

**MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT
ON NIUE ISLAND**

by

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B.A Johns Hopkins University 1998

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

The University of Montana

May 2003

Approved by:

Chairperson:

Dean, Graduate School:

Date:

Migration and Development on Niue Island

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Abstract

Niue, a small island nation of approximately 1,500 people and a former New Zealand colony, has experienced a mass exodus of people in the past 35 years. This exodus amounts to a “brain drain” because many of the most skilled, experienced and ambitious people left the island community. Emigration and New Zealand policies have left Niue economically dependent on money from overseas foreign assistance. Through personal observations as a Peace Corps volunteer with the Niue Forest Division, email surveys of Niuean residents and Niueans living abroad and a literature review, I explore effects of emigration on Niuean social and economic conditions, and opportunities and constraints to economic independence. Survey responses, my experiences during two years of work and residence, and other studies of Niue development and emigration suggest that residents leave the island in pursuit of better jobs, better education, and what they perceive will be a better way of life. Those returning to Niue tend to be retirees with leadership skills and experience, but also health concerns that may pose a burden on an already constrained economy. Emigration has exacerbated economic and social conditions for those who remain. Labor shortages leave Niueans with less time than in the past for co-operative community activities and recreation. Agriculture, specifically cultivation of taro, copra, and fruits, was the basis of the island’s economy in the past, but is now limited by a lack of available labor. Agriculture in Niue is also constrained by isolation from foreign markets, poor soil resources, limited surface water, a typhoon-prone climate and limited access to arable land held by émigrés in New Zealand. While tourism and fishing are also possible avenues for future economic development, they too have constraints including a lack of reliable transportation. The future of Niue will likely be either as an independent, but aid-dependent nation or as a re-incorporated entity under the sovereignty of New Zealand. Opportunities for autonomous economic livelihoods appear extremely unlikely.

Preface

Niue Island: “The area of the island is approximately the same as Baltimore City [where I was living], but the population is that of my freshmen dorm.” This is what I initially told people when I learned that Peace Corps was sending me to Niue Island in the South Pacific for two years as a technical forestry advisor. With a 2002 population of 1,750 (NZMFT 2002b) and 260km² of land area, Niue has one of the lowest population densities in the world (CIA 1999) (7.2 persons per square kilometer (GONS 2001a).

When I first received my Peace Corps assignment, I was working at an engineering firm north of Baltimore as a research assistant on a GIS project. It had been a year since I had graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a Bachelors of Arts in Environmental Earth Science. For the previous year I had worked two seasonal jobs: one as a teacher naturalist and one as a resource management intern. None of this background was related to forestry, so I was surprised when I was selected for the position of Technical Forestry Officer. I was told I was the most qualified in the unqualified applicant pool.

With six weeks to pack and get ready, I hustled to the library and onto the web to learn as much as I could concerning my soon to be home for two and a quarter years. I called a Forestry professor at Penn State University for guidance on what books to pack or study before leaving in six weeks. I was scared.

I have since discovered that Peace Corps recruits often lack expertise in the subject of their assignment. The placement desk in Washington DC places capable, if unqualified, liberal arts majors in resource management assignments because the supply of qualified applicants seldom meets the country demands. With a science background

and a mother who gardened as I was growing up, I was apparently competitive for a forestry position, in spite of my lack of a strong background in forestry. I think for most countries other than Niue my qualifications would have been adequate. Unfortunately, when Niue asked for a Forestry volunteer they were expecting someone with 20 years experience in forestry. A 1997 Pacific News article explains “The government...of Niue wants to replace highly-skilled foreign contract staff with volunteers, as part of a government cost cutting plan” (PACNEWS, 6 Aug 1997).

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Acknowledgements

It is impossible for me to even begin to illustrate my gratitude for the opportunity I was given to live and work on Niue Island. I would like to thank the United States Peace Corps especially the Peace Corps Tonga office for their support and the Niue government and the people of Niue for being so welcoming. I would especially like to thank my host family the Talagis in Lakepa, my village family the Puhekes in Tamakautoga, everyone in Tamakautoga for their warmth and caring, and especially my co-workers in the Niue Forestry Division and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Fakaau lahi ma Shiela Utalo, Colin Makani, Terry Mokoia, Pehalo Tukitoga, and Laonoa Gatua.

I would also like to thank all those people who read and responded to my email questions, my committee members Dr. Steve Siebert, Dr. Jill Belsky and Dr. Sarah Halvorson, and my parents Christopher and Corien Heyn. Lastly, for all his editing skills, patience, and caring I would like to thank Greg Peters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The diminishing population of Niue Island is the subject of many publications, but its effects on development are poorly understood. This paper discusses how migration issues facing Niue may affect the development of the country as an economically and politically independent nation. Important aspects include who is leaving and why, and the effects of emigration on the Niuean community. Through a combination of data sources, including personal observations, correspondence with Niuean residents and Niueans living abroad, and a literature review, I illustrate how declining population constrains development of Niue into an economically independent country.

The South Pacific Islands are connected economically and politically with the Pacific Rim metropolitan nations through a combination of migration, remittances, aid and bureaucracy (Bertram and Watters 1985). “In small island societies migration dominates and defines the social structure, it is a matter of central pre-occupation for individuals and it constitutes a dominant theme in the cultural and symbolic structures of the societies” (Patterson 1987, 125).

A migration system is a group of countries that exchange labor and have “feedback mechanisms, reciprocity, and linkages between migration and other flows: not only of people...but also of capital, goods, ideas, and information” (Hugo 1996, 107). The migration system is both an individual and institutional response to real and perceived inequalities in socio-economic opportunities. These inequalities are a result of uneven regional development (Connell 1990, 3). Hayes and Haulofa define a South Pacific Migration System (Hayes 1991; Haulofa 1987; as cited in Goss and Lindquist

396-397) in which Pacific Islanders have formed what Bertram and Watters call a “transnational corporation of kin” which is a network of family migrants who support and provide for each other through remittance and chain migration (Bertram and Watters 1985).

Chain migration is a key characteristic of Polynesian migration. Once small groups of family members or village residents move to a new place, they provide support for their family and other village members to follow. This has occurred so frequently from Niue that the migration patterns of whole villages can be mapped out in specific neighborhoods of Auckland. Ninety percent of Niuean emigrants go to Auckland (Walsh and Trlin 1973). Goss and Lindquist (2000) note, that migrants derive their social status from their original roles in their native community. Village origins and loyalties play an important role in community life in migrants’ new home (Walsh and Trlin 1973). Emigration from Niue is predominately permanent. While many Niueans return to Niue for holidays very few Niueans return to live.

Methodology

During my two years as a Peace Corps volunteer on Niue, I was involved in several aspects of development work, primarily within the Forestry Division. The Forestry Division is overseen by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) one of the larger and most important agencies on Niue. My work for the Niuean government provided an opportunity to observe the structure and functions of DAFF. In this paper I use my observations as a participant in the government and society of Niue. My memories, journal entries, letters and papers are important resources. It is important

to note that I became a part of Niuean society to the best of my ability as a young Caucasian American female (I was in my early twenties at the time). I often felt as if I had been accepted on the island, and yet these feelings were balanced by knowing I was, and always would be, an outsider. My perceptions, and therefore this paper, are biased. I carry preconceived ideas and beliefs from before my time on Niue. I supplement my observations with the perceptions and analyses of Niuean “experts” on Niuean society and development issues.

I conducted my survey after returning from my Peace Corps service on Niue. After completing a year of course work towards my masters I began the research for this professional paper. I contacted as many residents of Niue as possible, both Niuean and non-Niuean, and Niueans living outside of Niue. All contacts made were through email, which limited possible respondents to people with access to email. I emailed a set of questions (see Appendix 1) to two different email lists. The first letter of introduction and survey went to a yahoo email group called the “Niue Global Community” (approximately 180 contacts). This is an email group designed to give Niueans all over the world a forum to discuss Niuean issues and community events. I posted an email with the questions and requested that whoever had an interest could email me directly, to maintain confidentiality. The second email list (104 contacts) originated from a list of contacts I had compiled while in Niue. These contacts led me to a list-serve of government and private email addresses to which I again sent the same questions.

Eighteen out of combined 284 individuals responded to the survey, including nine Niuean residents, seven Niueans living overseas and two non-Niuean residents on the island. The low response rate can be attributed to a number of factors. While the email

was sent to 284 individuals it is difficult to know how many individuals read the email. Additionally, if they did read the email they may have felt it was inappropriate to respond during work hours. It is also possible that people were either biased towards me as an individual or against Americans and did not want to respond.

These responses by no means reflect a random sample of Niueans. Email access may be correlated with socioeconomic status or other demographic factors, and those who chose to respond may not represent general Niuean perceptions. I did not expect to receive a large number of responses. The purpose of the questionnaire was not to conduct a statistical analysis of Niuean perceptions, but rather to obtain a range of perspectives concerning emigration and potential effects of emigration on Niuean development.

My questions were organized into two broad categories: first were questions concerning migration, including who is leaving or returning and why. Second was a group of questions concerning how emigration has affected Niue. The list of questions is attached in Appendix 1.

Throughout this paper, I will refer to participants in my survey as “respondents” and direct quotes from respondents will be in quotation marks without endnotes. All correspondences were either in English or in a mixture of English and Niuean. While I am not fluent in Niuean, I have a working vocabulary that allowed me to understand the occasional use of Niuean words. Both English and Niuean are official languages of the country. While a few translations were necessary from Niuean to English, it was also necessary to interpret some broken English to try to discern the intended message. I transcribed the responses with as little editing as possible in order to maintain the integrity of the response.

The third data source was a literature review. I have included a survey of Niuean youth completed in 1970 for comparison with my own survey. The survey was carried out by J-M Bazinet, Youth Work Officer to the South Pacific Commission during a one month stay in February 1970. The survey had two main objectives:

1. Determine attitudes of Niuean youth regarding the future of the island.
2. Determine attitudes regarding their villages.

The interviewers were thirty youth from villages around the island and they interviewed 150 youth between the ages of 15-25. This represented 13% of the total youth population on the island at the time.

Chapter 2: Background on Niue

Niue Island is the largest and highest upraised coral atoll in the world (Lane 1994) and has the smallest self governing population (Murray 2001). Located at 19° south 169° west, Niue is also one of the most isolated countries in the world. Its closest neighbor Tonga is approximately 400 km away. The island's highest point is 65 m above sea level and the terrain consists of layer-cake-like terraces of porous limestone. Fringing the island is a reef which stretches up to one hundred yards into the ocean (McBean 1962). Niue's soils



Figure 1: Limestone terraces on Niue's eastern coast.

are generally poor, highly leached coral residues with a mixture of volcanic ash or debris; some higher quality soils occur in pockets of organic accumulation (FAO 1989). Niue has no surface water as a result of the porous limestone (Hass 1977).

Niue is located on the edge of the tropical cyclone belt and experiences fierce cyclones approximately once every ten years (Barker 2000). The last major storm was cyclone Ofa in 1990, which nearly necessitated an evacuation of the island to New Zealand and damages were estimated at NZ\$30 million (US\$18 million) (Barker 2000). Niue's climate is tropical with a mean temperature of 25 degrees Celsius, average rainfall of 2,200 mm per year and a mean humidity of 79% (FAO 1989). There are two distinct

seasons on Niue: a hot wet season from November through March and a cool dry season from April through November (SOPAC 1999). Niue is prone to serious droughts which occur approximately every 5-7 years and can average six months or longer in duration (Barker 2000).

Niue is culturally part of Western Polynesia (Walter and Anderson 1995) and has settlements predominately along the coast. The interior of the island is a mosaic of forest, taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) plantations, and fallow land in 8-12 year rotation for

taro crops (Brooke and Tschapka 2002). Taro is a particularly important crop as it holds cultural significance to Niueans and is a staple food on the island. While many taro plantations are for production for household consumption, taro is also



Figure 2: Taro plantation cleared out of native forest.

Niue's primary export. The latter has encouraged many Niueans to increase the size of their plantations to allow for production of taro for export.

While the population is predominately protestant (Ekalasia Church Niue), other religions include the church of Latter Day Saints, Catholicism, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah Witness, and Bahai. The official languages of Niue are Niuean and English, and the government is based on the British Parliamentary system. Parliament, based in the capital, Alofi, is unicameral and made up of 20 members. The 14 villages on the

island have one elected member each and there are six common role members. Term lengths are three years. Their last election was in March of 2002 with nearly 100% voter turnout (NZMFT 2003). Reflecting the small village sizes, 8 of the 14 village candidates ran unopposed in the March election (NZMFT 2002b).

