



STATE of INDIGENOUS PEOPLES LAND,
TERRITORIES and RESOURCES of in the

*Pacific
Region*

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The Pacific is a region with more than thirty thousand islands and is made up of the sub-regions of, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and Australia. Melanesia includes the independent nations of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and the islands of New Caledonia¹. Micronesia lies between the Philippines and Hawaii and encompasses more than 2,000 islands, most of which are small and many of which are found in clusters. The sub-region includes the independent nations of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Kiribati, and Nauru; the Northern Mariana Islands, a commonwealth in political union with the United States; and Guam and Wake Island, two territories of the United States. Polynesia covers approximately 10 million square miles, known as the Polynesian Triangle or the oceanic country of Polynesia and includes the independent nations of Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu; the Cook Islands and Niue, (two self-governing islands in free association with Aotearoa (New Zealand)); Tokelau, (an island territory of Aotearoa (New Zealand)); French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, (two French overseas collectivities); American Samoa, (an unincorporated territory of the United States); the Pitcairn Islands, (a British overseas territory); Hawaii (a state of the United States) and Rapanui (Easter Island a newly independent state once colonized by Chile). (Geographic, 2018)

¹ Maluku and West Papua is also considered by the indigenous peoples there and others across the Pacific as

Brief profile of indigenous peoples in the region

1.1 Estimated population

Based on the United Nations estimates, in 2017 the entire population of the Pacific was 40,690,786 with approximately five people per square kilometre (Worldometers, 2018). Australia had approximately 25 million people and the sub-regions Melanesia 10.3M, Polynesia 5.4M and Micronesia 500k. The Pacific population is equivalent to 0.54% of the total world population (Wikipedia, 2018). See Appendix 3 for further details on indigenous populations.

The six countries with the highest populations, those being Australia, Papua New Guinea, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Hawaii and Fiji, have more than 95% of the total indigenous population in the region. Some islands have less than 20,000 inhabitants.

Indigenous peoples make up the majority of the populations of the Pacific with the exceptions of some countries and islands of Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Hawaii², New Caledonia and Guam. Countries that have more than 75% of indigenous peoples include, Wallis and Futuna, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tokelau, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Cook Islands, Niue, and French Polynesia. Countries with approximately 500,000 indigenous peoples or more include, Papua New Guinea, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji. The total indigenous population of the Pacific is 11,840,783 making up 26% of the total population. More than 10 countries in the Pacific have less than 20,000 indigenous peoples.

Appendix 1 lists country populations as of 2015

Appendix 2 lists the percentage of indigenous population per country

Appendix 3 lists the number of indigenous population per country

1.2 General socio-economic conditions

Seventy percent of the Pacific population is urban (28,631,308) with a yearly change of 1.43%. The median age is 32.9 years (Worldometers, 2018).

Pacific island developing economies as a whole are projected to experience an economic slowdown in coming years, with growth rates moderating to 3.4% in 2016 and 2.7% in 2017. In most countries, El Nino also induces drought conditions and constrains agricultural and fisheries production (Pacific, 2016). The region's ability to sustain high economic growth has been hampered by various factors: on the domestic front, inadequate transport and communications connectivity, notable energy and infrastructure gaps and limited skilled workforce and institutional capacity remain key constraints to growth (Pacific, 2016).

² Hawaii is considered as a nation amongst indigenous peoples of the Pacific and therefore is included in this report, although it is a state of the United States

1.3 Cultural features

Pacific Islanders encompass a wide range of cultural groups and nationalities from Australia, Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia in the Pacific Ocean.

► Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are complex and diverse. The indigenous cultures of Australia are the oldest living cultural history in the world – they go back at least 50,000 years and some say closer to 65,000 years. One of the reasons Aboriginal cultures have survived for so long is their ability to adapt and change over time. Land is fundamental to the wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples and the spirit of ‘country’ is central to their core being. “Traditional lands” are defined by geographic boundaries such as rivers, lakes and mountains (TR7, 2013).

► Polynesia

Polynesian seafaring culture developed almost entirely from its geography. Polynesian culture relies on a sophisticated navigation system based on observations of the stars, ocean swells, and the flight patterns of birds. Polynesians were able to domesticate plants and animals, and transport them to islands that lacked native flora and fauna. This allowed Polynesians to establish stable, permanent communities throughout the islands of the South Pacific. By 1000 CE, these seafarers had colonized the islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. In the process, they established a unique, ocean-oriented culture that persists today (Geographic, 2018).

The Polynesian creation stories refer to the spiritual bond between Polynesians and their gods and goddesses, Papa (earth mother), and Rangi (sky father), and their children, the marvelous gods, who molded the first human, a woman, Hineahuone, from the sacred red clay of the earth. (Universal, 2005)

► Micronesia

Most of the islands that make up Micronesia are low coral atolls with the residents being especially mobile traditionally. They maintained extensive inter-island exchange networks, in part because of the precarious nature of living on low islets. There are a large number of distinct languages within this sub-region, including Nauru, Ngatik, the Morthlocks, Chuuk, the Puluwat area, the Woleai area, Tap, Palau and the Marianas. Micronesians traditionally depended on the cultivation of plant crops and on fishing in shallow reef waters. Because arable land was in short supply for the relatively dense population, Micronesians had a strong practical basis for their attachment to locality and lands. Land rights are usually held through lineages or extended family groups, often backed up by traditions of ancestral origins on the land. The strong local loyalties of the Micronesians may also be partly explained by the difficulty of travelling to any place very far from home. Some of the low islanders, especially in the storm-swept central Carolines area between Chuuk and Yap and in the Marshalls, were some of the most skilled navigators of oceangoing

canoes. By early records, the populations of Micronesia were in good balance with their natural resources at the time of European culture. Traditionally, the most important property among the Micronesians was land. Specific land tenure customs varied considerably from island to island, but in general land was owned by extended families or lineages. Individuals acquired use rights to particular plots through their kin connections, acknowledging the rights of the group by periodic offerings of first fruits to the kin group's leader. Because land was scarce, various mechanisms were developed to govern its distribution. Interior areas not under regular cultivation were considered community property and were used for collecting wild food and for temporary gardens (Britannica E., 2018).



