonstrated a clear understanding of what institutional strategies work for them, or would work if implemented. These focus mainly on increasing the visibility of diverse-gender people within the institution and providing diversity education for staff. In line with the Human Rights Commission (2008) findings, the participants in this study are not seeking any special treatment; they simply wish to be treated with the same dignity and respect that their gender-conforming peers receive.

## Conclusions

Four key conclusions arise from the findings of this study that connect to the research questions about discrimination and inclusive strategies. The first conclusion is related to diverse-gender students themselves and the other

three are related to the tertiary environment.

#### DIVERSE-GENDER STUDENTS INCREASINGLY EXPECT TO BE INCLUDED

Findings indicate that all the participants had a clear understanding of their right to be included within tertiary environments. The participants reported clear examples of when they felt excluded and how this problem could be resolved. The literature links this increasing demand for inclusive education to the growing refusal of the diverse-gender community to accept cultural, legal and political barriers in all areas of life (Spade, 2011). Participants demonstrated a range of skills that both created a sense of personal security for themselves and ensured others were aware of how to create inclusive environments. As diverse-gender students continue to choose places where they feel secure and included, it will be important for staff to increase their awareness of what this population requires.

#### THERE IS A LACK OF STAFF AWARENESS ABOUT DIVERSE GENDER IDENTITIES

The participants' experiences in all the tertiary environments demonstrated that staff, in general, were either not aware of how to include diverse-gender people, or lacked the motivation or confidence to make the necessary changes required. Overall, staff appeared willing to hear about diverse-gender students' experiences and to learn from them. However, this willingness often left diverse-gender students receiving attention that separated them from their cisgender peers. Participants talked about feeling uncomfortable when staff and other students expected them to be responsible for upskilling the cisgender population. This form of 'othering' highlights how diverse-gender people do not fit the gender norms and can sometimes be seen as odd or unusual (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013). As staff increase their awareness of gender diversity they will also start to see how gender norms impact all areas of the educational environment.

#### GENDER NORMS ARE REINFORCED IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS AND IN CURRICULA

The findings showed a lack of visibility of diverse-gender people within policies and processes, and clearly demonstrated how binary gender norms are woven throughout educational systems. This socialisation of gender norms is often invisible to those who conform, so these norms are unconsciously reinforced in both educational systems and curricula (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013). The literature suggests that staff could usefully consider how gender norms are perpetuated in language within classroom activities and course content (Spade, 2011). This increased awareness may provide the opportunity for staff to adjust some of the unconscious messages that have been delivered about binary gender norms. Until such changes occur, gender norms will continue to be reinforced overtly and covertly in many aspects of tertiary education.

#### THERE IS A LACK OF RESEARCH ABOUT BEST PRACTICE

Within educational settings, little research informs practice in relation to diverse-gender inclusion. This lack of research and debate connected to best practice for inclusivity could explain the participants' perception that there

is a lack of attention being paid to their needs. Rands (2009) acknowledges the lack of research as problematic given that diverse-gender people are participating in all levels of the educational system. Unless tertiary providers are aware of diverse-gender students' experiences, these students will continue to experience marginalisation and barriers to reaching their full potential.

Tertiary providers often make public comments about providing inclusive environments; however, as noted, there is very little research about what best practice in this area looks like. Rands (2009) states that all teacher-education programmes should be designed to ensure that staff know how to support the growth of diverse-gender students. This study may provide some direction for tertiary providers who are working towards inclusive practice. It is important that the focus remains on the power and privilege of the majority inherent in the educational system (gender-conforming privilege) to avoid placing the burden of change on the diverse-gender community. In this model of change, instead of a focus on empowering diverse-gender people to deal with the challenges gender norms create, the focus is on changing social systems to reflect gender diversity so that all can feel authentically included.

## Recommendations

The findings of this study have led to the development of four recommendations. The table below shows the links between the study findings, the conclusions, and these recommendations.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

<i>Study findings</i>	<i>Conclusions</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
Students experiencing minority stress and the personal strategies they have developed in response.	Diverse-gender students increasingly expect to be included.	That tertiary providers recognise the impact that gender norms have on diverse-gender students and work to normalise gender diversity.
Lack of diversity education for staff.	There is a lack of staff awareness about diverse-gender identities.	That tertiary providers deliver educational programmes for staff that support the active creation of inclusive environments for diverse-gender students.
Gender normativity and the lack of visibility of diverse-gender identities in policies and processes.	Gender norms are reinforced in administrative systems and curricula.	That institutions investigate policies, processes and curricula to ascertain areas where diverse-gender identities require inclusion.
Perceived lack of support from staff for the diverse-gender community.	There is a lack of research about best practice.	That research scholarships be established for diverse-gender researchers to support increased research within the community and create events where findings relating to diverse-gender studies can be shared.



Whilst these recommendations focus on increasing the visibility of diverse-gender people within the tertiary environment it is important to note that educational practitioners also need to protect students' right to self-determination and therefore protect the right to remain invisible for those who wish to. Cisnormativity still permeates educational institutions. Therefore, visibility does not equal safety (Burford, MacDonald, Orchard, & Wills, 2015). Visibility is not inherently good and those wishing to remain invisible have as much right to do so as those wishing to be seen. There is no easy answer to this challenge. Ideally everyone will find a place to stand and know they are valued and respected.

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Helen Gremillion is an Associate Professor of Social Practice at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland. She is also Research Professional Development Liaison in Unitec's Research and Enterprise Office. Her research and teaching interests include feminist theories and gender studies, narrative therapy, effective professional development in the research space, constructionist theories of the body and of sexualities, research ethics, gender and science, consumer culture, and medical anthropology.

Catherine Powell has worked as a Lecturer in Community Development at Unitec Institute of Technology since 2008. Prior to this, Catherine contracted to a range of not-for-profit organisations as a facilitator, community developer, mediator and project manager in New Zealand and Jordan. She is committed to ensuring all students can access tertiary education and succeed in whatever pathway they choose.

*Laudato si'* – establishing local approaches  
for global ecological conversion

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This publication may be cited as: Jennings, A. (2018). *Laudato si'* – establishing local approaches for global ecological conversion, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 4(2), 31–47.

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

An ePress publication

[epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz)  
[www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/](http://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/)

Unitec Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

# *Laudato si'* – establishing local approaches for global ecological conversion

ANNE JENNINGS

## Abstract

In 2017 the Aotearoa Community Development Association (ACDA) and the International Association for Community Development (IACD) held a conference, *Sustainably yours: Community development and a sustainably just future*, in Auckland where I presented a paper titled “Community development – The ‘missing ingredient’ in striving for sustainability”. That paper examined the United Nations Agenda 2030 (2015) and, in particular, the associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This paper will explore a further significant document, also released in 2015, the encyclical (letter) by Pope Francis, *Laudato si': On care for our common home*. The paper starts with some history of the Pope's work, moves on to provide an overview of the areas *Laudato si'* encompasses, analyses some of the responses it has attained, and then concludes with a review of how and where community development theory and processes fit with the document.

## Preamble

This section provides a brief overview of the previous paper, “Community development – The ‘missing ingredient’ in striving for sustainability” (Jennings, 2017). As noted in the abstract, this paper was presented at the *Sustainably Yours: Community development and a sustainably just future* conference in Auckland in 2017. The paper included a summary of differing views of the SDGs, some of which pointed to ‘top-down’ government and corporate approaches to change that are urgently required, due to our planet's ecological predicament. The paper did, however, subsequently question if/where non-government organisations (NGOs) could be involved using ‘bottom-up’ community development approaches.



## UNITED NATIONS 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The publication *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development* (United Nations, 2015) is, according to the United Nations (UN), “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”, that “seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom”, whilst “recogniz[ing] that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development” (United Nations, 2015, p. 3).

The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), incorporating 169 targets that cover economic, social and ecological developmental objectives. The need for action is certainly understandable, given that *The Sustainable Development Goals report* (United Nations, 2016) found that approximately one in eight people live in extreme poverty, nearly 800 million people suffer from hunger, 1.1 billion people are living without electricity, and water scarcity affects more than 2 billion people. Significantly, many of the issues related to climate change. Further, the report noted that:

- In 2013, 59 million primary-school-aged children were out of school, and during the same period 757 million adults were unable to read and write.
- An average of 83,000 people died and 211 million were affected each year by natural disasters from 2000 to 2013.
- Over 23,000 ecosystem species face extinction across the globe.
- In 2004 13% of human trafficking worldwide comprised of children, in 2011 this had risen to 34% (United Nations, 2016).

All this is in addition to the extreme climate change events currently being felt across the globe, many a result of human-instigated destruction, pollution and overconsumption. We are now in the position where our current epoch (period), the Holocene, which provided us with 12,000 years of stable climate since the last ice age, has clearly ended. “Humanity’s impact on the Earth is now so profound that a new geological epoch – the Anthropocene – needs to be declared,” according to experts at an International Geological Congress (Carrington, 2016, para. 3).

Given the degree and complexity of the mainly human-activated issues facing the world today, the 2030 Agenda is an important attempt to galvanise actions “for people, planet and prosperity” (United Nations, 2015, p. 3). The resultant SDGs are a declaration of aspirations, framed within a voluntary agreement, but not an obligatory accord (Pogge & Sengupta, 2016). The United Nations (2015) position on the voluntary nature of the agreement is that, although it is not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of outcomes of the goals.

To support this process the UN Global Compact was created, with groups established in member nations to “help companies understand what responsible business means within different national, cultural and language contexts and facilitate outreach, learning, policy dialogue, collective action and partnerships” (UN Global Compact, 2016, para. 2). It was proposed that, through “networks, companies can make local connections – with other

businesses and stakeholders from NGOs, government and academia – and receive guidance to put their sustainability commitments into action” (UN Global Compact, 2016, para. 2). This has resulted, however, in many ‘top-down’ approaches to policy, planning and proposed action for social, economic and environmental change.

#### AUSTRALIA’S INVOLVEMENT

In Australia the responsibility for the Global Compact Local Network lies with the Commonwealth Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This department’s position is as follows:

The 2030 Agenda helps Australia in advocating for a strong focus on economic growth and development in the Indo-Pacific region, and in promoting investment priorities including gender equality, governance and strengthening tax systems. It is also well aligned with Australia’s foreign, security and trade interests especially in promoting regional stability, security and economic prosperity. (DFAT, n.d., para. 6)

This certainly does not encourage small-to-medium communities and non-government organisations (NGOs) to participate in the change process. Further, it appears Australia isn’t managing very well in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. According to the 2018 Global SDG Index Australia is now ranked 37th in the world – down from 26th last year (Thwaites & Kestrin, 2018, para. 1, 2). Whilst performing relatively well in health and education, results for the environmental goals and climate change are among the worst in the OECD group of advanced nations. Further:

The new [2018] index ranks Australia as the worst-performing country in the world on climate action (SDG 13). The measure takes into account green-house gas emissions within Australia; emissions embodied in the goods we consume; climate change vulnerability; and exported emissions from fossil fuel shipments to other countries. (Thwaites & Kestrin, 2018, para. 7)

Whilst recognising the UN has been involved in, and has supported, community development approaches to social change for over 60 years (UNESCO, 1954) current approaches to economics and ecological conversion are questioned. That includes asking to what extent can combining the goals of top-down business-as-usual economic development with social and ecological activities be transformative (Jennings, 2017; Sachs, 2017).

#### WHERE IS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

So where, if at all, do the ‘bottom-up’ community-based processes come into the SDG programmes? When examining the global ecological predicament, Ife proposes that the ‘bottom-up’ approach to the changes required involves community development processes – which he identified as the “missing ingredient” (Ife, 2013, pp. 20-22). He recommends this approach as a feasible alternative to the current neoliberal social, economic and environmental policies and practices that are major contributors to the current dilemma. “At the heart of community development,” he explained, “is the idea of change from below” (2013, p. 138).



Whilst the UN SDG pro-active activities are often undertaken in (and by) small communities and villages across the globe there appears to be very little evidence of the same happening at this level in Australia. In the previous (first) paper in this sequence the following was concluded:

From a 'bottom-up' community development perspective the international and national approaches to SDGs lead non-government organisations and community development practitioners to question if there is a role for them in assisting to fulfil the SDGs. This paper clearly articulates the importance of the community development approaches, advocated for by the International Association for Community Development. This includes recognising that, when addressing structural and social class inequalities, the poor who are victims can become active contributors in designing and developing solutions. This is tangible 'bottom-up' community development. (Jennings, 2017, p. 16)

#### WHERE TO FROM HERE?

There have been many valuable international climatic, social and economic changes as a result of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda by member nations. Local people and local communities, however, are often going it alone when they clearly identify social, cultural, health, economic and environmental risks in their own backyards. Consequently, they intuitively adopt 'bottom-up' community development processes to work collectively to overcome them.

Given this discussion so far, research into other similar approaches and campaigns to address the challenges of our global issues was undertaken, resulting in the following study into the encyclical (letter) *Laudato si': On care for our common home*<sup>1</sup> by Pope Francis (2015). The following sections of this

<sup>1</sup>  
Referred to in this paper as *Laudato si'*.

paper will explore this letter and, as with the previous paper, “Community development – The ‘missing ingredient’ in striving for sustainability” (Jennings, 2017), will conclude by examining relevant links with local community development processes that could lead to ecological transformation.

## *Laudato si’* – the encyclical

### BACKGROUND

To begin, what is an encyclical? The name is derived from the Greek word for circle, or circular. Accordingly, an encyclical is an important letter from the Pope of the day, sent to all bishops around the world, containing vital information relating to Catholic social teaching. They are not issued often, but contain important guiding principles to be taken seriously, and should challenge people to grow their personal knowledge and faith (Global Catholic Climate Movement, 2015). Lately encyclicals are addressed to Catholics, other Christians, people of other faiths/belief systems. Or, as Pope Francis clarifies in *Laudato si’*, “faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet” (2015a, para. 3).

The current Pope, on his investiture in 2013, adopted the name Francis because of a strong conviction in the principles held by St. Francis of Assisi, who devoted his life’s work to caring for poor and sick people. Importantly he also loved and cared for all animals and creatures, whom he considered brothers and sisters under God. St. Francis died in Assisi, Italy, in 1226 (Biography.com, n.d.).

Because of this, Pope Francis’ very first words in his encyclical are:

*“Laudato si’, mi’ Signore” – “Praise be to you, my Lord”*. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. (2015a, para. 1)

Some journalists and others note Pope Francis is the first Pope to address ecological issues. For example, Tilche and Nociti, in their otherwise supportive paper, state “The Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato si’*, addresses for the first time in the Church’s history the subject of the protection of the environment” (2015, pp. 1-5). However, in all fairness, the following is acknowledged:

- “In 1963 Pope John XXIII emphasized the world’s growing interdependence ... he extended the [then] traditional principle of the common good from the nation-state to the world community. Ecological concern [he said] has now heightened our awareness of just how interdependent our world is. Some of the gravest environmental problems are clearly global. In this shrinking world, everyone is affected and everyone is responsible, although those most responsible are often the least affected. The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental ethic” (United States Catholic Conference, n.d., para. 9).

- In 1971 Blessed Pope Paul VI referred to the ecological concern as “a tragic consequence” of unchecked human activity: “Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation” (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 4).
- Saint John Paul II, in his first encyclical in 2001, warned that human beings frequently seem “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves their immediate use and consumption”. Subsequently, he called for a global ecological conversion (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 5).
- In 2007 Pope Francis’ predecessor Benedict XVI, proposed “eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the environment” ... Benedict urged us to realise that creation is harmed “where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone” (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 6).

Thus, the stage is set – not for a conflicting approach to the UN’s 2030 Agenda, but for a similar one with many commonalities, plus added dimensions. There are also some differences, which will be discussed later in this paper.

#### COMMENCEMENT OF *LAUDATO SI’*

In 2015 Pope Francis released the encyclical ‘*Laudato si’*: On care for our common home’, two months before the United Nations released the 2030 Agenda. In fact, on the day of the UN document’s release Pope Francis was guest speaker at the United Nations. In his speech to the UN General Assembly the Pope discussed many areas covered by both representations. This included the following:

First, it must be stated that a true “right of the environment” does exist, for two reasons. First, because we human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself entails ethical limits which human activity must acknowledge and respect. ... Any harm done to the environment ... is harm done to humanity. Second, because every creature, particularly a living creature, has an intrinsic value, in its existence, its life, its beauty and its interdependence with other creatures. (Pope Francis, 2015b, p. 2)

He continued by emphasising:

The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged. Economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offense against human rights and the environment. (Pope Francis, 2015b, pp. 2-3)



In the preparation of *Laudato si'* Pope Francis was assisted by an esteemed team of eco-theologists, and scientists from the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The Academy, established in 1603, has international, multi-racial and non-sectarian membership, which has included many Nobel Laureates and other famous scientists, including the recently deceased Stephen Hawking (Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 2017).

Therefore, at this stage of the investigation into *Laudato si'* one clear message that distinguishes it from the UN's 2030 Agenda is that, globally, people, with their individual and/or collective faith/spiritual belief systems, or lack of them, are now an integral part of discussions relating to the planetary environmental crisis; and that it is a crisis, as clearly articulated in *Laudato si'*, that not only involves the environment, but also demonstrates a deep connection between environment and poverty.

So how does this differ from fundamental scientific approaches? As one scientist, Gus Speth, a US advisor on climate change, co-founder of the Natural Resources Defence Council, and former Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, stated:

I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change.

I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address these problems.

But I was wrong.

The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation – and we scientists don't know how to do that. (quoted in Curwood, 2016)

Based on discussion to date, the next section of this paper will move into an overview of what *Laudato si'* contains, chapter by chapter. Whilst the amount of detail is restricted by the length of the paper, the whole document is available at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) if people wish to explore it further.

#### WHAT DOES *LAUDATO SI'* CONTAIN?

This section provides a synopsis of content covered in *Laudato si'*, to lay the foundation for further discourse in this article. Principally the question being asked in the encyclical is "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 160). This question is at the heart of discussion on caring for our common home. It is a passionate call to all people of the world to undertake unified global action to address the destruction of nature and people who cohabit our planet.

In Chapter 1, entitled 'What is happening to our common home', Pope Francis discusses many of the environmental issues facing us today, including poverty and human inequality, loss of biodiversity, the throwaway culture, overconsumption, global degradation and climate change. Throughout this chapter the interconnectedness of all creation is emphasised, and it clearly illustrates that we cannot continue to exploit and pollute our common home.

Chapter 2, 'The Gospel of Creation', sets out to address the areas

identified in the previous chapter, through understanding and insight that the Bible offers. Pope Francis clearly pronounces:

...the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man “dominion” over the earth has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church. ... we must forcefully reject the notion that [we have been] given dominion over the earth [or] ... absolute domination over other creatures. (2015a, para. 67)

Thus the wellbeing of all creation is emphasised, including appreciating that every creature has its own value and significance.

Chapter 3, ‘The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis’, examines the human origins of our current situation, and also explores the use, and dangers of overuse of technology. Misguided anthropocentrism “which sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interests” (2015a, para. 122) is addressed, as is the importance of work for everyone. Issues relating to biotechnology and genetic engineering are also examined.

In this section, Chapter 4, ‘Integral Ecology’, is proposed as the heart of the encyclical, as the paradigm for justice. It upholds the relationship between environmental issues as inseparable from social and human issues. Further, it calls for preferential opportunities for people who live in poverty, those most harmed by ecological degradation. Pope Francis devotes this chapter to advancing a new world vision and offers integral ecology as “a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis” (2015a, para. 137). Further, Pope Francis emphasises it is essential to show consideration towards Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions (2015a, para. 146).

Chapter 5, ‘Lines of Approach and Action’, assesses the achievement of efforts at international and local levels to protect the environment. “World Summits on the environment,” the encyclical reports, “have not lived up to expectations because, due to a lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment”. In addition, Pope Francis clarifies, “The Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But is concerned to encourage an honest and open debate, so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good” (2015a, para. 188).

‘Ecological Education and Spirituality’, Chapter 6, emphasises that it is human beings, above all, who need to change. What we need, it advises, is to educate ourselves to forge an agreement between humanity and the environment. Ecological citizenship, which curbs unsustainable behaviours and promotes ecological virtues, is addressed as a requirement to lead to a reflective “ecological conversion”.

Overall, ‘*Laudato si’*: On Care for Our Common Home’ addresses many social issues, embedded within their economic and environmental contexts. This includes unemployment, lack of housing, barriers to people leading dignified lives, injustices, and the growing numbers of people deprived of basic human rights. Thus the encyclical promotes social peace, stability and security – calling on society, as a whole, to defend and promote the common good.

