

## Chapter Five

### Voices from the Field

#### Introduction

This chapter documents the stories from the fieldwork. It begins with the *'toli kakala'* and has inevitably followed the semi structured questionnaire schedule used during data collection. The interviewees all worked with Tongan people either in a professional health or social capacity or in a pastoral carer position or as a community leader.

As discussed in the methodology chapter the questions were geared to solicit information regarding the aims and objectives of the research project:

1. the extent of gambling/problem gambling among the Auckland Tongan community
2. factors that contribute to problem gambling
3. possible solutions or public health interventions to deal with problem gambling
4. Future relationship to work together in implementing and applying some of the suggested interventions.

This chapter and its discussion is conceptualised by extensive re-listening to the tapes, reviewing the transcripts, research team meetings, advisory group meetings, Vaka Ola meetings as well as general conversations, workshops, presentations and discussions with other peoples at *fono*<sup>28</sup>, forums and conferences in Auckland.

All efforts to ensure participants, stories and examples are not recognised have been taken.

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<sup>28</sup> Pacific meetings/gathering

## Common Themes and Concepts

The first part of this section reports on themes and concepts ‘identifying the extent to which gambling is an emerging problem within the Auckland Tongan community’

### 1. Household and Familial Relationships

The discussions around gambling and its effect on the family unit became central to all of the interviewees. Professionals, ministers and leaders noted that although many of the clients did not attribute their hardships to gambling specifically they did after some discussion and investigation of their daily expenditure and routines, gambling became one of the main reasons for the hardships.

Some families were referred to service providers due to the children having no lunch at school or poor clothing, hygiene and or absences. Other referrals included violence in the family or home alone cases for the children and/or elderly.

All of the interviewees knew of at least one or more cases of broken families or the household suffering due to a member/s gambling habits. Many of the professional workers noted that most of the cases came through directly linked to the children.

***“...the husband went to the casino and stayed there overnight and so the wife left the kids at home alone and went to find the husband, when she did she joined him gambling for another day. Social workers took the kids away as a result.”***

***“Kuo tonounou ‘ae ngaahi fiema’u e famili pea pehe foki kihe tauataina e fanau moe famili ko e ‘uhi ko e ‘alu e pa’anga kihe gambling.”***

***“The family needs are not fulfilled and the children and family’s sense of stability is lost because money is being spent on gambling.”***

Other reasons such as domestic violence or partner abuse were sighted by many of the interviewees as a symptom of either one or both of the caregivers gambling behaviour.

***“Mole e fefalala’aki ‘a ha ongo matu’a koe’uhi ko e ‘alu lau houa e tokotaha va’inga pa’anga pea pehe foki ki he mole mo e nounou e pa’anga ke totongi ‘aki e ngaahi me’a faka e ‘api.”***

***“A couple can lose their sense of trust because the gambler is away from the home for hours and the money is short for basic household needs.”***

***“Lahi e loi mo e ke ha ongo matu’a ko e tupunga mei he loi e tokotaha va’inga pa’anga pe ko e nounou e totongi mo’ua pea pehe foki ki he fua kavenga – stress.”***

***“Lots of lies and arguing for couples because of the gambling habits of the gambler or bills can’t be paid and other obligations can’t be met – stress.”***

Family break-ups were common effects of gambling throughout all the interviews. There were significant comments about the neglect of the elderly, where family members would use the casino or local pokies bars as entertainment places for them. Some elderly members of the family would be dropped off at these places and then picked up when family members were ready. This was mentioned by a number of the interviewees and knew that it was quite common.

***“Ko ia ‘oku si’i ‘ave foki e kau vaivai ‘o tuku’i ki ai [casino] pea toki pick he tuku e ngaue pe he ‘osi e me’a ‘oku mo’ua ki ai e fanau, nau si’i nofonofo ai pe ‘o talitali mo siosio holo, ka mahalo ‘oku nau sa’ia ange nautolu ai he nofo noa’ia ‘i ‘api.”***

***“Yes, they take the old people there [casino] and then pick them up after work or whatever the children [caregivers] were busy with, they just sit around and look around until someone picks them up, but I think they would rather be there than at home doing nothing.”***

Other comments were around the family members or caregivers spending long amounts of time at the gambling venues and the elderly are left at home to fend for themselves. Some comments came around older family members not eating for hours because there was no one home to prepare food or feed them. Medication was also neglected because the caregivers were spending long hours gambling.

***“Na’e ‘ ai foki e ki’i vaivai na’e feinga ki he ‘api Tonga ‘oku ofi mai pe ki honau ‘api ko e talu e ‘a e ‘alu hono foha mo hono mali ki he casino he po e taha pea kuo a’u mai eni ‘o po’uli ‘oku te’eki ai pe ke na ‘asi’asi mai. Ko e talu e ‘ene nofo ta’e kai mei he efiafi ‘e taha pea feinga leva ki he ‘api Tonga ofi mai pe pea toki ‘alu leva e ‘api ‘o kumi ‘a e tamasi’i mo hono mali... ‘o ma’u atu ki he casino.”***

***“There was this elderly person that tried to go to another Tongan home close by to his house because his son and his wife had gone to the casino the evening before and it was now getting dark the day after and they still had not returned. He had not eaten since the day before and so he walked down the road to another Tongan home and they went out looking for them [son and wife] and found them at the casino.”***

As one of the ministers stated:

***“Gambling is severing the moral fibre of our society and weakens family relationships and ties.”***

## 2. Finances

Other referrals have come by way of mortgagee sales, evictions, disconnection of utilities, repossessed goods and the harassment of debt collectors and loan sharks.

Efforts to fund and maintain gambling habits have introduced the Tongan community to numerous ways of obtaining money. Tongan pawnbrokers and small personal loan outlets have also seen a significant growth in clientele as well as growth within its own business. Personal home loans have also been set up in order to target this dubious market.

***“Fakatu’utamaki e fanga ki’l fale no pea mole ai ‘a e koloa fakatonga pea mo e ha fua koe feinga ke recover ‘ete loss mei he gambling”***

***“The small loan places are very dangerous because they loose their Tongan valuables and other things in order to recover their losses from gambling”***

It was also noted that some of the smaller Tongan loan places had a very loose credit criteria and would lend on more lenient terms so in some cases credit checks were not a requirement, this suited clients that already had bad credit ratings.

***“People [gamblers] resort to financial services with very high interest to feed their gambling habits or to make ends meet. This further adds stress and more debts.”***

Concerns about the cyclic nature of getting into more debt from loans and gambling was also consistent among all the interviewees. Some people also accessed more stringent loan places which would then affect their credit rating when the loans could not be paid for.