→ Rarotonga

► Melanesia

In the past, Melanesia was a meeting ground of two cultural traditions and populations: Papuans and Austronesians. The earliest, or Papuan, tradition is ancient. Papuans occupied the Sahul continent (now partly submerged) at least 40,000 years ago. As hunting and gathering peoples whose ways of life were adapted to the tropical rainforest, they occupied the equatorial zone of the continent, which became the vast island of New Guinea after sea levels rose at the end of the Pleistocene. Modern descendants of these early populations speak languages that belong to a number of different families that together are categorized as Papuan languages. Papuan peoples domesticated root crops and sugarcane and may have kept domestic pigs as early as 9,000 years ago, contemporaneous with the dawn of agriculture in the Middle East. By 5,000 years ago agricultural production in parts of the New Guinea highlands had incorporated systems of water control and swine husbandry, both of which were intensified over subsequent millennia. Evidence of long-distance trade, particularly of shell ornaments and obsidian, suggests that the widely spread communities characterized by the Lapita tradition had become linked politically

by 3,000–3,500 years ago. The settlement of eastern Micronesia by Austronesian speakers, perhaps from the Solomons, apparently took place during this period. Fiji was initially colonized by Lapita peoples and became a springboard to the settlement of western Polynesia. The Austronesian speakers, who had a maritime orientation and sophisticated seagoing technology, probably had a system of hereditary chiefs with political-religious authority. They also had elaborate cosmologies and complex religious systems that were similar to those recorded in western Polynesia. Although the mix of Austronesian and Papuan cultural elements varies across Melanesia, in many ways the joint classification of both Austronesian peoples and Papuan peoples as Melanesians—in contrast to Micronesians and Polynesians—does a disservice to the ethnological, linguistic, and archaeological evidence. The Austronesians of northern Vanuatu and the southeastern Solomons speak languages very closely related to those of Polynesia and eastern Micronesia. Culturally, Austronesians are in many ways more closely related to these other Austronesian-speaking peoples than to the Papuans of interior New Guinea. Their religious systems are also similar to those in Polynesia and, for example, incorporate such concepts as *mana* (“potency”) and, in the Solomons, *tapu* (“sacred”) (Britannica E. , 2018).

1.4 Status of legal recognition

Legal status of the recognition of indigenous people’s sovereignty is still contested across the Pacific. In 1960 the United Nations issued a Declaration of Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which encouraged the trend toward self-government, yet it was not until the independence of Samoa from New Zealand in 1962 that a worldwide wave of decolonization reached the region. During the 1960s and 1970s seven South Pacific countries (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa) became independent as Britain, Australia, and New Zealand dismantled their colonial systems there.

The Cook Islands and Niue have achieved *de facto* independence in association with New Zealand. The French territories, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna, have varying degrees of internal autonomy.

Active independence movements for land and freedom continue in Bougainville, West Papua and Guam. American Samoa remains firmly tied to the United States. Pitcairn is still a British colony, and New Zealand administers Tokelau, but this is at the request of the inhabitants (Stanley, 2018). Rapanui (Easter Island) was recently decolonized as a colony of Chile.

Regional & national laws and policies

Customary land is land which was traditionally owned by indigenous communities and administered in accordance with their customs, whilst statutory tenure was usually introduced during the colonial periods. Common ownership is one form of customary land ownership (AusAID, 2009).

In most countries of the Pacific Islands customary land under customary authority remains the dominant land tenure form. In most countries it represents more than 80 per cent of the total land area (see table below). Distinct customary systems of tenure have evolved on different islands and areas within the Pacific region. The characteristics of customary tenure systems are significantly different from those of public or freehold forms of tenure. Land rights are managed by customary groups according to their own unique processes, which are linked to underlying social and spiritual belief systems. For countless generations, customary tenure has successfully met the basic needs of people in the Pacific region. Land has come to represent an important safety net in terms of the subsistence lifestyle of many people in the region (AusAID, 2009).

The total land area of the Pacific is 8,486,460 square kilometres (Worldometers, 2018). Many countries have more than 80% of customary lands, including the Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Niue, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. The amount of customary land ownership out of the total land area of a country is 97% in Papua New Guinea, 90% in Vanuatu, 88% in Fiji, 87% in the Solomon Islands, 81% in Samoa (AusAID, 2009).

The following table shows the distribution of land by system of tenure in the Pacific region.

	Public	Freehold	Customary
Cook Islands	Some	Little	95%
Fiji	4%	8%	88%
Federated States of Micronesia	35%	<1%	65%
Kiribati	50%	<5%	>45%
Marshall Islands	<1%	0%	99%
Nauru	<10%	0%	>90%
Niue	1.5%	0%	98.5%
Palau	Most	Some	Some
Papua New Guinea	2.5%	0.5%	97%
Samoa	15%	4%	81%
Solomon Islands	8%	5%	87%
Tokelau	1%	1%	98%
Tonga	100%	0%	0%
Tuvalu	5%	<0.1%	95%
Vanuatu	2%	0%	98%

(AusAID, 2009)

Many people no longer enjoy secure land tenure. They no longer have certainty that their rights (or their group's rights) to land will be recognised by others and protected in cases of challenge. While public and freehold land represents only a small proportion of a country's land area, it is often located in the most productive and accessible places, and is usually supplied with the infrastructure for economic and social development (AusAID, 2009).