*Laudato si’* concludes with two prayers. The first is for the Earth, which

includes a call to assist us to “protect life and beauty” and “help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth”. The other, a prayer in union with Creation, includes a plea to “[e]nlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live. The poor and the earth are crying out”, wrote Pope Francis (2015a, para. 246).

The next section will further discuss and analyse *Laudato si'* – what are people and institutions, both within and outside of the Judeo-Christian and other belief systems, saying about the encyclical? Climate change and appropriate economics lead this discussion.

#### DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF *LAUDATO SI'*

Like other global approaches aimed at supporting and/or instigating international social, economic and environmental change, for example the UN 2030 Agenda, *Laudato si'*, by incorporating the spiritual, has received both positive and negative responses. Dialogue at this level, however, is considered essential as it involves examining and discussing issues relating to the survival of people, creatures and natural habitats on this planet.

One analyst, Fritjof Capra, describes the encyclical as “The Pope’s ecoliterate challenge to climate change, ... a ‘truly systemic’ understanding of the ecological basis for a just, sustainable, and peaceful world” (2015, p. 1). Capra also upholds that the “radical ethics championed by Pope Francis ... is essentially the ethics of deep ecology” (2015, p. 2). Throughout his paper Capra continually quotes direct from *Laudato si'* to support this theme, including comparing it to ethical principles within the Earth Charter.

However, “the only unconvincing section”, Capra found, “is paragraph 50 where Pope Francis tries to downplay the importance of stabilizing population (2015, p. 12). This is not surprising, he qualified, given the Church’s staunch opposition to birth control. That section within the encyclical does, however, bring other questions into account on that subject, including pointing out the view of many who maintain the problems of the poor can only be changed by reduction in the birth rate, without considering “extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some” (Pope Francis, 2015a, para. 50).

Overall, in supporting *Laudato si'*, Capra concluded that, “our key challenge is how to shift from an economic system based on the notion of unlimited growth to one that is both ecologically sustainable and socially just” (2015, pp. 8-9).

The need for economic change arises regularly in literature pertaining to global climate change and international social justice, both in discussions concerning the UN 2030 Agenda’s SDGs and to *Laudato si'*. Wolfgang Sachs, Director Emeritus of the Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy in Germany, is one researcher who has compared the Sustainable Development Goals and *Laudato si'* on this issue (Sachs, 2017). Based on what is happening globally, he states, “the Agenda 2030 is protecting the growth model, a model which has always been prioritised over protection of nature” (2017, p. 2581). The Pope, he says:

...chooses the path less trodden by clearly mentioning both ecological and social limits, and by holding the industrial growth model accountable

for its various shortcomings. At one point, he even goes as far as recommending de-growth for the more affluent parts of the world. In other words, he advocates a reductive rather than an expansive modernity. (Sachs, 2017, p. 2581)

Thus, Sachs points out, "*Laudato si'*" suggests a strategy of sufficiency embedded in cultural change: it is indeed the rich who have to change, not the poor; it is wealth that needs to be alleviated, not poverty" (2017, p. 2581). In summary Sachs pronounces:

While the Agenda 2030 seeks to repair the existing global economic model significantly, the encyclical calls for a pushing back of economic hegemony and for more ethical responsibility on all levels. While the Agenda 2030 envisions a green economy with social democratic hues, the encyclical foresees a post-capitalist era, based on a cultural shift toward eco-solidarity. (2017, p. 2584)

Overall, the cultural change Sachs advocates for is intended to be approached from both local and global levels, comprising both cooperative economics and politics aimed at the common good.

Of course, not everyone agrees with this view. *The Australian* newspaper, for example, published a number of articles criticising *Laudato si'*, saying it was "wrong about climate change and ignorant about economics" (Duncan, 2015, p. 55). Further, editor Paul Kelly declared the Pope's language was "almost hysterical. Profound intellectual ignorance is dressed up as 'honouring God'. Page after page reveals Francis and his advisers as environmental populists and economic ideologues of a quasi-Marxist bent." In addition, he claimed, "the Pope has 'delegitimised as immoral' pro-market economic forces" (Kelly quoted in Duncan, 2015, p. 55).

In his investigation into these incidences, Duncan concluded:

Kelly seriously misrepresented *Laudato si'*, surprisingly so for such a senior journalist and economic commentator. Contrary to Kelly's allegation that the Pope is "blind to the liberating power of markets and technology", Pope Francis explicitly acknowledges and rejoices in the benefits of modern science, technology and creativity which have resulted in advances for humankind. (Duncan, 2015, p. 56)

Another perspective is offered by Carmen Gonzalez, a Professor of Law at Seattle University. In her article 'UN goals fall short of Francis' vision', Gonzalez reviewed the content of both the UN 2030 Agenda SDGs and *Laudato si'*, and surmised:

While the sustainable development goals represent a welcome incorporation of environmental concerns into the development agenda, they fall short of Francis' vision by seeking to moderate rather than transform the consumption-driven, growth-orientated model of economic development that degrades human dignity and has caused potentially catastrophic environmental harm. (Gonzalez, 2015, p. 30)

Scharmer and Kaufer, in their book *Leading from the Emerging Future*, discuss disconnection: in particular, ecological disconnection, social disconnection and

spiritual-cultural disconnection. They call for the end of the “silo-type approach – dealing with one symptom cluster at a time – [which] isn’t working. On the contrary,” they say “it seems to be part of the problem” (2013, p. 5). *Laudato si’*, it is maintained, provides the synthesis that enables the spiritual to cross those boundaries to be the connector.

In summary, there are many areas that the 2030 Agenda and *Laudato si’* have in common. In fact the United Nations and the Vatican work closely together in many ways, aiming to instigate social, economic and environmental change. But, as shown, there are also some differences, in both philosophy and resultant activity. This paper will now move from the global to the local, to see where and how communities and NGOs can participate in activities relating to *Laudato si’*.

#### LAUDATO SI’ – WHERE DOES COMMUNITY FIT?

As highlighted in the preamble to this paper, the question “Where does community fit?” was previously asked in relation to the SDGs. Some answers pointed to ‘top-down’ corporate approaches to change, often totally disassociated from local communities. This question is now being asked of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’*.

I will commence by relating it to local Indigenous people/communities. I live on Yawuru country, in Broome, in the northwest of Australia. The Yawuru people are the Traditional Owners, Custodians of the Land, and Native Title Holders of this country. I pay my respects to their people, past, present and future, as I prepare this paper from their land.

In *Laudato si’* Pope Francis addresses his words to “every person living on this planet” (2015a, para. 3). He expands on this by clearly noting it is essential that Indigenous communities and their spiritual and cultural traditions are respected and protected. As Pope Francis explains:

They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred place with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. (2015a, para. 146)

At a conference held in Broome in 2016, Peter Yu, from the organisation Nyamba Buru Yawuru (This is the land of the Yawuru), was keynote speaker, addressing ways *Laudato si’* was relevant to Yawuru people. He clearly articulated:

I can say with absolute confidence that *Laudato si’* speaks to the overriding concerns of Indigenous people – degeneration of our lands and seas that nurture us spiritually, culturally, socially and economically; social and political alienation; and rampant industrial development and greed. (Yu, 2016, pp. 2-3)

These thoughts can also be extended to villages and communities around the world. Whilst addressing major international organisations, as the

2030 Agenda does, Pope Francis also pays particular attention to small communities, encouraging them to contribute to locally instigated activities for change. This, it is contended, clearly involves community development understandings, processes and activities.

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development (which includes communities of intent and/or geographical communities) is the process whereby people organise to inform, skill and empower each other to take collective action on jointly identified needs (Kenny, 2011). Those needs can include positive value-adding to community social infrastructure, through to undertaking activities to overcome disadvantage and climate change.

As Ife explained:

Community development represents a vision of how things might be organised differently, so that genuine ecological sustainability and social justice, which seem unachievable at global or national levels, can be realised in the experience of human community. (2013, p. 2)

This involves “change from below, valuing the wisdom, expertise and skills of the community ... and the importance of community control” (Ife, 2013, p. 4). In addition, Ife highlights “[t]he purpose of community development is to re-establish the community as the location of significant human experience” (2013, p. 212). He does, however, advise against single-purpose projects/programmes, as “one-dimensional community development is likely to be of limited value” (2013, p. 212).

In addition, links between spiritual and community development ways of undertaking social and sustainability transformation have been made by Ife (2013), and Chile and Simpson (2004). Ife states:

The spiritual dimension ... is important to community development. A sense of the sacred, and a respect for spiritual values, is an essential part of re-establishing human community and providing meaning and purpose for people’s lives. But the corollary is also true: genuine human community is in itself a spiritual experience, so the development of community is an important ingredient of spiritual development. The two belong together. (2013, p. 255)

When exploring the work of faith-based organisations, Chile and Simpson noted that:

The underpinning philosophy of community development and *spirituality* is the connection of the individual to the collective, acknowledging that the well-being of the individual influences and is influenced by the well-being of community. The central tenets of this philosophy are the promotion of fairness, *social justice* and access to community resources to create responsible well-being. (Chile & Simpson, 2004, p. 318)

In addition, they maintain that the dimensions of community development identified by Ife “are strongly informed by spiritual values of holism, sustainability, diversity, equilibrium and social justice” (2004, p. 318). They conclude the role of spirituality within this “discourse provides a framework



for critical analysis and understanding of the causes of oppression as a means for creating positive and sustainable transforming community development” (2004, p. 323).

#### PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY AS HIGHLIGHTED IN *LAUDATO SI'*

It appears Pope Francis understands and supports community development approaches as described above. He clearly points out:

Attempts to resolve all problems through uniform regulations or technical interventions can lead to overlooking the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community. New processes taking shape cannot always fit into frameworks imported from outside; they need to be based in the local culture itself. (2015a, para. 144)

Thus, he clarifies:

There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures, and to appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural context and demands the constant and active involvement of local people *from within their proper culture*.<sup>2</sup> Nor can the notion of the quality of life be imposed from without, for quality of life must be understood within the world of symbols and customs proper to each human group. (2015a, para. 144)

Other community-based issues, which appear personalised within *Laudato si'*, include:

A wholesome social life can light up a seemingly undesirable environment. At times a commendable human ecology is practised by the poor despite numerous hardships. The feeling of asphyxiation brought on by densely populated residential areas is countered if close and warm relationships develop, if communities are created, if the limitations of the environment are compensated for in the interior of each person who feels held within a network of solidarity and belonging. (2015a, para. 148)

A further cross-section of community, grassroots-relevant quotes, provided by the Pope include:

[Do not] underestimate the importance of interpersonal skills. If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships. (2015a, para. 119)

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature. (2015a, para. 139)

There is also a need to protect common areas, visual landmarks and urban landscapes which increase our sense of belonging, of rootedness, of “feeling at home” within a city which includes us and brings us together. (2015a, para. 151)

[We must not] overlook the abandonment and neglect also experienced by some rural populations which lack access to essential services and where some workers are reduced to conditions of servitude, without rights or even the hope of a more dignified life. (2015a, para. 154)

The list could go on; however, this discourse will be concluded by noting a discussion in *Laudato Si'* that describes a case where cooperatives are being developed to provide renewable energy resources, ensuring local self-sufficiency and the possibility of sale of surpluses. Pope Francis tells us that:

This simple example shows that, while the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instil a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land. They are also concerned about what they will eventually leave to their children and grandchildren. (2015a, para. 179)

## Conclusion

I'm a community development practitioner and researcher, commencing PhD studies in community development for an ecologically sustainable future. Scrutinising both the United Nations 2030 Agenda (Jennings, 2017) and Pope Francis' *Laudato si'* (this paper) has been essential to my decision relating to which document I will primarily ground my local community action research, activities, projects and consequently thesis, within. I have now decided to primarily use *Laudato si'*, and then 2030 Agenda to a lesser degree.

Why? *Laudato si'*, I found, encapsulates many of my personal beliefs, philosophy and approaches to ways of working. So, after some time away from the Catholic Church, *Laudato si'* has led me to strengthen my Catholic beliefs and practices. I will now venture to shape those areas into a framework for my study. In doing this I aim to provide participants (local people in my local community) the space to think, and act, big – using community action research. This will be combined with community development processes of cooperation, shared vision and collective action in the challenges that will emerge as we (my community) move forward, towards defining and activating a more positive future.

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Anne Jennings is a PhD candidate at the Nulungu Research Institute, University of Notre Dame Australia, Broome Campus. She has been a community development practitioner, trainer and researcher for 30 years in regional and remote Western Australia. Anne is a long-time member of the International Association for Community Development (IACD) (based in Scotland), and is currently on the Board's Training, Publications and Professional Development Committee, and is also an IACD Australian Country Correspondent. In addition, Anne is also on the National Board of the Australian Community Workers Association.

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This publication may be cited as: Eggins, J., Papoutsaki,  
E., and Thomas, V. (2018). Engaging youth in community  
action research: a visual methods approach to HIV and AIDS  
awareness, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community  
Development*, 4(2), 48–66.

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

An ePress publication

[epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz)  
[www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/](http://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/)

Unitec Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

# Engaging youth in community action research: A visual methods approach to HIV and AIDS awareness

JOYS EGGINS, EVANGELIA PAPOUTSAKI, VERENA THOMAS

## Abstract

Young people are among the most affected and vulnerable groups in the HIV epidemic. Targeting young people in prevention strategies requires inclusive and participatory approaches. This paper discusses a film production project that involved youths in a remote rural community in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. It explores some of the processes and impacts of integrating a visual methods community action project in a local community context while targeting young people in an effort to engage them in a reflective dialogue on HIV and AIDS.

## Introduction

Young people or adolescents are a key population highly affected by and vulnerable to the HIV epidemic. "Adolescents are the only group worldwide for whom AIDS-related deaths have increased" (Kelly-Hanku et al., 2017, p. 1). In Papua New Guinea (PNG), where this research project took place, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 continue to be one of the most affected groups. A recent study argues for the need to better understand the lives of adolescents living with HIV (Kelly-Hanku et al., 2017). Young people face specific challenges that must be considered and it is therefore most important to involve young people meaningfully in programmes that are targeted towards them. In addition, programmes among this population

should “harness their creativity, resilience and resourcefulness” (Mek et al., 2017. p. 30). Prevention strategies therefore need to integrate innovative communication concepts in order to fulfil the needs of today’s young people.

This film production was a component of the Komuniti Tok Piksa<sup>1</sup> project, which was both a research project and community action initiative. Visual research tools were used within an Indigenous research framework in order to study behavioural practices, perceptions and needs in regards to HIV and AIDS in PNG. The Ruti village drama film project explored the ways in which visual methods, when paired with a community action approach, can be used to facilitate social change and to encourage new engagements between researchers and participants and among various community groups.

The project engaged youths who were members of an organised church group. The drama production *Broken home* began as an idea proposed by youths who identified the common theme of polygamy, and how it links to the spread of the HIV virus experienced in the community. The youths took on the challenge to develop the script, do the casting, act, direct and screen their final product. While the first screening was co-facilitated by one of the researchers, the second and third screenings were done solely by the youths, during which they spent time reflecting on their film and on community feedback. The community reaction to the filmmaking process and outcomes indicated an increase in community dialogue and critical reflection on their behaviour in regards to HIV and AIDS. The production offered the youths a space to express their ideas, which were recognised by the community through the screenings. It re-positioned the youths within their own community as active members, and a dialogue was facilitated that cut across a previously difficult and sensitive topic. As a result, for the project, the youths have become more critical about their roles as advocates, seeking support from provincial groups to continue the use of media within their regional area.

Using an Indigenous approach and the creative use of media tools to engage young members of the community in participating in this project facilitated a process of integrating their knowledge of cultural processes in addressing social issues related to HIV and AIDS. The open and flexible approach created a space where participants voiced their concerns and thoughts and were able to develop these further in collaboration with the researchers. Participatory action research concepts of dialogue and reflection, using local processes, set a framework for other projects addressing social issues in the region.

## The context

Despite Papua New Guinea carrying the largest burden of the HIV epidemic in the Pacific region, support for HIV prevention and related activities has decreased in recent years. In 2017, the prevalence rate in PNG was estimated to be 0.9% among adults aged 15 to 49 in a population of about eight million people (UNAIDS, 2017). The epidemic is concentrated among key populations in certain provinces. In particular, the Highlands region has been identified as one of the main geographical areas with higher HIV prevalence rates. Higher

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Komuniti Tok Piksa is Melanesian Pidgin for ‘community talking through the picture’. It can also translate to community talking in parables.



prevalence rates are also found among key groups such as women and girls who sell and exchange sex, men who have sex with men, and transgender women (Kelly-Hanku et al., 2018). Providing treatment to people living with HIV continues to present challenges. Young people have been identified as particularly vulnerable, both in terms of prevention and in terms of remaining on treatments once diagnosed with the virus (Kelly-Hanku et al., 2017).

Despite an improvement in the knowledge of patterns of the epidemic, the National AIDS Council of Papua New Guinea (NAC), at the time when this research study was designed, had noted that there had been an overall lack of epidemiological and behavioural data to steer the national response, specifically in planning for prevention initiatives (2010).

The dynamics of HIV transmission in PNG are influenced by a great diversity of sexual cultures, with different values, norms, beliefs, and practices. The potential for sexual transmission of HIV is heightened by early sexual partnerships, including polygamy, extra-marital sexual partnerships and inter-generational sex; the exchange of sex for cash, goods and services; low and inconsistent condom use; high levels of sexual violence and rape; mobility; and the use of penile inserts and modifications. (NAC, 2010, p. 19)

Due to these reasons, awareness campaigns have faced enormous challenges. As seen in other regions, social-marketing strategies with one-way messages around HIV and AIDS prevention, especially through mass-media product marketing strategies, have only had limited success (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2006). NAC has undertaken a number of initiatives to create awareness, with many church-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and corporate organisations developing various strategies.

Theatre and television drama has shown some success in its awareness-raising and behaviour-change application. People prefer the edutainment approach also because it is reaching a largely illiterate population who might not have regular access to mass media (Corrigan, 2006). When the focus is on socio-cultural change, the intervention needs to “focus on what is circulating within the social domain, what is shared within the community ... which will not change any individual behaviour directly, but it will address the climate [and] set a frame for discussion” (Lie, 2008, p. 293).

Two locally driven initiatives have been notable in their innovative response to HIV through the arts as a means of raising awareness and research. *VSO Tokaut AIDS Awareness Community Theatre Project* has been an action research project that trialled community-led theatre in rural communities (Corrigan, 2006; Levy, 2008). The visual quality of theatre defied language barriers as messages were played out to reflect to communities their realities. Along the same line, the *Community Conversations* approach has been adapted by the NAC. In this project, dialogue within communities was used as a facilitation mechanism to identify the driving forces of the epidemic, specific to local settings (Reid, 2010). Most recently, a study used photography, voice and filmmaking to better understand the lived experiences of adolescent girls living with HIV (Mek et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2018).

The localised approach was pivotal in the success of these research and awareness initiatives, along with the appropriation of technology and valuing of

community experiences and beliefs as a way of both facilitating the message creation and creation of knowledge among participants. Such approaches were reinforced in the literature (King & Lupiwa, 2008), which showed that cultural diversities, sensitivities and fear were delaying the success of the national response to HIV and AIDS.

### **The *Komuniti Tok Piksa* project: visual methods and indigenous action research**

The fundamental idea behind the *Komuniti Tok Piksa* project emerged from the need to develop sustainable approaches to slowing the spread of HIV and AIDS by communities themselves in order to be successful. To facilitate this process, KTP developed a number of creative research approaches that sought to move beyond the collection and analysis of research data, to involve participants actively in the creation of prevention strategies that can be used to educate others in PNG (Thomas, Papoutsaki, & Eggins, 2010).

In this approach, it is essential to facilitate a dialogue between researchers, participants and communities. Prevention messages implemented at national level are often one-way, and do not always fit with the communities' communication structures and communication needs. While visual technologies are only partially available in PNG communities, they enable – when used appropriately – a responsive process allowing for reflection and dialogue to emerge.

The *Komuniti Tok Piksa* project sought to facilitate such visual dialogues in the Highlands region of PNG (Thomas, et al., 2010). The camera, whether video or photographic, was used as a tool to collaboratively produce visual material to study, reflect on, and to eventually use to create messages for potentially larger audiences. By doing so, the locally specific driving forces of the HIV and AIDS epidemic were discussed, and solutions developed at the local level. The visual material challenged perceptions and opinions, and viewed collectively prompted community discussion.

The level of participation was determined by the communities; whether they contributed to the visual products by being interviewed or telling their stories, or whether they actively participated in taking pictures. Considering the rapidly emerging technologies in PNG communities it is particularly youth that can be mobilised by the use of technology. By engaging actively in a creative and technological process they engaged in content and formed new relationships in the community. While KTP's approach might be easily defined by the novelty of bringing technology into PNG communities, it was its underlying concepts and processes that allowed for technology to be used in culturally responsive ways and in ways that communities determine as appropriate. The foundation for that was grounded in an Indigenous approach to research and practice.