***“Toe no ke tapuni ‘aki e pa’anga kuo mole pea hoko leva hono feinga’i ke totongi e no pea fakafoki mai mo e koloa na’e malu’i ‘aki e no, pea fakataha mo e pa’anga kuo mole he misini pea taimi ‘e ni’ihi kuo ngaue ‘aki e pa’anga totongi pila (mo’ua) pea ‘ikai pe ke toe ‘ ai ha founa ia ke toe foki mai e pa’anga, pea taimi ‘e ni’ihi kuo kovi ai pe mo e credit rating.”***

***“they loan to recover gambling related losses and then find it difficult to make payments on the loan so they can get the goods they used as security for the loans back, plus the money they lost on the machines [pokies] and sometimes they use their bills money and they just can’t see a way out and then some get bad credit ratings.”***

There were also stories from some interviewees about people stealing from the family home or using family goods as security for loans. One story was of a man who stole the family TV and VCR and took it to a pawnbroker in exchange for money so as he could go to the casino. He later acted as surprised as his wife and children when they realised the TV and VCR had been stolen and went along with them thinking that it had been stolen.

The wife later found out the truth some time after when the habit became uncontrollable and other things in the house began disappearing, especially her Tongan crafts. She and the children left the family home and have since filed for divorce.

This story was not uncommon and the loss of goods and traditional goods to pawnbrokers and small loan outlets were increasingly becoming common.

Comments were made regarding the neglect and or abuse of the elderly. Some interviewees commented on family members using the benefit money of elderly members of the family to fund their gambling habits.

***“Kuo a’u eni kihe taimi kuo si’l ngaue ‘aki e vahe ia ‘a e kau vaivai ke fakapa’anga ‘aki e ‘alu kihe casino moe ha fua, pea kuo lahi e abuse ‘enau vahe koe ‘uhia ko e gambling, ‘ave pe ia he fanau pe ko e famili ko e ‘oku nau nofo ai ‘o ‘ikai ke si’l sio e vaivai ia kiha seniti”***

***“Its come to a point where the older family members benefit money is being used to fund trips to the casino and whatever else and their benefit is being abused because of the gambling, the children or the family members they live with use the money and they don’t get to see any of it.”***

The increase of financial problems that has occurred due to gambling was evident when many of the interviewees stated examples of mortgagee sales, evictions, repossessions and the disconnection of household utilities. In many cases they attributed a lot of these hardships to some form of gambling.

***“Gambling is a major problem, I know of friends and others in the community whose homes, vehicles and other assets have been repossessed because of gambling.”***

***“Its [gambling] a major problem. I am aware of at least 3 families who have lost their homes. They could not pay their mortgage because they gamble away their income.”***

Another significant point about women gambling was mentioned by a couple of the interviewees. It touched on the idea of financial freedom for the women and ideas around power and control within marital relationships.

***“Ko e fakatata eni ki he kakai fefine ‘e ni’ihi, power and control. ‘Ikai ke ma’u ha pa’anga ia mei he hoa pea pule haohaoa pe e hoa ki he vahe, pea hola leva ia ‘o tata ha misini ‘o ma’u ha’ane ki’l \$200, te’eki ai ke ‘oange ‘e hono hoa ia ha fu’u pa’anga pehe ke fa’iteliha ki ai.”***

***“Take for example some women, power and control. [If they don’t work] they don’t receive any money from their husband and he has total control over all their money and so she slips away and plays the machines and wins \$200, her husband has never given her this much money to for her own spending”***

### 3. Community Socio-cultural Relationships

There were many comments regarding the effect on familial, community or cultural standing of the gambler and/or the family. Connection to the problems with the pawnbrokers and Tongan loan outlets it was noted that the loss of cultural goods with traditional value affected the family and its contribution to family events.

Many of the Tongan outlets loaned money using Tongan crafts such as tapa, mats, ta’ovala<sup>29</sup> and other such crafts as security on loan agreements. As mentioned when the loans cannot be paid the loan outlets keep the goods and sell them to the public to recover their losses.

By losing these precious goods the family and especially the women cannot contribute to various significant functions and therefore loses face within her family, community or village. It was a reoccurring theme throughout many of the interviews.

***“ko e feinga foki ke ma’u ha pa’anga ke hoko atu aki e va’inga pa’anga pea kuo o ‘o no ‘o malu’l ‘aki e ki’l motu’l me’a fakatonga na’e nofo mo ia pea hoko mai e kavenga ia ‘oku ‘ikai ke ‘iai ha me’a ia ke ‘ave ‘o tokoni ki he me’a ‘oku fai, ‘oku fakama kapau ‘oku hoko tonu e me’a ‘l hoto loto’l famili pe ko e kainga lotu ‘oku te kau ki ai.”***

***“its an effort to get more money to fund the gambling and so they go and get loans using their Tongan goods as security and when the occasions arises they have nothing left to give as a contribution the event and its embarrassing if the even is within your family circle or within the church you belong to.”***

As one of the interviewers mentioned they know of people who have exhausted all avenues of getting money to fund their gambling, asking, begging and borrowing from loan outlets to family and friends and even asking the church to assist in paying for the disconnected utilities or overdue bills in case of eviction and so forth.

Interviewees have talked about members of the congregation asking for help at the last resort.

***“Its hard to keep anything confidential in our communities especially when the money is communal. We as executive holders have to account for the money and if a member of the congregation is desperate like the examples I have told you, and we loan them some money, then we have to report on it. They then save themselves and their family from eviction or get their utilities re-connected but they also have to face the community and know that they are being talked about.”***

These people lose face and standing in the community. Their self-esteem is further damaged.

#### **4. Mahaki Fakae’atamai<sup>30</sup>**

Comments have also been made regarding the mental stability of some clients or family, friends or community members.

Comments were made about the vulnerability of the Tongan community and how they do not understand why and how the pokies machines have been designed. Ignorance was commented on as the Tongan community did not understand the purpose of the machines and mistakenly take on a habit that leads to further problems.