Distinct customary systems of tenure have evolved on thousands of different islands and areas within the Pacific region. In any country there may be dozens of different types of customary tenure but in some of the Melanesian countries the number is higher. Despite their complexity and diversity, customary tenure systems do share some common characteristics, which differ significantly from those of public or freehold systems. The various aspects of customary tenure—inheritance, allocation of usage rights, dispute settlement and recordkeeping, for example—are managed by customary groups according to their own unique processes, which are often linked to underlying social and spiritual beliefs. Most governments in the Pacific region respect customary tenure systems and have tended to avoid interfering with them in terms of how they allocate rights, manage the land and keep records.

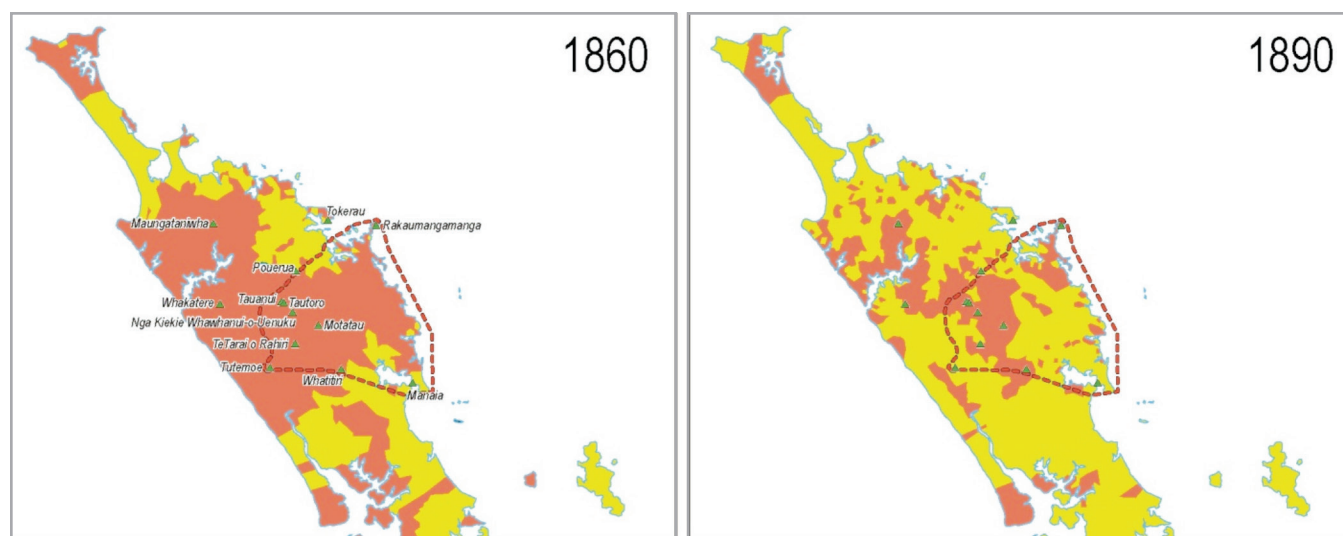
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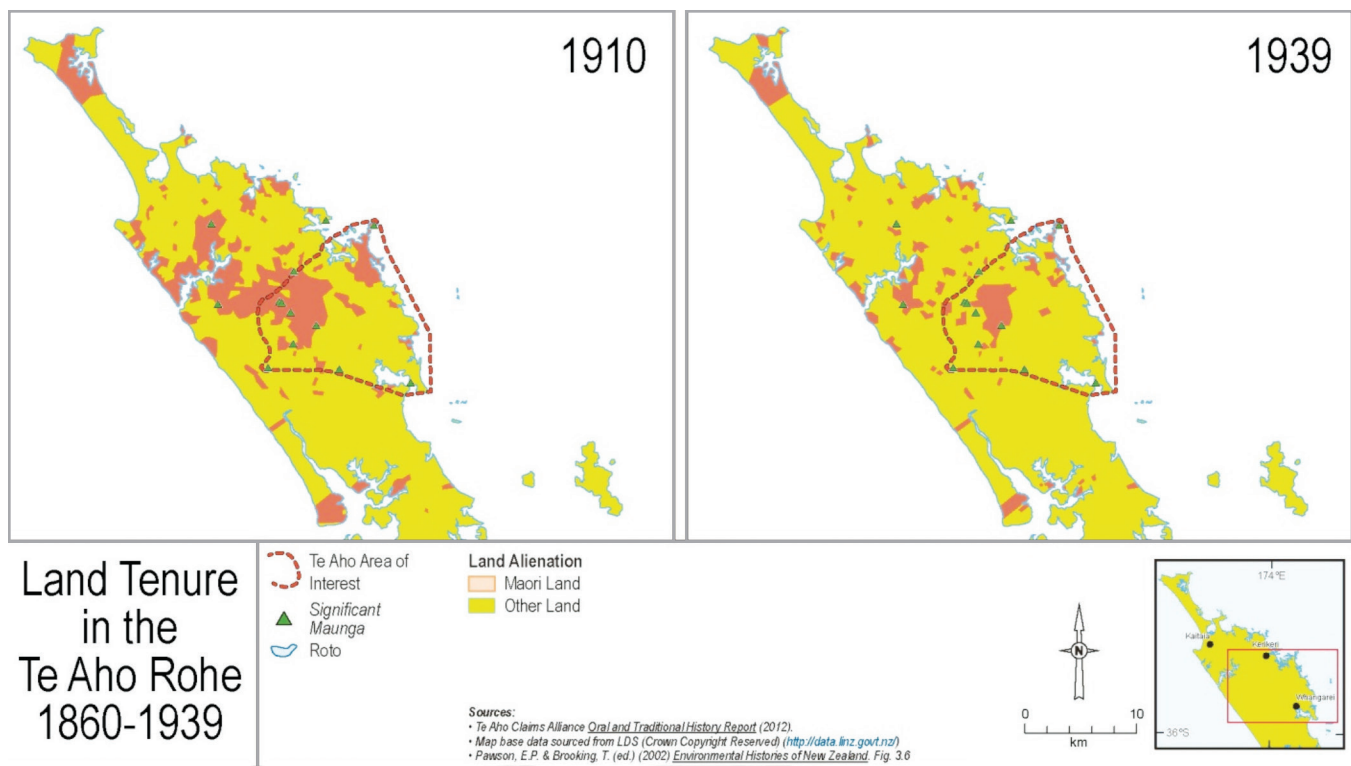
Peoples Lands, Territories and Resources