Bringing new technology into communities that they might otherwise not have access to inevitably can create tensions; and so do research approaches that do not fit with community approaches. An indigenous approach to

research, in our case a Melanesian approach, allowed the KTP researchers to ensure that communities have a say in the research process, and that they take ownership of aspects of the research process. Understanding communities' perceptions does not only require using tools that might provide a better platform for dialogue, it also enables the research project to follow the community's structure and rules.

An indigenous approach to research values relationships and the trust of participants. It takes them on board not as informants but as co-researchers and as significant guides in the research process. Relationships to each other are acknowledged and form the basis for any action research to continue. Knowledge is regarded as relational (Wilson, 2008), and the relational accountability of the researchers becomes paramount to the research process.

Specifically, the Melanesian research approach (Vallance, 2007) used here allowed the leading researcher (Joys Eggins) to anchor the research project within shared values (held by Ruti people and researcher), taking in both environment, social, communication, religious spiritual beliefs and community interaction as fundamental to the research experience and impacting the data. The relational encounter of the researcher and community within those spheres created an enabling environment for the research.

## Methodology

This project combined an Ethnographic Action Research (EAR) (Tacchi, Slater, & Hearn, 2003) and visual methodology (Prosser & Loxley, 2008; Thomas, Papoutsaki, & Eggins, 2010) working in harmony with an Indigenous research approach (Wilson, 2008; Bishop, 1998; Vallance, 2007). The research design acknowledges that socio-cultural history, community context and specific situations play a critical role in determining the methodological approach and impact of project initiatives (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). In our case, the project relied on local knowledge and stories to enable the community to produce the audiovisual material.

The methodology of this project used the Komuniti Tok Piksa's participative filmmaking and reflexive viewing methodology placed in a Melanesian research framework. Essentially, this has been inclusive, creative and relationship-based research. In accordance with this approach, the process involved recruitment and ongoing training of local researchers and students. This has enabled the research to remain sensitive to community values and build on both new and established relationships with individuals and community members as the research process unfolded. Reciprocal relationships were formed as the research team interacted with the community through which stories emerged, were captured on video and shared on screen with the communities themselves. Feeding back recordings served as a catalyst for community-developed HIV and AIDS-prevention strategies.

Together with the community youths and other members, the local researchers activated the PAR cycle (observe-reflect-plan) and put in place a set of actions following initial observation, supported by a baseline study,

and community reflection and discussion. These actions were then realised, being iteratively reflected on and revised as the research progressed and as the community was given opportunities to comment and respond (Thomas, Papoutsaki, & Eggins, 2016). The main steps in the research process included the following:

1. **CONSENT AND COMMUNITY INTRODUCTION:** The local researchers first identified the community to conduct their research in. In this case the selection was influenced by an existing relationship of the leading local researcher (Eggins) with this community through relatives, which facilitated entry into the group. A community introductory meeting was then held with the community and consent was gained from the community.
2. **BASELINE STUDY:** Observation and interviews were conducted to assess the general level of HIV and AIDS education and knowledge in the community. Based on the results, the researchers worked with the community to design a method that was appropriate to their level of knowledge, the way in which information is disseminated, and the particular interests of the community.
  - 2.1 **COMMUNITY PROFILE AND COMMUNICATIVE ECOLOGY:** As part of creating a comprehensive profile of the community and its young members, the research team created a profile of the community (i.e., topology, resources), and facilitated the drawing of their communicative ecology which, along with the baseline, formed the basis of understanding knowledge and information dissemination patterns.
3. **REVIEW RESEARCH TOPICS AND DEBRIEF:** Having iteratively revised the research topics to be inclusive of community perspectives and needs, the researchers revised and planned the next stage. They incorporated relevant community members, as the specifics of the research were finalised.
4. **RECORDING OR CREATION:** The research team, supervised by the principal researcher (Eggins), recorded community narratives or facilitated, where appropriate, creative workshops with the youth. In this case, they recorded a narrative film.
5. **DOWNLOADING, DIGITISING OR EDITING:** The filmed data was then edited on-site, involving participants.
6. **COLLECTIVE VIEWING:** Once the product was prepared, the community was invited for a collective viewing. The researchers, together with the immediate participants, then presented their artistic creations to the community.
7. **REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:** Following the screening, the researchers facilitated community discussion focusing on the issues raised by the visual outcome. Open discussion about HIV and AIDS relevant to the community was stimulated.

Throughout this process, a combination of data collection methods was used, including participant observation, diary and field notes, baseline survey and communicative ecology mapping from the research team members, and on several occasions by the youths themselves who were asked to keep diaries (a combination of written and audio-recorded notes) and map their own communicative ecologies. Data was collected during two field trips to Ruti village in the Western Highlands of PNG between August 2010 and January 2011. The processing of findings followed a linear narrative structure, incorporating data from the different stages of the process followed by a thematic analysis.

## Discussing the process: Getting a sense of the community

### A. FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship of the researcher with the community, as well as the relationships within the community itself impacted the community's perceptions of the project. The balance of relationship plays out in various forms, through 'politics' both literally and within community contentions, in uncertainties about the project application, in hierarchies with communities, and between researcher and community.

The Indigenous research paradigm, especially from a Melanesian research approach, accepts relationships as fundamental to the experience. Submersion into community relationships, including those between researcher and community, forged by the researcher allow them to unpack experiences and find thematic undercurrents that influence the way people make decisions. The Indigenous researcher is also a stakeholder in the relationship web and thus obliged to maintain it, taking the role of the researcher to another level, this of a critical, reflexive, stakeholder researcher. The researcher's relationship to the community must be clear and significant enough to make them a stakeholder in the relationship.

*Joys came here through a connection; you, young people sitting here know this. She came and slept in my house and worked with the youths and you showed your film in other communities. I am very happy about this.* (Gigau, closing comments, 28 January 2011, Ruti village)

The youth participants understood the need for a strong relationship. The project created a new group among the Ruti youths, one that is seldom together due to community contentions, or because some are away in schools. These divides were not as obvious during the workshop and screening times, and often any contention about the project was either disregarded or spoken in whispers. This in turn shows that the youths were willing to protect their work and achieve new grounds with it.

*Because everything we do promotes our community, district, province and country, we have to work together. Us youths here gathered, must hold hands in order for things to work well. Despite whatever doubts we've had, we've worked together as a team. Both boys and girls must*

*cooperate here. We must maintain what we've done the next time this team comes back and I'd like us to maintain respect. Whatever you ask us to do, we will listen. At first, I thought we'd just be working in the community, but as we sit and reflect, I've come to understand the step-by-step process of our work.* (Solo Rox, closing comments, 28 January 2011, Ruti village)

After the research fieldwork, communication was kept up with the youths in order to maintain the relationship. Project outcomes needed to be contextualised within the relationships formed between researchers, participants and community members during and beyond the time of the project in the community.

#### B. ASSESSING HIV AND AIDS KNOWLEDGE

A baseline study, using guiding interview questions, was conducted with 24 participants from the Ruti community in order to assess the existing HIV and AIDS knowledge prior to the intervention. It was found that HIV is associated with negativity, stigma and death. People living with HIV were looked upon as victims and pity was expressed towards them. Condoms were viewed negatively as promoting promiscuity. The overwhelming response from the Ruti community members was a belief that following Christian principles can deter risky behaviour, especially sex. From the baseline, the emphasis on being faithful was firstly a religious one. The importance of the church in Ruti was evident in the community mapping, communicative ecology, and ensuing dialogue that faith provides protection against HIV.

The youths' Christian references challenged socially tolerated behaviours such as alcohol abuse and sexual promiscuity, among other issues. The youths did express differences in faith and practice; some said being faithful to Christ will help you prevent contracting the virus, but continued to say that they found it disgraceful to have an HIV positive person in the family. There was a lack of knowledge about HIV diagnosis and the symptoms of the disease. The majority of the respondents identified physical appearances as signs of a person living with HIV.

Sources of awareness about HIV were largely received from faith-based and community-based health organisations that would visit the community.

#### C. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES

Like most other rural communities, Ruti has been experiencing a rapid shift in the way people communicate. Technological advancement and improved communications structures have been facilitating new forms of relationship building. This has also impacted on the decisions people are making regarding their sexual behaviours. The emergence of mobile communication has affected how people communicate. Easier access to others through mobile phones has been influencing decisions about sexual behaviour and sexual negotiations, as it emerged from the data.

A mobile phone company, Digicel, has enabled people to communicate even if they do not have phone credit. Digicel has formulated a number of packages such as the one toea<sup>2</sup> text after 10pm, the 18 free SMS after paid texting and CREDIT ME feature allow continued transfer of messages. Users

<sup>2</sup>  
One PGK (10 toea)  
converts approximately  
to 0.30 USD.

have developed codes that pertain to certain messages. For example, CREDIT ME K99 translates to 'goodnight' or 'night-night'; CREDIT ME K60 translates to 'hurry' or 'sixty' in Tok Pisin, and might also mean 'come' or 'go', and CREDIT ME K43 translates to 'love you'. All the youths owned mobile phones and charged them using miniature solar panels or at the local trade store for K1 per hour.

Radio has been the most viable medium in rural PNG. However, the media landscape is shifting as more and more *haus piksa* (makeshift cinema houses) pop up in villages (Eby & Thomas, 2016). It was interesting that the youths did not mention the *haus piksa* as much as the adults, who viewed them as having a negative influence on young impressionable people:

*We have to take care of ourselves in the village. If you have a daughter, make sure she isn't standing at the market until 6 o'clock, and boys too. Don't frequent the village cinema, gambling places and social nights. The disease is in the village. The film made reference to the city, but I say it's a lie, the disease is in the village.* (Viewer 8, Ruti screening, 22 August 2010, Ruti village)

*When my husband goes out to the haus piksa or gambling places, I become worried. I have a baby boy and I'm a young woman and I become worried about these actions.* (Female respondent, baseline interview, 22 August 2010, Ruti village)

There was one *haus piksa* in Ruti village and a few along the road situated within community perimeters. The *haus piksa* is usually made from bush materials and looks larger in size than a house. Operators might use generators or have access to electricity, and charge viewers a minimum of 50 toea to watch. They mostly show Hollywood action productions. Minors can be found among adults watching movies rated R (Restricted), MAO (Matured Audiences Only), and PGR (Parental Guidance Required) (Eby & Thomas, 2016). Some community members felt that the films being screened in *haus piksas* encourage promiscuity.

Apart from *haus piksas*, community members showed considerable exposure to the visual medium. The collaborative creation of films was something new, but access to the visual medium is expanding with improved support structures.

*A man from Goroka had acted in a movie like this one. The movie was called O Papa God. These kinds of films have educated us in the communities. We all know about the disease. But when someone dies, we return from the funeral and continue doing the same thing. And we're still contracting the virus.* (Viewer 1, Kotna screening, 28 January 2011, Ruti village)

*The disease has spread to everywhere and we know this through radio, television and read it in the papers, in front of houses, they put sign boards.* (Respondent, baseline interview, 24 January 2011, Ruti village)

Online access to most of the youths in Ruti is difficult, while in-school youths can access the internet. Youths, through the baseline survey, said illicit



materials were being distributed by urban dwellers that frequent the village. The youths referred to them as 'high class' people:

*The people who spread the disease are high-class people who look through the Internet and see how white people have sex. These high-class people's children also view these pictures and teach us and then we get involved in sexual activities and end up with AIDS.* (Respondent, baseline interview, 24 January 2011, Ruti village)

At the time this research was conducted, the communication landscape in Ruti was visibly changing and there was potential to harness visual tools more strongly. This, however, needed to be done carefully and in consideration of the perceptions and attitudes that existed in relation to available communication tools.

#### D. KNOWLEDGE AND CONSENT

In the first visit to Ruti, information and presence of the research team sparked a dialogue about the project. Often there were doubts about benefits, and money or some kind of material gain was debated. That was expected and was discussed during the first visit. The doubts became more pronounced during the first village screening when a man posed a question: "What does the community benefit from this film?" This question most definitely popped up in corridor whispers, and lingered even after the last visit – leading to misconceptions held among some of the youth.

While, out of all the community visits, only one man asked this question, it was nonetheless a big concern as the concept of 'benefit' came through in problematic encounters. The obvious response would be that the community collaborates in the creation of a visual message for social change, but the concepts of monetary gain and behaviour change became somewhat confused.

It seems impossible to remove doubts occasionally articulated by community members in regards to potential monetary benefits from the project. The immediate participants of the project, as discussed below, however, were clear about their voluntary involvement and the benefits to themselves and the community in regards to the film production they proposed to engage in. The researchers sought to engage in reciprocal relationships as much as possible and to establish understanding with participants through ongoing discussions and reflections.

#### E. IMPLEMENTING THE VISUAL PROJECT

In the process of introducing KTP to the community a group of Ruti youths came forward and expressed that they would like to produce a dramatic film based on a story idea they had developed. Through this process the youths' perceptions about HIV and AIDS would be visualised. The story essentially was about a village man who leaves his family to visit a friend in the town of Lae, where he takes a second wife and faces the possibility of life with HIV.

As a team, we advised the youths about how to prepare for drama presentations and how the camera would work with them to capture the story. The participants comprised five females and seven males in the 14 to 27 age group. The youths participated and contributed depending on their

commitments at home. There was a lot of discussion about where to film, the storyline and casting. We decided initially that a narrator's script and screenplay should be drafted for everyone. The researcher (Eggins) assisted the youths with typing the screenplay. The youths then spent a lot of time rehearsing their parts under the bamboo shades, using the script as a guide.

Over a period of one week, the team developed a screenplay, conducted shooting, reflecting and editing in the community. As we filmed, crowds of people would gather, watching the actors performing to the camera and talking among themselves about what was happening. At one point, some of the characters were shifted around, depending on who could play out the role better. The main characters were played by Sesmo, Solo, Maria and Esther, who were natural actors and didn't seem shy or disturbed by the crowd. As planned, they improvised the dialogue, bringing to it the local language and common phrases and gestures. After the shooting, we viewed the footage and noticed areas that needed improvement, and discussed what roles each person was playing.

We spent a few more days filming other scenes and taking footage of the environment around Ruti. The youths would watch as their footage was edited on the laptop. The researcher (Eggins) talked them through how television programmes, the news or other films are made. The youths appeared fascinated by the process and giggled with excitement about how the story was slowly being pieced together. Seeing themselves acting and dialoguing with each other on the laptop made them so excited they would pinch each other and laugh. In that process the youths began to realise the potential benefits of the project, as later articulated by participant Sesmo Teabag:

*I see the youths are showing an interest in this program because it will help us change. This is not for money or for food. I see clearly that this is purely voluntary. This is good because when we showed the film to other communities, they were able to learn. I think it was very helpful because the young people were involved. (Sesmo Teabag, diary entry, 26 January 2011)*

Upon completion the film was screened in three different communities within Dei district. The first screening in Ruti village took place soon after the final cut was made. The second and third screenings took place some months later in Kotna then Kenemba. The film triggered discussions around a number of issues.

#### F. FEEDBACK AND DIALOGUE

The film became a catalyst for dialogue; it attracted an audience and stimulated a thinking process that led to a dialogue among the group. The film idea appeared to be captivating. Audiences watched with smiles as the youths spoke in the local Melpa language and portrayed typical mannerisms and slang. Community members watching the Ruti youth's drama said the film was educational and a good initiative. The main characters quickly became popular, with children calling them by name. This shows that the dramatic impact was substantial as people remembered the characters, what they did and said, and the story itself. The creative visual output enabled people to remember the stories, the conflicts and resolutions in those stories, which all

have underlying messages. These messages were unpacked as the audience began sharing their opinions about various issues following the screenings. One respondent said he appreciated the film as a tool for preserving culture:

*We've never seen a film of our community. It's something the white-man does and brings to us and so we're happy to watch our own. Some of our cultural practices, such as gathering during the mourning period, were acted out by the youths and we are happy to see it on film* (Viewer 1, screening, 25 August 2010, Ruti village)

Another woman spoke about uncertainties towards their husbands:

*I see that we the mothers don't go out looking for this disease. Some women in cities do carry the virus around, but us mothers who remain in the village don't know. We think that our husbands will be faithful to us when they go out, but they bring back the virus.* (Female Viewer 7, Kotna screening, January 2011)

An issue of contention discussed following the screening was the distribution of the anti-retroviral treatment (ART). A male viewer commented:

*The white-man brought this medicine into our community and the six million people in PNG will die from this because people are knowingly spreading the virus. I appeal that we stop ART.* (Male Viewer 3, Kenemba screening, January 2011)

This indicated a lack of understanding with regards to the use of ART and the fact that people can maintain a healthy life once on ART treatment. The dialogue also entailed further questions from the community about uncertainties regarding ART, where to send orphans or how many people in PNG were infected. The youths facilitated the discussion, often referring to the church as a means for prevention and good living. The screening created a space for community dialogue, but was limited in some ways. Firstly, women spoke out less compared to the men, who dominated the discussions. Secondly, the presence of the video camera limited the space for dialogue in a way. Most of the male viewers were talking to the camera rather than with the group.

In essence, the film caused viewers and producers to engage in critical self-reflection. They began discussing issues that they faced as a community and those they faced as individuals:

*We did not realise what was happening inside our families, our homes and our community. But now I'm happy this project has come into our community. I drink beer, get drunk and engage in bad things and I forgot my family. When I look back now, I realise that I shouldn't have been ruining my life like that.* (Youth diary entry, 27 January 2011, Ruti village)

After viewing the film again, the youths noted polygamy, adult peer pressure, psychological effects on children, family wellbeing, and alcohol abuse as the biggest problems coming through in the story.

## Discussing the impact on participation and community response on youths

In this project, the research journey of the team members and their interaction with the community was processed in a narrative way that took into account not only data directly linked to the main topic but also peripheral material, including observations about the community, cultural and social behaviours, and reflections of the researchers as they came to certain realisations about their role in these communities and as indigenous researchers. The narrative unpacked various processes and thoughts that the local researcher (Eggins) had as a cultural insider, while bringing in voices from the community. The use of a narrative highlights various aspects of community life that community members considered important, such as food, water, land, wood and cash crops. This approach has generated a wealth of data that has led to a thematic approach to the analysis of the findings. What follows is a discussion of the impact on the youths in particular as a result of their participation in the project:

### A. MOTIVATION AND EMPOWERMENT

The film stimulated dialogue and exchange of community thoughts and encouragement. The youths facilitating the process began to see the impact of their dramatic film and the potential it had to create dialogue. It made them realise their potential as well, and this impacted on the youths' motivation to keep working on the project. The community's encouragement and demand for more films made them excited about continuing. This also demonstrated a common desire for the project to continue to create more films in their community.

*I'd like to say thank you to the youths, both boys and girls for making this CD (film). I like it. Overseas, they make CD (films) and the people there are able to see what their communities looked like before. Now you've made one of our village, our culture, and we like what we see. (Viewer 6, Ruti screening, 22 August 2010, Ruti village)*

*Now in remote places, many people carry the virus and we don't understand our situations, so it's good that you've come to these remote communities and talked to us. We're grateful. (Viewer 5, Kotna screening, 27 January 2011, Kotna village)*

Importantly, all these stemmed from their initial participation and willingness to get involved, to see the challenges and rewards that motivated them in the end:

*I really agree with this project because when we showed the film to other communities, I saw that people were learning something, they understood it and agreed with it as well. I think you (the researchers) received great help because we youths got involved. (Sesmo Teabag, diary entry 2, 28 January 2011, Ruti village)*

*When we showed the film in other places, I think we challenged them,*

*we showed this to improve our community life.* (Kopex Mul, diary entry, 28 January 2011, Ruti village)

*We told them we were showing a drama we made on AIDS. We explained this and the community was happy to learn from this film.*

(Youth reflection after Kenemba screening, 28 January 2011, Ruti village)

It was observed that the youth's involvement in the production, screening and distribution of the film presented the youths in a different light within the community. There were interesting comments coming from the community, which were written as news stories later on and disseminated through the print media. The youths saw copies of the stories and they became very excited. One of the said, "You've exposed us youths from the back-pages of Western Highlands and we are all psyched up to do more. People are watching the film and talking about it and we're happy that we got involved." Another participant noted:

*I want to say thank you for Joys and the team for coming to Ruti because I see that this is going to help our community. The project has brought us youths together in this community and they've shown a big interest in it and through this cooperation, I believe the community will change. I see clearly that this is voluntary work and it will encourage change. I believe in the project because when we showed the film in other communities, we challenged them.* (Youth diary entry, 27 January 2011, Ruti village)

Apart from the youths' reflection on their experiences with the project, their motivation and eagerness to work came through in other ways. During both field trips the youths always came early to the research team's house, especially the males. The females came when they could. This was a dilemma, which the project needed to consider. The lack of female participation in the project reflected the lack of women's roles in organised activities, especially when it comes to decision-making or oral liberty. There are seldom situations where a woman is seen addressing the community or openly voicing her opinion. Their role in this project was minimal and a more inclusive process needed to be planned for subsequent phases of this project.