Colonization of Niue is thought by historians to have begun in the last few centuries of the first millennium BC (Walter and Anderson 1995). Historians also believe that the original colonists came from Tonga, Samoa, and Pukapuka in the Northern Cook Island group (Haas 1977; Lane 1994). Although Niue is a large island for its population, it lacks critical natural resources, particularly surface water, fertile soil, and stones for tool making. These three factors made Niue a difficult place to settle and live for Polynesian colonists (Walter and Anderson 1995). After the initial colonization, Niueans remained relatively isolated from other Polynesian societies, but were occasionally harassed by war-like incursions from other islands. This led to a fear of strangers reflected in early accounts of European attempts to gain access to Niue (GON 1982).

Some pre-European incursions are likely to have occurred because there are distinct dialects and historical animosity between the northern and southern parts of the island. The Niuean language's similarities to Samoan and Tongan (GON 1982) would also suggest that there were different colonization attempts and successes to the island.

European contact began when Captain Cook reached Niue on June 20, 1774 (Loeb 1926; GON 1982). He attempted to land three times and was greeted with a hostile reception twice; the third time the residents ran away from him. During one of the attempts he was approached by a native with Hulahula banana juice on his teeth, which is

a red substance that looks remarkably like blood. Cook thought he had stumbled on an island of cannibals and thus christened Niue “Savage Island” (Loeb 1926; GON 1982).

On June 19, 1830 missionary John Williams attempted to leave fellow missionaries on the island but was unsuccessful (GON 1982). Instead, two Niuean youth were abducted, converted to Christianity, and then returned to the island to preach their new found religion. When the youth returned they brought new diseases to Niue (influenza or possibly something similar to syphilis) (GON 1982), which increased Niueans’ xenophobia (GON 1982). Christianity did not expand on the island until Peniamina, another kidnapped Niuean, returned to the island in October of 1840 and began to successfully convert many Niueans to Christianity (GON 1982). In 1846, the London Missionary Society officially established Christianity on the island (Lane 1994, NZMFT 2002b). The first resident English missionary, George Lawes arrived on Niue in 1861 (GON 1982). Early Europeans to the island, including George Lawes and his brother Frank (GON 1982), helped to establish a central government with an elected king. They also helped set up a western style legal system, health clinics and theological training on the island (GON 1982; NZMFT 2002b). The population at the end of the nineteenth century was beginning to fluctuate with the migration of working age men.

History of Emigration

Migration in the Pacific is “an ancient islander characteristic” (McCall and Connell 1993, 4). Population changes are not a new phenomenon to Niue. In the 1860’s the population rose from 4,300 to about 5,000, and then remained stable for the remainder of the century (GON 1982). At the turn of the century the population was

4,015 on the island, with 400 Niuean men living and working overseas (GON 1982).

This reflects the already apparent trend of emigration. The reduction in population resulted predominately from disease, emigration and forced removal (Lane 1994).

Emigrants left for a number of reasons. Young men were eager to leave Niue for economic opportunities available in lands with more abundant natural resources (Walsh and Trlin 1973). They also wished to leave the harsh control of the missionaries, who enforced strict punishments on lawbreakers (GON 1982). Many working age males who departed intended to return to Niue with capital to begin a new life on their home island. Scott (1993) explains:

Even before colonization young Niueans, industrious and resourceful, roamed the Pacific in search of betterment. They labored in the 19th century plantations of Samoa, Fiji, Tahiti, and Queensland and in the equatorial guano mines of the Line Islands. In the first decade of New Zealand rule, there were never less than 500 to 600 Niueans from a population of 4000 working overseas as indentured laborers... Formerly practically every young man spent some time at sea or abroad...it is only the shipping that has kept the men there of late years (24-25).

Not all Niueans left willingly. In the 1860's, hundreds of Niuean men were abducted by slave traders to work in the guano mines in Peru (NZMFT 2002b). Only one Niuean ever returned after being abducted (Cowan 1936; GON 1982). Niueans were lured to the slave ships to trade fresh food for cloth, axes, knives, fish hooks and other goods. Once aboard they were forced into the holds of the ship (Cowan 1936).

Emigration, both forced and voluntary, led to important social changes on the island. The emigration and abduction in the late 19th century resulted in lower ratios of men to women on the island, and returning migrants necessitated a restructuring of the community. In 1868 there were twice as many women on Niue as men (GON 1982). At the end of the 19th century the Niuean men that did return brought with them a taste for

alcohol which led to lawlessness and a decrease in church membership (GON 1982).

This decline in church attendance was confounded by an increase in awareness among returned migrants of the failure of white communities overseas to live their purported puritanical lifestyle (GON 1982).

History of colonization to independence

Niue became a territory of New Zealand in 1901. In 1889 King Fataaiki, wrote to Queen Victoria asking for inclusion into the British Empire. He wrote that Niueans were “afraid lest some other powerful nation should come and trouble us, and take possession of our island” (GON 1982). Following King Fataaiki’s death and no response from England, in October 1899, King Togia, who would be the last king on Niue, wrote to the governor of Fiji and the British High Commissioner of the Pacific to remind them of the original petition (GON 1982). Although the wish for British colonial status was granted in 1900, Niue was soon annexed to New Zealand, in return for New Zealand loyalty and support in the Boer War (GON 1982). Many Niueans protested becoming part of New Zealand, particularly to being administered under the Cook Islands’ group because the two colonies had no historical ties (GON 1982). On the 29th of September 1903, a New Zealand administrative group was established specifically for Niue in response to Niue’s frustration (GON 1982; NZMFT 2002b).

Niuean life under New Zealand rule was riddled with disease, poverty, and highly restrictive laws whose resistance by Niueans was seen as “criminal acts” and led to record-setting levels of per capita criminal charges (Scott 1993). The first fifty years of New Zealand control saw very few improvements for Niue as the island was virtually

ignored by their colonial power (Chapman 1976; GON 1982). The interaction that did exist under colonial rule was generally regimented and belittling. Scott addresses this period in Would a Good Man Die? which recounts the murder in 1953 of Hector Larsen, the New Zealand High Commissioner from 1944 to 1953 (GON 1982; Scott 1993).

Scott argues that the condescending treatment of Niueans by Larsen and the New Zealand power structure may have been a motive for the murder (Scott 1993). During 1940-41, 1,483 criminal charges were brought against Niueans (Scott 1993, 34). Before his murder, Larsen had 1,256 people convicted of crimes in 1950 alone (Scott 1993, 50). This is remarkable as the population of punishable age at the time was approximately 2,000 people (Scott 1993). Crimes included breaking curfews, breaking prohibition, swearing, playing poker, having yeast (for brewing), and holding hands. Houses could be raided with no warning, and bushes and bedrooms were monitored for anyone breaking the immorality laws (Scott 1993).

In comparison, Chapman (1976), a Niuean scholar, compliments New Zealand on its methods of colonial administration. He suggests that while Larsen's methods were forceful, he was ahead of his time with ideas about development and education. He sent Niueans overseas for medical training and raised the standard of education on the island (GON 1982).

What Scott (1993) describes as a patronizing and demeaning rule was evident even before Larsen, and was apparent in New Zealand's response to emigration. Emigration continued when Niue became a New Zealand territory in 1902, and New Zealand tried to deter emigration by instituting an exit tax. As Scott (1993, 25-27) explains, New Zealand was limiting Niuean freedom because:

The resident commissioner regards these people as children- in a state of tutelage and as yet unfit for full freedom. As they themselves have not yet acquired a regard for the future welfare of their own island, it is surely our duty to take some such step in their own interest.

The natural home of the Niuean is in the tropics...they should spend their days producing copra and fruit for export rather than working abroad. The Niuean is a child of the soil-he belongs to the land.

After Larsen's murder, New Zealand's concern and support for Niue increased (Haas 1977). J.M McEwen was the next High Commissioner, who learned Niuean and wrote the first Niuean-English dictionary (GON 1982). McEwen also gave powers to an Island Council that previously had been little more than a puppet government (GON 1982). The role of the Island Council officially changed in 1960 into an elected legislative assembly with the power to appropriate finances (GON 1982).

The change of leadership from the heavy-handed Larsen to the more culturally sensitive McEwen was a sign of New Zealand's change in policy on Niue. After pressure from the United Nations and two devastating cyclones in 1959 (two thirds of the houses were destroyed) and 1960, New Zealand changed its policy on Niue to one of "welfare-state colonialism" and began preparing Niue for self-government (Barker 2000). "Welfare-state colonialism" involves giving high priority to health and education which results in expanding government sectors (Bertram and Watters 1985). By 1965 life had changed drastically for Niueans largely because of the immense amounts of assistance money that were being funneled into the country by the New Zealand government, to prepare Niue for self governance. In the following years, education was the single largest item of government expenditure (Chapman 1976) with additional money used for improving health, housing and for building the airport in 1970 (Scott 1993).

Niuean self-government resulted not from pressure within Niue, but rather primarily due to the 1960 United Nations Declaration of Colonialism (Haas 1977; Fisk 1978; Parson 1978). United Nations pressure to free Niue of colonial rule induced New Zealand to falsely profess Niue's wishes for self-governance without consulting the people of Niue (GON 1982). In response, Niue's first independent decision was to declare that they did not desire independence, at least not on the time-table New Zealand and the United Nations had established (Chapman 1976; Parson 1978).

The government and citizens of Niue were hesitant to seize the opportunity for self-governance for a number of reasons. Firstly, centralized government did not fit with their traditional decentralized political structure. Traditionally, the basic social unit was the family under the authority of the eldest male. Village affairs were discussed at regular meetings of family heads (White 1964), and decisions were made through consensus. Niue had an egalitarian tradition of power decentralized to the village level (Walter and Anderson 1995). The egalitarianism of Niue is unique among Polynesian cultures (Pollock 1979). Terry Chapman and Sir Robert Rex describe this traditional mindset and how it affected the desire to have self-governance:

Decision making was traditionally by consensus of the people, with all parties having an equal say. No individual possessed prerogative powers other than those generated by his own personality, deeds and intellect. Always suspicious, and even jealous of the next man, the individual Niuean does not even today find it easy to accept that self-government will ultimately lead to a situation where a small number of his country men will be required to exercise political leadership: a condition which calls for formal prerogative powers, and which erodes the traditional egalitarian power structure (Chapman as cited in GON 1982, 137-138).

For centuries Niue existed as several hostile moieties, so they [the people] had no traditional bonds of nationalism, and as such modern Niueans loathe the idea of some of their own kind presiding over them: they preferred what they believed to

be the impartial rule of the New Zealand administration (Robert Rex as cited in GON 1982, 138)

In addition to lacking bonds of nationality and becoming accustomed to outsiders making decisions (first the church and then New Zealand), Niueans did not embrace independence because they had actively sought to become a British colony only 60 years earlier (Chapman 1976). A History of Niue, written by a group of Niuean authors, suggests that Niueans did not think Niue could afford independence because they feared financial separation from New Zealand, they did not believe they were educationally qualified to run their own country, and they feared severing the free access (emigration rights) they had to New Zealand (GON 1982).

Niue therefore decided to attain independence on its own terms and on its own schedule. United Nations pressure on New Zealand subsided when a United Nations group visited Niue in 1972 and became convinced that development should occur at a Niuean pace (GON 1982). Niueans postponed full self-government for eight years (Scott 1993). In 1974 Niue adopted a constitution that provided for full self-government in free association with New Zealand (NZMFT 2002b). A unique solution was devised to abate Niue's fears concerning self-governance. Sir Robert Rex suggested in 1973, "The solution to Niue's future constitutional position has the need to satisfy the requirements of the [UN's] Declaration of Colonialism and the need to make adequate provisions which take into account the desire of Niuean people to retain economic and citizenship ties with New Zealand" (GON 1982, 137).

Self-governance was finalized when the Niuean constitution was instituted on October 19, 1974 after a vote of 887 for and 469 against (GON 1982). The Constitution made it possible for Niueans to retain their much desired ties with New Zealand. Most

pertinent to the issue of Niuean economic independence is section 7 which reads: “It shall be a continuing responsibility of the Government of New Zealand to provide necessary economic and administrative assistance to Niue” (Niue Constitution 1974). New Zealand is bound to continue economic and administrative assistance regardless of the development constraints that Niue might face.