3.1 General characterization of Indigenous Peoples Lands, Territories and Resources

In many parts of the Pacific region, information about the boundaries of land under customary tenure is recorded orally by local groups. These boundaries tend to be described in terms of natural features such as rocks, trees or rivers. Uncertainty or disputes among customary groups over boundaries are common (AusAID, 2009).

The following map demonstrates the changes to Maori land over time:





Although customary land tenure systems vary greatly across the Pacific region and it is risky to generalise, they do share some common features with the following main characteristics:

1. Access to land primarily stems from birth into a kinship group.
2. Groups based on kinship or other forms of relationship are the main landholding (or 'owning') units.
3. The main land-using units are individuals or small household units.
4. Men, particularly chiefs, elders or senior men within the customary group, have the main say in decisions over the group's land matters.
5. As well as being a source of power, land is a focus for many social, cultural and spiritual activities.
6. There are usually ways to accommodate the land needs of anyone accepted into the group. Outsiders—for example, refugees from tribal fights—are sometimes adopted by a group and gain the privileges of group membership.
7. Land can be transferred only within existing social and political relationships.
8. Rights to access land are constantly adjusted to take account of changes in group membership—some groups increasing and some dying out—and the need to redistribute land (AusAID, 2009)

Although customary land is often described as being 'owned' by a group, this does not necessarily mean that all members of the group have equal access to the land. Each individual within a customary group has distinct and often different interests and rights to use, control and transfer land and land-based resources. Some rights are vested exclusively with a particular individual (for example, rights to harvest a particular tree); some are vested in families or households (for example, rights to grow a crop); and some may be shared equally between all or a large number of the group's members (for example, the right to decide, or to say no, to swap land with another customary group). Customary groups often allocate land rights to members on the basis of function rather than demarcated area. This can result in several members having different functional rights to the same land. For example, an individual may

have the right to hunt on the same land as someone else has the right to collect timber. Reciprocal obligations often underpin the allocation of land rights. For example, a family or an individual may be granted rights to harvest timber for subsistence use on the condition that they help the group to defend the forest (Vegter 2005).

Examples of Customary Land Rights

Usage rights Rights to use land for traditional purposes, including:

- hunting, fishing, growing crops, grazing animals or collecting food
- manufacturing materials, artifacts or other natural products from the resources of the area
- erecting a residence and other infrastructure
- learning and communicating cultural, natural and spiritual knowledge, traditions and practices of the area.

Transfer rights

Rights to transfer land, or specific rights to use land, to other people, including:

- through inheritance or membership of the customary group
- through negotiation and agreement with another customary group or an outsider.³

3.2 Legal recognition of Lands, Territories and Resources

Most countries in the Pacific recognise in their Constitutions or legislation the authority of customary groups to manage their ancestral land in accordance with their traditions and customary law.

There are five ways this has already been done, both within and outside the region:

1. By creating legal mechanisms to recognise customary groups;
2. By formally recognising the landownership of customary groups through a process of recording or registration;
3. By facilitating the leasing of customary land in a way that fairly distributes benefits between landowners and leaseholders;
4. By establishing regulations and institutions that support, assist and protect customary landowners during negotiations with governments and investors;
5. By supporting both customary and formal institutions in resolving different kinds of land disputes. (AusAID, 2009)

In some countries a customary landowning group is able to or encouraged to create a legal device known as a ‘trust’ or ‘incorporation’ to gain formal legal recognition for the group as a whole. The ‘trustees’ hold legal title to the land while acting in the interests of the traditional owners. In some cases, such as Aotearoa (New Zealand), trusts are however considered to be difficult to establish and at times disempowering of traditional owners who are not always consulted on decisions to the level that they wish.

Depending on the legislation, there are sometimes establishment and operational costs including legal assistance, accountancy services and anthropological advice on genealogies and group membership.

³ Adapted from FAO (2002) and Sutton (2001).

Ideally, the legislation dealing with the incorporation of customary landowning groups should allow groups to define their own rules for decision-making without imposing foreign concepts and ideas. Without this freedom, members of a customary group may struggle to understand their rights and responsibilities. (AusAID, 2009).

In New Zealand, there is a single Act, Te Ture Whenua Maori 1993, that governs both incorporated customary landowning groups and landowner trusts for Maori land. But this is rarely undertaken. In Papua New Guinea, incorporated land groups are the usual mechanism for representing landowners, through the Land Groups Incorporation Act 1974.