#### B. REALISING A KNOWLEDGE GAP

When the youths proceeded to screen the films, they demonstrated a lack of knowledge about HIV. This also came through in some misconceptions in the baseline survey about diagnosis. The focus on the film, especially technical professionalism as well as the audience's control over discussion topics, gave little time for the youths to provide correct information. The youths did, however, use the film to generate awareness and challenged the audience to turn negative actions into positive change. They encouraged viewers to be engaged in church activities and to think smart during seasonal activities such as election periods and the coffee season during which sexual promiscuity is high. The youths used parables, common in Melpa oral tradition, to make a point; this can become an important aid to awareness, accompanied by visual material.

The research process demonstrated not only to us researchers, but most

importantly to youth as collaborators, the need to have extensive knowledge about HIV when facilitating discussions with community members. During the screenings, some viewers asked questions about HIV and AIDS, but the youths could not always respond accurately:

*How many people in PNG have AIDS? What province rates the highest? I'd like to know this.* (Viewer 13, Kenemba screening, 28 January 2011, Kenemba village)

*We don't know the statistics; we've only come to show this drama film. We're not from the office of the AIDS council, we're just students.* (Facilitating youth 1, Kenemba screening, 28 January 2011, Kenemba village)

It was obvious that in the cyclic process of creation, viewing and reflection, there needed to be an intervention from expert facilitators with regards to providing information around HIV and AIDS. The awareness the youths developed, as a result of the project, pointed to the need for HIV and AIDS information. It validated input from both medical and other experts who could work at the community level to disseminate information targeted to youth.

In our efforts to facilitate a process that was endogenous, we began to understand the limitations of the project. Perceptions of HIV and AIDS were at times misconstrued because of gaps in knowledge. As a group within the Ruti community, youth needed access to correct information. Having an expert assisting raised the profile of youth in the community and increased the impact of their awareness-raising efforts. There was potential for the group to become an important source of information and reference for community members once fully knowledgeable about the various aspects of HIV and AIDS.

## Conclusion

The project's approach has begun to show that visual participatory action research (PAR) provides a powerful means for engaging local communities in discussions about HIV/AIDS that has the power to alter and refine people's perceptions and values regarding disease, care and health behaviour. The footage and images circumvented language, literacy, and cultural-taboo barriers. Because the footage and images were anchored to experiences of the community itself, they became tools for reflection, discussion, idea generation and norm re-evaluation. Dialogue among community's young members was powerful in that learning was communicated in ways that were meaningful to these young people and accepted among other community members.

The open approach to let the participants guide the creative process presented various outcomes. It allowed the researchers to better understand community perceptions, including scenarios of risky behaviour. The viewing of the Ruti film drama stimulated important community discussion among audiences. The product therefore served as a stimulator within the local

context, yet its value for wider audiences still needs to be assessed by the research team. The film might re-inforce negative community perception towards HIV and AIDS and requires re-assessment in terms of its educational value to other communities.

The desire by the youth to shoot another film or refine the one they shot, as well as their wish to know more about HIV facts, were important signs of community mobilisation. Considering audiences, they developed an interest and willingness to listen to messages around HIV and AIDS. In realising their potential role as HIV community advocates, they wanted to receive information and pass it on to others. This demonstrated a shift in HIV and AIDS communication. This community mobilisation was crucial in establishing a foundation for behavioural change in communities in the PNG Highlands.

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Joys Eggins is the Research Coordinator with the ABC Media Development Initiative based in Port Moresby. She holds an MA from the University of Goroka. Joys has been involved in a number of research projects in PNG and the Pacific. Her personal project on youth narratives on HIV/AIDS through use of film employed a communication for social change approach. She is a founding member of the Centre for Social and Creative Media, working as a Lecturer in Research and Production at the Centre. She is currently focused on strategic alignment, research, monitoring and evaluation support on voice and accountability initiatives with mainstream media in Papua New Guinea, as well as creative communication approaches around good governance.

Evangelia Papoutsaki is an Associate Professor at the University of Central Asia, Naryn campus where she leads the Communication and Media Program. Evangelia's research interests are in communication for development and social change, ethnography, ethnic/migrant media and island communicative ecologies. She has extensive experience in Asia Pacific region and former Soviet Union countries. She was previously the Head of the Communication Arts Program at Divine Word University in Papua New Guinea, Editor in Chief of Unitec ePress and Research Associate at the Pacific Media Centre, AUT. She was most recently an International Research Fellow at the Center for Pacific Islands Research, Kagoshima University, Japan. [evangelia.papoutsaki@ucentralasia.org](mailto:evangelia.papoutsaki@ucentralasia.org)

Verena Thomas is Senior Research Fellow in the School of Design, Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology. She holds a PhD in Communication from the University of Technology Sydney. Her research interests include communication and social change, communication for development, health communication, arts-based research approaches, visual methodologies and participatory design. Verena has developed innovative and creative approaches to localising research in cross-cultural contexts. She is the founding Director of the Centre for Social and Creative Media at the University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea, which she led from 2012-2016. Verena has led numerous research projects funded by donor agencies, government and non-government partners. She has extensive experience in research and media capacity-building in the Pacific region. [verena.thomas@qut.edu.au](mailto:verena.thomas@qut.edu.au)

Placing youth in a volunteer  
framework

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This publication may be cited as: Wardlaw, M. (2018). Placing  
youth in a volunteer framework, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal  
of Community Development*, 4(2), 67–89.

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

An ePress publication

[epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz)  
[www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/](http://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/)

Unitec Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

# Placing youth in a volunteer framework

MARYANNE WARDLAW

## Abstract

Volunteering Auckland faces an encouraging challenge: it has more youth volunteers than it has organisations willing to place them. As a nonprofit that helps other nonprofits find and maximise a volunteer base, Volunteering Auckland wants to discover what hinders and what might help organisations to effectively engage and retain volunteers between the ages of 10 and 19. Most research related to youth volunteerism is youth-focused – encouraging youth to participate and pointing out the benefits they receive in terms of social capital, work experience and personal achievement. But here we look at this from the organisational perspective, seeking to discover why few organisations choose to accept youth volunteers, their challenges and prejudices, and proposing ways Volunteering Auckland can equip organisations to overcome these. Even organisations that have vulnerable clients or unsafe environments may find tasks that youth are capable of carrying out safely. Examples from those that have both high-needs clients and a thriving core of young volunteers demonstrate how that can be accomplished. For nonprofits that do not have the margin to invest in the staff needed to nurture a volunteer base, strategic training and supervision may enable them to incorporate volunteers. Furthermore, some youth may not find a fit within an organisation, or may wish to take more of their own initiative. Volunteering Auckland has the tools to help them create their own community project and recruit other young people to pitch in, both for one-off projects and initiatives that participants take further.

“Young people bring a different perspective to problems. They may be more creative, may see the easier way to get something done, may be more direct. The easiest way to find out what they may be able to contribute is to ask them and to listen to their answers.”

— *Families Volunteer* by Kerry Kenn Allen and Sarah Harrison, 1983, p. 35

## Introduction

Volunteering Auckland is receiving a growing number of youth applicants. According to its database, to the year ending 30 June 2012, 208 15-to-19-year-olds applied; in 2013, that number rose to 229. Then, in 2014, it more than tripled – 803 youth applied. The 10-to-14-year-old segment experienced an even greater increase percentage-wise, from five in 2012 and ten in 2013, to 45 in 2014.

The organisation has more than 400 nonprofits registered, but the majority prefer to use volunteers over the age of 18. A Volunteering Auckland survey found that the most common reasons are the vulnerable nature of clients, the level of training required, and the time commitment expected (see Appendix 1).

So the question is, what obstructs and what enables successful involvement of youth in voluntary organisations? And how can Volunteering Auckland help organisations overcome obstacles and leverage the benefits of hosting youth volunteers? We look for answers in Volunteering Auckland’s interviews with its partners, stories of success at home and abroad, Statistics New Zealand’s census data, and research conducted by nonprofits, government agencies and academic bodies.

There is no shortage of discussion on the importance of mutually beneficial relationships between youth and their communities. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of development suggests that when there are more strong, positive relationships within the microsystem (household or family) and mesosystem (community contacts, from workplaces to friendship circles), it strengthens both broader communities and individual wellbeing (Lewton & Nievar, 2012). However, current research on youth volunteering primarily addresses the benefits to youth as individuals, discussing how best to mobilise young people and not necessarily why organisations should consider creating places for them. Many of these discussions confirm the stereotypes that dissuade organisations from inviting youth on board, such as the fact that training and supervision is more intensive for those who have yet to finish formal education and have little work experience (Lewton & Nievar, 2012).

The common assumption that young people contribute less to their communities than older generations is not entirely unwarranted. Statistics New Zealand’s 2009/10 Time Use Survey reports that 12-to-24-year-olds spend the most time of any demographic on personal care, sports and hobbies, and social entertainment, while spending the least time on household work

and unpaid work. However their combined hours for labour-force activity and education/training are equivalent to working-aged people's labour-force activity, indicating that they are as productively occupied as older generations (Statistics NZ, 2011).

A number of sources do express optimism about the freshest crop of volunteers. According to one, "In countries on every continent, young people are coming together to lead campaigns, run projects, start new organisations – all aimed at improving their communities, their nations, their world" (Adair, 2011, p. 6). In 2005, the Russell Commission report in the UK also recognised a demand from young people to volunteer that wasn't matched with opportunities in their communities (Russell, 2005).

As with any demographic, organisations will find advantages to employing young volunteers as well as challenges. As one rest home's volunteer coordinator observed, "One of the most beautiful things about youth volunteers... is that younger people often don't see the disability in someone – they see what is still there, what is still possible and what a person is capable of doing" (Appendix 2).

In the UK, vInspired, a youth-focused equivalent of Volunteering Auckland, is mobilising this demographic in unprecedented ways. Organisations that wish to tap into these advantages could begin by following their methods or by replicating the approach of local organisations that are successfully employing young volunteers. Elizabeth Knox Home and Hospital in Auckland, for example, has a well documented, intentional approach to recruiting and retaining youth. Not every organisation will be able to afford a dedicated volunteer coordinator, but the systems Knox and others have put in place can constructively inform other programmes.

#### WHY YOUNG VOLUNTEERS VOLUNTEER

As Volunteering Auckland has discovered, many youth are willing volunteers. The benefits to both young people and their neighbourhoods include greater community involvement, increased confidence, sharing social resources, gaining social capital and work experience, and building respect between youth and communities (Family Strengthening Policy Center of the National Human Services Assembly, 2006)

A German study on youth who completed a year's voluntary service found two keys to their commitment: "They must regard the work as being really useful and specific, and it must have an element of fun" (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2000, p. 25).

Immediate incentives for young people to volunteer include the demands of education and award programmes – some schools in Auckland suggest students undertake a volunteer component, and a number of students in New Zealand also participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Hillary Award (Appendix 3) that necessitates involvement in volunteer work. The Bronze award requires practical service for a minimum of three months and the Gold award between 12 and 18 months (Duke of Edinburgh Award, 2018).

A strong social component also contributes. More than any other demographic, teenagers tend to take initiative if they are doing so with friends (Allen & Harrison, 1983). They often volunteer because their friends have, discovering the benefits by word of mouth.

Elizabeth Knox Home and Hospital in Auckland has a programme for high-school volunteers. Responses to the questions of why they volunteer and what they have learned include, "I gained more confidence", "I could build a relationship", "I want different types of interactions than I have at school", "To do something meaningful", and even "I have too much free time" Some students already have careers such as nursing or hospitality in mind, and a number said they appreciated the opportunity to learn skills ranging from serving tea and coffee to giving presentations (Elizabeth Knox Home, 2014a).

#### WHY ORGANISATIONS PREFER OLDER VOLUNTEERS

Several organisations Volunteering Auckland works with say that the vulnerable nature of their clients necessitates older volunteers, suggesting that they don't see younger ones as mature or reliable enough to fulfil the roles (Appendix 1). This echoes reports and research that teem with suggestions for keeping participants interested, providing adequate training and supervision, and finding tasks for unskilled helpers.

Limited availability also works against young volunteers. They may have more free hours than adults but they are constrained by school schedules, family commitments, and often part-time employment and extracurricular activities. They rarely have their own transport, and because their schedules and commitments change frequently they are less likely to settle into a long-term role.

Organisations must also consider liability, and some are restricted by legislation. Habitat for Humanity, for example, cannot legally allow anyone under the age of 15 on its building sites. Because they have experienced what they consider to be a youthful lack of judgement, they have set their age limit for construction sites at 16 and have supervision requirements (Appendix 3).

Training and supervising people who have little or no work experience is a big ask for small organisations. The staff-to-volunteer ratio needed for smooth operations may prohibit teams that are already stretched thin from taking on young (or sometimes any) volunteers. Unless organisations know that the effort will be worth it, they are unlikely to start the process.

Youth may also be less efficient at completing tasks. Habitat for Humanity has found this is due not just to inexperience, but to lack of concentration and concerted effort. Unlike more mature volunteers, youth are more likely to be there for social as well as practical and altruistic reasons. They have also witnessed parents signing teenagers up in order to keep them busy outside of term time, so participation is not necessarily willing (Appendix 3).

#### WHO ARE THE VOLUNTEERS?

Females do unpaid work at twice the rate of males according to both international trends and Statistics New Zealand's latest Time Use Survey, where 'work' is unpaid for females 65 per cent of the time but only 37 per cent for males (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). Females between the ages of 15 and 19 are more than three times as likely to register with Volunteering Auckland: 619 applied in the year ending 30 June 2014, compared to 186 males.

Statistics New Zealand reports that youth are the least voluntarily engaged demographic, with lower levels of unpaid work for those 12-24 years

of age than other age groups, averaging 1 hour 46 minutes per day (Statistics NZ, 2011). The rise in applications to Volunteering Auckland suggests that this may not be due to an unwillingness to volunteer, but actually a lack of opportunities.

In a breakdown of ethnicity, Statistics New Zealand reports that European and Māori rates of unpaid work for any organisation were the highest, with 34 per cent and 32 per cent participating, respectively, and Asian rates were among the lowest at 21 per cent (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). However the applications with Volunteering Auckland follow the opposite trend, with rates for Asian youth exceeding their percentage of the Auckland population and European youth underrepresented (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: ETHNICITY OF 15-TO-19-YEAR-OLDS REGISTERING WITH VOLUNTEERING AUCKLAND TO THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2014.

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>2013/14 applicants</i>	<i>Per cent of applications</i>	<i>Per cent of Auckland population</i>
Asian/Indian/Sri Lankan	347	43%	22%
NZ European	239	30%	48%
Pasifika	69	9%	10%
European	57	7%	
Māori	37	5%	4%
Other	18	2%	
South African	17	2%	
South American	6	1%	
North American	5	1%	
African	3	0%	
Australian	3	0%	
Middle Eastern	2	0%	
	803		

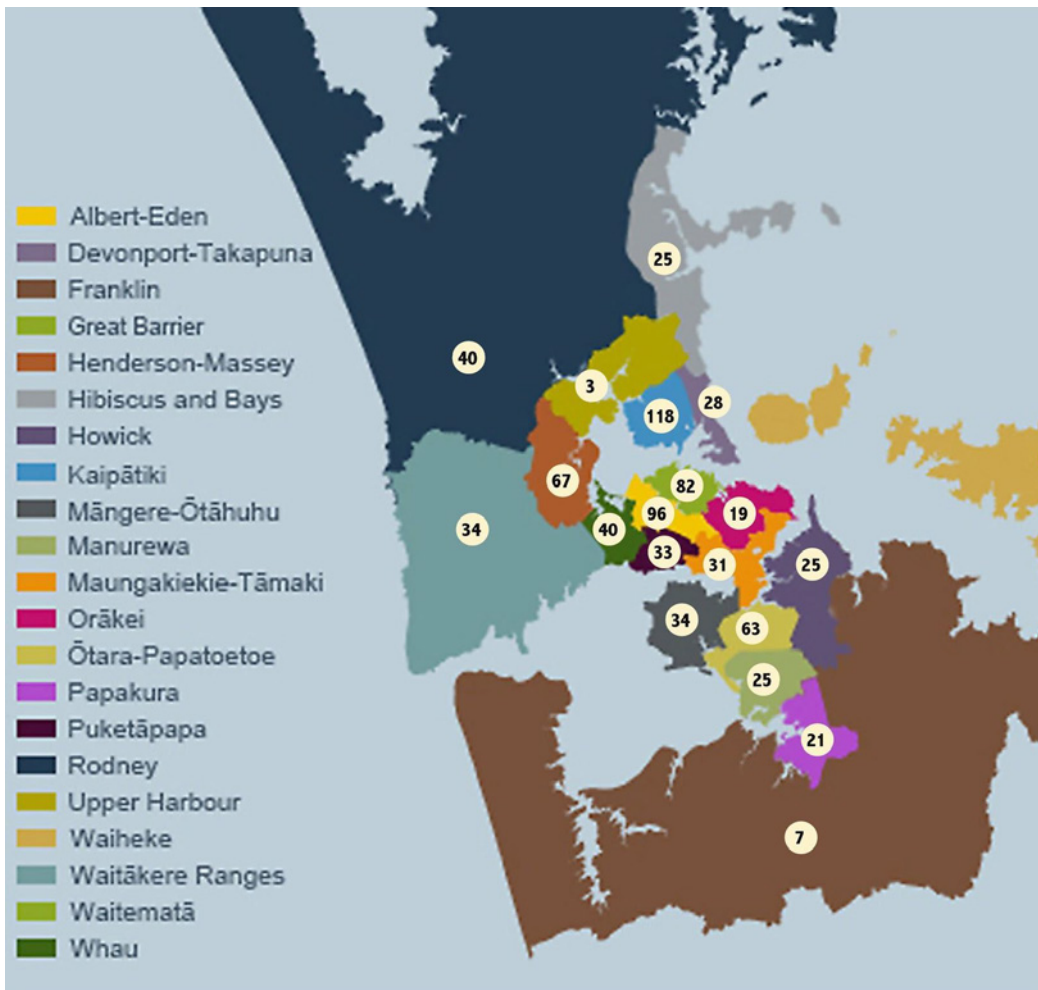
Sources: Volunteering Auckland, Statistics New Zealand, 2014

The population percentages represent those who identified as only one ethnicity on the census – there are other categories including combinations – however, Volunteering Auckland applicants must identify as one of these or ‘other’. As a result, the application percentages are likely to be higher because there are fewer categories. Still, the growth in youth applications to Volunteering Auckland is largely fuelled by Asian youth, who make up 43 per

cent of all applicants despite representing less than a quarter of the population.

The highest concentration of youth applicants is in the central suburbs – Kaipātiki on the North Shore, and Otara-Papatoetoe in South Auckland (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF 15-TO-19-YEAR-OLDS REGISTERING WITH VOLUNTEERING AUCKLAND IN EACH OF AUCKLAND'S BOARDS TO THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2014.



Sources: Auckland City Council, Volunteering Auckland, 2014.

#### ORGANISATIONS' LIMITATIONS

Of the nine organisations interviewed, seven would not consider taking youth volunteers (Appendix 1). Both Refugees As Survivors (RAS) and Red Cross Refugee and Migrant Services listed their clients' traumatic backgrounds as a reason for only using volunteers over the age of 18. RAS also reported that immigration requirements restricted who they could use as volunteers. In addition, incorporated nonprofits can be sued, so they must take reasonable means to ensure the safety of those both receiving and providing assistance (Department of Internal Affairs, 2005).

Those who work with minors or families with children have a similar rationale for their age limits. Island Child, Brothers in Arms, and Thrive Teen



## International examples of youth-led initiatives

Indigenous Communities Education & Awareness Foundation (ICEA) in Western Australia is a youth-led organisation. A high-school student set it up in 2007 to “promote reconciliation, unity and mutual respect for all Australians by creating experiences, relationships and understanding between young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians” (Adair, 2011, p. 10).

Youth PATH (Poverty Alleviation through Heritage Tourism) operates in St Lucia. It involves more than 150 youth and student organisations in providing training and business-development skills for young people, especially the unemployed and recent graduates. They receive ICT training, training in business development and in running cultural and natural heritage sites. Then they receive the opportunity to start up small businesses operating and maintaining heritage tourism sites (Adair, 2011).