A second important aspect of the Constitution, especially in regards to migration, is that Niueans retain New Zealand citizenship. Not only do migrants have an open door into New Zealand, they also preserve their rights and ownership over land that they leave behind. Absentee landowners never lose their land rights. Under the Constitution, ownership can only be by Niuean people and any question of ownership is for families to determine (GON 1982). Another important aspect to the Niuean Constitution requires a two-thirds majority for major changes to the Constitution (Niue Constitution 1974). This reflects the traditional republican or egalitarian form of government (GON 1982).

Recent history as an independent nation

The Niuean government is the biggest employer on the island with approximately 450 public servants, or 95% of the workforce (NER, 30 Oct 2001). Government expenditures often exceed revenues such that wages for government employees are mostly covered by aid money from New Zealand (CIA 1999).

Niue has a high standard of living compared to other developing countries (AusAid 2002), primarily due to personal food production, aid money, and remittances from overseas (Fisk 1978) (Table 1). Niue has the highest per capita aid of any country in the South Pacific (Radio Australia, 27 Mar 2001), but the main source of revenue for

the island is remittances from Niueans working overseas (AusAID 2002). The infrastructure on the island is sound and available to all. Niueans currently have power throughout the island supplied by diesel generators, and more than 90% of homes have telephones (Mitimeti 1999). Social indicators in Niue are impressive with a life expectancy of 74 years, an infant mortality of 18 per 1,000 births and a school enrollment rate for ages 5-16 of 98% (House 1999; AusAid 2002). Housing on the island is heavily subsidized and education and health services are basically free (NZCTD 1982).

Table 1: Gross Domestic Product for select years.

Year	GDP	GDP per capita	Source
1989	US\$4.5 million	US\$1,985*	CIA 1999
1997	US\$5.8 million*	US\$2,800	CIA 1999
1998	US\$7.8 million*	US\$3,714	SOPAC 1999
2000	US\$8.35 million	US\$4,375	NZMFT 2002b

* These figures were calculated by the author using relevant population data.

Although Niue produces a large percentage of its own food (private sector agriculture production accounted for approximately one third of GDP in 2000 (NZMFT 2002b)), there are few natural resources or cultivation opportunities available for export (Fisk 1978). Current exports include taro, vanilla, honey, nonu (*Morinda citrifolia*) and kava (*Piper methysticum*) (NZMFT 2002b). Marine resources surrounding Niue are currently unexploited; the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) includes 390,000 sq km around Niue.

At present there is no manufacturing on Niue. The few retail outlets sell local handicrafts, locally made items, and imports including: food, manufactured goods, and building materials. There is a small commercial sector tailored to tourists, which provides rental transportation and accommodation.

Annual cuts in budgetary assistance from New Zealand (Levine 2000) will force Niue to find alternative funding, or it will necessitate decreases in the standard of living on the island or the island population. How emigration and the associated “brain drain” may affect Niue from becoming a self-sustaining community (i.e. one capable of functioning without international aid) is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Emigration and Development

Migration is a powerful socioeconomic process that affects development in many South Pacific countries. Skilled members of island communities are more likely to emigrate, which has a detrimental affect on both human and social capital. Few countries illustrate this condition more dramatically than Niue Island.

Fisk (1978) explores how the Niuean economic, political, social, and religious factors interact with external aid to determine the size and structure of its future population. He describes not simply an economic dilemma, but also a unique political and social structure on Niue. The current political structure on Niue is based on the British parliamentary system, but traditionally, Niue had an egalitarian system of power decentralized to the village level (Walter and Anderson 1995). Chapman describes how this traditional mindset has made contemporary governance on Niue difficult:

Decision making was traditionally by consensus of the people, with all parties having an equal say. No individual possessed prerogative powers other than those generated by his own personality, deeds and intellect. Always suspicious, and even jealous of the next man, the individual Niuean does not even today find it easy to accept that self-government will ultimately lead to a situation where a small number of his country men will be required to exercise political leadership: a condition which calls for formal prerogative powers, and which erodes the traditional equalitarian power structure (Chapman as cited in GON 1982, 137-138).

Niuean culture, while historically Polynesian, has been significantly altered by the westernizing New Zealand influence in the last century. Niue continues to be affected by New Zealand culture as Niuean residents, who are New Zealand citizens, migrate between the two countries. Niueans have a traditionally cohesive society bound by kinship, village association and land ties, but after years of emigration to New Zealand

large family groups and village fragments have formed a new Niuean community and social structure within New Zealand (Fisk 1978).

Fisk (1978) suggests that the quantity and type of aid exert large effects on population size and structure. Likewise the population size and structure affect the amount of aid money received and development of the country into an economically independent nation. Aid money introduced into the Niuean economy increases the amount of economic activity on the island. This raises the levels of income and the aspirations of people on the island for a higher standard of living (Fisk 1978). If the amount of aid money decreases, people may seek the higher standard of living available in New Zealand. Fisk (1978) suggests that infrastructure aid can be permitted without limits, but budgetary aid will more directly affect emigration. If the budget aid is too low, emigration will accelerate, while if the budget aid is too high, the standard of living may grow beyond a level which could be supported by the island's resources, making it impossible for Niue to ever develop into a self-sustaining nation independent of aid money. Fawcett and Cariño (1987) suggest that migration is both a response to and a cause of economic change and modernization in Oceania.

Migration has had both positive and negative effects on Pacific Island economies. While emigration relieves direct pressure on the economy, removing members of the community in need of land or jobs, it also removes experienced workers (Walsh and Trlin 1973). Emigration can be seen as a "brain drain" because it is a "selective process which tends to involve the most economically active and most highly educated members of society; the young and old remain to be supported by the working age group usually deficient in males" (Walsh and Trlin 1973, 52). Emigration can have significant effects

on human capital, the value of the combined skills, education, and leadership abilities of the individuals in a community (personal communication, Belsky 2001). Emigration can lead to “the loss of highly qualified and productive workers embodying significant investments of human capital...the geographic transfer of value in human form; this exemplifies the potential contradiction between individual and collective interests, where migration is rational for the individual, but may not benefit the society as a whole” (Goss and Lindquist 2000, 392).

The small size of Niue’s population plays an important role in how emigration affects the labor pool. Because chain migration on Niue often involves the emigration of entire families, the resulting scarcity of labor has a greater relative impact at the community level than at the household level. The lack of surplus labor at the community level, combined with the extremely low national population has led to an extreme shortage of wage laborers in Niue.

Emigration tends to exert greater economic burden on those left behind. Growing labor shortages leave people less time for co-operative community activities and recreation (Graves and Graves 1976); this reduces the social capital of the community. Social capital can be defined as, “the features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1993).

Emigration from Niue

Apart from a brief period between 1991 and 1994, the population of Niue has continuously declined since 1966 (Southpac News, June 1997). Walsh and Trlin (1973)

suggest that there is a feeling of fatalism among Niueans towards migration; Niueans do not migrate out of necessity, but rather because of rising expectations, their New Zealand citizenship, family pressure from within New Zealand or just because they are participating in what they perceive as inevitable (i.e. emigration).

Contemporary Niuean emigration has its root in the 1960s. At that time many Niueans began to realize that they wanted more than just a subsistence lifestyle. “People had finally become aware that a subsistence way of life was no longer appropriate, unfortunately, they did not have an economic base on which to achieve their material aspirations” (Chapman as cited in Haas 1977, 72). In 1960 New Zealand began importing unskilled contract labor from Western Samoa, Cook Islands, Tokelau and Niue (Crocombe 1974; Sudo 1997, 3; as cited by Goss and Lindquist 2000, 392). Even though this contract labor soon stopped, the first migrants settled in New Zealand and became a welcoming community for additional migrants-a perfect example of chain migration (Goss and Lindquist 2000).

With approximately 1750 people currently living on the island of Niue (NZMFT 2002b) and 20,148 Niueans living in New Zealand (Perrott 2002) there has clearly been profound emigration off the island. The declining population is apparent in figure 3, which shows the population on Niue between 1857 and 2001, and figure 4 which shows the increasing population of Niueans in New Zealand. The effects of emigration can be seen in the number of abandoned houses on the island which now almost equal the number of occupied houses (517 occupied in 1999: 450 unoccupied in 2000 (GONS 2001a)). Emigration was particularly high from 1969-1974 (Fisk 1978). This is partly an

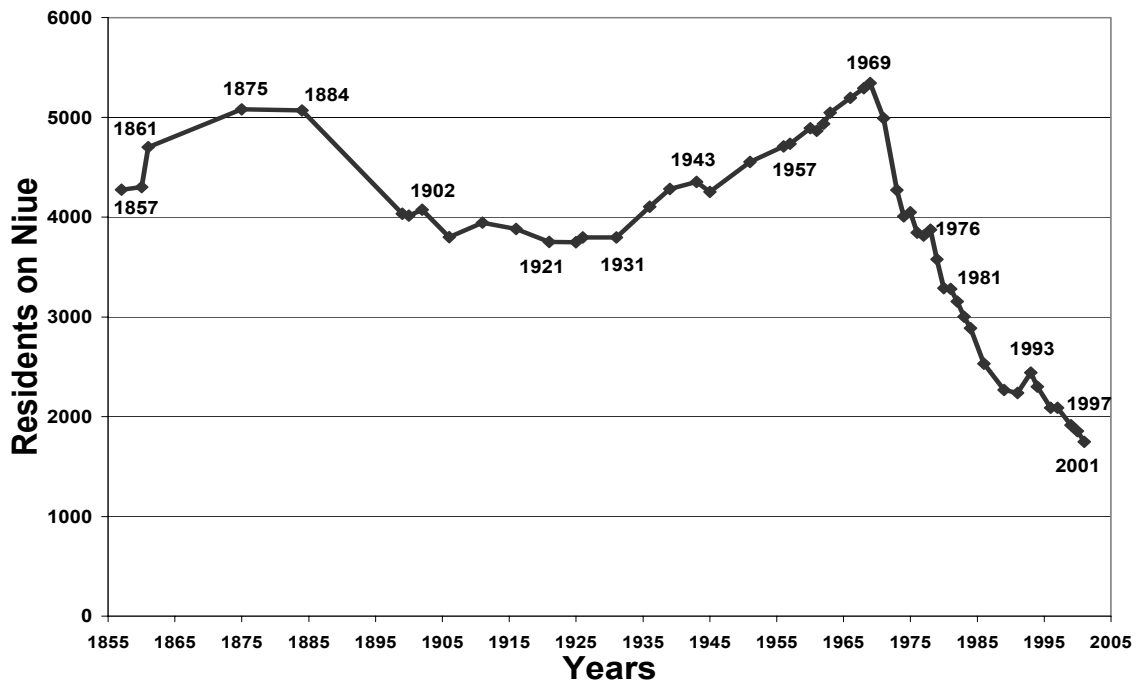


Figure 3: Population of Niue 1857- 2001. (Bissell 1971; Chapman 1976; Fisk 1978; GON1982; GONS 2001a, 2001c; Haas 1977; Lane 1994; Loeb 1926; Matheson 1986; Scott 1993; White 1964)

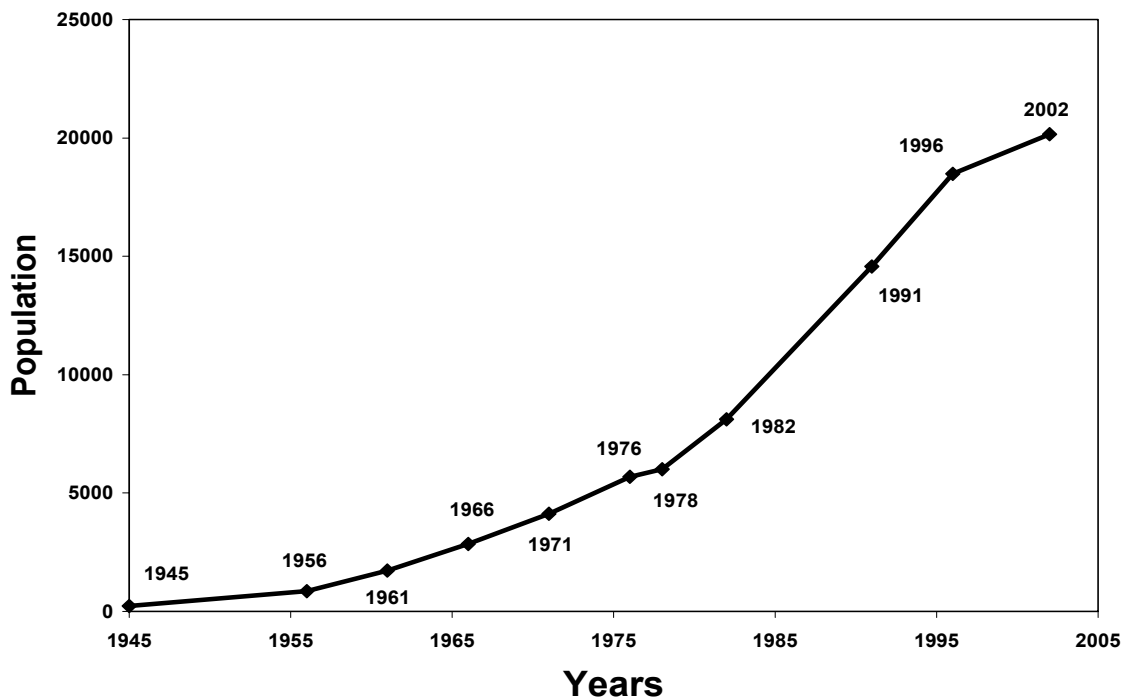


Figure 4. Niuean population in New Zealand 1945-2002. (Fisk 1978; Lane 1994; Matheson 1986; NZCTD 1982; NZMFT 2002b; Perrott 2002; Walsh and Trlin 1973)

effect of the opening of the airport in 1971, which facilitated transportation off the island (Walsh and Trlin 1973).