***“...’oku ‘ ai e motu’a ia na’a ne talamai ‘oku mohe pe ia ‘o sio ki he misini pea fanongo ki he lea ‘a e misini pea ‘alu ‘o ngaue ‘o faka’amu pe ia ke fai mo a’u ki he misini...ma’u ‘enautolu e ngaahi lea e misini mo e ulo e maama he ‘oku ngaahi foki e misini ke lata ki ai e tokotaha va’inga pa’anga ke ma’u ‘enau tokanga ke uiui’i ‘aki kinautolu, hange ko e ngahaha e silini he kapa, ‘oku ngaahi kotoa ke uiui’i ‘aki e tangata mo puke ‘aki ho’o tokanga...”***

***“...there was this man who told me that when he slept he could see and hear the machines [pokies] and when he went to work he would wish he could be at the machines...they are captured by the sound of the machines and the lights because the machines have been designed to captivate the player and grab their attention like the sound of coins clanging against the metal, its all made to mesmerize people and keep their interest.”***

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<sup>29</sup> Mats worn around the waist, many have special significance and value, especially if it has been handed down through the generations.

Other comments came regarding the denial of gambling problems with other problems in the household, family or community.

***“Ikai ke lava ‘e he tokotaha va’inga pa’anga ‘o fakafehoanaki ‘a ‘ene ngaahi palopalema mo e gambling...they don’t do something until it really hits them or causes break-down – like arguing may not cause change because when you argue it could include all sorts of things...changes will happen once a problem is directly related to the gambling.”***

***“The person gambling can’t connect his gambling with his other problems...[as continued above]***

## **Themes and concepts on why Tongan people in Auckland gamble and factors that can contribute to a gambling problem:**

The second series of questions during the interviewing process was geared towards gaining examples of reasons why Tongan people gamble and to identify factors that can contribute to a gambling problem among the Tongan Auckland community.

### **1. Fua fatongia/fua kavenga<sup>31</sup>**

Discussions around this theme centred on the need to fulfil ones obligations to the family, church, community and or state. These obligations are often a variation of financial contributions, cultural, familial and church knowledge, time, and the willingness to participate in the event or occasion the obligation is required for.

Communal living centred on interdependent relationships between the extended family unit, church community or village community which then meant that being a part of the group gave you responsibilities and obligations to fulfil. Not being able to fulfil these obligations ultimately meant that members are marginalised, left to feel *ma*<sup>32</sup> which then is associated with the immediate family and to a lesser extent the extended family. *Fua fatongia/fua kavenga* is a major part of Tongan existence and is also shared by Samoans in their practice of *fa'aaloalo*<sup>33</sup>.

Gambling was seen as a means to and end. Winning the jackpot or striking it lucky at the TAB or Lotto meant that the obligations and any financial responsibilities to the family, church, community and state could be fulfilled and completed. It meant that one could win favour from family, peers and leaders.

***“Lahi e ngaahi fatongia ke fua, pea ko e feinga ke ma’u ha pa’anga lahi he taimi nounou pe ko e vave, li atu ha ki’i tola ‘e nima kae ma’u mai ha tola ‘e teau.”***

***“Lots of obligations to be met and this is an effort to get a lot of money in a short amount of time or fast, put in five dollars so you can get one hundred dollars back.”***

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<sup>31</sup> To fulfil ones obligations whether it be familial, socially, spiritually or culturally. These obligations usually come with a financial contribution, donation or set amount in order to fulfil ones obligations.

<sup>32</sup> Embarrassed or loose face

<sup>33</sup> Samoan obligations and responsibilities

Another concept that came out of the discussions about *fua fatongia* and *fua kavenga* was the *laukau*<sup>34</sup>. This meant that fulfilling obligations was part of building up the Tongan self-esteem, building up the importance of you as a family, church or community member.

***“Oku ‘ai ‘a e fatongia ke fua moe ha fua pea ‘oku ‘ikai ke lava ke tuku e ngaahi ongo’i faka-Tonga ko ia, ko e fua fatongia ‘oku pau ke fua koe’uhi ko hoto lakanga faka e famili, siasi, fonua mo e ha fua – ‘ilonga ‘ete tangata pe ko ‘ete fefine he li lahi he lotu pe ko e famili hange ka fai ha putu ‘e ‘asi he lahi ‘ete pulu pe ko ‘ete puaka.”***

***“There are obligations that have to be fulfilled and you can’t ignore that Tongan feeling because there are obligations that must be fulfilled because of your standing in the family, church, village and whatever – you can tell that you are a good man or woman by the amount of your contribution like if there is a funeral it will show in the size of your bull or pig”***

## 2. Feinga

*Feinga* became the second most common concept of answering the question of why do Tongan people gamble? In discussion gambling was seen as a legitimate way of trying to meet obligations, *fua fatongia* and *fua kavenga*. It was another path to try, of exhausting all avenues to get money in order to fulfil obligations. It was seen as another area that needed to be accessed in order to *fua fatongia fua kavenga*. Completing *feinga* was to include gambling as a viable option.

In discussing this concept one of our health professionals commented that gambling was a viable and common option for people to try so that they could make ends meet, fulfil obligations and provide for their families, community or church.

***“ Ko e anga eni e feinga, ‘oku nau tui ko e lelei taha eni e feinga ke a’ua’u kihe tumutumu – pe ko e no, pe ko e gambling, pe ko e kole, pe ko e ha ‘oku kau ai pe ‘a e gambling he feinga ni.”***

***“Its all part of trying, they believe that this is the best way of trying, trying all things until all options are exhausted – loans, gambling, personal loans or whatever but gambling is part of trying.”***

*Feinga* also includes the ideals of chance and luck. It was mentioned throughout the interviews that people participating in gambling as viable options believed that there was a chance or that it could be your lucky day, like the Lotto slogan – Be in to Win.

***“Kau ka nofo he pooni ‘e mole ‘eku laki/faingamalie”***

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<sup>34</sup> Pride

***“If I stay tonight I’ll loose my luck/opportunity”***

Interviewees also mentioned people who dreamed of being lucky, dreamed of winning and would get up in the middle of the night and go to the casino because they believe it was a sign and if they didn’t go they then believed they missed out on their fortune.

In discussion with the advisory group we talked about the belief in dreams. Gaming venues have become a place of infinite possibilities, the place where dreams can come true where all your problems would disappear once you hit that jackpot. These beliefs were very real within the Tongan community.

### **3. Fusimo’omo e Mo’ui/Taufaa e Mo’ui/Fe’amokakai e Mo’ui<sup>35</sup>**

The Auckland Tongan community is no different from the rest of the Pacific population in New Zealand. They are grouped in the low-socio economic part of the population and feature significantly in the determinants of health, poor housing, and low educational achievement, poor health status in areas of nutrition, communicable diseases, tobacco, alcohol and now in gambling.

In answering the question why do Tongan people gamble many of the interviewees expressed concerns around people not being able to make ends meet. That their weekly income was short of their daily needs. Gambling was accessed as a way of meeting everyday needs.