Another mechanism used in the Pacific to recognise a customary landowning group is registration of individual members of the group. While it sounds good in theory, this approach can result in inaccurate details on landowners and fragmented land ownership. Identifying the members of a customary group and understanding how the rights of ownership or land use are allocated is not straightforward. The allocation of individual land rights can change as a result of, for example, inheritance, residence, marriage and family size. Also, there are significant differences in how the various customary groups determine membership and allocate land rights. In an attempt to capture information about land rights within a customary group, a number of countries have applied a particular inheritance rule to all customary groups. However, this approach usually fails to capture the full picture of ownership patterns normalize by customary groups. As a result, the register of landowners often ends up being incorrect from the perspective of the customary groups. (AusAID, 2009)

3.3 Threats and challenges to the Lands, Territories & Resources

Over the past few years, OECD members have seen ‘fragile states’ as one of the major challenges to sustainability and security. These relations are also profoundly determined by external economic, political and military dynamics. (Volker Boege, 2008).

Customary forms of authority in some areas of the Pacific has been weakening due to increased interaction with outsiders such as governments, democratic institutions, and religion. Globalisation has also had an impact through external actors with new ways of using land, including large-scale harvesting of timber and minerals, agribusiness, roads and other infrastructure, and tourism. New ideas and opportunities for customary groups to benefit from their land can mean that customary authority is less effective in regulating the behaviour of group members or the leaders of the group. Changes in customary authority can reduce land tenure security for some members of customary groups and strengthen it for others—for example, when land deals take place without the consent of all landowning members of the group. Historically in the Pacific region, such changes have tended to reduce women’s access to land. Loss of authority can also weaken processes for resolving disputes involving customary land, so that disputes remain unresolved for a long time. (AusAID, 2009)

► Population growth and migration

In many rural areas, population growth and limited employment and business opportunities have led to significant migration from these areas. In Melanesian countries such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu, large numbers of rural people have moved to urban centres. In Polynesian countries, such as Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands, many have moved to other countries, particularly Aotearoa (New Zealand), because of favourable entry conditions. (AusAID, 2009) The city of Auckland in Aotearoa (New Zealand) is in fact considered as the capital city of the Pacific as it often has a higher population of Pacific Islanders living there than in their own respective countries.

Large-scale migration from rural to urban areas has undermined tenure security in a number of ways. A lack of affordable freehold land for rural migrants to use for housing and businesses in urban areas has forced them to informally settle on public land and the customary land of other groups. The new settlers often try to strengthen their tenure security through, for example, physical force, political patronage and rental agents. Because the first wave of settlers are usually men and they make the initial informal arrangements, the women who follow them usually have neither informal nor formal tenure agreements in which they have participated or to which they have consented. (AusAID, 2009)

► Increased conflict

While insecure land tenure and land degradation is known to create disputes and conflict, the relationship also works in reverse—conflict and instability can undermine tenure security. Places such as East Timor and Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, West Papua and Maluku have suffered instability that has escalated into violent conflict. The cause of conflict is often a dispute over rights and access to economic benefits (AusAID, 2009). State institutions are confronted with a wide variety of internal and external challenges and their ability to deal with these will depend on whether they are organically and tightly connected to customary institutions (Volker Boege, 2008)

► Land fragmentation and cross-ownership

The Cook Islands and Aotearoa (New Zealand) have attempted to create a register of individual customary landowners. Both countries use an equal inheritance rule, whereby children inherit equally the registered lands of their parents. This system has created the problems of fragmentation and cross-ownership. Small plots of land now have hundreds or thousands of owners, and any one person may have ownership rights in a large number of small plots of land. The equal inheritance system has corrupted the traditional practice of rights to land being contingent on residence and participation in the community and so has changed the land systems from being flexible and effective in allocating rights and managing land, to being unworkable. Highly fragmented landownership can create a vicious cycle. This is because the greater the dilution of ownership, the lower the incentive for people to dispose of land to enable consolidation of ownership. This is the case for two reasons: 1) as fragmentation increases the value of each shareholding shrinks and so do the benefits of disposing of the land and 2) the scope and complexity of the ownership structure increases and so do the costs and effort required to bring the owners together to consolidate ownership. (AusAID, 2009)

► Registration of Customary Landowners in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and the Cook Islands

In Aotearoa (New Zealand), systematic registration of the customary lands of the Maori people began in the late 1800s. The objective was to bring the land tenure systems closer to the English system, so the emphasis was on individualization of titles rather than registration of group ownership. Measures were taken to reinforce the process of individualization, including a requirement that each title have a maximum of 10 registered owners. This forced the landowning groups to divide their lands into small parcels for registration. The Cook Islands followed a similar path and the ownership of most customary lands in the Cook Islands was registered during colonial times under a ‘native freehold title’ system. A crucial court decision in Aotearoa (New Zealand) which was adopted in the Cook Islands, was that all children should inherit equally the registered lands of their parents. This decision has led to considerable difficulties in managing land and defining ownership. In Aotearoa (New Zealand), in 2007 there were 2 million owner interests recorded on just 26,000 land titles, and this is growing by about 185,000 a year. The difficulties relate not only to fragmented ownership but also to increasing cross-ownership. People now have ownership rights in many parcels of land, with the portfolio of each person’s land interests increasing rapidly. With the ever-increasing dilution of ownership, people in both countries are failing to update their registration records, which now contain obsolete information. In the Cook Islands in particular, the registration system cannot cope, and registered titles are not accepted as collateral by lenders. (AusAID, 2009)