As the population of Niueans continues to decrease, the expatriate population on the island has remained fairly stable; people leaving are predominately Niuean. In 2001 when the total population dropped from 2088 to 1812, the number of Niueans dropped from 1779 to 1489, and the number of non-Niueans did not change (NZMFT 2002b).

There is some uncertainty regarding Niue's current population. While the most recent census reports 1750 residents (NZMFT 2002b), one respondent said, "There are probably about 1200 people left, since at the election there was something like 860 voters. [Voter turnout is consistently 100%] So 860 plus some kids, and that's how many there really are." Furthermore, a recent article in the New Zealand Herald mentioned 1,000 residents (New Zealand Herald, 21 Nov 2002). Possible deliberate overestimation might occur due to Niue's aid status and tenuous political situation. Overseas aid and support from international organizations are largely based on the number of residents (PINA, 8 Oct 2001), and while there is no evidence to support it, rumor on the island holds that the constitution becomes invalid if the population drops below 2000. Furthermore, under the United Nations convention, Niue will fail to be recognized as a nation if the population drops below 1500. Regardless if this is true or not, it suggests that there is concern on the island for the viability of a decreasing population.

Who is leaving?

According to published data, the majority of Niuean emigrants are between 10 and 25 years old (Lane 1994). In Bazinet's (1970) survey 83% of youth surveyed

indicated that they wanted to move to New Zealand and 52% expected to emigrate at some point in their life. In my survey, fifteen of eighteen respondents suggested that the vast majority of people leaving are recent high school graduates. Youth who have finished high school on Niue often travel either to New Zealand or Australia to continue schooling or to explore the greater diversity of job opportunities.

The trend of youth emigration can be seen in the age-sex structure of Niue (Figure 5); the elderly and young are clearly overrepresented (Southpac News, June 1997). Niue has a young population, with a median age of 30 and a mean age of 32 (GONS 2001c). The skewed age structure is most apparent in the under-representation of Niueans between the ages of 20 and 29.

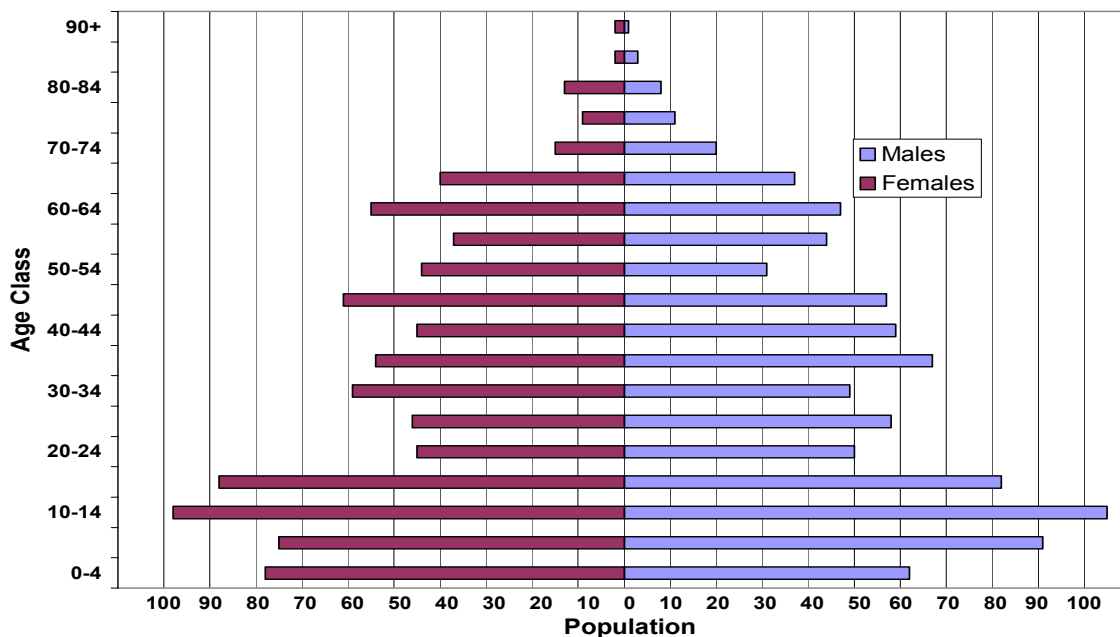


Figure 5: Age – Sex Distribution of Niue Residents (GONS 2001c).

The dependency ratio corroborates the skewed age structure. The dependency ratio is calculated by dividing the total number of dependents (people under 15 and over

60) by the total number of working age members of the population (those people between 15 and 60), multiplied by 100 (Graves and Graves 1976). Niue had the highest dependency ratio of 130 countries that the United Nations surveyed in 1970 (Graves and Graves 1976). By international standards, a high dependency ratio is over 100 (i.e. more dependents than producers) (Graves and Graves 1976). Using the above equation the 2001 dependency ratio was 79, but I would argue it is much higher as socioeconomic factors have changed such that students aged 15 and 16 do not normally hold jobs on Niue and therefore are still dependents. A high dependency ratio represents a heavy burden on those in the productive age bracket (Graves and Graves 1976). Emigration has reduced the number of young working age adults available to care for the large numbers of elderly and young Niueans on the island (Barker 1994).

Why are Niueans leaving?

In the 1994 census, youth were asked if they would rather live on or off Niue. Most preferred to stay on Niue, but a lack of jobs, housing, leisure and education reportedly enticed them away (Southpac News, June 1997). I posed an analogous question in my survey, and the responses were similar: Niueans leaving Niue are in search of better employment opportunities (12 responses), better education (11 responses), and an overall better way of life (11 responses). Many Niueans who stay on Niue take jobs that are inferior to jobs they could find in New Zealand.

Present migration patterns are a direct result of demographic, economic, and social patterns many of which result in part from New Zealand policies. Walsh and Trlin

(1973) argue that New Zealand policy was neglectful and stressed welfare rather than development. Education and capacity building were not considered important by the early colonial government on Niue. Not until 1954 was an Agricultural Department created, and even then it was not for development of viable export crops or high yield subsistence crops, but rather for experimenting with tropical crops for New Zealand. A patronizing administration emphasized Niue's inadequacies relative to New Zealand, thus making New Zealand an attractive place for migration (Walsh and Trlin 1973). To this day education on the island stresses western values and white-collar aspirations which can be better fulfilled in New Zealand.

One non-Niuean respondent living on Niue suggested that because of the challenging living conditions on the island, Niueans have wanted to leave Niue for years. It is only recently, with the construction of the airport, that it has become easy to do so (Barker 1994). There seem to be a number of reasons that Niueans leave Niue, but Walsh and Trlin (1973) suggest that it is not necessarily a planned decision: "Many Niueans seem poised on the edge of migration. A sudden deterioration [of living conditions], hurricanes or fears about political future can tip the balance of decision. It's an impromptu or passive act, where you can go on very short notice; sometimes a ticket just arrives in the mail."

In contrast to Walsh's and Trlin's assertions, employment opportunities were the most widely mentioned reason for leaving by the respondents in my survey (12 responses). Many resident Niueans express dissatisfaction with their jobs and salary. They see expatriates getting paid New Zealand wages which make Niueans feel like

second class citizens (Chapman 1976). A number of respondents mentioned that the number of Niueans on the island is related to the number of government jobs available:

The number of people [families] on Niue is always directly proportional to the number of government jobs available...Now they are having money problems again so they are talking about reducing the number of public servants, which they decided not to do because they know that whoever doesn't have a job will just leave. And so the cycle repeats.

Two respondents mentioned that they wanted to pursue the careers of their dreams, rather than what they were forced into by the government. One respondent said, "If people want to achieve things in an area that interests them they are limited by the 'employment' opportunities at home. It's a catch 22 situation; the population limits career opportunities (i.e. brain surgeon, not enough demand on the island even if someone wanted to train to be one.)" Many people on the island expressed a desire to have a different job. Several of my acquaintances on Niue stated, for example: "I wanted to study _____ but the only scholarships available were for _____ so here I am." One respondent told of a fellow resident who had dreamed of a particular career, but had to take a scholarship in another field. He writes:

[The new career] worked out for him, but the point is, it wasn't driven by his dream of what he wanted to be when he grew up....it was driven by somebody handing him a paper and saying, well you missed out on this career thing, but UNDP will pay for your school if you'll be a _____. This kind of thing is totally WRONG. Mostly because that's exactly what the government does too. It would never occur to most Niueans to follow a dream regardless of what the aid organizations say.

This creates a depressing working environment that is evident in employees' morale. I experienced a similar feeling of desperation while on Niue, "I think every once in a while I get caught up in the dead-end, no

dreams or aspirations that has a vice grip on Niue. It's as if our vision stops where the ocean begins. No wonder everyone is trying to leave" (personal journal).

Even those on Niue who are flexible and willing to work at any job still face significant challenges. The government is the largest employer on the island, but has a limited number of positions available. If youth, upon high school graduation, see no job openings within the government, they frequently emigrate (Fisk 1978). There are currently about 450 people employed by the public service commission – which represents approximately 95% of the island's workforce (NER, 30 Oct 2001). When a student graduates from high school, if they are not on scholarship to New Zealand, Fiji, or Australia, they look to the government for a job. If none are available, they emigrate, most commonly to Auckland.

Employment opportunity is not unique to Niue as a reason for emigrating to New Zealand. The New Zealand Coalition for Trade and Development (1982) suggests that economic interests dominate Cook Islanders' and Tongans' reasons for migration. Wage employment whether in Rarotonga or New Zealand pays much higher than the agriculture work and wage rates are significantly higher in New Zealand, thus Rarotongans emigrate to New Zealand (NZCTD 1982).

To better understand what causes people to leave Niue for better employment, I asked, "If there was a job available in your line of work would you return to Niue?" Many respondents questioned the pay scale, terms, and conditions of employment on Niue. "It will depend much on the conditions of the job, i.e. whether it's temporary or permanent. [It] also depends on the salary, there is no point having to do a NZ\$4/hour job and your qualification deserves NZ\$10/hour." Another person mentioned that it would be important that both he and his

spouse have employment. This couple felt that two incomes were critical to remain on Niue. A similar question was posed by Bazinet in the 1970 survey, 77% of those surveyed said they would rather take a job on Niue than a job in New Zealand but only if the pay scale was the same. The main reason given for the decision was so they could save more money because Niue is a cheaper place to live (Bazinet 1970).

The second most commonly mentioned reason for leaving was for better education. These respondents included people who were looking to further their own education, and parents who wanted to improve their children's employment opportunities through higher quality education. "My parents sent me to New Zealand in 1981 at sixteen years of age, straight after high school to further my education but I think they just wanted to get me out of the Niuean environment because at that time, the girls who finished high school and didn't leave Niue ended up having families within a year."

Another respondent was concerned with the current education situation on Niue. "The other main reason [to emigrate] is to seek better education for children as qualified teachers go on strike; we have no choice but to employ retired teachers. These new recruits are not familiar with the new curriculum and may not be teaching the children with up to date modules." In a 2000 education strike, 10 Niuean teachers walked off the job and the Niue government immediately recruited teachers from New Zealand whom they paid three times as much as the local teachers (WSWS, 16 September 2000). This conflict between teachers, the public service commission, and the government has sown doubts in the minds of Niuean parents concerning the education available on the island, and is an additional incentive for families with school age children to leave. Bazinet (1970) asked his respondents if they would rather raise their children in New Zealand or

Niue and 63% of them replied that they would rather raise their children in Niue. It would be interesting to see how this statistic has changed. Many students go overseas after high school with scholarships to tertiary schools and never return to Niue.