***“Matuaki nounou pe e pa’anga ia ‘oku ma’u ‘osi e totongi e ngaahi me’a kehekehe, pe ko e me’a ‘oku lava atu, pea moe fua kavenga foki, ikai pe ke lava ia.”***

***“The money comes up short after you pay for all sorts of things or whatever you can and fulfil some obligations, it is still short, still can’t do it”***

This was a common perception among the interviewees in finding answers as to why Tongan people gamble. Although the logistics of gambling meant that they would spend money they didn’t have, the ideal would be that they would win back more so that meeting daily needs, community, church and family obligations would be fulfilled.

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<sup>35</sup> Simply no enough earnings to live on, financially short, incomplete lifestyle, financial hardships

This spending was often taken from an already short budget which would lend to bills being left unpaid, cuts in household expenditure such as food, neglect of children's needs, consequences we will discuss later in this chapter.

Other considerations when discussing financial hardship was the lure of positive talk or talking up winnings.

***“ Ko e talanoa ko e me’a ‘oku ‘alu, talamai ha taha na’a ne ma’u e \$200 ka ‘ikai ke ne talamai ‘a e pa’anga na’e mole. Talanoa’i pe e fo’l ma’u pea ‘alu leva e fo’l talanoa ko ia ki he tokolahi”***

***“Talk spreads, someone told me that they won \$200 but didn’t mention how much they had lost. The talk of the winnings spreads to many people.”***

This positive talk and the spread of stories about people winning or hitting it big is a major lure for those who are in financial hardships. They ‘by-in’ to the idea of winning as one of the ministers called it ‘false hope’.

***“...the hope is there, that one day they gonna hit the big jackpot and they will be out of their financial troubles”***

#### **4. Increased Accessibility and Availability**

Interviewees also mentioned the ease of accessing gambling venues and machines. Statistics show that local pokies bars are being operated in low socio-economic areas of Auckland where the ratio is 1:3 machines per person.

One of the findings from the interviews is that Tongan people are no exception when it comes to being susceptible to the increased availability of these gaming venues.

***“Oku toe faingofua ange ‘a e local bars ko e uHINGA ‘oku malava pe ke fai ha luelue ki ai pea ‘ikai ke toe fiema’u ha me’alele pe toe tali ha lifi ke fai ai ha ‘alu – taimi ‘e ni’ihi ‘its on the way hange ko ‘ete ‘alu ‘o sopingi pea te afe atu pe ki ha ki’i fale lokolo”***

***“The local bars make it easier, you can just walk down there and you don’t have to worry about transport or waiting for a lift and sometimes its on the way like when you’re going shopping you can just go into one of the local places”***

Another commentary on the ease of using pokies machines in particular came from one of the health professionals

***“Ko e ha’u ko ee ‘ae misini ‘oku ‘ikai ke toe ‘iai ha me’a ia ke fakakaukau’i hange ko e fakafonu foomu no pe ko e fili hoosi peti mo e ha fua – toe faingofua ange he ko ete ta’utu pe ‘o lomilomi ta’e toe ‘iai ha me’a ‘e toe fakakaukau’i.”***

***“The machines [pokies] make things easy you don’t have to think of anything else like filling out loan forms or picking horses to bet on – its easier because you just sit and press buttons without having to think of anything else.”***

Another factor in the accessibility of gaming venues came up when discussions around the casino and their strategic targeting of Pacific peoples to come to the casino.

Interviewees talked about the casino card where you were personally sent vouchers for free car parking or a free drink or meal. These were seen as specific promotion to the Pacific community. There was even a Pacific night at the buffet restaurant on Wednesday nights. Some interviewees also mentioned that some machines had Pacific imagery on the spin dial so as to be inclusive of Pacific designs, thus further normalising the association with the machine and gambling venue.

There were also discussions around the casino being a popular tourist destination for many Tongans who come for holidays or visits. They are introduced to the casino by family or friends who take them there as part of touring Auckland. As one of the interviewees said:

***“A trip to Auckland is not complete without a trip to the casino.”***

***“I notice Tongans who regard the casino as one of the first places to take their newly arrived relatives and friends to as a place to visit. This practice gives the new arrivals an impression that perhaps the casino is a place to make a quick money at.”***

## **5. Entertainment/Relaxation**

Another popular concept was that of relaxation and entertainment. Gambling was seen as a form of entertainment. The promotion of housie, pokies machines and local bars were commented on as being targeted to Pacific peoples and therefore, Tongans as a place they can go and be entertained and relax. Gambling is promoted and understood as a recreational venue and activity.

Boredom was mentioned as a reason why gambling was taken up as a way to alleviate boredom.

***“When people have nothing to do, boredom can creep in and this might lead them to engage in activities such as gambling”***

Comments were also made about women in particular taking up gambling as a form of entertainment because there is a lack of alternative forms of entertainment for women. Especially older women.

***“Many women go to the pokies bars within their community as a means of socialising. They go in groups, they share their wins and they comfort each other when they loose money. There are no other forms of entertainment for them.”***

***“He ‘ikai ke ‘iai ha fefine akonaki ia ‘e ‘alu tokotaha ‘o tata misini ha papu pe bar, kae lava lelei ia kapau ‘e o fakakulupu ki he casino, ‘oku more acceptatble ange e alu kihe casino pea mo e ‘alu faka kulupu.”***

***“A church woman with responsibilities won’t go to a pub or bar and play the machines [pokies] by herself, but she will go in a group to the casino because it’s more acceptable to go to the casino in a group.”***

## **6. Migration**

The multi-levelled effect of migration for the Tongan community was mentioned by many of the interviewees to various degrees.

Some commented on the new environment and Tongan people not knowing how to handle, control or use gambling venues as recreational. The lack of understanding of the gambling industry and how it works against them is not a consideration. The unsuspecting or novice gambler begins as from curiosity or entertainment and moves along the continuum to the problem or pathological gambler stage without much understanding of the process.

The effect of a new society and new lifestyle was mentioned as one of the major contributors to a problem in gambling. One of the church ministers interviewed commented on the distinction when coming from Tonga.

***“Tongans are attracted to the casino because they are free there to do what they want. There are no such places in Tonga. They are also attracted because of the ‘culture shock’. They did not experience such places in Tonga and when they go to the casino and win a bit of money for the first time, they are hooked.”***

Another part of the new society were the lack of Tongan people's skills in budgeting and making ends meet with the money they received.