Every three years, Pacific Youth & Sport Conference (Oceania Football Confederation, [www.oceaniafootball.com](http://www.oceaniafootball.com)) gather 1000 16-to-25-year-olds to talk about health, education and social issues. Young people are encouraged to develop their ideas, own projects, and present these to their Minister for Youth and Sport. They work with the ministers to implement, monitor and evaluate these projects within their communities.

Africa Youth Trust ([africayouthtrust.org](http://africayouthtrust.org)), based in Kenya, is a youth-led approach to development, promoting democratic dialogue and ensuring young people are engaged in national and regional affairs (Adair, 2011).

Mayibuye, in South Africa ([mayibuyesouthafrica.org](http://mayibuyesouthafrica.org)) “is a youth-led organisation that’s using dance, performing arts and life skills workshops to build a generation of young people who are equipped to lead their community and act as positive role models” (Adair, 2011, p. 18).

Parent Support all have a minimum age of 18 years due to the young age of their clients. Big Buddy also seeks long-term commitments, which is one reason they have a higher age limit of 21 (Appendix 1).

Tough Love reported 18+ a requirement due to their desire for long-term commitments, however they see potential for placing younger volunteers in social-media roles. Similarly, Thrive Teen Parent Support will not place teen volunteers in roles with teen clients, but could have youth assist in their koha room (Appendix 1).

Pakuranga Howick Budgeting Services does not accept volunteers under the age of 18 because they require extensive training to work with clients. They did not suggest any other roles that volunteers could fill.

Wilson Home Trust takes volunteers from the age of 13, and welcomes them for peer friendships. The charity works with children who have disabilities, but despite the vulnerable nature of their clients it sees young volunteers as an asset and finds art projects a good way to involve them (Appendix 1).

Habitat for Humanity could restrict youth volunteering due to the dangerous nature of construction sites. However it has developed partnerships with trade schools and high schools, offering hands-on experience for students who need it. They also offer youth opportunities to do office work, babysitting and help in the op shop. For one-off projects, students have also painted murals, helped with community events, and even created a radio advertisement (Appendix 3).

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS

Projects available through partner organisations generally fall into one of the following categories:

- Direct service (assisting clients)
- Indirect service (helping in op shops, raising funds, etc.)
- Internal administration (office-based work)
- External administration (creating posters, theatrical displays, etc.)

(Lewton & Nievar, 2012, pp. 695)

Many of Volunteering Auckland’s organisations have a lower age limit because of direct service

demands. However, all have administration needs and either have or could create indirect service projects if they allowed for training and oversight.

Projects that are well suited to under-18s include work in:

- Animal shelters
- Arts and performances
- Athletic events
- Community events
- Practical tasks
- Cooking
- Clean-up
- Fundraising drives
- Office duties
- Media and marketing
- Sports clubs
- Tutoring
- Wildlife care
- Care of the elderly
- Youth-led initiatives

(Lewton & Nievar, 2012; Volunteer Spot, 2008; Adair, 2011; Inspired, 2014; Allen & Harrison, 1983)

Not all volunteering must take place within the structure of an organisation. Given the benefits of involvement in one's community and the transportation limitations students have, opportunities that are geographically close will be the most successful. Public institutions like hospitals, schools and leisure centres, and public amenities such as parks and beaches could benefit from their time and initiative. Local sports clubs are likely to have open doors for youth interested in volunteering. The UK's 2005 Russell Commission recommended such venues as both good matches for youth volunteers and ones with "tangible community benefit" (Russell, 2005, p. 17).

There are also examples of youth-led initiatives, where they have driven each phase from the idea to the recruitment and implementation. The Russell Commission report led to the founding of vInspired in the UK. Its purpose and strategy are similar to Volunteering Auckland's, but with an exclusive focus on youth. It has channelled more than 1.25 million youth into voluntary outlets since 2006, and not all have been through established nonprofits. Team V campaigns provide a platform for youth to come up with their own community projects, recruit local volunteers and implement them. VInspired provides the hub and coaching, much like Volunteering Auckland does for registered organisations. Here, youth-led projects may themselves tie into established programmes, and their organic, one-off nature suits young volunteers, allowing them to use their initiative, take ownership and learn as they go.

## A success story: Elizabeth Knox Home

Amongst Volunteering Auckland's partners, Elizabeth Knox Home and Hospital in Auckland stands out as an effective manager of youth volunteers. It has recruited and placed dozens of high-school students over the past year and a half. A key factor is its dedicated volunteer coordinator. Before Knox created the role in May 2013, most of its volunteers were retirees. Within six months, the coordinator had recruited 50 high-school students, making up a quarter of their volunteer pool. Volunteer Manager Kristen O'Reilly's role is not just about recruitment and training, but also retention (Appendix 2).

The coordinator enacts the rest home's philosophy of care, which includes the presence of "children, animals and plants" and seeks to create "an environment where unpredictable and unexpected things take place (antidote to boredom)" (Appendix 2). Youth volunteers fit in well in this model; their energy and spontaneity, combined with their ability to provide companionship and meet practical needs, bring something unique to the role.

Volunteers must be at least 13 years old. The home recruits from local schools, church and community groups, universities, and via Volunteering Auckland. Commitments are intentionally flexible, with both short-term support roles and long-term companionship roles available (Appendix 2). The coordinator understands that few youth will commit long-term, and has adjusted its programme to recognise this reality. Kristen told Volunteering Auckland, "We try not to focus too much on turnover as a negative thing because it actually helps us to retain our volunteers".

The coordinator starts with a 15-minute interview with each applicant to gauge skills and interest, then runs a group orientation. Youth begin with task-oriented jobs such as serving drinks, caring for animals, and admin jobs. Staff make an effort to present these roles as professional ones, not simply checking off chores. After volunteers have had a chance to get comfortable around the residents, they transition into companion roles, befriending and helping residents. Staff have found that the younger students are more comfortable doing task-based jobs, but generally gain confidence as companions by the age of 16 or 17.

Workshops run by the coordinator also prepare volunteers to interact with residents, coaching them in listening and communicating well, respecting cultural differences, and identifying challenges they might face. Follow-up worksheets help them get the most out of the experience and ensure they are well equipped to contribute to home life.

The communications worksheets ask volunteers to reflect on the following topics:

1. Write about a recent highlight of your work as a volunteer. Write about who you worked with, what you did together and how it was rewarding.
2. What have you learnt from this workshop and how will you put this into practice when volunteering or in other parts of your life? What skills (listening/speaking/reading/writing)? How will you apply this? Be specific!

3. Do you have any questions for Knox staff about volunteering or about the communications workshops?

(Elizabeth Knox Home, 2014a)

The answers counter many of the stereotypes about teenagers. Students find satisfaction from engaging with the elderly, commenting on successes in striking up conversations, playing games together or gratitude received for assistance. Some felt privileged when residents shared personal stories with them, and one even looked forward to future conversations with a resident who shared her taste in jazz and rock music. "My friends have a completely different taste in music, so it was good to find someone who shared the same taste as me," Kartika wrote (Elizabeth Knox Home, 2014b).

Despite a lack of work experience, students may bring valuable skills with them. "Some of the residents are Chinese," student Terry Lin wrote on a volunteer feedback form. "They talked to me in Mandarin and I explained the meaning to Victoria in English. The 'language exchange' is really good!" And even teenagers' less-valued skills can be an asset in some situations; in engaging with elderly residents, Sophie Lim wrote, "I learnt that maybe my over-talking can be useful for once!" (Elizabeth Knox Home, 2014c).

The responses also show appreciation for the time Kristen O'Reilly spends training them, praising both the content and the presentation (Elizabeth Knox Home, 2014b). By helping youth volunteers with aspects that might be challenging right from the start and welcoming feedback and suggestions, Knox increases their odds of success and leaves an open door for youth to seek help when they encounter difficulties. With that support in place, the home's staff also trust students enough to leave them with residents suffering from physical infirmities and dementia.

Knox's success shows that vulnerable clients may not preclude the use of youth volunteers. In fact, Knox has trained and retained some stellar examples of young volunteers, developing a volunteer base with a potential for growth both amongst present peer circles and over time, as some volunteers get hooked.

Two cases in point are those of Katie Beyer and Lucy Bean, who began volunteering in their first year of high school in 2013. A year and a half later, they still worked at the rest home. On 9 October 2014, at the Volunteering Auckland launch of a display in Revo Café to celebrate their organisation's partners, the 14-year-olds gave a speech:

"We keep going back every week because the atmosphere is relaxed and friendly," Katie said. "Volunteering doesn't feel like a job and there is no pressure to do something you don't feel comfortable doing – setting up the tables for dinner or watering the plants is always appreciated if conversations with strangers isn't your thing. ... It is wonderful to visit Knox each week and realise that over the past 18 months, the huge influx of volunteers has brought many residents who may have been shy, or lonely, or forgetting things because there was nothing to bother remembering, out of their shells. Some of them are dancing at the annual resident and volunteers' ball.

"The most rewarding thing that has happened in 18 months of coming to Knox almost every week, was when a woman we spend almost all of our time

with, who we have to re-introduce ourselves to each time, remembered us,” Lucy said. “Not our names, but the fact that the three of us had been coming to see her every week, talking or just sitting quietly in her room for hours – and occasionally going for a walk up the road to get a choccie ice cream.

“Age gaps aren’t a big issue often, in fact it is amazing to hear what many of these people have achieved in their lifetimes. ... You even see current Epsom girls like us chatting about how school has changed with EGGS old girls.”

Katie concluded by saying that they volunteer “because a little of our time means a lot to others.” (Beyer & Bean, 2014, n.p.)

## Recommendations

Volunteering Auckland is well placed to increase youth participation in volunteering. It has a network built up over a couple of decades, comprehensive institutional knowledge, and already advises hundreds of organisations on volunteer management.

The UK’s Russell Commission report, which led to the successful vInspired initiative, recommended setting up an implementation body that is similar to what Volunteering Auckland had already been doing for years – raising awareness; improving quality and usefulness of volunteering experiences; building volunteering capacity; providing a point of contact; maintaining a database of opportunities; working with local volunteering bodies to deliver opportunities, advice and guidance for practitioners; and providing a feedback mechanism. Volunteering Auckland could focus these efforts more intentionally on its youth demographic, and conduct ongoing research into trends of youth participation and the community benefits of youth action and engagement (Russell, 2005, pp. 9-11).

### RESOURCE EXISTING VOLUNTEERING AUCKLAND INITIATIVES

Even before the steep rise in youth applicants, Volunteering Auckland was considering ways to better integrate youth into its partners’ programmes. In 2004, it proposed two methods to accomplish this.

The first is a youth ambassadors programme. This would involve selecting ambassadors between the ages of 16 and 18 from local schools and community organisations. Those youth would come together once a month to work on community projects at different organisations. They would then offer feedback on their volunteering experience to the organisations, and take ideas for further community involvement back to their peer groups (Volunteering Auckland, 2004a).

The second, dubbed ‘Flying Teams’, proposes creating trios of young volunteers who would audit and then advise organisations on their volunteer systems from a youth perspective. Volunteering Auckland would train the youth so they would be aware of youth participation matters and know how to approach board members with their observations. Those could include policy suggestions, matters of recruitment and retention, procedures, explicit or implicit prejudices, and plans for practical action (Volunteering Auckland,

2004b).

Volunteering Auckland never secured funding to trial these plans, so nothing has eventuated. There is still potential to develop these plans further and, with sufficient resourcing, to implement them. Potential partners include local boards – Volunteering Auckland identified the Albert/Eden Youth Board, which had earmarked \$5000 to further youth volunteering.

#### GET THE WORD OUT

Volunteering Auckland regularly communicates with registered organisations through its newsletters. As part of its resourcing role, it can publicise the number of young volunteers looking for roles and highlight the opportunities best suited to youth. A targeted campaign could also include case studies (such as the programme at Knox Home) that may inspire replication and break down negative stereotypes of youth. Volunteering Auckland could mobilise its own youth volunteer base, commissioning media students to produce short videos that tell these stories and provide helpful pointers.

Volunteering Auckland also offers workshops to upskill its partners. As part of this campaign, it could provide pointers on training and retaining youth volunteers. This could be the most direct means of sharing successful models, breaking down stereotypes by sharing the stories of motivated youth, and finding creative ways for under-resourced organisations to commit to investing in volunteers.

The static information on Volunteering Auckland's website could be updated to include successful youth projects, videos promoting those programmes, and stories of youth volunteers. A stronger social-media presence – perhaps managed by youth volunteers – could also reinforce this message.

#### PROACTIVELY ADVISE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Volunteering Auckland would like to employ someone in a membership services role, but that is dependent on funding. Among other things, that person would be able to find out what each organisation's lower age limit was and why, and provide information about the potential for youth to fill both current roles and ones that had previously not been considered. This would be particularly useful at the induction stage with each new organisation, getting youth volunteers on the agenda from the start.

Along with publicising the potential for youth to benefit organisations, Volunteering Auckland could offer a framework that minimises concerns around youth capabilities. The framework will vary according to the context, but the following may be helpful for those who are willing to develop their capacity for youth volunteers:

- Clearly communicate the process for becoming a volunteer from the start, including the type and timing of initiation
- Offer adequate training, so youth are prepared for each new role and gain confidence despite being challenged
- Create clearly defined roles, and give them titles
- Involve youth in defining their jobs whenever possible, incorporating their own interests

- Provide clear objectives and a personal appraisal system
- Consider how buddy systems and team setups might provide support
- Provide a staff member or trained volunteer who is easily accessible to answer questions as they arise and provide coaching
- Provide a means of feedback from youth, and task a staff member with considering and implementing improvements to the volunteer programme
- Capitalise on opportunities around school holidays and short assignments

(Russell, 2005; Allen & Harrison, 1983)

### MEASURE SUCCESS

The ongoing feedback that Knox House collects is also important for gauging the long-term effectiveness of its efforts. Volunteering Auckland should encourage registered organisations to collect specific and regular feedback from both young volunteers and any clients they deal with. In areas that have outcomes that can be measured, such as fundraising or community projects, the Russell Commission recommends tracking impact through longitudinal studies, recording the impact on the community and identifying cost-effectiveness measures (Russell, 2005).

## Opportunities for further research

### LEARNING FROM YOUTH

Interviews with students may shed light on the reasons for the boom in youth applicants for volunteer roles. School curricula, extracurricular activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, and other educational and social contexts may be fuelling the interest.

Feedback that organisations such as Knox receive would also be useful for Volunteering Auckland as it seeks to educate others further down the learning curve. When someone takes on the member services role, they could encourage organisations to solicit feedback and share it with those who plan the training seminars.

### LEARNING FROM VOLUNTEERING AUCKLAND'S PARTNERS

Volunteering Auckland could further refine the way it meets the needs of registered organisations by asking member organisations the following questions – both for gathering information to fine-tune its training and support, and to prompt innovation within those organisations:

FOR THOSE THAT DO NOT USE ANY VOLUNTEERS YOUNGER THAN 18 OR 20:

1. Do you ever have one-off projects (fundraisers, community events, working bees, etc.) that do not involve interaction with vulnerable clients?

2. Do you have administration, IT or social-media roles in your organisation that a regular volunteer who is under 18 may be able to take on?
3. What specific reservations about underage volunteers are behind your policy? (For instance legal liability, lack of work/life experience, higher training/supervision needs, lack of regular time commitment, etc.)
4. Is there any potential to buddy up younger volunteers with established ones?
5. What practical type of support or training might make you consider volunteers who are 18 or younger?

FOR THOSE THAT ALREADY USE VOLUNTEERS YOUNGER THAN 18:

1. What roles in your organisation do youth volunteers excel at?
2. What strategies do you use to overcome challenges youth volunteers present? (For instance lack of work/life experience, higher training/supervision needs, lack of regular time commitment, etc.)
3. How do youth volunteers benefit your organisation?
4. How could Volunteering Auckland help you overcome the challenges and accentuate the benefits of using youth volunteers? (For instance, are you interested in training for supervisors, learning about other organisations' systems, etc.)



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## Appendices

### APPENDIX 1: VOLUNTEERING AUCKLAND FEEDBACK FROM SELECTED ORGANISATIONS

<i>Agencies</i>	<i>Youth Availability</i>	<i>Description</i>
Refugees As Survivors (RAS)	No, 18+	As RAS works with refugees, migrants and asylum seekers who have come to New Zealand generally from countries affected by war, they do not employ volunteers under the age of 18 years. The clients may have come from traumatic backgrounds and there are specific programmes in place to help this which do not require the assistance of volunteers, especially volunteers of such a young age. There are also immigration requirements for working with the clients and on the facilities, so volunteers must be over the age of 18 years.
Red Cross Refugee and Migrant	No, 18+	Red Cross Refugee Services works with migrant and refugee families. Volunteers buddy up with a family in teams of up to six and offer support to a migrant or refugee family. The volunteers are required to be 18 years or preferably older to work with the families. The clients may have come from traumatic backgrounds and the support they need could be demanding. Volunteers need to be over 18 years to take on this responsibility and to connect with adults in the family.
Tough Love	No, 18+	Tough Love works with parents and their children. They do not seek volunteers through Volunteering Auckland for the programme. There could be room for volunteers in the social-media field, however for commitment's sake the volunteers would preferably be over 18 years.
Island Child	No, 18+	Island Child works with homeless families. Due to the sensitive nature of the work, volunteers need to be over the age of 18 years.
Wilson Home Trust	Yes, 13+	Wilson Home Trust have children from the local schools such as Takapuna Grammar come in to volunteer with the youth in social settings to offer peer friendship. They have also utilised young community youth in art projects throughout their premises. Although they have not had any youth volunteers referred to them through Volunteering Auckland, they do welcome youth into their trust.
Brothers in Arms	No, 18+	Brothers in Arms volunteers are mentoring youth, therefore need to be above the age of 18 years to take on the responsibility and commitment.
Big Buddy	No, 21+	Big Buddy volunteers are 21 years and older, as they are working with young fatherless boys and need their volunteers to be responsible and mature enough to take on the sometimes challenging role. Big Buddy volunteers also need to be committed to the role for extended periods of time.
Pakuranga Howick Budgeting Services	No, 20+	Pakuranga Howick Budgeting Services offers budgeting advice to the community. To become a volunteer budgeter there is extensive training to undergo which can at times be difficult. Pakuranga Howick Budgeting Services would be interested in having volunteers from 20 years and over.
Thrive Teen Parent Support	Currently no, but potential for youth volunteers	Thrive Teen Parenting at this stage doesn't take volunteers younger than the age of 18 years. This is due to the nature of their work and that the clients are teenagers. Volunteers younger than the age of 18 years could conflict with the ages of clients. However, they are looking into having volunteers to assist in their koha room, which has potential to have volunteers under the age of 18 years working there.

## APPENDIX 2:

### STRATEGIES AROUND YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTEERING AT ELIZABETH KNOX HOUSE AND HOSPITAL (SUMMARY FROM KIRSTEN O'REILLY, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR, 2014)

#### Recruitment strategies and procedure

This programme was established through a number of recruitment strategies and involved around 50 of our 200 volunteers in 2014. As the Eden Alternative principles state, we need to have the community involved in life at Elizabeth Knox Home and Hospital (Knox Home) and daily life must include plants, animals and children (see edenalt.org/). Therefore, with the expansion of the volunteer programme, a significant emphasis was put on seeking youth volunteers. A number of relationships revolving around youth were established in the local Epsom community:

- Gateway programmes with Epsom Girls Grammar and Mt. Roskill Grammar school, where students come once a week (9am-3pm) over the course of ten-week programmes, a few times throughout the year. Kristen put an advertisement in local school newsletters, and the local library, and went to St. Cuthbert's Girls school to give a speech to interested volunteers (100+ in attendance).
- A St. Cuthbert's teacher, Ms. Wong, set up a programme with the Volunteer Coordinator (VC) to provide the opportunity for college students to volunteer with the physio team's daily exercise circuit (1:00-1:45pm) during their lunch breaks. The programme established that Ms. Wong does the initial orientation/ health and safety and registration-form sign-up and then brings the students over on their first day. The students then come four times (once a week for a month), and then the student groups switch. They can then contact the Volunteer Coordinator if they're interested in long-term volunteering, which many of them have done.
- Another St. Cuthbert's teacher, Ms. Yarden, and the VC set up a programme with a Year 9 English class who wrote poems introducing themselves – 'Where I'm from' – along with videos which they shared as a presentation to Knox residents. A visitation programme was set up from the relationships established, in which students interviewed elders for their class projects – an opportunity for residents to give care as well as receive it.

#### Interview and orientation process

- Step 1: All interested volunteers contact the VC for an interview, which lasts 15-30 minutes.
- Step 2: After the interview and 'role placement' (see roles below) all volunteers attend a weekly Volunteer Orientation which lasts 1.5 to 2 hours, before they begin

their volunteer role.