“Fia palagi”, the desire to have a western lifestyle, was mentioned by nine respondents as one of the main reasons people wanted to leave. The perception is that in New Zealand, Niueans will find employment, housing, social benefits, education, health services, and all the other privileges typical of a wealthy country (Fisk 1978). The perceived better life would include being close to family who had already moved, availability of western food (which many Niueans have developed a taste for), and no backbreaking work in the fly infested bush plantations. Fisk (1978) suggests that Niueans are happy eating their own homegrown food, but people emigrating say it is nice to get paid enough to buy food instead of working in the afternoons and on Saturdays in their bush plantations.

Two respondents also mentioned dissatisfaction with village life. Additionally, one respondent was dissatisfied with church influence and another with government bureaucracy. Unfair working conditions, particularly nepotism, provide additional incentive for leaving. Three respondents mentioned being frustrated with the feeling that job success depends on “who you know, not what you know.” Fisk mentions that the pressures which develop because of the exodus instigate more Niueans to want to leave. If true, this positive feedback could accelerate emigration. “With the departure of up to half of some of the population of the back [more rural] villages, a great psychological pressure builds up on those who stay behind, as they watch the church

empty, the social ceremonies become less frequent, the neighbors depart, and the garden plots fall in disrepair” (Pollard 1975 as cited in Fisk 1978, 9).

Why do Niueans return to Niue?

A May 2001 statistical release, from the Niue Government reveals that while the numbers are dwindling, Niueans are still coming back to Niue. If a goal of the Niuean government is to draw Niueans back to the country, it is important to know what, if anything can influence people to return; “If the leaders of Niue wish to discourage emigration and the depopulation of their home, let them give deep consideration to why, and call openly into question the assumptions and values that motivate those who leave” (Fisk 1978, 11).

Although “fia palagi” (desire to have a western lifestyle) is a strong sentiment in Niue, the main reason for returning suggested by respondents in my survey was the attraction of the lifestyle on Niue. Respondents described Niuean lifestyle as quiet, relaxed, low crime, secure, and free. Community involvement and knowing everybody were attractions as well. While the frustration with bush work was mentioned as an incentive for people to leave, it was also mentioned as a reason why people wanted to return. “Back home if you’re hungry you go fishing, hunting for crabs, there’s taro in your own plantation. You work, but it’s a different sort of work. It is paradise and a place where life is free.”

Respondents suggested that many people are interested in returning home to work the land and retire. This is a phenomenon called “circular migration”, where people may move away from their home land for many years but eventually move back to retire

(Gegeo 2001). Gegeo (2001) explains that in the Solomon Islands, “[people] in old age feel an obligation as well as a desire to go home, [to] fulfill their share of leadership responsibilities, and immerse themselves in traditional culture.” Similar reasons have been recorded in the Cook Islands where a large number of returnees are older men who have lost their jobs in New Zealand (NZCTD 1982). Nine respondents wrote that Niueans returning were typically people interested in retiring on the island because of a “sense of security for older people; no rates or mortgages; easy way of life, and an ability to work a piece of land.”

If increasing numbers of aging Niueans return, the need for social welfare and medical services will increase as well. Barker (1994) writes that proportionately larger elderly populations will tend to strain familial resources which may not even function or persist on the island. If family support is not available, social welfare and medical services will have to shift from infectious disease and children to services for the elderly (Barker 1994).

Four respondents mentioned a feeling of “there’s no place like home” as a reason for returning to the island. Niueans have a strong pride in being Niuean. Bazinet (1970) writes that while Niueans are proud of their identities as being Niueans, the pride comes from a sense of community rather than a tight association with the island. Respondents to my email questions mentioned a desire to return to their heritage “to remember who we are and where we came from and who we left behind.” This could be the result of changing sentiments in the last thirty years. Six respondents mentioned a draw of family and friends as what brings a number of people back to the island. This suggests that as more people leave Niue, one of the few things that bring them back will also decline, potentially accelerating emigration.

One respondent wanted to return to help develop the private sector on Niue with her own business. Some Niueans interested in returning to Niue to start their own business have found Niuean bureaucracy frustrating, Perrott (2002) writes, “One person mentioned wanting to go back to Niue to start a small business but [says], ‘I talked to the government there, but they offer no help to those returning and there are very few jobs. What could I do?’”

There are also smaller numbers of young people returning to Niue after finishing school in New Zealand or Australia to fulfill their government work obligations. In the past contracts have been signed between the government and prospective students to obligate the students to return to Niue once their studies are complete. To the best of my knowledge these contracts are not legally binding. Many of these young people return to New Zealand or Australia once their commitment to the Niuean government has been fulfilled. One respondent did have hope for the young people returning, and said the people coming back are “married couples with young families at completion of tertiary training. Most people returning are highly educated and committed to helping with the development of this country.”

What have been the effects of emigration on Niuean economic and social structures?

Emigration has led to the loss of both human and social capital as well as decreased amounts of aid money and the number of private businesses on Niue. Three respondents mentioned the decreased amount of aid money to the island, and three mentioned decreased number of businesses. “Decrease in aid has offset other effects such as the need to reduce the size of the public service like in the early 1990. The redundancies affected total tax

revenue, it has contracted the market base for the private sector (reduced aggregate demand) the community suffered from a decline in income.” The economy as a whole has suffered from out migration in spite of remittances.

Increased pressure on Niueans who stay on Niue was mentioned by three respondents as an effect of emigration. Niueans who remain have to wear many hats; they have many responsibilities. This can build resentment in nonparticipating community members when those few people with the increased number of responsibilities also get disproportionate recognition. They see a small number of people getting all the credit for the positive work that is done. Specialized skill on Niue is scarce due to emigration and a low population in general, and those who remain need to be multi-skilled, with the possible result that their competence in any one skill is deficient (House 1999). One respondent explained how migration decreases human capital:

A country's most valuable resources are its manpower resources. Outward migration has affected the Niuean community in many ways. The brain drain has seen educated people leaving a few to carry out the multiple responsibilities within the government, and community. When so much expectation is placed on a few it results in overload, stress etc. It reaches a stage where people in the best intention of trying to spread their resources ultimately become ineffective.

Regardless of population size, a minimum amount of public services are necessary. While such services provide jobs for the few remaining people, this limits the number of people available for direct economic productivity (i.e. for exports). The cost of maintaining health and other public services is very high for such a small population (Haas 1977). The New Zealand Herald (20 Oct 2001) reports Hima Takelesi, the first Niuean High Commissioner to New Zealand, as saying:

I think that the dilemma facing Niue is that literally one day we'll wake up on the island and say 'Hey wait a minute. The population has dropped to the stage where it's not possible to have all the kinds of infrastructure necessary to run a

country, because even though the size of the population is small, you've still got to have your hospitals, and you've still got to have your schools, and fire engines and everything else. This place is not viable anymore, what are we going to do with it?

Jobs that are available on the island frustrate many Niueans: “[The] government in its attempt to keep people offers meaningless employment in the public service which is expensive and nonproductive” says one respondent. Workers get frustrated and bored with their work if they do not feel useful, and this reflects poorly on government agencies if workers are seen walking around the capital during working hours:

The hours of work has decreased. I remember a public works truck in the 70s loading up people from Mutalau and transporting them to Alofi early in the morning (about 7 am) and coming back to Mutalau in the evening about 4.30 – 5 pm. [Now] there is no room for development and improvement. People tend to start with one job after completing their education and stay there. Management control is not there, every worker is their own manager (this is a perception after seeing many government workers wandering around Alofi [during] what I would call working hours in Auckland).

The work force on Niue has become younger, which has both benefits and disadvantages. “A young workforce can be good in the sense that you have young people in charge and they can be innovative, creative however there is a disadvantage of lack of direction and maturity/experience.” This young work force came about “after the redundancy, a lot of the mature people stayed home so there were a lot of job offerings but the only people on the island were really young people. Now the work force on the island is mainly young people, like they say, they are still green.” This has caused tension and conflict on Niue. Traditionally, Niueans prefer to see leadership evolve from less ambitious but wiser “ulu motuas” or “grey hairs”, rather than more inspired but impatient “patu fuatas”, young leaders (GON 1982).

I have thus far only addressed negative effects of migration, but there are positive effects as well. Niueans return to Niue with new ideas, perspectives, and leadership and training skills which may play a positive role in Niuean development. Hooker and Varcoe (1999) write that in the Cook Islands many returnees are influential in shaping the direction of social and economic development. The perspectives brought back to the island can significantly affect social structure in the form of changing attitudes and values. Hooker and Varcoe (1999) suggest that migration to and from the Cook Islands has had a dramatic effect on the role of women in the country. The Cook Islands have essentially a patriarchal society (Hooker and Varcoe 1999). However, women migrants have returned to the Cook Islands with new experiences of different social situations and practices:

These experiences, often in societies where women were more active in the political and legal spheres and less likely to tolerate abuse and inequality, had allowed them to reflect on Cook Islands society; in many ways this seems to be leading to beneficial change, whether through women gaining independence and respect through their income-earning roles or their greater assertiveness (Hooker and Varcoe 1999, 98).

From my own experience I can attest that a similar patriarchal society exists on Niue. I was appalled by the number of rape and domestic abuse cases that I heard about while I was on the island. I believe that Niuean women's increased access to higher education and perspectives from more equitable societies will affect the social structure of the island. This is an area of study which deserves more research.

When asked "How has Niue changed in the last ten years with the decrease in population?" respondents mentioned changes in the workforce and other changes in the economy caused by emigration. There have been particularly obvious changes in the number of businesses on the island. Levine (2000) cites a decrease in the number of

businesses registered on Niue from 157 to 88 over the course of two years. When I first arrived on the island in January of 1999 there were four grocery stores, when I left in 2001 there was only one.

Respondents also mentioned that emigration leads to a loss of culture. The following respondent mentions finding an entirely different lifestyle when she returned to Niue for a visit:

The changes I see in peoples' behavior especially young kids have been tremendous. The family no longer does things strictly the Niuean way. I grew up having to learn to go to the bush, pull weeds, collect coconuts, go to the sea to hunt, etc. but when I was in Niue in 2000/01, my family had changed, English is the kids' main language, they live on bread and coke rather than taro and coconut, most people don't go to the bush, they go to the market instead to buy their taro, there is an abundance of food e.g. pawpaws (papayas), coconuts that go to waste, the coconut cream making factory has gone, the passion fruit drink factory has gone, the glove making factory has gone, no-one has a passion fruit garden (pa vine) any more and the Agricultural Department no longer needs them, there is nowhere for the pawpaws to be sold other than the market and for feeding the pigs with, there is nowhere for fresh and dry coconuts to be sold except in the Niue shops or also feeding the pigs with, the Rex Shop opposite the Fale Fono (parliament building) has closed, Russell Kars and family had closed up K-Mart and moved away, kids are more interested in growing up fast and enjoying the 'vai mamali' (alcoholic drinks) at Claytons than their school books, the discipline I used to see in my parents when growing up is not there in recent years, the primary schools have all closed except for Halamahaga, everyone drives a car, wants to be seen in Nike's, Adidas, or other famous brands from America, people are more mobile especially government workers who tend to spend a lot of time outside of Niue in a given year, there are heaps of empty houses, Bert's Shop is the only main grocery shop, all entertainment facilities are in Alofi. There used to be dances in outer villages in the olden days.

There has been a decline of cultural and community activities on the island including sports tournaments, dances, and other village events. "Out-migration could destroy the very fabric of the community" predicts House (1999). Walsh and Trlin (1973) note,

It is increasingly difficult to maintain community spirit and develop social – or any other – life in an island dismembered by migration...Niuean society at village

level seems increasingly incapable of maintaining old standards or providing new ones conducive to social harmony and development precisely at a time when it is most needed of people are to be induced to stay.

Graves and Graves (1976) documented some psychological effects of emigration (linked to westernization) in Aitutaki, Cook Islands. They noted a shift in personality from cooperation and generosity towards greater individualism and rivalry; this was then amplified by a western based school system that supports individualism and competitiveness. The result of this was decreased involvement in the lives of community and extended family. They noted that cooperation still exists, but is offered more grudgingly (Graves and Graves 1976).