***“Tali pe ki he momeniti faka'osi, pea toku fekumi ke ma'u – kae 'ikai ke fai ha mateuteu pe tatanki ki amu'a, 'oku 'iai 'a e ngaahi me'a tuku pau hange ko e misinale, totongi ako e fanau moe ha fua 'e lava 'o faia ki ai ha mateuteu pe ko e budget”***

***“Waiting for the last minute and then they get desperate get the money – instead of preparing and saving before hand, there are set costs like church annual donation, children's school fees and whatever else that can be budgeted for”***

Although these comments were made it was also understood that even with the best budgeting skills if the money is still short or not enough then problems will always occur.

***“Ngaahi famili e ni'ihia e budget lelei 'ae pa'anga pea to'o e rent, me'alele, 'uhila moe ha fua 'ikai pe ke toe 'iai ha me'a ia 'e toe mai.”***

***“There are some families that can budget very well and they pay the rent, cars, electricity and whatever else and then there is nothing left.”***

## **7. Ta'etopono<sup>36</sup>, Fakapikopiko<sup>37</sup>**

Some commentary was made on the ideas of greed, laziness and not being satisfied with ones earnings. It was not identified by all interviewees but was considered by some to a lesser extent.

***“Greed and not being contented with what you can honestly earn from your work can urge you to go to gambling.”***

***“Ha'u fakataha e fiema'u moe manumanu moe ta'e topono”***

***“Your needs and wants are linked together wanting more/ greed.”***

Some of the comments around laziness came across together with how Tongan people made money in the past before the age of easy access to the pokies machines and loan outlets.

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<sup>36</sup> Greed/Not satisfied

<sup>37</sup> Lazy

***“Fiema’u pa’anga kae sii l e hela mo hono ngaue’l, taimi ko e na’e fakamaketi e kakai, ngaue toli ‘akau, feinga pa’anga founga kava Tonga, koniseti, fanga ki’i tikite lulu, fakatau me’akai, koloa mo e ha fua. Ko e feinga kotoa ke fakalahi ‘aki e ki’i vahe, lahi mo e kakai na’a te fanongo ai ‘oku ngaue pea toe ‘iai mo e ki’l part time pea ngaue part time mo e fanau, taimi ni kuo ‘ikai ke toe fie ngaue e kakai kae vave ange mo faingofua ange e ‘alu ki he misini.”***

***“Wanting money without much effort and don’t have to work for it, before people use to sell at the market, take on seasonal agricultural work, fundraise for money by way of kava parties, concerts, raffles, selling food, crafts and whatever else. It was efforts to supplement wages and there were lots of people who held partime jobs alongside their fulltime jobs and the kdis had partime jobs, but now people don’t want to work and the machines are faster and easier.”***

**The third set of questions asked for suggestions regarding possible interventions for problem gambling within the Tongan community in Auckland as well as support for further investigation, planning and implementation.**

Suggested approaches centred on various health promotion concepts of community action, education and prevention programmes. There were also many ideas around government responsibilities and industry control.

### **1. Church and community involvement**

All the interviews stated the importance of church involvement for any planned intervention. Community workers as well as social and health professionals noted the need for churches to be involved in spreading the message about the negative effects of gambling. Churches still yield a lot of power in the Tongan Auckland community and many of the people identified to be gambling belonged to a congregation or were regular church goers.

As one of the health professionals said:

**'We need to go into the community, workers, organisations – go to where the people are and ask them to work with us – work together.'**

Notions of community development, mobilisation and partnership and participation at all levels was important from both the perspective of the service and community providers and the ministers. One of the ministers made a statement about church involvement:

**'The church should be part of problem solving it should not isolate itself from societal problems.'**

***'Oku tonu foki ke toe fakalele'i e founga ngaue, ke tau fetokoni'aki hono tauhi mo tokanga'i hotau kakai. We need to be more co-ordinated ke tau ngaue fakataha. He 'ikai ke 'aonga 'eku ngaue kapau teu vivili atu pe au he'eku tafa'aki mo'ui lelei 'oku pau ke 'aonga mo mahino mo fakafehoataki e ngaue.***

***We need to review our methods of working, we need to work together to care and help our people. We need to be more co-ordinated to work together. There's no use in me only promoting my work in health, our work needs to be useful, understood and co-ordinated.'***

Others commented and challenged the churches to review their teachings and discourage and/or ban gambling practices within the congregation. Role modeling was also important in that participants felt that Tongan people look up to leaders and people with power and so will

subconsciously and consciously believe that anything they do or practice is good or appropriate for them to do also.

***'Fakamamafa'l he ngaahi siasi 'oku kovi fakatokateline e gambling, pea 'oua poupou ha fa'ahinga feinga pa'anga faka gambling.'***

***(translation)***

***'Church leaders should lead by example. All leaders should come together and consult on how to address this issue and any other issues.'***

***'The church needs to stop some of its practices such as holding raffles to raise funds. The church needs to role model the lifestyle that it wants its people to live.'***

## **2. Ngaue Founa Faka Tonga<sup>38</sup>**

Some participants felt that there were already Tongan frameworks that the community were accustomed to and felt that any programmes should consider these methods.

***'Oku 'iai 'etau founa ngaue faka Tonga 'oku tau 'osi mahino'l mo anga maheni moia. Hange ko eni koe ngaue faka kautaha – fei mo 'ai fakataha mo ala fakatokolahi kae 'osi ia.'***

***"We have our Tongan ways of working such as collectivist approach to tackle issues. Working together can quickly address issues such as this (gambling)."***

***'Ngaue'aki 'ae ngaai kalapu kava tonga, ke kamata'l e talanoa mo ngaahi kovi e gambling – ko e tafa'aki malohi, tokolahi mo kaukaua eni.'***

***"Use the Tongan kava clubs as forums to discuss the harmful effects of gambling, this is a very effective strategy."***

***'Fou he ngaahi siasi ke ma'u e kakai.'***

***"One can also work with the churches to reach the people."***

***'We Tongans have a unique world view, perspective and value system. It has some advantages and some disadvantages.'***

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<sup>38</sup> Tongan methods of working/practice/implementation

### 3. Education and Prevention Programmes

All of the participants had very strong ideas about educating and raising awareness regarding gambling in the community. Health promotion was also considered as an important vehicle for prevention, but education had consensus among all the participants. The methods and suggested programmes varied but in essence the participants agreed that there was not enough to hardly anything about gambling specific for the Tongan community.

***'Me'a mahu'inga kete ma'u 'ae fo'l me'a koia koe mahino, kou tui fakapapau kapau tenau ma'u 'ae fo'l mahino moe 'ilo 'oku 'ikai ke kainga ha taha mo e misini pea 'oku 'ikai ke 'iai ha nunu'a lelei 'e ma'u mei he misini te tau toe sai ange.'***

***"It is important that one has the understanding and knowledge. If people have the knowledge and understanding that the pokie machine is the friend of none and that there is no positive result that comes out of it, people will be better off."***

Approaches varied from explaining all the 'evils' of gambling to ensuring positive messages and methods.