- Step 3: On the first shift, all volunteers are buddied up with another volunteer, until they feel comfortable to volunteer independently (if their role requires that).
- Step 4: To attend additional (monthly) training opportunities if desired.
- Step 5: To switch to a different volunteer role after a few weeks (if desired) i.e., switch from staff support to companionship (see below).

#### Training programmes

- Mandatory – Orientation
- Optional – Eden Sessions, communication workshops and open communication sessions
- Orientation: The original orientation covers the following:
  - Knox Home – Who are we? Who are our volunteers?
  - The Eden Alternative – The caring philosophy of the home
  - Code of conduct for volunteers
  - Health and safety
  - Confidentiality
  - Registration process

#### Weekly or monthly Eden sessions

Knox residents and staff hold weekly Eden sessions (discussing the ten Eden Alternative principles) every Monday afternoon.

The VC holds an optional monthly session for volunteers who wish to learn and understand more about the Eden Alternative principles.

#### Communication workshops

This is a seven-part series which focuses on communication with residents, developing personal confidence and social integration of volunteers. The first four workshops (each two hours long) talk about cultural differences in communication, introducing ourselves, sharing anecdotes, communicating with people of a variety of ages and medical conditions, and more. The last three workshops revolve around public speaking, interview skills and vocabulary – as a way for us to 'give back to volunteers', we'd like to support them in their communication outside of Knox, too.

We noticed immediately the benefit that these workshops have on youth volunteers, as many of them haven't volunteered in this environment before, may not have relationships with many elders and/or are less confident in developing new relationships with others. As some volunteers cannot commit to coming fortnightly over a few months, we've created 'open communication sessions' where we condense a few of the workshops into two-hour sessions.

## Open-communication training

Volunteers can sign up for a monthly open-communication training (two hours) to support volunteers in establishing relationships with residents.

The key to training and retaining youth is that they feel supported and ready for their role. Having a Volunteer Coordinator on site, or someone responsible for supervising them, guiding them and supporting them is critical. Giving clear instructions and starting off with specific tasks is also very important so that volunteers are clear in their understanding of their roles. As we initially developed a very flexible programme, we realised that we needed further role development for younger volunteers so that they feel they have a place amongst volunteers that is valuable, clear and supported.

## Roles for youth at Knox

Many younger volunteers want clear directions and task-oriented roles, at least to start off with. It's our procedure to start off most volunteers in a 'staff support' role, i.e., serving morning tea, helping in physio or helping over the dinner hour to set up and assist residents with their meals. As they get to know residents, they may want to move on to a companionship role, where they simply sign in and visit residents that they know.

If volunteers are particularly outgoing, have experience communicating with residents or feel very comfortable doing so, they are allowed to sign up for a companionship role right away. We don't want volunteers to feel 'restricted' to certain tasks, but they must also feel supported. Therefore it's encouraged that all companion volunteers attend Eden sessions and/or communication training so that they have the best possible understanding of what it means to join the rhythm of the elders' day.

## Which roles do we create for youth volunteers?

- Staff support: Serving morning tea, helping out in physiotherapy activities, supporting the activities team with games, serving dinner to residents, helping out with weekend brunch, assisting the laundry staff with labelling clothes and organising the residents' unlabelled clothing rack, running and operating the residents' café and store (on-site) and helping to feed the pets.

- Companionship role: we can 'structure' companionship by assisting in the set-up of games for residents and volunteers, encouraging volunteers to bake in groups, play musical instruments; and also support the companionship role by making helpful resources, like a photo album with all residents' photos and hobbies/facts about them.

## How do we support youth volunteers?

- Multiple training opportunities
- Continuous opportunities for feedback: feedback forms, surveys, journal writing after communication workshops
- Learning Circles – a chance to get together to discuss how things are going, any challenges, etc.

One of the big shared experiences from Knox volunteers is wanting to support youth in their roles, and giving them the opportunity to grow and care; however, we should limit the number of restrictions we place on them. We can't make it too hard to sign up or get started, or else we won't retain them. We must be flexible about the amount of the we require from them (i.e., to be more flexible around exam time, etc.).

## The benefit of youth – feedback from residents and staff

Staff and residents have fed back in multiple ways how beneficial it is having the younger generation involved. Residents feel that the youth energise them, share stories and relate to them as their own grandchildren would or do. Many residents don't have grandchildren or children nearby, or perhaps they have grown up and residents enjoy having children in their lives again. It's a chance to be re-anchored in the community, and an opportunity to meet new people, and to share experiences and skills. Having younger volunteers here really gives residents the opportunity to give care to that generation, and having the opportunity to continue to care for others is an opportunity to grow for everyone.

One of the most beautiful things about youth volunteers that we notice at Knox is that younger people often don't see the disability in someone – they see what is still there, what is still possible and what a person is capable of doing. Simply by seeing that possibility, we open up through the companionship to a world of opportunities – and allow a resident and volunteer to spend time in a way that is meaningful to them both.

## APPENDIX 3:

VOLUNTEERING AUCKLAND INTERVIEW WITH  
KATHERINE GRANICH, HABITAT FOR HUMANITY,  
TUESDAY 5 NOVEMBER, 2013

### 1. Where do you see your organisation in relation to successfully engaging young people as volunteers?

Presently, Habitat Auckland is not very successful at engaging young people as volunteers. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being 'not at all successful' and 10 being 'very successful', I would put us at about a 3-4. This is partly a self-limiting situation for reasons explained below.

### 2. If I was to ask you to think about the current volunteers you have in your organisation,

#### (a) What percentage are aged 14-18 years?

Perhaps five to ten per cent.

#### (b) What would you suggest has helped them most in engaging with your organisation?

Our staff and other volunteers are extremely encouraging and supportive of volunteers. I think this supportive, welcoming, encouraging, accepting environment that we are fostering for our volunteers promotes positive engagement with our organisation. The nature of the work, which is challenging but rewarding, also fosters positive engagement.

### 3. What (if any) is your organisation's current recruitment process in regards to youth volunteers?

We do not have a specific recruitment policy or procedure in place for youth volunteers for several reasons, which I will explain in following questions. Our youth volunteers generally come to us from these different 'streams':

a) Often, youth volunteers come to us because they either have community service to fulfil as part of their schooling (some high schools in the area encourage or require community service of some kind as a curriculum element for senior students). In these cases, supervising teachers or school staff contact us to arrange volunteer days. We have ongoing relationships with a few local schools which have developed from this.

b) We have had some students get in touch with us directly with the intention of setting up a volunteer programme for their school, but this is rare.

c) We also have Gateway and other work-experience coordinators contact us to arrange construction-site work

experience for students undertaking pre-trade qualifications or needing work experience prior to undertaking trade qualifications.

d) We sometimes have church youth groups contact us wishing to volunteer.

e) There are special volunteering experiences organised through schools, one of which is successfully running for the first time this year and will run again next year, and another of which is still in the negotiation process. This has come through relationships and partnerships between local trade schools/tech schools and high schools who wish to give their students an even more targeted and meaningful work experience prior to graduation. One has successfully run at Onehunga High School, whereby the students in the construction school have built a Habitat home on their school grounds during the school year. The house will then be moved to its 'home site' upon completion. This came through relationships between the high school, Onehunga-One Tree Hill Rotary, Habitat, and a few other partner organisations.

f) We also have some youth volunteers through our Habitat partner families, who are family members of those who will be receiving a Habitat house. Habitat partner families have to do 500 hours of volunteering with us, which we call 'sweat equity'. Family members of the homeowner are able to do these hours as well, and often we have partner family youth in our ReStore working as volunteers to help complete the sweat-equity requirement for their parents or other Habitat partner-family relatives.

g) Sometimes volunteers wish to bring their children along to their own volunteering experience, and are permitted to do so if they meet the age requirement (which I will explain in following questions).

### 4. Within your organisation what tasks do young people typically undertake?

When we do have youth volunteers, they are generally on our house-building site doing all manner of building tasks that are suited to their age and maturity level, as well as what is safe for them, and to their experience if they are coming from a building or trade background or are going into trade. It is hard to list the tasks, as they are so numerous and varied, but generally they relate to every stage of building a house excepting those which require professional certification such as electrical work or plumbing (although we do sometimes permit apprentice plumbers/electricians to work under direct supervision of qualified plumbers/electricians). We also sometimes have youth volunteers in our ReStore, which is our secondhand store, and their tasks may include serving customers, helping us to sort incoming donations, helping us to tidy the shop. Additionally, some of our youth volunteers babysit for other younger family members during the time that their parents are completing sweat-equity volunteering hours, and those babysitting hours also count as sweat equity and towards our volunteer hours. We have also had

youth volunteers in our office doing administrative tasks like filing, answering the phones and collating paperwork. Additionally, we have in the past had youth volunteers doing special projects, such as designing and painting a mural at our office, helping us to host a special community event, and even creating a radio commercial for us in one of their school classes. We are very open to different creative ways in which we can work with youth.

### **5. What strengths do you see within your organisations that are enabling successful long-term engagement with youth volunteers, if any? (Looking at both within your organisation and in general.)**

I think the nature of our work (building houses) is quite exciting and interesting to youth volunteers, many of whom relish the opportunity to use power tools and do something hands on. I also think our staff, particularly those who interact regularly with volunteers, are also a compelling reason our youth volunteers like coming along – they do make things fun and are great with volunteers of all ages. I also think that the fact our build site requires no prior experience or skills is very encouraging to all volunteers, particularly youth. We challenge our volunteers, but not in a negative way; more in a ‘give it a go and you might surprise yourself’ kind of way. The fact we also offer work experience for volunteers who are seeking trade qualifications is a bonus, as we want to make it easier for these students to enter the workforce with support and encouragement as well as appropriate instruction.

### **6. What obstacles do you see within your organisation that may be affecting successful long-term engagement with youth volunteers, if any? (Looking at both within your organisation and in general.)**

a) The first obstacle is age. Legally we are not permitted to have any volunteers under the age of 15 on our build site, as it is considered a working construction site. Our organisation’s policy, which has evolved from this, is that we don’t permit youth under the age of 16 on our construction site.

b) The second obstacle is the need for adequate supervision on our build site for health and safety reasons. Generally, we prefer to have one supervisor to every five volunteers. We have one supervisor onsite all the time, and another on call but whom we do not always have access to, so we do need to limit the number of volunteers we have onsite because of this. To help ensure adequate supervision, we require any 16- and 17-year-olds (and some 18-year-olds who are still in school) to bring supervising adults with them. The ratio of youth volunteers to adult supervisors is varied. For some youth we permit one supervisor to five youth; for others we require a ratio of one supervisor to two

youth. It depends on many factors, and we generally use our previous experience to determine the level of supervision we will require them to bring along with them. New groups of youth volunteers or volunteers require more supervisors; more regular groups of youth volunteers we might relax the supervision rule somewhat. Groups with whom we have had difficulties in the past may require more supervisors because we know that they have a tendency to misbehave or not listen to us. (However, we have one group of 16-to-18-year-olds from one particular high school who have proven themselves over many volunteering occasions to be very trustworthy, reliable, and mature, and we permit them to come in groups of up to five or six students without bringing an adult supervisor with them, but they are the one exception with regards to school groups. The other exception is our work-experience students, whom we permit to come onsite one or two at a time on a regular basis. Because they are there to learn skills over time and are working closely with our supervising builder, there is a level of expectation on both sides as to their maturity and capability, and they are allowed to come without supervision as long as they fulfil our and their programme’s expectations.) To sum up, the supervision factor is tricky on both sides. It’s tricky on our side because we don’t have enough of our own people to ensure the supervision ratios are adhered to, and often when groups of youth volunteers or even individual youth volunteers find out they need to bring supervision along, they balk and sometimes become annoyed, and may not come because they can’t/won’t find enough supervising adults.

c) Related to the second obstacle is that we have noticed a tendency for schools/parents to treat our volunteering options as a ‘school-holiday programme’, and wish to drop off their youth with us for the day to be kept busy, but they are not serious about wanting to volunteer with us. We are trying to work out a way to deter these occurrences; the supervision ratios we have introduced are helping to keep this from happening, but it still happens.

d) Another obstacle is what I call the horsing-around factor. Youthful exuberance is wonderful, but can be very dangerous on a building site. Groups of students who are not closely supervised can create or get into dangerous situations on our build site, where there are many potentially dangerous tools, materials, and situations for those who are not vigilant and serious. We like to have fun on our site, but we need to always think of safety first, and youth are generally not of this mindset.

e) A further obstacle is maturity. While there are many mature and exceptional youth volunteers, many of whom we have had the pleasure of working with, there are an equal number of youth volunteers who are simply not mature enough to work on a construction site. This is an awkward situation for us, as we find it difficult to explain to their supervisors or cooperating teachers that of a group of ten regular volunteer students, five are fine, but the other five really can’t come along as they are too distracted/on their mobiles/not interested/unreliable, etc.

f) Another obstacle is work ethic. Our outcome is finite – we need to build a house. We have a timeframe to do it in, and we need to get it done within that timeframe because we want to house a needy family and then build another house. We also have requirements set by our funders and our board which we have to fulfil in order to be sustainable. We find it difficult to host youth volunteers because, frankly, they take twice as long to get the work done. It's not a matter of inability or lack of capability, because our volunteering work is set up to be suitable for anyone of any skill level. It is more that youth volunteers tend to not have the work ethic to get stuck in and get done what we need to get done in order to fulfil our build schedule. In order to stay productive and sustainable, our volunteering options tend to be geared toward adults.

g) Because we can only host up to ten volunteers at a time on our build site, with the need for supervision numbers to be included in this limit, the number of youth volunteers who are able to come at any one time is also severely limited. This means that larger interested groups need to be split into smaller groups and come over several dates, which most youth groups are reluctant to do for a number of reasons.

h) The last obstacle is the feeling of entitlement, which is perhaps not the correct word. This is hard for me to explain. There can be a feeling among volunteers that because they are volunteering their time, we as a charity should be grateful and accept anything and everything they are offering us.

## **7. What do you see as fundamental principles when engaging and/or recruiting youth volunteers?**

I think the most important attribute is being able to relate well to youth and engage with them in a way that makes them feel respected and appreciated. I think openness, friendliness and kindness are essential when engaging with all volunteers, particularly youth.

## **8. What key characteristics would the 'ideal volunteer' have, from the perspective of your organisation?**

An ideal volunteer would believe in Habitat's mission, which is that everyone deserves to live in a simple, decent, healthy home, and that poverty in housing needs to be eliminated in New Zealand and around the world. They would be enthusiastic and interested in our work. They would be punctual and reliable, and willing to get stuck in even to tasks that aren't terribly exciting. They would be friendly and personable, and relate to our other volunteers well. They would be capable and perhaps have skills we could utilise that would help us in our tasks, especially those where we have little support or limited skill. They would tell their friends about us and spread the word about what we do. Ultimately,

they would feel that making a donation to support our work is a worthwhile thing to do.

## **9. How do you envision a youth-friendly organisation to function and what would it look like?**

A youth-friendly organisation would have a dedicated youth liaison to work with youth volunteers and to actively identify and organise youth-friendly volunteering opportunities. It would have ample opportunities available for youth, to engage them in a friendly and encouraging manner, to help harness and channel their natural exuberance in a way that will be beneficial to both the organisation and the youth. A youth-friendly organisation would have good relationships with sources of youth volunteers, such as schools and churches, and would actively maintain these relationships through mutual communication and feedback.

## **10. How can Volunteering Auckland assist your organisation to effectively engage with volunteers aged between 14 and 18?**

It would help us if VA understood that our organisation's parameters around youth volunteers are somewhat strict for a number of reasons, and to communicate this upfront to potential youth volunteer groups so that their expectations are managed and any potential disappointment limited.

Maryanne Wardlaw is a former journalist who has worked in the nonprofit sector since 2002 as a communications specialist. This paper was written in 2014 while interning at Volunteering Auckland, as part of her Master of Public Policy studies at the University of Auckland.



Rethinking the true impact of voluntourism  
in line with new community development  
standards

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This publication may be cited as: Parkes, E. (2018). Rethinking  
the true impact of voluntourism in line with new community  
development standards, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of  
Community Development*, 4(2), 90–101.

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

An ePress publication

[epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz)  
[www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/](http://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/)

Unitec Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

# Rethinking the true impact of voluntourism in line with new community development standards

ELEANOR PARKES

## Abstract

The volunteer tourism market now represents over \$2 billion annually but its impact is not yet adequately understood. Studies that have considered the impacts of voluntourism on host communities have had some significant limitations as well as very having mixed findings, highlighting both the potential benefits but also the costs of this increasingly popular form of travel. Voluntourism is now the fastest growing market in the tourism industry and it is essential we consider it critically to ascertain which voluntourism models are contributing to an outmoded north-south approach to development, and which are designed to support the capacity of local organisations. This paper will argue that with the recent publication of the IACD's *Towards shared international standards for community development practice* document the time is right for a renewed and focused attempt to measure the impacts of volunteering and voluntourism on community development.

## Introduction

Volunteer tourism or 'voluntourism' is most commonly defined as travel with the purpose of engaging in organised volunteer work to positively impact both the host community and the guest (Wearing, 2001). The volunteer tourism market now represents over \$2 billion annually (Biddle, 2016) but its impact is not yet adequately understood (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018; Lupoli &

Morse, 2015).

A voluntourism experience is usually for up to three months and involves activities intended to aid the community, such as through alleviating material poverty, conducting research, teaching or preserving a particular environment (Wearing, 2001). This is differentiated from the broader term 'volunteering', which does not necessarily include a travel aspect, does not imply a length of time and does not usually require payment by participants. Voluntourism is differentiated from other forms of 'alternative tourism' that do not seek mutual benefits for the unpaid visitor and the host community.

Research into volunteer tourism has largely focused on the travelling participants, with less attention given to measuring the outcomes and long-term impacts of volunteer-based projects on host communities. Studies that have considered the impacts of voluntourism on host communities have had mixed findings, highlighting both the potential benefits but also the costs of this increasingly popular form of travel. Much of the research conducted has had significant limitations, such as failing to include the input of the host community (Fee & Mdee, 2011; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012; Lupoli & Morse, 2015).

Voluntourism is now the fastest growing market in the tourism industry (Lupoli, 2014; Lupoli, Morse, Bailey, & Schelhas, 2014) and it is essential we consider it critically to ascertain which voluntourism models are contributing to an outmoded north-south approach to development (the 'undeveloped' global south supposedly needing the aid and advice of the 'developed' global north), and which are designed to support the capacity of local organisations.

This paper will argue that with the recent publication of the *Towards shared international standards for community development practice* document (IACD, 2018) the time is right for a renewed and focused attempt to measure the impacts of volunteering and voluntourism on community development. By developing standards and indicators for good volunteering practice which closely align to *Towards shared international standards for community development practice* (TSISCDP), we will be in a better position to establish whether there is a place for short-term volunteering and voluntourism in community development.



Young people pay to volunteer for a minimum of a week at this elephant rescue operation in Northern Thailand. Volunteer activities are focused around feeding the elephants and improving the site. Volunteers are well supervised, educated on the wider issues and encouraged to become ambassadors for elephant welfare when they return home.



Building houses remains a common voluntourism activity, with wide variations in approach depending on the organisation. Here, volunteers in Cambodia rebuild a family home alongside local builders, with materials largely funded by the volunteers.

## Time to question voluntourism

Critics of voluntourism point out that it often focuses on a single project or issue without consideration of the interconnectedness of development issues and their underlying causes (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018). Voluntourism is often organised by tourist operations that may not be equipped to set up sustainable community-development projects (Birrell, 2010). Participants believe themselves to be helping but may contribute to a system that neglects the real needs of a community, particularly when volunteer needs are prioritised (Lupoli, 2013). Their presence can contribute to job creation but can also drive up unemployment in the long run, and may disrupt the local economy if its focus shifts to attracting volunteer tourists (Loiseau et al., 2016).

The quality of work done by voluntourists is variable, sometimes being of a high standard but at times needing to be redone by locals after the volunteer tourists have left. In a few documented cases work is redone unnecessarily because a dependency has been created on the volunteers, and constant work for volunteers is needed for the community to continue to receive the economic benefits they bring (Lupoli, 2013). Examples of this dependency and the “dark side of volunteer tourism” (MacKinnon, 2009, p. 1) include practices such as remuddying walls of community buildings, ready for the next round of volunteers, after the volunteer painters have returned home, or placing children in orphanages to meet voluntourism demand.

As with other types of tourism, voluntourism that might have a neutral or even beneficial impact when done on a small scale can have a range of unintended consequences when the number of people involved becomes too high. These numbers put stress on scarce resources such as drinkable water, food and energy. There is a tipping point at which the constant presence of volunteers from large-scale voluntourism operations can negatively affect local customs and values, can introduce antisocial or destructive habits, and can impact sacred places and natural environments (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018).