Another potential problem associated with registering individual members of customary landowning groups and the equal inheritance rule is absentee members. Under traditional practice in parts of Polynesia, people who moved elsewhere usually relinquished their rights to the land. But under the formal land register in the Cook Islands all children inherit the registered land of their parents. This has meant that decisions about land management are sometimes influenced more by absentee owners than by resident owners. This is a particular concern for the Cook Islands because, as already noted, most citizens live in other countries. As a result of the equal inheritance rule, the rights of Cook Islanders living on their customary land are dominated by the rights of people living elsewhere, who are in the majority. Land rights even extend to people born in other countries who have never been to the Cook Islands but are considered Cook Islanders. (AusAID, 2009)

3.4 Practices and state of sustainable resource management and traditional livelihoods, traditional knowledge and related indigenous institutions

Continued customary land tenure in physically remote territories around the Pacific ensures continuity in many instances of the practices and state of sustainable resource management and traditional livelihoods, traditional knowledge and related indigenous institutions.

In some instances a multiple knowledge based approach can add value to such management. While traditional and cultural approaches to environmental management in the South Pacific pre-date western environmental management methods by centuries, scientific monitoring techniques should add, rather than substitute for, traditional and customary approaches. The most effective approach to environmental management is a combination of traditional and customary



RA'UI

practices and knowledge with scientific methods of assessment and monitoring of environmental sustainability. This has proven to yield successful results, for example in the village of Ucunivanua in Venata, Fiji. After implementing scientific monitoring of fish and bivalves in the coastal area of the village, and adjusting harvesting when counts were low, the women who are the gatherers of the bivalves are able to collect twice as many oysters in the same amount of time, compared to before the monitoring began. This demonstrable benefit has ensured that the environmental monitoring program continues. (Sutton, 2017) amount of time, compared to before the monitoring began. This demonstrable benefit has ensured that the environmental monitoring program continues. (Sutton, 2017)

3.5 State of biodiversity in indigenous territories

Many reports and statistics produced on the state of biodiversity in the Pacific are grouped together with the Asia region and therefore it would require more time to investigate specific Pacific state of biodiversity for this report. However, there are reports from Small Island Development States (SIDS) which cover information relevant for the Pacific:

The biological diversity and the high degree of endemism of many species on SIDS is well known. Because of their small size and the endemic nature of many species, the biological diversity of SIDS is extremely fragile. One consequence of the relative isolation of SIDS is the large incidence of unique biological adaptations: flightless birds, gigantism and dwarfism in other groups, and many modifications of form, diet and behaviour. Restrictive habitats and small populations often generate unique features and adaptations to prevailing environmental and climatic conditions, but under such circumstances species often lack the ability to adapt to rapid changes. (Development, 1998)

As pressures on fish stocks, nutrients loading, port activity, sea surface temperature and CO₂ flux, continue to increase (and be potentially exacerbated by environmental change, climate variability, and climate change), PICTs⁴ will also require a strong institutional and governance capability to effectively implement all the necessary regulatory and governance responses. Achieving this will require a strategic and coordinated approach at multiple levels that is capable of working across various regulatory areas due to the complicated nature of many of the challenges identified in this report. If this can be achieved, it will go some way to developing solutions, or at least mitigate the impacts of current threats and future pressures. (Kwa, 2008)

3.6 Impacts of climate change and related solutions

For indigenous communities in the Pacific, adapting to the impacts of rising seas, fierce storms, and other challenges due to climate change has become a necessity. Global temperatures hit record highs the past three years in a row—and the people of the Pacific have been feeling the effects.

The Pacific region has experienced devastating cyclones, storm surges, coral bleaching, and irregular rainfall patterns. Sea level rise threatens low-lying islands, where salt water infiltrates drinking water wells and kills staple food crops, as well as damaging property. For example, in Guam, the biggest challenge is coral bleaching, but in the last few years, the cyclones have become more intense. Abnormally warm ocean waters can bleach corals, which occurs when stressed corals expel the colorful algae living within their tissues. Coral bleaching threatens the reef ecosystem, but increasingly intense cyclones and tropical storm surges pose immediate danger to island residents. Two category-five cyclones hit the Pacific in the past two years: Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu in March 2015, and Cyclone Winston hit Fiji in February 2016. Winston was the strongest tropical cyclone to hit the Southern Hemisphere in recorded time. (Cantieri, 2018)

⁴ Pacific Island Country Territories

Sea level rise threatens many Pacific countries and is having striking implications. At least eight low-lying islands in the Pacific Ocean have disappeared under rising seas (Klein, 2017). Based on the Pacific Ocean's sea level in 2015, it is estimated by the end of 2016 the world's average surface temperature will increase up to 0.28 degrees Celsius more than in 2014 (Jensen, 2016).

3.8 Actions of indigenous peoples in defense of their LTR and for self-determined development, achievements and lessons learned

► Community Based Monitoring and Information Systems

There is a growing number of Pacific community monitoring initiatives which are contributing to decision-making at local, national and international levels.

In 2012 and report on Alternative Indicators of Well-Being for Melanesia: Vanuatu pilot study report was released (Cookson, 2012). The objective of this pilot study on well-being in Vanuatu was to open a dialogue on well-being which measures happiness and considers variables that reflect Melanesian values including resource access, cultural practice, and community vitality, which are now being used at the national level (Office, 2012).