***'We need a very holistic approach so that we capture all groups in society as this issue affects most aspects of our life from health, to family relationships, education and living standards.'***

***'Make sure that whatever programme we design, we engage with people in a positive and empowering way and not to focus on their problem.'***

### 4. Language Appropriate Programmes

Commentary was consistent about making programmes language appropriate. One of the community leaders summed up the comments made by other participants regarding language appropriate interventions.

***'Ko e me'a lahi ke mahino e feinga ako pe ko e health promotion 'oku fai. Ke mahino e lea mo e fetu'utaki.'***

***"It is vital that people understand the message that you try to educate them about through your health promotion. The message must be communicated clearly."***

## 5. Remove the misconception of fast/easy money and that gambling is a viable and practical method of making money.

This was an area that participants identified most to include in any education and prevention programmes.

*'Fiema'u ke 'ilo hotau kakai 'a e tefito'i makatu'unga 'oe misini mo e ngaahi me'a 'oku ne puke 'aki 'enau tokanga hange ko e music, lights, atmosphere 'ae casino, bar pe pub etc...'*

*" Our people need to understand how the reality of the pokie machine and its accessories that lure them into it such as the music, lights, the atmosphere of the casino, bar or pub etc..."*

*'Kou tui koe ma'u pe hetau kakai 'ae mahino 'oku 'ikai ke 'ai ai ha 'uhinga e misini ka koe 'ave 'a ho'o pa'anga 'e toe sai ange, ken au 'ilo 'oku tau toe fakapa'anga 'e kitautolu ia 'ae kakai tu'umalie ka tau toe fai hifo kitautolu.'*

*" I think our people need to understand that the pokie machine does nothing else but taking their money away, and that by gambling they are actually helping some rich people getting richer while our people become poorer."*

## 6. Strengthening Families and the Purpose of Life

This was another area that participants felt passionate about in the sense that Tongans needed to be reminded about the 'important' things in life. Information and education around how gambling effects the development and wellbeing of the family was suggested by many participants as a topic for any community education.

*'Fakamahino ko e tokotaha va'inga pa'anga pe ko e gambling 'oku ne hanga 'o fakauesia e me'a lahi fekauaki moe nofo faka e 'api, ko e fanau, ko e fua kavenga mo e ha fua, 'oku ne maumau'i e me'a lahi.'*

*"The gambler needs to be made aware that as a breadwinner he ruins the life of the whole family - the children, basic needs etc when he gambles away the family income."*

*'Ko e 'uluaki tafa'aki 'oku uesia he gambling ko e fanau. No doubt about it, the kids suffer first, 'oku fu'u fiema'u ha tokoni ma'ae community ke nau mahino'i e anga 'oe gambling moe ngaahi palopalema 'e lava hoko, for the kids sake, he kuo 'osi ha mahino mai he anga 'emau ngaue ko e si'l fanau kuo nau fua e ngaahi kovi e kemipolo.'*

***“ The first party to suffer in the family when someone gambles are the children . No doubt about it, the kids suffer first. Our people need to know the many harms and consequences of gambling, especially the suffering of the children.”***

## **7. Suggestions to Combat Gambling**

There were many comments about including advice on budgeting, counselling and how to make extra money. It was clear from the reasons why Tongan people gambled in particular was due to low socio-economic status. Some of the participants commented that if people were living on or below the poverty line, then they needed to be educated on how to use what resources have wisely and areas where they could possibly make some extra money instead of gambling.

***‘Teach better budgeting skills and help with a plan and then access a WINZ top-up for those families who are really in need.’***

***‘Ako’i e kakai ke budget, hange ko eni ko e misinale ko e me’a mahino pe koe fixed espense, fefe kapau ‘e tatanaki fakauike pe faka mahina ‘uhi ke a’u atu ki he misinale kuo ‘osi lava e fo’i kavenga koia he’ete tatanaki pe lolotonga e ta’u, ‘ikai leva ke toe fai ha ‘oho holo last minute pea iku ai pe ‘o fehalaki e founa feinga ‘o hange ko gambling.’***

***“ Teach people how to budget. For example, identify fixed expenses such as donations to the church, and gradually save towards those goals so that they do not have to rush around the last minute, looking for money to donate as this could lead to gambling.”***

***‘Ko e budget ko e fo’i kaveinga mahu’inga ka kuopau ke te ma’u e fakapotopoto moe sio loloa kae toki lava ke ‘aonga e budget.’***

***“ Budgeting is an important subject but one must be wise in managing one’s resources and be strategic before budgeting skills can be applied successfully.”***

A comment regarding making extra money came from one of the community leaders when he said that instead of looking to fast cash from gambling and loan sharks our people should go back to some of the practices in our past such as seasonal farming work;

***‘Uki hake e toli ‘akau moe ngaue faka faama he tutuku e ako ke lava ke tokoni ki he tafa’aki fakapa’anga ‘I ‘api.’***

***“Fruitpicking and other such casual work at farms during school holiday can help to supplement the family income.”***

## 8. Better Co-ordination of Services

Co-ordination of services was an apparent gap identified during the interviewing process. The majority of ministers noted that people did not know how to access help or assistance if members of their congregation needed help. Community leaders and health and social professionals also needed the need for a much more co-ordinated effort and the need for all leaders to work together within the Tongan community to be effective in any form of health promotion or implementing public health interventions.

***'Services should be in the community close to the people.'***

***'You need to visit all community leaders in the same way that you have come to meet me. We need to engage all leaders. You need to buy us all in – both in our minds and heart so that we commit ourselves to you cause. We all need to come together and plan together.'***

## 9. Media, Research and Government Responsibilities

Comments on accessing media and research were also made in linking and co-ordinated services and information and promoting the message as far and as wide as possible.

***'We need to use all forms of media and target institutions within the Tongan community from churches and educational groups using promotional resources, so the message about gambling gets out there first, so people start talking about it.'***

***'We need to cooperate. Your studies [this investigation] will complement our message to the community.'***

Participants were also curious and worried about the government response to gambling and its de-regulation of many of the old gambling restrictions. Although, many were more curious about government responsibility and response a small number of participants knew exactly what they thought of the governments gambling policies.