Niue has a number of social institutions outside of the government. These include family and village life as well as the interactions with communal land ownership, and



Figure 6: Ear-piercing ceremony.

churches (Lane 1994). There are many community events that are still celebrated including show-days, hair-cutting ceremonies for boys, ear-piercing ceremonies for girls, 21st birthdays, marriages, funerals, sports, and even watching people leave at the airport. I remember one of my

weekly highlights was to ride my bike to the airport and stand with everybody else watching to see who was coming back to the island and who was leaving. “The

community is still a cohesive unit with tight ties of kinship, village, association, and land rights binding its individual members....the social structure is clearly a matter of emotional as well as practical significance in the lives of Niueans and is something they will be reluctant to abandon” (Fisk 1978).

I asked respondents if they still thought a cohesive community existed on Niue.

People responded to this question in many different ways. The majority of the respondents indicated that a cohesive community remains but:

This will never change. You will always have a cohesive community in Niue. They may not be all together but in their own respective units they share similar beliefs, hopes and whatever else. Niueans are really a nation of simple people that is still kept alive with their old traditions of giving and helping each other. Competitiveness is not something that is instilled in them.

Yes very much but like in any community there are times of disunity and friction. Christianity and cultural upbringing have been instrumental as glue that holds the community together and providing people with the skills to address issues in a more civil manner. However there is a danger of young people growing up and not necessarily following the way of their parents. The generation gap if not addressed has the potential to break the cohesiveness within the community.

Yes but not in politics. There is a crab mentality where one pack of Niueans can't stand to see another succeed. It is difficult to watch the same person carrying so many roles and taking credit for all the successes.

Some of the respondents mentioned cohesion in some aspects of community life, but said it was lacking in some of the larger issues for the island:

Has there ever been one? I'm not being cynical about this but it is a small community and family and friends come first before the real issues. As a community in areas such as sport, church, village councils, they seem to operate in a very cohesive manner. It is difficult to understand what most people are thinking because as a people, we are not good at coming forward.

Another respondent was concerned with how people are now beginning to act as though they are above the law. “No [it is not a cohesive community], the community is

fragmenting and that's evident at the village level. People have less respect for law and order and think they can do as they want with immunity.”

While the Niuean perception of a cohesive community appears diverse in my survey, the decrease in population is undeniable and has had a profound effect on the atmosphere on the island. There has been a decline in anonymity. Life on Niue was often described to me as “like living in a fish bowl.” I experienced a frustration with a lack of privacy and a respondent mentioned her frustration with this too:

I can remember growing up and there were a lot of different faces around, and I did not know all of them but now since the population is less than 2000 you know them by name and where they live and are they married or not. With the decrease in population you see the same old people day in day out. You go to the market you see the same old people there everywhere you go and everywhere you look same old, same old, same old.

Another respondent mentioned, “Alofi is like a ghost town.” The decline in the population has some interesting effects on social aspects of the community:

Less labor available for part-time work; churches become more powerful with greater direct say in government and village administration.

Relationships have become somewhat a mismatch because the choice in the island is very limited. You have 18 year olds having relationships with 30 year olds and older because there is just no one in their age group. There is nothing wrong with such a relationship but there is something wrong if it is a common occurrence.

Discussion

Whether it is because of the pursuit of employment or the pursuit of love, the movement of Niueans to New Zealand might be better classified as urbanization. Golden (1981, 28) describes urbanization as “The process by which a society’s population increases its concentration in urban units...a society is urbanizing if the proportion of the total population concentrated in urban places is increasing.” The emigration of Niueans to New Zealand began well before Niue became

an independent country. While Niue was still part of New Zealand, the movement of Niueans to New Zealand would have been better defined as urbanization. Now that Niue is a separate country it is termed emigration.

Many developing nations display trends of urbanization and this trend would likely occur on Niue if it had urban areas. The proportion of Cook Islanders living in Rarotonga in 1902 was 25% compared to 54% in 1981 (NZCTD 1982). Without metropolitan areas like that found on Rarotonga, Niueans migrate to Auckland instead. **“Young Niuean ties to the island aren’t very strong. [He is] not a migrant driven away from his father land by necessity but rather an internal migrant going with the general trend of urbanization”** (Bazinet 1970). Niueans are not migrating out of one culture and into another, they are moving within their culture from the country to the city, as evidenced by the thriving Niuean culture in Auckland. This is a topic that merits further research and discussion.

The emigration of Niueans to New Zealand has led to decreases in both social and human capital; two types of capital necessary for Niue to develop into an independently sustainable country. Fewer people on the island has led to increased pressure on those people left behind to maintain a vibrant community where young and old are taken care of and community activities and recreation still occur. This reduces the social capital of the island or the glue that holds the island together; the capacity of the community for action. It has also reduced the human capital, experienced and trained Niueans are leaving for better employment opportunities in New Zealand and Australia. This leaves fewer working age Niueans to support an aging community.

What would be the ideal population on Niue? The Niuean government, New Zealand government, and Lincoln University in Canterbury have been working to define what would be considered a “living community” on Niue. A “living community” study is an assessment of the population capacity of the island’s resources and the economic capacity to maintain a desired standard of living (Lane 1994). The outcome of the study will help determine the future direction of economic support and development options for Niue.

It is difficult to know how Niue would be economically different if there were 5,000 or 10,000 people living there. Mitchell (1977 as cited in NZCTD 1982) suggests “available resources [on Niue] are not being utilized adequately; this is partly because of the effects of net emigration to New Zealand on population numbers and available labor units...the present population is insufficient to bring about large-scale economic development”. This suggests that a larger labor pool especially one willing to work in agriculture and cash cropping would make economic independence more viable. The literature suggests that an increased standard of living has increased people’s aspirations for work other than tilling the soil. Regardless of the population size Niue would still be constrained by isolation, land availability, lack of natural resources and harsh climatic conditions.

Few areas of the world confront the same constraints and limited resources as Niue. Aid money has supported a standard of living that the island’s natural resources and economy can not. Although the population on Niue is small, those left on the island still support an independent Niue (PINA, 16 Oct. 2000), but the New Zealand government is not willing to continue supporting an aid based economy and are already implementing annual cuts in budgetary assistance (Levine 2000). New Zealand and Niue

may soon need to reconsider Niue's independence. If Niue is to maintain its independent status, many aspects of the economy, education, and governance will have to change. The private sector must develop and remove pressure from the public sector. Education and training will have to target the needs of the country and instill loyalty to Niue, and the government may have to be completely restructured. This is a difficult task to ask of so few people, so first it will be important to find out what those people actually want the future of Niue to be.

Chapter 4: Future of Niue

The future of Niue will be influenced and molded by numerous constraints both related and unrelated to emigration. In this chapter I explore agricultural potentials hindered by location and climate, education on Niue, and the role of aid and aid workers in the development of Niue. I conclude the paper with a discussion of Niue's development plans and my own thoughts on the future of Niue.

Niue faces a number of major development constraints which are unrelated to the declining population. These include poor soil quality, unpredictable climate (droughts and hurricanes), and limited land base in general. Any development plan for Niue will have to contend with these natural resource limitations. Niueans are dependent on their environment for agricultural production for household consumption, which contributes to a large portion of their diet. This makes them attuned to the need to protect natural resources and environmental values that support their cultural and economic practices. If environmental degradation interferes in the process of cultivation or harvest it usually becomes quickly obvious to cultivators (Lane 1994). While there is no impending natural resource crisis on Niue, the finite resources must be considered as a limiting factor in determining what the economic development opportunities of the island might be. With the current population and resource extraction activities there is little local fear of environmental degradation, but there are still matters of environmental concern.

Farming on Niue is backbreaking work and occurs on very shallow, nutrient poor soil. Clearing is done either by traditional slash and burn methods, or by bulldozing. This is followed by planting taro with a planting stick, alternating with long fallow periods (8-12 year crop rotation) (Walsh and Trlin 1973). Taro is rising in importance

and represents 90% of the total value of Niuean exports (Murray 2001). However, Samoan taro is returning to the international market after a being dramatically reduced by leaf blight in 1993 (Hunter 2000). The Niuean taro market will likely decline if Samoa, with its more reliable freight service, can sell taro at lower prices. Even if the Niuean share of the taro market remains, it is uncertain if it will be a sustainable crop especially if cultivation is done by mechanization: “taro fields cleared by bulldozer have devastating effects on ecosystems, destroying biodiversity, increasing soil exposure and erosion, disturbing animal habitats, and removing nutrient replenishing plants” (Murray 2001). Once the cleared land is depleted of nutrients new land is cleared. Export taro also requires large amounts of fertilizer and pesticides. It is unclear what effects the chemicals might have on Niue’s sole reliable water source (Murray 2001), and the size and terrain of the island limit the amount of land that can be cleared.

Agriculture has been the backbone of the Niuean export economy, but is no longer the focus of the government economic plans because of limited international market opportunities and waning interest in the private sector for backbreaking agriculture work. In the future, agriculture will likely continue its role in local food production. Copra, bananas, kumaras, passion fruit, limes, and honey have all been tried as export crops, but none have proven profitable in the long-term. Returns from agricultural exports fluctuate and are unreliable (Pollock 1979). Many options have been tried before and either failed because of a turn in the economy, natural disasters (hurricanes or drought), or unreliable transportation. Pollock writes that, “attempts at developing an export economy have floundered, largely because they have been instigated by well-meaning non-Niueans who fail to comprehend the many factors

working against those products” (Pollock 1979). Cash cropping schemes in the past were introduced from outside the country without first consulting participating farmers (NZCTD 1982). Niue does not have the man power or the sophisticated technology to clear large plantations or the reliable transportation to get the products to market. Even if products could be delivered reliably to a market Niue’s size and lack of resources (both human and natural) limit the amount of any crop they might consider growing. Any crop for export would likely need applications of fertilizer and pesticides which are not only costly but potentially dangerous to Niue’s shallow fresh water lens. Niueans are prepared to gamble a little with their labor, but they cannot afford to throw away their cash, or watch a cash crop rot because no ship arrives (Pollock 1979).

Hurricanes and floods have had devastating effects on the Niuean economy, especially its agriculture sector. On average Niue has a severe hurricane once every ten years. Between 1905-1990, 21 hurricanes hit Niue, six of which were very destructive. These severe hurricanes damaged plantations, flattened houses, and contaminated the drinking water (Barker 2000). “The cycle of destruction and recovery has had an underappreciated impact on socio-economic development” (Barker 2000). Barker (2000) argues that one of the main reasons Niue is so dependent on aid is because a precedent was set after the hurricanes in 1959-60, when large amounts of foreign aid money were quickly provided for reconstruction.

Another development constraint is land tenure. As noted above, included in the constitution is a clause asserting no ownership time limits for absentee landowners over their land. As one respondent bemoaned, “Those in New Zealand still retain their land rights and it becomes problematic when Niueans at home want to develop the land for

building purposes, agricultural development etc. Absent landowners become obstacles to development when they block land access or issue injunctions.” While working in Forestry we ran into this problem when trying to set up a demonstration plot on sustainable forestry techniques. We had plenty of funding and manpower, but could not find a local landowner with a piece of land large enough to house the site.

Exacerbated by a small and declining population there are limits to development incurred by a lack of foreign investment, a small domestic market, and a shortage of managerial and entrepreneurial experience. The brain drain creates a void of experienced and trained workers. The problem of filling this void forces Niuean leaders to question whether the country should educate its citizens for the sake of education or to be productive members in the world community.

Education

What is the goal of secondary and tertiary education on Niue? Is it to educate Niueans to become more productive members of Niuean society or to become more productive members of a world society? “Many educators and political leaders have raised questions about whether European models of education and economic development, promoted by former colonial powers and multinational organizations like World Bank, are appropriate for their region” (Carpenter 1996). Traditional education systems were displaced by missionary schools on Niue in the nineteenth hundreds and the missionary schools were then gradually replaced by government schools once Niue became a colony of New Zealand. A government run elementary school was set up in 1909 (Benson and Tagaloailuga 1992), but little was done for education until Larsen

became involved in education in the 1950s (Chapman 1976). In the 1960's, education was the single largest item of government expenditure (Chapman 1976).

Forty years ago there were elementary schools in all the major villages on the island and one high school just outside of Alofi.

Currently there is one elementary school (seven years of study) and one high school (five years of study). The high school

incorporates both academic and vocational training. Both



Figure 7: Students at Niue's only Elementary School.

schools teach the New Zealand curriculum. There is only one postsecondary school on the island and that is a satellite campus of the University of the South Pacific based out of Fiji. Courses are taught by correspondence with local tutors and some interactive satellite classrooms. If students are interested in leaving the island for studies, they must qualify for a few select scholarships or government training programs or use their own financial resources (Carpenter 1996).