In Aotearoa (New Zealand), the Kauri Dieback Joint Management Programme, through the Tangata Whenua Roopu (indigenous peoples group), have championed the design of a framework to enable the use of cultural indicators in the surveillance and monitoring of Kauri Dieback. This is to ensure that a holistic, kauri ecosystem approach can be taken and is currently being piloted in three communities. (Shortland & Chetham, 2013)

In Hawaii, Kama'aha Educational Institute has developed a project called, 'Aimalama, which utilizes the Kaulana Mahina (Hawaiian Moon Calendar) to empower Hawaii communities to prepare and adapt to the changing climate. The subsequent 2015 'Aimalama Lunar Conference brought together peoples of Hawaii and the Pacific who are revitalizing lunar practices to share lunar methodologies with one another and build a regional community of practice. (Initiative, 2015)

► Cultural Impact Assessments

Cultural Impact Assessments are often used as tools to assess the effects of developments on indigenous communities. One example is a Cultural Impact Assessment produced by a tribe of Aotearoa (New Zealand) for an application for an aquatic herbicide reassessment by the Environmental Protection Authority. Through providing evidence of the effects of the proposal, Ngati Hine were able to demonstrate the adverse impacts on the waterways within their catchments on their cultural and spiritual relationship. Therefore the Environmental Protection Authority made a decision that no use of the herbicide was to take place without the full and effective participation of Ngati Hine communities (Shortland T. , 2012).

► Indigenous generated literature on the natural environment

The natural environment including biodiversity sustains culture and influences the livelihood strategies of many indigenous societies in the tropics, including Papua New Guinea. Indigenous societies have unique ways of perceiving their natural environment, with intimate relationships and connectedness between biodiversity and culture that have great influence on their livelihoods. This has enabled them to develop better strategies of conserving the biodiversity traditionally and utilising the services provided sustainably by the ecosystem. However, most approaches to biodiversity conservation in PNG at present are based on species, ecosystem or hot spot concepts, which have very little meaning to the communities as such concepts do not fully capture the traditional and cultural values of the biodiversity as seen by indigenous communities. This study investigated the Gimi peoples' perspective on their natural environment and its influence on their culture, livelihood and biodiversity conservation. The aim of this work was to document the importance of the natural environment to the Gimi community by investigating the interrelationship they have with the environment and culture, between traditional knowledge and age and their connectedness to the environment. It also aimed to understand the indigenous peoples' views of the environment, how indigenous people link biological diversity to cultural practices and how their views, which provide a holistic approach to preserve biodiversity and culture not only in PNG but across Melanesia, can be incorporated into biodiversity conservation projects (Ruli, 2017).

► Environmental restoration and protected areas

There are many environmental restoration and protected area projects being initiated across the Pacific by indigenous communities.

One example in Fiji is known as the Sisi Initiative, to 'protect, restore and sustainably manage' the Natewa-Tunulua (on the northern Island of Fiji, Vanua Levu) SEPL natural assets to sustain and guarantee the perpetuation of heritage, livelihoods, resilience and opportunities for current and future communities within the landscape. The overall long-term objective of the COMDEKS Programme Landscape Strategy is to enhance socio-ecological production landscape resilience through community-based activities especially through the use of indigenous and local knowledge (ILK).

The Sisi Initiative Site Support Group (SSG in the project document and also the recipient of the grant), was established in 2005 as a voluntary community-based group that has agreed to oversee environmental activities in the area. In 2009, the group was formalised and given the name Sisi Initiative with a specific goal to conserve and sustainably manage the forests for the benefit of landowning communities and for the wider population of Fiji. It established a community-managed protected forest and was seeking mid to long-term development projects to help sustain its conservation initiative.

The overall objective of the project is to provide support to maintain the agricultural biodiversity and productivity within the landscape through reviving traditional crop varieties and establishment of demonstration or model farms. Activities included

establishment of trial plots to propagate all crop varieties that are traditionally known in the Natewa Tunulua peninsula. The project aims at reviving traditional farming methods. The SSG in consultation with the communities put together a strategy to ensure that small projects and enterprises are established to ensure livelihoods for themselves, since they have put aside their forest for protection (Qaloibau, 2017).

► Environmental sustainability and employment

It is important to acknowledge and encourage indigenous initiatives that focus on environmental sustainability and employment. In Samoa, the Women in Business Development Fine Mat Programme,

Founded in 1991, Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI) is considered a pioneering organisation in certified organic agriculture in Samoa and in the region. Organic farming as a set of principles and practices for ecologically sustainable agriculture are much aligned with traditional farming approaches already existent in Samoa

In 1997, WIBDI started working with weavers to revive the tradition of creating Samoan fine mats, the *ie sae*. Prior to the commencement of WIBDI's *ie Samoa* programme, the fine mats being produced in Samoa were of poor quality.

The traditional process of making a mat is complex, physically demanding, and time-consuming. It takes a skilled weaver up to six months to produce a single mat of standard size (approximately 230 cm x 210 cm). The outcome of this process however is extraordinary – the *ie sae* is very durable and gains in quality over time. When kept for many years, the fine mats resemble a piece of fabric almost the quality of fine silk. Its softness is produced by treating and finely cutting (in strips of one to three millimetres) only the leaves from a particular species of pandanus tree (*lauie*).

In Samoa, carrying out training workshops successfully requires a good understanding of the local political structure. Each Samoan village runs a women's committee, whose members report to the high village chiefs. The reunion of the village chiefs is the final decision-making body at the village level. WIBDI staff generally approach the women's committees to discuss the need of a workshop in their villages.