Young people have a variety of motivations to engage in this type of alternative tourism. A few studies highlight the self-serving agendas of some volunteer tourists, especially around personal ego enhancement and a need for recognition (Mustonen, 2007; Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018), but oftentimes this volunteering stems from a genuine desire to contribute to a community. While ostensibly well intended, this has led to marketing strategies that sell the idea of poor people in undeveloped countries needing the personal help of those in developed countries (Fee & Mdee, 2011). They may need support from developed countries in the form of collective solidarity and changes to practices at home and abroad, but the assumption of personal help from volunteers being beneficial to host communities buys into the north-south development model that, while outmoded in community-development practice, seems to remain widespread in developed countries outside of community-development circles. I have witnessed surprise and anger on the part of young people looking to engage in voluntourism when they find out they need to pay for the opportunity, which does not fit with their understanding that they are the ones providing the service. Communities often

reinforce this idea through shows of gratitude that a well-meaning volunteer is unlikely to question.

## **The 'win-win' theory of voluntourism. Who is really benefiting?**

There is still strong support for the idea that voluntourism can potentially benefit both parties (Fee & Mdee, 2011). Corti et al. (2010), Wearing (2001) and Proyrungroj (2017) maintain that short-term volunteer placements in a different community can contribute to a shift in the volunteer's understanding, growing their world view and leading to much more substantial future contributions on their part. While volunteering, including voluntourism, may well facilitate learning on the part of the participant, little research has been done to measure this learning potential, and it can also lead to greater intolerance, ethnocentrism and feelings of superiority, and can further imbed colonialistic ideas of 'us' and 'them' (Hammersley, 2014).

Voluntourism programmes that do not adhere to good development practice are likely to solidify outdated north-south concepts (Comhlámh & VOSESA, 2013), and while there may be some benefit to the volunteer, projects are at best of neutral value to the host community. If the main benefit is personal growth on the part of the volunteer, then we need to move beyond thinking in terms of the giver and receiver categories of north-south development. Even when the focus is on gaining a mutual sense of global citizenship and fostering understandings between people from different cultures, the benefit is more likely to be greater for the developed country (Haddock & Devereux, 2015). Northern governments have been criticised for exporting the problems they are facing with youth unemployment or, more recently, with youth mental health (Comhlámh & VOSESA, 2013). Once we have acknowledged who really benefits from these exchanges we may at least come to the table with more open and honest agendas.

## **The end of voluntourism?**

Despite the widespread criticism of current voluntourism practices, there is still a strong case to be made for the importance of volunteering. The 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been said to be only achievable "with the active engagement of volunteers", and volunteer groups are now recognised as stakeholders in the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which reviews the implementation of the 2015 development agenda (Haddock & Devereux, 2015). Volunteers have the potential to cause great harm, but also could play an important role in implementing the SDGs and "help to localize the new agenda by providing new spaces of interaction between governments and people for concrete and scalable actions" (UNGA, 2014).

Comparatively, volunteering can fill an important need by rounding out the academic education received by those studying community development. The International Association for Community Development has noted that high-level community-development education has become overly theoretical in many institutions. Training in the field is essential for anyone pursuing a career in development practice and is needed to balance in-class learning (IACD, 2018). Volunteer placements or in-field internships can be an effective way of starting to gain practical experience. However, it is important that this field experience is tested with critical practice theory and professional community-development supervision.

Voluntourism is a growing industry and seems unlikely to decline anytime soon, so the case has been made that the focus should be on developing it, and if necessary regulating it, to minimise harm to host communities (Fee & Mdee, 2011). Does acknowledging that the benefit is to the volunteer detract from the volunteer experience? Does admitting that the most important contribution a volunteer tourist makes is not their skills, but their money, mean they learn any less? Voluntourism experiences would need to be marketed differently, but volunteers would learn more in this way than from a programme that falsely congratulates them. To overcome the problems associated with voluntourism, the local perspective needs to be incorporated into any impact assessment (Lupoli & Morse, 2015). A focus on education for volunteers is also needed if the experience is to lead to meaningful relationship-building, understandings of global citizenship and good development outcomes.

## Measuring the impact of volunteering

A number of strategies and tools have been developed to examine and assess volunteer impact, but there are currently few that do this successfully (Lupoli & Morse, 2015). Tools that exist have many strengths but have not been widely adopted – the measures they use vary greatly, and they can be difficult to apply for people who are not specialists in the field (Independent Sector & UN Volunteers, 2001). Such tools include True Impact's *Volunteerism return on investment tracker* (2018); *Measuring the difference volunteers make*, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1997); and *Measuring volunteering: A practical toolkit*, published by United Nations Volunteers and Independent Sector (2001).

Some tools, such as the Compass of Sustainability developed by the Sustainability Accelerator Network, consider community sustainability and can be applied to voluntourism, but many attempts to measure volunteering gloss over the impact on host communities, are largely anecdotal, or try to consider impact without including the voices of the host community (Benson & Wearing, 2012; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012; Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018).

Tools such as True Impact's Volunteerism Return on Investment Tracker will not be considered adequate by many community-development practitioners as the measures used do not align with what is now considered

by the International Association for Community Development to be best practice for community development. *Measuring volunteering: A practical toolkit* aligns more closely to good development practice, but it is highly technical and may not be accessible enough to be of practical use to volunteer-using organisations.

Research does, however, indicate that there is interest among some volunteer tourism organisations in properly measuring the impact of their programmes on host communities (Lupoli, 2015). They just need to be provided with the right tools and incentives to do this. The recent publication of *TS/SCDP* indicates that such a tool should soon be developed.



Volunteer interns in Ningbo, China, work with children of all ages to encourage environmentally sustainable behaviours. Children enjoyed the interaction, energy and language opportunities of engaging with volunteers; however, supervision, training and reviews of the overall effectiveness of the programme are lacking.

## Towards Shared International Standards for Community Development Practice

The criticism around voluntourism has surfaced in a multidisciplinary field with wide-ranging understandings of community-development practice. Without a common understanding of best practice it was difficult to measure the impact of volunteering and to know what indicators to use to monitor or regulate it.

Community development has now been defined by the International Association for Community Development as “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings” (IACD, 2018, p. 13).

This definition builds on past efforts to come to a common understanding of community development and is already widely implemented (IACD, 2018, p. 11). IACD members collaborated to produce it along with *TS/SCDP* so that all stakeholders involved in community development – communities, practitioners, trainers, employers, funders, policy advisers and others – could have a joint understanding of what was meant by the term ‘community development’ (IACD, 2018). The standards were adopted in 2018 after widespread consultation and refinement, and recognise eight common themes across the practice of effective community development. These are:

- Putting values into practice
- Engaging with communities
- Ensuring participatory planning
- Organising for change
- Learning for change
- Promoting diversity and inclusion



- Building leadership and infrastructure
- Developing and improving policy and practice

(IACD, 2018, p. 15)

Now that there is an international standard for community-development practice it is possible to begin applying this to volunteering. An instant shift away from the negative aspects of voluntourism is not possible, but it at least the standards provide a starting point for discussion of what should be measured, and indicators to align with. At a minimum these standards could be applied by voluntourism organisations or individuals to develop reflective self-assessment of their impact. They could also facilitate improved analysis of volunteer contributions and make possible the creation of an international accreditation and certification system for voluntourism organisations.

## Developing an accreditation system for voluntourism organisations

The themes and much of the content outlined in *TSISCDP* could be directly used in future accreditation standards for voluntourism organisations or projects. The second theme of the standards, for example, is around engaging with communities: whether using volunteers, volunteer tourists, paid or unpaid development practitioners, one of the things that a successful community-development project should be able to demonstrate is that the organisation and people involved “understand the social, political, economic, cultural and environmental factors impacting on local communities, particularly marginalised groups” (IACD, 2018, p. 19). The standards also provide a basis for what values should underpin the development projects led by voluntourism organisations.

An accreditation system and appropriate indicators would need to be developed with input from volunteer tourism organisations, as well as community-development practitioners, in order to reach some common priorities. Lupoli and Morse (2015) outline ways in which indicators could be jointly developed, including online questionnaires and exploratory workshops. A co-design process with both stakeholder groups could be run by the IACD or any of its member organisations to jointly develop indicators that fit within the *TSISCDP* recommendations. In their research to determine the effectiveness of the Compass of Sustainability for this purpose, Lupoli & Morse (2015) found that there is interest from volunteer organisations in this type of collaboration. While not a panacea in itself, it would allow for effective leadership and direction for the volunteering community (Haddock & Devereux, 2015).

There are a number of in-country standards for volunteering that could feed into this. *Best practice guidelines for volunteer-involving organisations*, developed by Volunteering New Zealand (2015), has provided some useful tools for improving the effectiveness of local organisations. *National standards for involving volunteers in not-for-profit organisations* was developed by Volunteering Australia (2001), as volunteers made up more than 50 per cent



of the not-for-profit sector workforce. When combined with the IACD's *TSISCDP*, these could provide a good starting point for volunteering standards that could be adopted internationally.

Practitioners stress the importance of the role of managers of international volunteering organisations in instigating a shift towards this type of good development practice (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018). Managers of volunteering projects need to be aware of these standards, and their organisations's activities need to be measured against them. If volunteers are carefully matched to community-development projects then they will be more likely to have the required skills for the activities they undertake. Skills matching is hugely important, as the myth that somehow volunteers can make a positive difference irrespective of their skills is considered one of the most problematic and dominant aspects of voluntourism (Fee & Mdee, 2011).

Volunteers will need closer management and critical supervision, with more resources put into volunteer education alongside their on-the-ground contributions. The role of the supervisor and manager is often not very visible but is crucial (Volunteering New Zealand, 2015). Improved supervision requirements would change the ratio of volunteers to supervisors required, which could limit numbers of volunteer positions available with certified organisations.

If the number of voluntourism opportunities with accredited organisations becomes limited, possibly a renewed north-north volunteering approach is needed. Young people want to be engaged, they want to learn, and to feel they are contributing, which are all experiences that are possible in one's home country. If opportunities were more available for young people in developed countries to engage within their own communities, then some of their needs could be fulfilled without seeking a north-south voluntourism experience.

## Conclusion

Measurement of the true impact of voluntourism on host countries has been limited and has shown mixed results, not least due to different understandings of good community development. With the recent publication *TSISCDP*, the time is right for a renewed and focused attempt to measure the impacts of voluntourism on community development. Some volunteer tourism organisations are already interested in having this understanding and in developing standard measures for good practice that can be applied to their volunteering projects.

Developing standards for voluntourism that fit within the IACD understanding of community development could enable international accreditation and certification processes of volunteering organisations. The



A small number of volunteers shadow staff of this livelihood programme in Samoa. Volunteers are well supervised and contribute to development projects that are monitored by a local non-governmental organisation Women in Business Development Inc, in partnership with Oxfam.

*TS/SCDP* standards have provided a starting point for further discussions; given the continued growth of the multi-billion dollar voluntourism industry, it seems necessary that these standards are now applied to it, and that a framework for an accreditation system is developed. This would be a beneficial collaborative undertaking, as short-term volunteering can either support or completely undermine what community-development practitioners are working to achieve.

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Eleanor has a background in community development and project management in Asia and the Pacific. Working for Amnesty International as a Project Specialist and Frontline Campaign Coordinator, Eleanor developed a passion for human rights and supporting vulnerable communities. She has a Master of Arts in Development Studies, is on the board of ECPAT Child Alert, co-convenes the Green Party's National Fundraising and Marketing Committee, and runs a business that offers team building for corporate groups and non-profits. She currently works with the Aotearoa Youth Leadership Institute through which she led a delegation to the United Nations Environment Assembly, and works with Beyond Profit Aotearoa as a consultant and Senior Partner.

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This publication may be cited as: Haigh, D. (2018). Poverty in New Zealand, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 4(2), 102–115.

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

An ePress publication

[epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz)  
[www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/](http://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/)

Unitec Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

# Poverty in New Zealand

DAVID HAIGH

## Abstract

Poverty is an important socio-political issue in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Children's Commissioner's Child Poverty Monitor has established the following measures of poverty: material hardship (households that go without things they need), and income poverty (where household income is less than 60% of the current median income). It was also identified that households in extreme poverty (including 80,000 children) are experiencing both material hardship and income poverty. Various policy proposals are made to government to relieve poverty in both the short and long term. Short-term measures will not involve high cost and include greater child-support payments to sole parents who are receiving a benefit. Long-term measures involve increased child-related benefits and greater commitment by government to social housing and continuing free healthcare. This paper also recognises the importance of a cultural shift in the Department of Work and Income in relation to staff treatment of benefit applicants.

## Introduction

Poverty has become a socio-political problem in Aotearoa New Zealand. Over recent years, governments have neglected the rapid growth in poverty. This has been based on a political belief that getting a job will relieve poverty. This belief has been countered by others who show that getting a low-paid job is no panacea for living on a low-paid benefit. Some politicians actually deny that poverty exists in this country. Leader of the ACT party, Jamie Whyte in 2016 stated that there was no poverty in New Zealand because there were no slums. In an attempt to define poverty, he seemed to move towards the Third World indicator of abject poverty rather than considering the face of poverty in this country. However, his argument does raise the important question about an agreed approach to measuring and understanding poverty. In New Zealand, poverty is seen as relative, whereby those suffering deprivation are often struggling to feed their children, living in insecure circumstances and unable to

enjoy a satisfying social life. As a result, family members' health suffers and children fail to achieve a sound level of education.

This research is an attempt to look at ways of measuring poverty and the best ways of reducing and eliminating poverty in this country. It considers three key questions:

- What are the key indicators of poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand?
- What are the evidence-based actions, policies and programmes that could reduce or eliminate poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand?
- What other innovative ideas could be worth exploring?

The New Zealand Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty (EAG) (2012) explained the reality of poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand in this way:

Child poverty involves material deprivation and hardship. It means, for instance, a much higher chance of having insufficient nutritious food, going to school hungry, wearing worn-out shoes or going barefoot, having inadequate clothing, living in a cold, damp house and sleeping in a shared bed. It often means missing out on activities that most New Zealanders take for granted, like playing sport and having a birthday party. It can also mean much narrower horizons – such as rarely travelling far from home. For instance, many children in low-income families in the Hutt Valley and in Porirua have never been the short distance to Wellington city (*The Dominion Post*, 27-28 October, 2012). A major reason is because their families cannot afford the very modest transport costs. This is the harsh reality for many of our children (p. 1).

The advisory group goes on to point to the fact that child poverty carries economic costs. The costs start with the children themselves and then move on to the wider society. Initially, these include children going hungry and living in cold, damp housing. Being socially excluded results in poor school achievements. In the longer-term, child poverty correlates with unemployment, poor physical and mental health, and higher rates of criminality. The report states that these economic cost are \$6-8 billion per year and it "...damages the nation's long term prosperity" (EAG, 2012, p. vi).

A recent article in the *New Zealand Herald* (Leahy, 2018) said that the 'working poor' are frequently living in motels as a response to homelessness and that four out of ten families living in poverty are working poor. In the same article, the Salvation Army is quoted as saying that there was an increasing number of families seeking food parcel assistance in 2017 and that 60% of those had never sought help before.

As well as the Salvation Army, a number of other community coordinating and advocacy organisations have been consistent in their claims, backed by data, that Aotearoa New Zealand faces a major socio-economic issue of poverty that is accelerating. The Child Poverty Action Group has, over a number of years, spoken out, researched and disseminated information on child poverty and its impacts. It argues that "290,000 Kiwi kids live below the poverty line" (2018, para. 1), and that "Nutritious food for children is beyond the reach of many low-income families." (CPAG, 2011, para. 6)

Using various definitions, Boston and Chapple (2015) have calculated the number of children living in poverty and material hardship:

Income-poor children (60% of constant value 2012 median after-housing-costs income)	240,000
Children in families experiencing hardship	220,000
Children both income-poor and families experiencing hardship	110,000
Children not in hardship but income-poor	130,000

(Boston & Chapple, 2015, p. 40)

Auckland City Mission research (2014) into the lives of 100 families in poverty highlighted the following:

- Food is scarce for impoverished people and may involve a great deal of effort to obtain (p. 5).
- Housing may not provide a place of sanctuary and may compound the struggles of being poor (p. 5).
- Participants had to tell and re-tell their stories of despair to many different agents to 'prove' they were poor, truly desperate and deserving of help (p. 18).

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) (2017, para. 3) claims "...that there are around 682,500 people in poverty in this country or one in seven households." The NZCCSS goes on to explain what this means in reality. "Being in poverty means experiencing hunger and food insecurity, poor health outcomes, reduced life expectancy, debt, and unaffordable or bad housing." (para. 13)

In 2008, Catholic Bishops issued a statement of concern about levels of poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. They said, in *Poverty in an affluent society*:

When a section of our society is allowed to fall into poverty and hardship, everyone is at risk from symptoms of that economic violence. The diseases that thrive in conditions of poverty threaten the health of everyone; the violence that accompanies economic stress does not confine itself to the poorest suburbs; and the uncertainty of those living with insecure work is exposed in mental illness and suicide rates. (NZCBC, 2008, para. 14)

The poverty issue is acknowledged by government officials – a briefing to the Minister of Social Development in 2017 stated:

In light of the short and long-term costs of child poverty to individuals and communities and relatively flat trend lines in levels of child poverty and hardship, it is important to continue to make progress in this area. Alleviating hardship for children in the 'here-and-now' is an investment to improve life chances and child wellbeing in other domains, and reduces the potential harm and costs (including economic costs) to society. Within



this multi-pronged approach, options could be explored to review the adequacy of the existing transfer payments, notably in the case of families with children. (New Zealand Government, 2017, p. 28)

The measurement of child poverty is used as a means of measuring poverty in the general population. Research and analysis of child poverty has been carried out through organisations like Child Poverty Action and the work of the Children's Commission.

## Measuring levels of poverty

Recently, government introduced the Child Poverty Reduction Bill, which establishes criteria for measuring poverty including low income (less than 50% of median household income), through to those who experience material hardship and persistent poverty. The Minister for Social Development has responsibility to produce a strategy that would improve the wellbeing of children and reduce poverty. In addition, the minister is required to set long-term (ten-year) and intermediate (three-year) targets for reducing poverty.

In determining appropriate measures, the minister should consider the New Zealand Children's Commission's EAG work in this area, which proposes this definition of child poverty:

Children living in poverty are those who experience deprivation of the material resources and income that is required for them to develop and thrive, leaving such children unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential and participate as equal members of New Zealand society. (EAG, 2012, p. 2)

This definition links poverty to both inadequate material resources and low income. It also relates to the rights of children. In addition, the report reflected on the relevant 1972 objective proposed by the Royal Commission on Social Security. This objective for social wellbeing is "to ensure that everyone is able to enjoy a standard of living much like the rest of the community, and thus be able to feel a sense of participation in and belonging to the community (p. 65)" (EAG, 2012, p. 4). This objective suggests an egalitarian society where there was little difference between groups in society in terms of income and wealth. The intervening decades have, however, resulted in grave disparities of income and wealth. The following graph shows these changes from the 1990s to 2011. The sudden change in the 1990s is a result of benefit reductions coupled with limitations on trade unions to negotiate on behalf of members under the Employment Contracts Act, and reduced working conditions. Rashbrooke (2014) says, "Weaker bargaining power for many low-paid workers is the flipside of greater power for company managers" (p. 7).

Statistics New Zealand explained disparities in wealth: "Household wealth in New Zealand was concentrated in the top 20% of New Zealand households, which held about 70% of total household net worth" (Statistics NZ, 2016, para. 3). The following graphs demonstrate the income and wealth disparities.

According to research carried out by Oxfam New Zealand, "...two New Zealand men own more wealth than the poorest 30% of the adult population" (Oxfam NZ, 2017, para. 1). In addition, Rashbrooke (2014) states that "...the wealthiest 1 per cent of the adult population alone [in New Zealand] own 18 per cent of the total wealth" (p. 46).

The New Zealand Children's Commissioner's Child Poverty Monitor (2017) considers two key measures of poverty:

- a) Material Hardship – within this category are two measures:
  - Lesser Hardship: 135,000 NZ children (12%) live in households that go without seven or more things they need (see appendix).
  - Greater Hardship: 70,000 NZ children (6%) live in households that go without nine or more things they need.
- b) Poverty – within this category are two measures:
  - Income Poverty: 290,000 NZ children (27%) with household income less than 60% of the median contemporary income.
  - Severe Poverty: 80,000 NZ children (7%) are in low-income households and are also experiencing material hardship.

Boston (2013) explained that the gap between the rich and poor in New Zealand increased markedly in the early 1990s when benefit payments to individuals were markedly reduced together with pressures on wage income (p. 5). Since that period, poverty rates have stayed much the same for ten years and then reduced, only to rise again in 2008. Figure 1 shows these changes.

