



Conducting Impact Assessment of Foreign Aid Projects in the Community: A perspective from Vava'u, Tonga

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Aim of Research

- ▶ 1. To identify how local community members have perceived the impacts of foreign aid projects and how they have benefited from them
- ▶ 2. To determine how the local community members have benefited from the foreign aid projects
- ▶ 3. To identify alternatives of foreign aid projects for community development
- ▶ Case study: Two aid projects developed in Vava'u, Tonga

Aid Effectiveness

- ▶ Substantial accumulation of previous research in aid effectiveness (in particular on the macro level, including PICs)
 - ▶ E.g. Aid has failed the Pacific (Hughes, 2003).
- ▶ Complexity in assessing aid effectiveness
 - ▶ Aid is diverse
 - ▶ Who benefits from aid?
 - ▶ What is the measure of “success”, and does the aid have a long-term and wider impact?
 - ▶ Who assesses the effectiveness from what perspective?
- ▶ How do local community members benefit from aid projects and how do they perceive “aid”?

Aid Effectiveness

- ▶ Aid impact on local communities in the Pacific
 - ▶ Impact assessment is conducted but not always open to the public
- ▶ SWAp (A Sector-Wide approach) (Overton and Murray 2021)
 - ▶ Aid donor funds going to the respective government department to be spent on that sector (public sector, disaster relief, education, health, technical and vocational skills, etc)
 - ▶ Aid effectiveness in government sections have been observed (Wrighton 2010; Mountfort 2013; Pirnia 2016; Talagi 2017)
 - ▶ Does the 'success' reach to civil society?
- ▶ Little empirical evidence of the impact of aid policy and practice (Jakupec and Kelly 2016)
- ▶ The 2005 Paris Declaration aimed to improve aid effectiveness and grant “ownership” to the recipient country.

Study Area



Two case-study aid projects

- ▶ The waste management on Vava'u (J-PRISM)
 - ▶ Collaboration between the JICA and the government of Tongan to improve waste management in Vava'u
 - ▶ The open pit dumpsite Kalaka is located adjacent to the community of Okoa (case study site)

- ▶ The marine resource conservation (SMA) on Taunga Island
 - ▶ Collaboration among the JICA, the government of Tongan, and the community of Taunga to protect marine resources
 - ▶ Established the Special Management Area (SMA) (subsistence fishing only) and the Fish Habitat Reserve (FHR), an area fully protected as breeding sites

Methods

- ▶ Interview and observation in Okoa and Taunga in 2018
- ▶ Semi-structured open-ended interviews
- ▶ 25 and 20 interviews in each site, respectively

	Women	Men	15-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+	Total
Okoa	18 (57.1%)	7 (42.9%)	2	4	5	5	9	25
Taunga	9 (45%)	11 (55%)	2	5	6	3	6	20
Total	27	18	4	9	11	8	15	45

- ▶ Questions:
- ▶ Perception of the concept aid; awareness of aid projects that took place in their community and their background; evaluations on either J-PRISM or SMA projects; level of involvement in the respective project; potential future aid projects; and alternative to foreign aid

Findings

- ▶ The two community members are overall positive about the impact of the aid projects.
- ▶ In Ocoq, they were unhappy with the decision-making process regarding the dump site.
 - ▶ The waste collection project stopped me from burning my rubbish at home...it is much easier for me to dispose of all my wastes especially the bulky ones that are difficult to dispose of properly...clean home reduced the number of harmful insects like house flies and mosquitos and pests such as rats at home...I like the waste project a lot. (personal communication, June 18, 2018)
 - ▶ Tuesday is now like a community clean-up day. It is good to see people work together as a community to clean up not only their household but all parts of the community...Community spirit and cooperation is now becoming strong in our village. (personal communication, June 14, 2018).
 - ▶ It does not make sense to collect waste from our village and dispose of it at Kalaka. Kalaka is a part of our village and using it as a dumpsite is nothing but a huge problem for our people for a long time. Dumping waste at Kalaka is just like dumping the same waste outside our homes (personal communication, June 14, 2018)
 - ▶ I think it is very important for the donors and the government to involve us local people in the planning and implementing processes of any aid projects given to us in the future... I think we know our people and environment more than anyone else. (personal communication, June 14, 2018)

Findings

- ▶ In Taunga, they were happy with the positive outcomes regarding marine resources, but there have been challenges:
 - ▶ People can now easily see many different kinds of fishes schooled up on the beach... before the SMA project, it was seldom to see fish swimming close to the beach...I think this is a good sign the SMA telling us...that it slowly bringing fish back to our stock. (personal communication, June 22, 2018)
 - ▶ It is difficult to press charges on illegal fishermen because at the end of the day these people are our relatives or friends from neighbouring islands. We do not want to press charges because many people will end up in prison and it's not how we want it. (personal communication, June 23, 2018)

Findings

- ▶ The gap between community members and government sections regarding the necessity of foreign aid:
 - ▶ Foreign aid plays a significant role in the annual budget. It fulfils most of the MoH financial gaps.. (MoH official, personal communication, June 2018)
 - ▶ In the future, foreign aid will still be crucial to the MoF because the ministry's future development plans will heavily depend on it. (MoF official, personal communication, June 23, 2018)
 - ▶ I strongly believe that if foreign aid stops I can still manage to survive with my family. I see most of the aid projects have nothing to do with our individual daily lives...most aid projects do not give us a way to make our own life. (Taung, personal communication, June 2018).
 - ▶ I don't think we should heavily rely on foreign aid but should work harder for our own families and communities. ...In the agricultural sector, we can grow more food and cash crops like kava and vanilla...women can weave more mats and tapa. (Okoa, personal communication, June 2018).

Discussion

- ▶ The literature on aid has identified the lack of IA and the unclear benefit of aid projects on the community (Bell and Alttahir 2016).
- ▶ Some empirical studies have positively evaluated the implementation of the Paris Declaration principles into PICs within government sections.
- ▶ Employ a micro-approach to examine the sense of local ownership of foreign aid
- ▶ Local perspectives gained from IA may function as factual evidence to evaluate the overall effectiveness (not merely cost) of aid projects.
- ▶ Dose this aspect demonstrate the degree of implementation of the Paris Declaration principles?
- ▶ Local perspectives may be useful to identify how a future project can be improved.

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