***'This is typical of the government, they set it up, allow it to happen local bars, pokie machines down the road and then plan projects and fund and contract providers to address the problems – its pathetic really.'***

## Po Talanoa/Discussion

At the heart of this research project are the stories and po talanoa from the fieldwork. At the time of developing the project proposal the team did not anticipate the commonality and severity of stories relayed by the participants. Anecdotal evidence and observations lead to our earlier assumption that gambling was indeed emerging as a 'new' problem in the Auckland Tongan community, but evidence from the fieldwork left the team astonished and at times disheartened with the finding that the reality was far worse than we had imagined.

Re-occurring and supported stories of lost and/or repossession of goods and property, disconnected utilities, neglected children, elderly, families, false hope and misplaced dreams were a stark awakening at how quickly gambling effects the individual, family, community and society on a whole. It came to light for the team that one of the more dangerous elements of gambling was its speed in effecting almost every area of your life if gambling became a problem.

It became apparent that understanding Tongan gambling meant looking at the consequences and reasons for problem gambling and the environment as a whole within a socio-cultural context and analysis. The reasons in the concepts and themes identified above needed further probing to uncover central and core socio-cultural concepts that may support and encourage problem gambling.

Much of the discussion in this part of the report is built on commentaries from the team, advisory groups and other health professionals, community leaders and interested peoples who have made contributions to the findings. These discussions and commentaries have been made by some through professional judgement, observations and assessments from their profession/s. While others have made comments from personal observations based on their cultural expertise, leadership roles and social awareness of New Zealand society. In summary, the following po talanoa is extracted from a range of people who are professionals in their respective areas. They cover technical gambling industry experts, academics and scholars, community leaders, ministers, community members and the team.

This *po talanoa* is our process of 'construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of Tonga social realities' (Manuatu, 2000). It is also presented in the spirit of Helu's comments about putting aside referencing from others and turn to our own internal and personal knowledge/s to develop further understandings.

***'...for the good of scholarship and thought in general, there comes a point when every mature scholar must put an end of his or her reading and settle down to some solid, original thinking, digging into his or her own mind and engaging the resources which she or he can truly claim as her or his own.'* (Helu 1997)**

Some of the team members acknowledge that we are no where near 'mature scholars but there were many themes and concepts identified from the fieldwork pointing to reasons why Tongan people in Auckland were gambling, as we understand it, some of the more 'obvious reasons' stated were manifestations or indicators of other deeper underlying 'reasons'.

Therefore, the following *po talanoa* or discussions contain our efforts to internalise and understand the findings at a deeper level within a Tongan socio-cultural context and analysis. This section encompasses the time of the '*kau tui kakala*', where these thoughts and commentaries have been made by our leaders, professionals, ministers, academics and community in relation to the information received from the '*toli kakala*' process.

## 1. Migration and the Transferral of Dreams: New Zealand to Gambling Venues.

All of the people interviewed named 'feinga' as a reason why Tongans were gambling. *Feinga* on its own is a concept that is self-explanatory.

*Feinga* means, trying your hardest or trying your best in a situation. It invokes feelings, attitudes and philosophies of trying, effort, courage, persistence, perseverance, 'giving it your all' and determination. Hence if a Tongan individual is gambling to solve a financial problem or fulfil an obligation then *Feinga* was cited many times as a reason for the gambling.

*Feinga* meant that you have essentially exhausted all your options that you have tried your best and covered all alternatives and 'gave it your all' to either solve a financial problem or fulfil an obligation. The act of gambling incorporated all these feelings with the end result being that of exhausting all available options and avenues.

The team tried to identify and understand why a people who have no or very little history of gambling in their homelands, turn to gambling as a logical and sensible option in New Zealand. And why gambling for some must be considered before they can say they've done their best or tried their hardest or to quote, '*koe anga ia e feinga – ko e 'osi ia e feinga'*' or '*we have given our all – we have exhausted all avenues*'.

The legal regulation of gambling endorses gambling as a legitimate and proper activity. Along with limited options and alternatives regulated and legal gambling means it is a legitimate way of making some money and therefore an acceptable and favourable avenue to explore for *Feinga*. Furthermore, the attraction of gambling is that wagering is a type of play that **regulates** chance and so gives a feeling of participation and control.

This is where the team have identified an underlying concept in efforts to understand further why Tongan people are using gambling as another area for *Feinga*.

This idea or concept is the transferral of dreams.

Before migration NZ was the land of milk and honey, it was a place where all dreams come true and for many the dream was to provide for the family, fulfil obligations and enjoy some forms of a materialistic lifestyle.

However, the reality on arriving in New Zealand has been that the dream becomes elusive and not so easily achieved. Factors such as losses or support and new demands associated with migration, ethnic prejudice, membership of a minority community, language and communication problems, limited work skills and low socio-economic status makes the dream of a better life for the family appear unrealistic and almost impossible to achieve.

The team have explored the idea that these dreams are being physically transferred to gambling venues such as casinos, local bars, mini casinos, TAB's and the like. The dreams have remained the same but the site has now changed from New Zealand as the land of opportunity to gambling venues and machines as the new site for achieving these hard to find opportunities.

Gambling venues are the new place where anything is possible, where the dream can be achieved and where for people with limited resources and limited alternatives these sites are a logical and sensible place for *Feinga*, for achieving the dream.

Gambling becomes a rational approach given the lack of other opportunities for poorly paid individuals to amass a large sum of money. When this motivation is coupled with the belief that there is an even chance of winning gambling seems a realistic hope. An individual may continue to gamble in the belief that the longer one plays the more chance there is of winning. These Tongans believe that there is a fair method in playing and that luck and chance is only a matter of time.

Furthermore, to the team discussions around luck and chance identified that many Tongans maintain a link or a connection with spiritual and symbolic worlds/meanings.

Many Tongan people interpret and place meanings on their dreams, signs from nature, symbols and actions. They look to both the physical and spiritual environment for answers or reasons to explain their environment and why things happen or don't happen. Often for some of these people there is no real distinction between the physical and spiritual, the two worlds co-exist simultaneously. Common Tongan expressions that capture the co-existence of these worlds are, '*na'e pau pe ke hoko*' or it was pre-destined/it was meant to be., '*tamasi'i monu'ia*, that person is lucky/blessed/good things will always happen to that person, '*na'e 'osi 'iai pe 'ae ngaahi faka'ilonga*', there were signs to warn/tell/inform us this was going to happen.

Therefore, misi or dreams, believing in symbols, signs and messages that come from dreams and its interpretation is another reason why Tongan people are gambling. Analysis was

expanded to combine *Feinga* and a belief in the supernatural or chance, or luck or simply believing in messages/signs from dreams to explain Tongan gambling.