For those women who decided on weaving as their income-generating activity, WIBDI developed payment plans - the "sponsorship scheme" - to provide the weavers with a steady stream of income during the approximately six month weaving process. Under these schemes, buyers slowly pay off the total sum of up to SAT\$ 7,000 for a fine mat while it is woven. The payments are made fortnightly to the weaver if a sufficient amount of the mat is woven and to the required standard, and a small portion of the payment is paid to WIBDI to cover the operational costs of village workshops and visits.

The income of a weaver is nearly equal to the national monthly average wage (see above). (Fuimaono, 2017)

► Responses to the nuclear cycle

The Pacific region has suffered from some of the most detrimental effects of nuclear testing on the planet. The effects of which are being documented and justice is being sought for such activities. One example is the Marshall Islands. A Doctoral study in Education for Sustainable Development focuses on the Recentering traditional Marshallese Knowledge Systems.

This collaborative study with the Enewetak community – a community that continues to feel the devastating effects of nuclear testing – aims to document Marshallese epistemology through indigenous methodology for the purpose of healing, empowerment, praxis, and policy influence. ERUB refers to Enewetak, Rongelap, Utrik, Bikini – the four atolls recognised by the United States as affected by the 67 bomb tests conducted in the Marshall Islands.

Joint NGO statement to UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment - Statement in coordination with Iju in Eañ (Rongelap women's NGO) and Elimoñdik (Enewetak NGO, which I co-coordinate with my husband), focused on biodiversity, health, and human rights. The current issue now is the nuclear legacy and continued militarism of indigenous lands, and how to address these issues in a democratic manner through an indigenous lens (Abraham, 2017).

3.9 Recommendations

This report is only to be considered a small snap shot of the issues and initiatives within the Pacific region. There are many more examples that could be added given more time and resources.

To fully realise the appropriate traditional rights to lands, territories and resources, there is a need for decolonization in several countries and the establishment and review of legal recognition in many more.

Legal mechanisms to formally recognise customary groups are required in some parts of the Pacific. These mechanisms could include landowner trusts, incorporated landowning groups and registration of individual customary landowners. Their purpose is to give customary groups a presence in the formal legal system. The most suitable model will depend on a variety of factors and circumstances, including the strength of supporting state institutions. Landowner trusts and incorporated landowning groups can be particularly effective and efficient options for this task (AusAID, 2009).

Overall, there is a lack of human, technical, institutional and financial capacity in the Pacific, and this combined with the wide geographical distribution of Pacific Island Country Territories (PICTs) over a vast, remote and generally rural area, contributes to the need for capacity building. Subsequently, there is a need to build capacity and appropriate resources and funding to provide for the level of data collection, management and analysis for environmental monitoring of the marine environment in the Pacific Islands region (Development, 1998). There are numerous examples of good Community Based Monitoring and Information Systems within the Pacific which could be drawn upon including the Alternative Indicators of Wellbeing for Melanesia.

Further specific research that would assist in demonstrating a fuller picture of the Pacific region that would be of use to communities, countries and other decision makers, could focus on mapping of nuclear impacted territories, militarized zones, and bio-cultural territories managed by indigenous peoples.

Appendix 1 – Pacific Population

	Country / Nation	Population (2015) ⁵	Indigenous population by %	Indigenous total population
1.	Australia	23,792,000	2.5%	594,800
2.	Papua New Guinea	8,219,000	more than 98% ⁶	8,054,620
3.	Aotearoa (New Zealand)	4,579,000	15%	686,850
4.	Hawaii	1,425,000	10.2% ⁷	145,350
5.	Fiji	867,000	56.8% ⁸	492,456
6.	Solomon Islands	587,000	94.5% Melanesian ⁹	554,715
7.	Vanuatu	278,000	98.5% ¹⁰	273,830
8.	New Caledonia	273,000	kanak 39.1% in 2014 ¹¹	106,743
9.	French Polynesia	273,000	78% Polynesian ¹²	212,940
10.	Samoa	193,000	92.6% ¹³	178,718
11.	Guam	162,000	Chamorro 37.3% ¹⁴	60,426
12.	Kiribati	113,000	113,000 – 98.8% ¹⁵	111,644
13.	Tonga	104,000	96.6% ¹⁶	100,464
14.	Federated States of Micronesia	103,000	88.9% ¹⁷	91,567
15.	Marshall Islands	55,000	98% ¹⁸	53,900
16.	American Samoa	55,000	88.9% ¹⁹	48,895
17.	Northern Mariana Islands	47,000	34.9% ²⁰	16,403
18.	Palau	17,000	73% ²¹	12,410
19.	Cook Islands	15,000	88% ²²	13,200
20.	Wallis and Futuna	12,000	100% ²³	12,000
21.	Tuvalu	11,000	96% ²⁴	10,560
22.	Nauru	10,000	58% ²⁵	5,800
23.	Norfolk Islands	3,000	0%	0
24.	Niue	2,000	79.9% ²⁶	1,598
25.	Tokelau	1,000	89.4% ²⁷	894
26.	Pitcairn Islands	60	0%	0

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Oceanian_countries_by_population

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Papua_New_Guinea

⁷ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/HI>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Fiji

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_Islands

¹⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanuatu>

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Caledonia#Ethnic_groups

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_people

¹³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samoa>

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Guam#Ethnic_groups

¹⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiribati>

¹⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonga>

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federated_States_of_Micronesia

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_Islands

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Samoa

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Mariana_Islands

²¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palau>

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Islands

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallis_and_Futuna

²⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuvalu>

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nauru#Ethnic_groups

²⁶ http://www.indexmundi.com/niue/demographics_profile.html

²⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokelau>

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Published by:
Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN), International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IPMG) for Sustainable Development and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the **RFN, EU** and **IWGIA**.