Different poverty measures are used internationally. For example, the European Union uses 60% of the median household equivalent disposal income and the OECD uses the 50% measure (Stephens, 2013). The term equivalent is used to adjust income for families of different size. However, Stephens, while recognising these two measures (60% and 50%), also notes that more data is needed to identify the geographic distribution of poverty, "...showing which areas have high incidence of unemployment, sole parenting, low household income etc" (p. 21). Stephens also notes that national averages may not pick up on the family types most affected. He states:

Family groups with a high incidence of poverty tend to be sole parents, those with low or no labour force participation, Māori and Pasifika families with children, especially larger families, those renting or paying mortgages and younger households. (p. 21)

In spite of their limitations, it is suggested that both the 50% and 60% measures of income are used to monitor poverty together with the measures of hardship as used in the New Zealand Children's Commission's Child Poverty Monitor.

## Ways of reducing and eliminating poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand

This section looks at ways government and the community can work together to reduce and eventually eliminate poverty. The key responsibility lies with the state because of its access to resources (funds, organisations and facilities) and its responsibilities to service the whole of society. It is recognised that government has recently increased incomes of many people through various measures. These include:

- Expanding Working for Families financial support
- Introducing Best Start payments for newborn babies
- Extending parental leave to 22 weeks
- Providing Winter Energy Payments for people on benefits and superannuation
- Increasing the Accommodation Supplement

The EAG is the most comprehensive and evidenced-based analysis of child poverty and suggests four areas for policy change to reduce poverty:

1. Short-term measures to deal with hardship
2. More long-term measures that require greater coordination of government agencies together with local government and the community sector
3. Recognition of the complexity of the problem and that merely increasing benefit rates and wages will not be sufficient
4. The need for a government strategy to focus on the special needs of children

According to the EAG, the following priorities are recommended for immediate attention at relatively low cost. They are a series of practical, cost-effective and relatively inexpensive measures that will mitigate some of the worst consequences of child poverty. Most of these measures can be implemented quickly and will make a difference to the lives of many children. Their impact on child poverty rates, however, is likely to be only modest:

1. Pass on child support payments to sole parents who are on a state-provided benefit
2. (Recommendation 13)
3. Establish a Warrant of Fitness for all rental housing (both social and private sector)
4. (Recommendation 20)
5. Support a public-private partnership micro-financing model with the banking sector and community groups with the aim of providing modest low-interest and zero-interest loans as a mechanism to help low-

income families access affordable credit and effectively manage debt (Recommendation 48)

6. Implement a collaborative food-in-schools programme (Recommendation 60)
7. Support young people who are pregnant and/or parenting to remain engaged in education (Recommendation 63)
8. Support effective delivery of local services through community hubs. (p. vii)

The following are also recommended by EAG:

1. “Commission an independent and comprehensive review of all child-related benefit rates and relativities with a prime goal to reduce child poverty” (p. 36)
2. Create a new universal income-support payment for families with dependent children (called the Child Payment) to replace a number of existing benefits and tax credits
3. Increase the number of social houses by a minimum of 2000 units per year until 2020
4. Continue to implement free primary healthcare visits for all children
5. Local government to ensure their parks and other facilities are child-friendly and available and accessible to all children

Boston (2013, p. 7) suggests that overseas strategies to reduce child poverty incorporate a mix of policies:

1. Ambitious medium- to long-term reduction targets
2. Increased cash transfers to families who are working and non-working
3. Incentives to encourage sole parents back to work while improving working hours flexibility
4. Increased investment to child support, e.g. childcare, education, longer maternity leave, support for schools in poor areas and increased support for young mothers

The preference for unconditional cash assistance also comes from the quality analysis by Berentson-Shaw and Morgan (2017) who propose two options for relieving poverty:

1. One-year universal basic income of \$200 per week for every child that enters a family
2. Three-year basic income of \$200 per week for every child under three years

Berentson-Shaw and Morgan argue that all the international evidence (pp. 143-148) indicates that the best way to ensure that children thrive is to provide

their families with sufficient income so that they can make their own choices.

## Other innovative proposals

The following are suggestions for policy change:

### A) CULTURAL SHIFT AT WORK AND INCOME

St John (2012) attributes negative attitudes to people receiving benefits to "...ingrained prejudice and fear of the stereotype of people on welfare benefits, who are presented as 'a group that breed for money' and the solution to child poverty in New Zealand has been seen as simply to 'get a job'" (p. 16). It is clear that, based on the experiences of advocacy organisations like Auckland Action Against Poverty (AAP), there needs to be a shift in organisational culture at Work and Income. For example, people applying to receive national superannuation are treated better at a Work and Income office than people applying for benefits to relieve hardship. Superannuants (who receive a universal benefit) are treated with courtesy and assisted through the application process. The same cannot be said for other beneficiaries. Over the past five years, AAP has assisted and advocated for 6000 individuals who have not been treated well by Work and Income officers. A new organisational culture is needed based on compassion, courtesy, and ensuring that clients are provided with full information on their entitlements and rights including appeal rights. A change-management process to improve the culture of Work and Income management and staff is overdue. Also, appointing staff as skilled caseworkers for individual clients might also assist in moderating negative attitudes to beneficiaries. Lunt, O'Brien and Simpson (2008) state that "Active welfare requires case managers to have a much more sustained relationship with applicants and with the wider labour market" (p. 148). It is pleasing to see that any decision to suspend a benefit will now be checked by a second officer. It is hoped that this review will include impact on children.

### B) ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Many people find the costs of basic health services too great. Regular dental treatment, glasses and hearing aids are beyond the financial resources of many families. Government needs to widen access to these services for low-income families. While market competition has reduced the price of glasses, the same is not true for dental treatment and hearing aids. Government should:

1. Support community organisations and health agencies providing cheap/free regular dental treatment and prevention for low income families
2. Through the power of bulk purchasing, reduce the costs of hearing aids
3. Ensure access to affordable after-hours medical and dental services

### C) ABATEMENT THRESHOLDS

In order to encourage people receiving benefits to move into regular employment, the abatement thresholds should be raised. At present a person receiving sole parent support can earn only \$100 per week before having the benefit reduced by 30 cents in the dollar. This figure should be increased substantially and costs of travel and child care taken into account.

### D) SOCIAL HOUSING

Affordable and healthy housing is fundamental to people's well-being. A lack of access to secure healthy housing will result in major physical and psychological health problems. It will have major impacts on children's education as families move around in search of accommodation. While priority will be for family homes, there is also need for housing for older people, papakaianga housing close to marae, housing for people with disabilities, emergency housing, as well as accommodation for the homeless (St John, 2012, p. 16).

A *New Zealand Herald* article has, as already stated, reported that the working poor are living in motels and that four out of ten families living in poverty are working poor, but in the same article, policy analyst Alan Johnson said, "There was an increase in government support, more jobs than ever before and wages have been rising – but rents have been rising faster." He went on to say that, "The only way to address this poverty was to tackle underlying issues in the housing market" (Leahy, 2018, paras. 9, 10).

### E) SCHOOL MEALS

The need for school meals (breakfast and/or lunch) is supported by the Children's Commissioner (2014), which has produced guidelines on establishing such programmes. It points out the benefits of feeding children at school: children are healthier and able to learn, and they and the wider community have a better understanding of nutrition. Organisations like KidsCan are active in this area and feed 32,000 children every week at school. Government support for meals in schools programmes would assist communities to reach more children.

## Inequality and poverty

While this paper focuses on the alleviation of poverty, it is important to acknowledge the context of inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) show that there are social and health impacts as inequality increases. Those worse off suffer both physical and psychological health problems. Rashbrooke (2014) comments that, "New Zealand's long-running survey ... shows that children from poor families are twice as likely to suffer heart disease as children from wealthy families" (p. 12). In addition, Rashbrooke picks up the Wilkinson and Pickett conclusion that, "...in less equal societies nearly everybody, not just the poor, is adversely affected" (p. 13).

An article in the British newspaper *The Guardian* (2018) points out that the basic premise of Wilkinson and Pickett "...is that inequality creates greater

social competition and divisions, which in turn foster increased social anxiety and higher stress, and thus greater incidence of mental illness, dissatisfaction and resentment. And that leads to coping strategies – drugs, alcohol, and [...] gambling – which themselves generate further stress and anxiety” (Anthony, 2018, para. 8).

It is clear that New Zealand has become an unequal society with the wealthiest 1% owning 20% of the country’s net worth and the top 6% owning 60%. (Rashbrooke, 2014, p. 47) In terms of income, the richest 1% annual income has risen rapidly since the 1980s, whereas the poorest 10% has stayed constant over the decades (p. 56).

Piketty (2014) has convincingly argued that the economic and political reason that inequality has risen rapidly in recent decades is due to the adoption of neoliberal policies. These policies have favoured the wealthy in the following way: The return on capital ( $r$ ) (interest, dividends, profits, property) exceeds the rate of economic growth ( $g$ ) from which income is derived. In peacetime it does this continuously year by year. This concept is reduced to the formula  $r > g$ . If the rate of return is on average 5-10%, it far exceeds economic growth of say 2-3% and wage rises of around 1%. Piketty goes on to state that the wealthiest obtain the highest rate of return due to having fortunes that can be managed in a way to take advantage of a system that favours them. This wealth will also give them political power.

## Conclusions

It is clear from evidence-based analyses of programmes and policies that the best way to reduce poverty in the most effective and efficient way is to increase unconditional weekly payments to those on low incomes, whether waged or receiving a benefit. In addition, greater emphasis needs to be given to the building of social housing, coupled with increased provisions of health services such as free dental treatment, hearing aids and glasses for all children and those on low incomes.

While the focus of this paper has been about poverty reduction, it is useful to make special mention about child poverty and support for those caring for children. Calling for a new focus, St John (2012) says:

...it would start with asking what a woman with young children would need to thrive; it would admit that she is working; it would wrap her around with support and would stop tying social provision to narrow concepts of paid work. Importantly, it would not victimise and exclude some poor children from poverty alleviation measures, but it would place the child at the centre of a paradigm to determine how best that child could flourish. (p. 17)

This paper attempts to clarify what should be done to relieve poverty in the population in Aotearoa New Zealand. How this will be achieved through the political system, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

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## Appendix

The complete list of things that children need (Duncanson et al., 2017, table 2):

### CHILD-SPECIFIC ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE NEW ZEALAND HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SURVEY, 2016

<b>Ownership or participation</b> <i>(have/do, don't have/do and enforced lack):</i>
Two pairs of good shoes for each child*
Two sets of warm winter clothes for each child*
Waterproof coat for each child*
All the uniform required by the school
A separate bed for each child*
Fresh fruit and vegetables daily*
Meal with meat, fish or chicken (or vegetarian equivalent) at least each second day*
A range of books at home suitable for their age
A suitable place at home to do school homework
Friends around to play and eat from time to time
Friends around for a birthday party
Good access at home to a computer and internet for homework*
Mobile phone if aged 11+
<b>Economising</b> (not at all, a little, a lot) – to keep down costs to help in paying for (other) basic items (not just to be thrifty or to save for a trip or other non-essential). Economising a lot is taken as a deprivation in this report
Postponed visits to doctor
Postponed visits to dentist
Unable to pay for school trips/events for each child*
Had to limit children's involvement in sport*
Children had to go without music, dance, kapa haka, art, swimming or other special interest lessons*
Children continued wearing worn-out/wrong-size clothes and shoes*
Made do with very limited space to study or play*

\*Included in composite measure of twelve selected child-specific and six child-relevant household items (Perry, 2017)

David Haigh has an MA in sociology and diplomas in public health, community work and professional ethics. He has worked as a community worker for local authorities, as a policy analyst and leader of a regional council team involved in heritage and social planning. He has been self-employed, carrying out social-policy research for local authorities, NGOs and iwi. He is a lecturer at Unitec in the Department of Social Practice and an external examiner for the Planning Department at the University of Auckland. He has sat on two ethics committees dealing with social and health research. He is chair of the Newmarket Arts Trust. David received the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for his services to the community.

Conference report / Participation, power and progress:  
Community development towards 2030 – our analysis,  
our actions, World Community Development Conference,  
Maynooth, Ireland, June 25–27, 2018

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This publication may be cited as: Stansfield, J. (2018).  
Participation, power and progress: Community development  
towards 2030 – our analysis, our actions, World Community  
Development Conference, Maynooth, Ireland, June 25-  
27, 2018, *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community  
Development*, 4(2), 116–121.

Founded at Unitec Institute of Technology in 2015

An ePress publication

[epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz)  
[www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/](http://www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/)

Unitec Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92025, Victoria Street West  
Auckland 1142  
New Zealand

# Conference report

## Participation, power and progress: Community development towards 2030 – our analysis, our actions

### World Community Development Conference, Maynooth, Ireland, June 25-27, 2018

JOHN M. STANSFIELD

The conference was a collaboration between Community Work Ireland, CWI, the International Association for Community Development, IACD, and the Department of Social Studies Maynooth University (<http://www.wcdc2018.ie>). The setting was the spectacular Maynooth University campus set in historic Maynooth town, Ireland's only university town, in County Kildare.

The conference organisers had done a splendid job of assembling participants from around the world, and more than 300 of us gathered for the opening plenary which was introduced in song. Music, both traditional and modern, was a uniting theme throughout the conference, in the sessions and well into the night. Anastasia Crickley, my fellow IACD VP and chair of CWI, welcomed delegates to the conference before handing over to former Irish Prime Minister Mary Robinson, who addressed the agenda for sustainable development being carried out by her own Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice.

In keeping with the international reach of the conference, an international panel presented perspectives from across the globe. This included Anita Paul, whom readers may have met at the IACD conference in Auckland 2017, who updated delegates about the work and challenges of the pan-Himalayan grassroots development foundation in India. Peter Westoby, allegedly from Australia, but to look at his passport from most of the world, brought a very human-in-values-centred approach to the discussion. My colleague from

Nigeria, Mohammad Bello Shito, who has done tremendous work in raising the profile of IACD and promoting community development research and training in Africa, was, along with Ronnie Fay of Ireland, a discussant for the panel.

The issues of human rights and social justice were very strongly presented throughout the conference; in particular the plight of the Rohingya refugees was presented in a very powerful exhibition launched at the university library. Contemporary issues in the sphere of human rights and social justice were also addressed with sessions looking at the rise of right-wing populism, or malignant populism as Peter Westoby would have it, as well as climate justice and the plight of the Irish Travellers community.

As well as paper presentations there was a good range of posters from around the world and some very useful workshops. I attended a workshop on the 'Dilemmas Café', a method of exploring ethical and political challenges in community development, and I certainly hope to work it into my teaching next year. I also participated in a very powerful workshop utilising John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, which I will certainly be adding to my toolbox.

I had the opportunity to present my own work under the title 'Biting the Hand that Feeds Us', a fresh look at grant-making and grant-seeker relationships, and to receive some very useful feedback from my peers around the world. Fellow Kiwi Christy Trewartha presented work from her PhD on measuring community mobilisation. And my energetic colleague Holly Scheib presented her work on capacity building in research from southern Somalia.

Born as I was in the 1950s, the troubles in Northern Ireland were an issue of great interest for me as a young man. Like many of my generation I was enthralled by the young firebrand Irish politician Bernadette Devlin, now McAliskey, and it was an absolute thrill to hear her address the conference. Bernadette, shot 14 times for her trouble, is an extraordinarily powerful orator who held the conference in her hands as she so very gently but firmly declared, "in an age of inequality, if you're going to talk about democracy, then you must talk about democratising wealth". It was a fabulous and well timed challenge to community development and the broader social services.

Australian academic and writer Jim Ife, who will be known to many, made a powerful address posing not just the challenges of sustainability but the paths and the voices which must be heeded. He was joined by Francisco Cali Tzay, a global Indigenous peoples leader from Guatemala. Francisco did a terrific job of joining up Indigenous struggles from around the world and explaining how these had influenced both the thinking and practice of Indigenous activism. He included references to Indigenous groups from New Zealand, Australia and the Americas.

Conferences are of course more than learning sessions, workshops and posters – they are an opportunity to engage with our colleagues from around the world. It was a great pleasure for me to reunite with fellow executive members from the IACD, with former contributors to this journal, and with participants in the 2017 IACD conference held in Auckland, such as James Calvin. There were also some fabulous young people at the conference, a particularly strong delegation from Hong Kong and several young PhD students from around the world including a lone but by no means quiet delegate from Mongolia.

Well it was Ireland – the hospitality was fabulous, and the singing went on

all night. Hats off to the organising committee of a very successful conference – they have certainly set a standard. Next year's IACD conference will be held in Dundee, Scotland: see the advertisement later in this journal.













# Upcoming conferences and events



## PEOPLE, PLACE AND POWER

24-26 June 2019  
Dundee, Scotland

# SAVE the DATE

The **2019 World Community Development Conference** is to be held in the **City of Dundee, Scotland** in an exciting collaboration between the International Association for Community Development, Dundee City Council and the University of Dundee. We are delighted to host this conference to bring practitioners, academics and students together from all parts of the globe.

For over a decade Dundee City Council provided administrative and professional assistance to IACD and the city has a long and proud tradition of supporting community development.

Registration desk will open on Sunday, 23 June 2019 with an International Reception. The conference will take place **24 to 26 June 2019** with an optional practice exchange on 27 and 28 June 2019.

The conference venue is the **Dalhousie Building** at the heart of the **University of Dundee's campus**.

The themes **"People", "Place" and "Power"** have been chosen to reflect the contemporary challenges facing society and to provide the context within which community development practitioners, activists and academics can explore their responses to these issues.

The themes have particular relevance in the City of Dundee where polymath Patrick Geddes founded the modern town planning movement and the global sustainable development movement. Patrick Geddes was intrinsically involved in thinking about the relationship between people, place and power.

Today's world may be very different, but the challenges of creating sustainable communities and delivering a quality of life which is based on social and environmental justice are even more relevant now than they were 150 years ago.

[www.iacdglobal.org](http://www.iacdglobal.org)  
[info@iacdglobal.org](mailto:info@iacdglobal.org)  
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The Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba





*Join us for the*  
**Community Development Society's**  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration  
& Annual International Conference

**July 14-17, 2019**  
**Columbia, Missouri, USA**  
*Birthplace of CDS – University of Missouri*

**Events Include:**

- Honoring the past and charting new directions in community development
- Special celebrations as we come home to the CDS birthplace
- Inspiring plenaries, breakout sessions and more
- Mobile workshops that foster learning and exchange—heritage & agritourism, community resiliency, entrepreneurship, community arts, trails, energy sustainability & neighborhood development
- Professional networking and recognition
- Dedicated family activities
- In the midst of the historic, vibrant downtown and University of Missouri campus

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# Publishing in Whanake: submission guidelines

*Whanake* accepts submissions in the form of papers for peer review, opinion pieces, practice notes from the field, case studies, biographies, articles on emerging trends and research as well as reviews of books, plays, films, poems, songs and contemporary culture with a community development theme.

As an international journal, *Whanake* is using English as a standard language. Submissions will be published primarily in English.

Please note that submission is possible only by e-mail. All submissions should be in Microsoft Word format. All submissions should follow the APA style guide, 6th edition, for citations and referencing. A guide is available here: <http://libguides.unitec.ac.nz/apareferencing>

Contact: [epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz)

## FONT

Arial, 12 point

## TABLES

Send tables or figures in word or excel format

## IMAGES

Images should be sent separately in .jpg format with their file names as the relevant figure #, along with a separate Microsoft Word document that lists the figures and codes them back to the .jpg file. In the submission document write 'Insert Figure #'

## SUBMISSION LENGTH

Refereed papers:

3000 to 6000 words

Opinion pieces:

Provocations which challenge practice and/or theory

Practice reflections:

2000 to 4000 words

Practice notes:

500 to 600 words

Case studies and biographies:

1000 to 1500 words

Articles on emerging trends and research:

Up to two pages

Reviews (books, plays, films, poems, songs or contemporary culture):

One page or less

# Call for submissions

*Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development* invites submissions for the June 2019 issue (Volume 5, Issue 1). The deadline for submissions for refereed papers is 15 March 2019.

All submissions must adhere to the submission guidelines.  
Please send submissions and correspondence to [epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz).

# Call for guest editor/s

*Whanake* is seeking expressions of interest from community development professionals in editing future issues of the journal. To increase the scope and reach of its content and the community, *Whanake* is inviting the input of guest editors or co-editorships for one issue per year. Guest editor/s could work with in collaboration with the existing editors if this is desirable to the interested parties. NB: Copyediting, proofreading and layout is provide by the ePress team. Contact: [epress@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:epress@unitec.ac.nz).