Education in the Pacific is not directed towards rural objectives, but rather more urban-oriented 'technological' education that encourages migration of the educated few to urban areas to utilize these skills (Connell as cited in NZTCD 1982). The government must decide on an education policy to either educate Niueans for the sake of education, for another regions benefit, or to train Niueans in something that will be helpful for Niue. Haas (1977, 76) reports that the purpose of education on Niue is to educate Niueans for

Niue's needs. He says, formal education "has its aims the development of citizens who are conscious of the need to become productive effective economic units, [and] informal education is of the adult community in order to educate them quickly to meet immediate needs for greater mobility in agricultural production." The objective of the Niuean school system is to educate Niueans to a level of awareness and skill so that they may become productive in the modern world. This is so the human resources required to run necessary services such as the hospital and schools are largely generated from within instead of relying on budgetary support aid (Haas 1977). The Niuean government must decide if they (with New Zealand funds) should fund students only if they will return with their new skills or if students should be funded to pursue their dreams regardless of their value to Niue.

Fisk (1978, 11) recommends subject matter, "that strengthen indigenous values such as extending the teaching of Niuean language in schools encouraging the recording of Niuean histories, myths, traditions, music, and possibly if not already being done, recording and codifying Niuean custom and law. For too long Niuean things have been looked down upon and foreign things exalted maybe that is finally changing!!!" If only information about the outside world is taught it will instigate a desire to see the outside world. The premier was quoted to have said:

I don't think money or a better standard of living will keep people here or education – all these help to move people out of this place. Give them a little bit and they yearn for more. That's the kind of education we have at the moment, but with the right education they could want to stay. At present it is directed to the outside world, but the world starts here in the home, the village, the island, and if you can cope here you can cope anywhere (Young Vivian as cited in Walsh and Trlin 1973, 68).

However, if traditional education is agriculture-based it will be difficult to keep students interested in remaining on Niue. How can you convince youth after being well educated in Niue High School to return to just doing bush work? They will want to pursue loftier goals (i.e. go to Auckland) (Bazinet 1970).

A current matter of concern is who is best suited to be educators on Niue. The following article was published in the Niue Economic Review (Nov 2002):

Niue's Cabinet and Public Service Commission refused to give 10 of its trained high school teachers a NZ\$2000 pay rise in August 2000 taking their salaries to around NZ\$18,000. So they all resigned under threat of dismissal. The education department then employed expatriate teachers on salaries of NZ\$30,000 with free accommodation a deal which brought strong criticism from residents on the island. Now the Niue education department is advertising for trained local staff but sources say they are falling short of the qualified teachers required for the beginning of the new term in 2003. Former teachers who left the school have changed career paths or have moved to New Zealand.

One respondent felt that expatriate teachers can provide a better education than Niuean teachers. She wrote:

Kids of yesterday with more expatriate teachers seemed more motivated to do more for their country than kids of today with fewer expatriate teachers. Not to say that local teachers are not as effective, but perhaps expatriate teachers were more passionate about their career, otherwise why would they have moved to another country? further, local teachers know kids more in their community and are therefore able to play favorites to kids they like and grill those they don't like. There is some politics coming into play, if teachers don't like student's parents, brothers, sisters, etc.

The "brain drain" on Niue -the loss of skilled and educated Niueans from the island- has severely hampered Niue's ability to achieve its development goals. A fellow returned Peace Corps volunteer from Niue wrote me to say, "The labor force is absent from the island. Innovation and creativity fly out weekly and do not return until retirement or failure and indifference."

Aid workers

One of Niue's greatest challenges is how to keep the people with valuable skills, experience, and formal education on the island. One solution which was tried for seven years was to invite the US Peace Corps to come train counterparts with the hopes of increasing human capital on the island. Peace Corps established a program on Niue September 23, 1994 (USGPO 1994) and the program was terminated at the beginning of 2002. Teoboro Guambana, the Peace Corps Country Director for Tonga, said, "[Peace Corps] Niue work is ending because there has been difficulty in maintaining support services for Niue-based volunteers and that Niue does not really fall into the category of a country in need" (PINA, 24 Jan 2002). A fellow returned Peace Corps volunteer from Niue mentioned to me that Peace Corps never should have been on Niue since Niueans are New Zealand citizens, and New Zealand does not qualify for Peace Corps volunteers.

The majority of respondents were positive in discussing the Peace Corps program. Peace Corps volunteers were seen as "bringing in new ideas to Niue and encouraging Niueans to think outside the box." One respondent mentioned a particular project that a Peace Corps volunteer was involved in:

In the technical side of things it was very beneficial in terms of providing stop gaps where Niue lacks the human resources. The input assisted tremendously with the projects that they were involved, in terms of providing quality service in different areas and more so developing human capacity of local personnel not only in the government but also private sector and civil society. This is valued very highly by our young people and the community. One of the Peace Corps assisted with the purchasing equipment for our community-learning center and even though the scheme is not completed the equipment is there for the long haul benefiting everyone in the community. The scheme also provided an opportunity to expand our horizon of humanity, that there are people and a country that is dedicated to providing unselfish service for other people. So the scheme also helps to expand our understanding of the American culture and philosophy of service. I write these words with sincerity.

Other respondents said that while the Peace Corps program on a whole was positive there were also some faults:

The goals of the Peace Corps were admirable but in fact the Niue government used Peace Corps volunteers to carry out skilled jobs rather than train counterparts to replace them.

The idea was a great idea, at the time because it takes an outsider to see where we can improve but if we look at it most of the them were fresh out of University and the skills they had were textbook based knowledge also the way of America is not the same as the ways of the islanders and it was really hard for both parties to adapt to each other: the American to adapt to the island way and the islander to adapt to the American way so therefore the development was minimum.

Many have come and many have gone...some have stayed and at the end of the day Niue is still the same when they leave. What have they accomplished since being there other than helping out in various areas? If they really do want to make a mark in Niue, they should set programs up that will be of use to Niueans and one that the locals can continue in their absence. Like a preschool, tutorials for students, and community orientated networks.

Comments concerning consultants in general were more varied. On the positive side one respondent said that any help was good whether it be from Niueans or non-Niueans. Another who was very pleased with consultants said:

Having non-Niuean consultants and volunteers come into Niue is an asset. The expatriates bring in great ideas and have excellent inputs to community projects and most importantly they have trained some locals to master the skills of work that are not related to their daily operations.

Similar to the comments concerning Peace Corps, there were a number of people who responded that having consultants was positive, but there were some concerns. “It depends; some people enter with what they think are a lot of solutions without taking into account the context of the place.” A number of people suggested that non-Niuean consultants should be supplemented with trying to bring back Niuean experts in areas of need. Consultants are “very helpful, but the Niue government needs to balance that with Niueans abroad and offer the same opportunities for them to come back for these

purposes.” Unfortunately, this idea does not seem well supported by the government. As much as the government is trying to get Niueans to return there is a feeling of distrust when advice or training is provided by other Niueans:

We are currently trying to set up a project for a voluntary skills transfer for Niueans here [New Zealand] to go to Niue and volunteer their skills. This has not been received properly by the government. They have agreed in principle but that is where it ends, as a result we cannot proceed to negotiate with heads of departments in Niue. The possibilities in Niue should be made more appealing to Niueans abroad to entice them to go back.

I personally don't think (having non-Niuean consultants) is very helpful but Niueans don't tend to trust each other and therefore look to outside consultants to make inputs. Niue does not use the talents of its human resources, the residents on the island, because of jealousy, mistrust, and the lack of willingness to share information.

Another respondent made the important point that the area of need must be identified by Niueans and not by the outside aid organizations. The late Niuean Premier Sir Robert Rex is rumored to have said that foreigners or “palagis” view Niue with blue eyes way different to Niueans with their brown eyes. Outsiders coming in are “very helpful if the need is identified by Niue and it also requires expatriates to be very sensitive about the culture of their new home.” Some respondents were more hesitant about outsider assistance in Niue:

[It is] only helpful to some degree...most come to Niue and undertake reviews and consultancy as a means of utilizing donor funds and call it Aid. I'd rather see the funds utilized for some tangible community projects... not a 200 page report which will sit on the shelf and gather dust.

There is no point in bringing non-Niuean consultants if they do not understand the people of Niue. They will give a perspective but it is like introducing a fish to a bicycle. Maybe Niueans need to be shaken up to the world economy but that will be changing a habit of a lifetime. Facts and figures they produce are only indications and anyone can make facts and figures dance to make it worth their while. You have to be really concerned about the situation to fully understand what can be done, and not to consider it an easy pay check.

Some consultants come to Niue and don't care about the effects or consequences of their reports or they don't do a very good job because they think that the Niueans don't know any better. The consultants take advantage of the politicians who aren't as educated or knowledgeable in the opportunities in technology etc...available.

At one point during my two years on Niue I talked with an Australian Aid worker nearing the end of his term on Niue. Over the course of the three years he had worked on Niue he had seen a drastic change in Niuean attitudes toward palagis (Europeans) coming onto the island as consultants. While initially revered for their supposed knowledge, he felt that attitudes towards palagis had changed to mild hostility. He felt that Niueans were taking pride in both their traditional knowledge and the skills they had acquired in western academic institutions and were now eager to solve their own problems rather than rely on outside "experts". One respondent mirrored this sentiment:

I finally realize it is up to me as a Niuean to help my self help my country and help my people. I also realize that we have been relying on non-Niuean consultants for help and then I think to my self what on earth does he know about my country he only comes here for 1 week and he knows the answer but in everything we do and anything we do it takes more than 1 week. E.g. 3 years to get a Degree...2 years for Masters and so forth but here is the non-Niuean coming here for 1 week and he knows the answer for Niue's people?

Aid money

Along with aid workers, Niue has been the recipient of vast amounts of aid money. This history of aid dependency may also prove to be a constraint to Niue's becoming economically independent. New Zealand is bound by the Constitution to provide economic assistance, but is hesitant to support the current state of dependency that Niue has on monetary assistance. With this in mind, New Zealand is gradually decreasing aid money to the island in hopes of pushing Niue into self-sustainability. The gradual decrease in aid money is heavily impacting Niue and is already causing budget

deficits. A budget deficit of NZ\$318,000 was predicted for the year July 2001 to June 2002 (NZMFT 2002b). According to the Niue Economic Review (27 Sep 2002), the government is now trying to make up for a multimillion dollar deficit which has accumulated in the last three years.

Most aid money on Niue comes from New Zealand and Australia. The United States and the European Union have also supported programs in Niue, but these have tended to support infrastructure and alternative forms of energy, respectively (Radio Australia 20 Sep 2002). Many researchers argue that the aid monies have raised the standard of living on Niue to a level higher than the local economy can independently support (Lane 1994). This leaves Niue and the donors in a difficult position. While the aid was easy to start, it is incredibly difficult to stop (Fisk 1978).

One purpose of international aid money is to enable a transfer of capital and technology to the developing country so that its productivity may be enhanced (Fisk 1978). The goal is the improved productivity of the recipient country that will then be able to sustain an acceptable standard of living. However, Matheson (1986) suggests that high levels of aid have had few positive effects on increasing productivity; “present aid policies are endangering the very attributes aid policy makers wish to foster; egalitarianism, income equality, homogeneity and self-reliance.” “Acceptable standard of living” is a dynamic concept (Fisk 1978). Standard of living tends to increase with aid money and the standard of living can become unavoidably dependent on aid money (Fisk 1978). The only way to maintain the standard of living as aid decreases, in the absence of other social or economic changes, is thru a declining population.

Development plans

Niue Island's isolated location, susceptibility to cyclones and droughts, poor soil quality, and dwindling human population make it challenging to envision how it might become an economically independent nation. The final question in my survey was to ask respondents where they hoped to see Niue in the next five or ten years. In general, they responded that they would like to see an increase in the population, development of Niue as a booming tourist destination, better education, better economy, development in technology, and better health care. One respondent desired "a more efficient and effective public service. A more vigorous and vibrant private sector resulting from an increase in the number of tourists and development of hospitality related industries. Increase in trade in organically produced crops and a total ban of chemicals such as paraquat."

In contrast two respondents felt that the "future of Niue lies with integration with New Zealand as the former colonial administrator" and how long they will remain independent is "based entirely on how long New Zealand can afford to support them as a free governing state." One respondent goes on to say:

I am against major continuing assistance to small countries because it breeds dependency and restricts economic and social growth and human development. Niue is a prime example where massive aid over 30 years has in fact lead to a reduction in population rather than an increase despite relatively good standards of living, essential services, subsidized living and access to tertiary educational resources in New Zealand and within the region.

This sentiment of reintegration is corroborated by Professor John Henderson, head of New Zealand's Canterbury University's Department of Political Science, "Reintegration of Niue into New Zealand is perhaps the only serious option for the island's future" (Radio Australia, 27 Mar 2001).

In November 2002 there were tentative meetings scheduled between Niue and New Zealand to discuss how to start implementing recommendations from a “living community” study (NER 27 Sep 2002) started early 2002. The Niuean government, New Zealand government, and Lincoln University in Canterbury have been working to define what would be considered a “living community” on Niue. A “living community” study is an assessment of the population capacity of the island’s resources and the economic capacity to maintain a desired standard of living (Lane 1994). The outcome of the study will help determine the future direction of economic support and development options for Niue. One of the key points to the study is how to retain people who have training on the island (NZMFT 2002a).

Some of the incentives behind the “living community” study are to create a new development plan and to identify a target population. One respondent mentioned that the preliminary results from the “living community” study are showing that the current population might be the ideal number and that the government should not further try to bring any more Niueans back. In the past, the government's main development goal was to reverse the decline in population in order to establish private sector development to offset the diminishing government sector (House 1999). The government hoped to entice Niueans to return by developing the economy, social structures, and island infrastructure (Lane 1994). It is hoped that the living community study will help redefine Niue's development objectives and develop indigenous models of governance and socio-economic development (NZMFT 2002b). “The living community study is intended to provide the basis for planning and implementing development towards the goal of a Niue living community” (NZMFT 2002b).

While there are still cultural remnants of Niue's egalitarian method of governance, western influence over the last century has helped shape a community which increasingly values individualism. While indigenous models of governance need to be considered, so must their limitations for creating a development plan for Niue's ever-changing island community.

The "living community study" seeks to define a development plan for a country that is in serious need of one. While on Niue, I felt that no one really knew where the country was headed, except towards depopulation. One respondent summarizes his feelings on Niue's lacking both a development plan and leadership:

They really don't have any (plan). For the whole time I've been in Niue...I have never seen any continuity in 'what the plan' is supposed to be. I believe this comes from the fact that there is really no leadership. And that may sound like a simple innocent statement, but it's deeper than you think. To have a government you have to have leaders and followers. In Niue, you have everyone going in their own direction, driven by what aid programs are available, and nobody has ever stopped to put together a plan that ignores 'the money you can get' and do what needs to be done. The basic fundamental of leadership is missing primarily because they are all related to each other, and that pretty much stops the concept of leadership in its tracks. So, what happens is, somebody in external gets a memo from UNDP that says there is an opening for a candidate to attend the annual workshop to discuss the mating call of the African bullfrog, and they pick out somebody and send them. This happens at least two dozen times a week, proved by the fact that the planes are always too full of government workers to bring tourists. But these decisions are not made based on what Niue needs or where Niue is going. It's based on the memo that says there's money available for a trip. And there's no 'leader' who will say, no you're not going on that trip because it has nothing to do with Niue's 'plan'.

The following is an experience I had in Niue, which gives another example of how a lack of leadership can lead to farcical interactions over aid money. One of the roles I had while working for forestry was to attend relevant development meetings on the island. One group I was a member of was developing a budget and tentative plan for money to be allocated for environmental capacity building. The meeting was a

brainstorming session to come up with activities that Niue could initiate to develop environmental awareness. The list grew long and outlandish, but was written down and tentative monetary figures were written beside each activity. At the end of the brainstorming session the figures were summed and that figure was recorded as what would be submitted to the donor organization as the budget. Not only did I find it amusing that the activities and costs were made up fairly arbitrarily, but at the end of the meeting when the grand total was announced, someone asked if the total was in United States or New Zealand dollars. The moderator looked at the figure and said it had not been decided yet but since US dollars would deliver more money to Niue they would put down US dollars.

The current development focus on Niue is on tourism (Barker 2000). Through most of the 20th century, the government was reluctant to abandon the stagnating agriculture sector as the prime source for socio-economic development efforts (Barker 2000). In 1970, 85% of those surveyed stated that agriculture was the most important prospect for Niuean development while only 5% said tourism (Bazinet 1970). In contrast 35% of my 18 respondents mentioned that they would like to see Niue become a major tourist destination in the next five to ten years.

Recreation opportunities abound for eco-tourists or couples looking for a romantic get-away. Niue offers spectacular landscapes, world class SCUBA diving, big game and sport fishing, a unique culture, and a warm and hospitable community. However, the island is not on any major flight paths and a reliable air service does not yet exist. In March 2001 tourism took a heavy loss when Royal Tongan Airlines stopped their weekly direct flight from New Zealand (PM, July 2001). This left only a single flight (of 20

seats) a week through Tonga. Tourism plummeted as Niueans traveling for business or returning home to see family filled all seats. As of October 28th 2002, Polynesian Airlines began a weekly direct service New Zealand-Niue-Western Samoa. With a five-year contract, many Niueans hope this will help develop a profitable tourism industry.

The government, supported by international aid money, feels tourism will best enhance private sector development, but people worry whether the human resources are available to support a significant increase in the number of tourists. Lane (1994) stated that the government had a tourism goal of 5,000 to 20,000 visitors per year. This number of visitors, evenly spaced throughout the year, would increase Niue's population by 100-400 people (Lane 1994) or 5-20% of the resident population at all times and would have profound cultural influence. While the infrastructure may support this sort of influx, it is questionable whether there are sufficient human resources to provide necessary services.

Marine resources are a yet untouched possible asset for the island, but there has been little talk of exploiting them. The South Korean government offered the Niuean government three free fishing boats in 2002 but the Niuean government soon realized the state of the boats was too poor for them to be financially beneficial (PINA Dec 2002). There are currently no locally-based off shore fishing vessels in Niue and there are no foreign fishing vessels currently operating in the Niue fishing zone under bilateral licensing agreements (Gillett and Lightfoot 2002). In the past there has been some successful fishing in Niue waters but Leolahi (2000 as cited in Gillett and Lightfoot 2002) writes, "In 15 years of licensing US purse seiners under the multilateral treaty, there has only been one successful set in Niue waters: 27.2 metric tons of tuna taken in late 1998." Fishing for personal household consumption makes up the majority of fishing

on the island, with coastal commercial fishing and offshore foreign based fishing accounting as a negligible amount (table 2). There is currently no export of commercial fishery products (Gillett and Lightfoot 2002). The Niuean export fisheries market is likely constrained by a lack of reliable transportation to international markets.

Table 2: Estimated Annual Fisheries Production of Niue, late 1990s (Gillett and Lightfoot 2002).

Fishing Sector	Volume (metric tons)	Value (US\$)*
Household Consumption	194	179,915
Coastal Commercial	12	54,720
Offshore Locally-based	0	0
Offshore Foreign-based	2	4,560
Total	208	239,195

* Calculated using average exchange rate for New Zealand dollars (.57) for years 1995-2000.

Niue is potentially vulnerable to exploitative tourism, fishing and other resource extraction. On the other hand, exploitation may be constrained by a number of factors including, traditional conservation management strategies, fragmented land ownership, and community integrity. Existing local resource conservation strategies incorporate traditional land use taboos and conservation initiatives that protect fish populations by limiting coastal activities during sensitive migration periods and by outlining acceptable harvesting practices. These traditional restrictions provide a foundation upon which to build conservation oriented land and sea management plans to reduce the risk of exploitation in the future.

The small size of the community on Niue may also be beneficial in restricting exploitation. A small, cohesive community with shared traditional values will likely be more easily organized to combat attempts to exploit the islands resources. While Niue has received many off-island business propositions in recent years, the government and community have been selective about what proposals they have given audience to. On

the other hand the large number of absentee landowners may constrain community organization and obstruct the adoption of resource development and management plans.

Conclusion

While Niue has unique social and economic characteristics it is in many ways a microcosm of South Pacific, as well as global trends. Many areas of the world are experiencing rural to urban migration and accelerating “brain drains” in less westernized areas. These trends reflect a shift toward western consumer behavior and culture. People have rising expectations of participating in a global society. Development forces at work in Niue are similar to those around the globe in other small isolated populations. Similarly, Niue is a model for how migration can affect development.

The future of Niue is uncertain. I suspect that the population will continue to decline with further detrimental effects on the human and social capital of the country. This in turn will make it increasingly difficult for Niue to become economically independent of monetary aid. No one knows at what point New Zealand will cease support to a 1,500 person nation. New Zealand is scheduled to phase out aid to Niue by 2003 (PACNEWS, 27 Apr 1999), but there are concerns that New Zealand may be bound to Niue by the Niuean Constitution and therefore required to maintain financial aid (Radio Australia, 27 Apr 1999). Until monetary aid is terminated, I believe Niue will continue on the same path it has for the last 40 years, including facing hurricanes, droughts, political instability, private industry decline, and a brain drain.

When I left Niue, I promised both friends and “family” that I would return to after five years. When I do return I look forward to seeing how it will have changed. When I

first left Niue in 2001 I thought that the next five years would bring drastic changes to the island. Now I suspect it will probably be remarkably similar to when I left although with even fewer people.

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Appendix 1

Summary table of Survey Questions and Responses (2002)

Why do you think Niueans leave Niue?	<p>Better jobs – 12</p> <p>Better education – 11</p> <p>Better life – 11</p> <p>Join Family – 3</p> <p>Get away from work load on Niue – 3</p> <p>Dissatisfaction with working conditions on Niue – 3</p> <p>Medical reasons - 3</p> <p>Bring kids up in NZ – 2</p> <p>Dissatisfaction with village life on Niue – 2</p> <p>Some of the other reasons included: desire to travel, self development, experience other cultures, unhappy with government and better food.</p>
What brings Niueans back to Niue?	<p>Retirement – 9</p> <p>Lifestyle – 8</p> <p>Friends and Family connections - 6</p> <p>“There’s no place like home” – 4</p> <p>Claim land or land affiliation – 3</p> <p>Holiday – 2</p> <p>Food - 2</p> <p>Other reasons: Desire power, to attend special celebrations like 21st birthday, sports tournaments, ear-piercing, funerals and appreciation of culture.</p>
If there was a job available in your line of work would you return to Niue?	<p>Yes – 4</p> <p>No – 1</p> <p>Maybe – 3</p> <p>Don’t know – 1</p> <p>No answer or not applicable – 6</p>
Who are the people that are leaving? age, educational background etc..?	<p>Youth – 15</p> <p>Families – 6</p> <p>No answer – 2</p> <p>Elderly people for health reasons - 2</p>
Who are the people coming back? age, educational background etc..?	<p>Older people – 9</p> <p>Youth – 2</p> <p>No answer – 5</p>
How has the out migration affected Niue and the development goals of the country?	<p>Don’t know- 3</p> <p>Decreased the amount of aid from New Zealand – 3</p> <p>Increased pressure on a few people to take on many different roles and jobs - 3</p> <p>Decrease in number of businesses - 3</p> <p>Decrease in employment opportunities.</p>

How has Niue changed in the last ten years with the decrease in population?	Changed a lot, economic, culture, education have dropped - 5 Fewer activities – 4 Only population change - 2 Strain on other community members – 2 Everyone knows everybody else – 2
Where would you like to see Niue in five years/ten years?	Increase in population - 9 Tourist destination – 6 Better education - 4 No answer – 5 Better economy – 4 Development in technology – 3 Better health care – 2 Empty houses utilized or pulled down if not used because they are mosquito nests - 2
How has the work force changed on Niue?	No answer - 5 Young workforce - 4 It's more like who you know and not what you know – 2 Decreased workforce -2 Education deteriorating- 2
Do you think there is still a cohesive community on Niue?	Yes – 6 No – 2 No answer – 5 Sort of – 3
What did you see the role of Peace Corps on Niue and how do you think it helped if at all in the development of Niue?	Positive responses to Peace Corps presence - 8 Positive but Peace Corps has its faults - 5 Don't know – 4
How helpful is it to Niue to have non-Niuean consultants and volunteers to come in and try to help in Niue?	No answer – 5 Positive with comments – 4 Positive – 3 Negative – 3
What has your experience been with this process?	No answer - 5 Sad that PC no longer exists - 2
Are you currently living on Niue?	Niuean resident - 9 Niuean living overseas - 7 Non-Niuean resident – 2