It was noted many times that people have had dreams about numbers and go out and buy a lotto ticket the next day and if they did not then there would be a feeling of missing your luck or losing a chance. For some this resulted even in depression or obvious stress.

Another significant interplay was the belief that a win was a blessing. Before beginning to play an individual may pray and ask for God's intervention or blessing and make a pact with God in the case of a significant win. Therefore, another cultural change highlighted here is that blessings can come by way of a machine. And so it is not uncommon for Tongan people to pray before and during playing the machines or gambling. The practice itself is not unusual or exceptional in that praying is common practice for many Tongans. It is offered before and at the closing of formal meetings, state, religious or familial, special events like birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and at informal occasions such as sports events, fundraisers and social events.

This practise and belief exemplifies Tongan beliefs that God is omnipotent and that all things are pre-destined and by the will of God.

The irony is that dreams and blessings come by way of machines and make Tongan people vulnerable to the commoditisation of relationships and machine relationships and to the formation of "human" relationships with machines. Casinos have become the physical place where the dreams and hopes of a people have been transferred to and where prayers are being offered.

The combination of factors such as low socio-economic status, limited options, targeted marketing, and migration have increased the vulnerability and susceptibility of Tongans to participate in gambling activities. Gambling for some Tongans is the elusive mystic power that can answer their prayers, where they can realise their dreams and a win is a sign of good fortune, it is a blessing. So you must keep trying your luck, chances are you will win and then we can solve our financial problems and fulfil our obligations, but first you have to be 'in to win'.

Luck and chance coupled with dreams and blessings have ensnared the interest, beliefs and hearts of some Tongan gamblers.

## 2. Migration and Break-down of Traditional Support *Kainga* Networks

The *Kainga* system is the Tongan 'social network or welfare system'. (Helu 1999a) Traditionally it dictated the distribution of resources, maintained peaceful relations, mediated conflict resolution, ensured appropriate caregiving and managed the correct fulfilling of responsibilities and obligations.

Many commentators have commented on the break-down of the *kainga* system due to the various effects of migration and western influences such as capitalist business enterprise and individualism.

It was noted in the fieldwork that Tongan people gambled because they wanted to *fua kavenga*, *fua fatongia*, however in understanding this theme it came to light that gambling to fulfil obligations was essentially filling a gap that had eventuated due to breakdowns within the *kainga* system.

Now, if the *kainga* system is charged with the responsibility of fulfilling obligations and distribution of familial wealth and resources, then essentially fulfilling obligations within a familial context falls within the responsibility of the *kainga* system's processes and procedures.

The difficulty is that if the *kainga* system has collapsed more than likely the familial responsibilities and obligations remain the same or has increased due to changing social environments and contexts. Therefore, with increased obligations to meet outside the *kainga* system framework, individuals and nuclear families are left to fulfil these obligations either on their own or with one or two other relatives.

Furthermore, if these families/individuals are 'typical' of Tongan migrants to New Zealand, they will be living on or below the poverty line and have little to no alternatives or options to make extra money. The themes of *fusimo'omo e mo'ui*, *fe'amokaki e mo'ui*, *taufa 'ae mo'ui* come into play. Feelings of hopelessness, severe financial hardships and poverty become central to understanding the far reaching effects of the *kainga* system breakdowns and the difficulty of achieving *fua kavenga*, *fua fatongia* on an individual and nuclear family basis.

The fundamental importance of fulfilling one's obligations is part of the definition of good health for Tongan people. For a Tongan person to achieve the status of good health and wellbeing areas of *mo'ui fakasino* (physical), *mo'ui faka'atamai* (mental) and *mo'ui fakalaumalie* (spiritual)

must be covered. In order to cover all these areas, health as defined for Tongans must include the ability to fulfil all one's obligations in these areas. By meeting your obligations to family, country and church/God, you help to maintain a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship, and therefore contribute to your own relational wellbeing with those key institutions in your life.

**“...It [health] is a state akin to satisfaction and happiness. A developmentally oriented paraphrasing makes health a state of wellbeing enabling a person to fulfil their obligations to society without compromising the ability of others. In the definition of health, society and its nuances define the boundaries for the operative terms.” (Finau, 1995, p.267)**

In failing to *fua fatongia*, *fua kavenga* a family commits the ‘worst social sin of *fakama*’ (Oksuitino Mahina, 2004)<sup>39</sup> *Fakama*,<sup>40</sup> harms the health of Tongan people in very deep and meaningful ways. For a people that operate at a communal level, *fakama* affects all aspects of health for people who are affected by it, physically, mentally and spiritually.

Isolation from the *kainga* and/or breakdown of the *kainga* system means that there is no longer support for Tongan families and people as they struggle to build a life in their new ‘homelands’. Furthermore, the new societies often do not understand communal lifestyles and all the responsibilities and obligations that come with operating as a larger group.

Gambling in this socio-cultural context has appeared as a beacon of hope albeit false, to combat poverty and fulfil all financial obligations facing the family so as to avoid *fakama*. Obligations remain consistent and still require fulfilment, continued availability and accessibility to gambling facilities and venues renders an easy quick solution to the situation. It portrays and offers false support for a people whose traditional networks have at some levels disintegrated. Families cannot depend on the *kainga* distribution of resources and wealth but gambling venues and activities entice and invite people to participate, enjoy and ‘be in to win’ so that gambling resources such as hitting the jackpot, accumulation of credits, black jack, betting, scratches, Lotto and so forth can be shared with them.

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<sup>39</sup> Discussion at the advisory group meeting.

<sup>40</sup> *Fakama* – embarrassment, loss of face, shame, humiliation

### 3. Laukau and Class Mobilisation

In relation to *fua kavenga* and *fua fatongia* were notions around *laukau*<sup>41</sup>, *ngali tangata/fefine e fua fatongia*<sup>42</sup>, *ke lava lelei e fua fatongia*<sup>43</sup>.

These cultural understandings underpin the need to fulfil obligations well and that achieving above and beyond the standard requirements builds you and your family up to higher status/level. Mobilisation between the stratified hierarchy and within ones own familial and village circle is important and desirable for many Tongans.

Before easy access to material goods and resources movement between the highly stratified hierarchies was through education, inter-marriage, clergy and business. However, even these means were only available to an elite few. The majority was left to be content with commoner status. Although, even within these levels and familial structures the stratification of rank and power was evident. So if by birth, placement, and social environment and relational consequences you could not move easily through the hierarchy, access to material resources was a sure way to improve on your own and your family's status.

In order to show this improvement of status and wealth, contributions to church, family and village obligations may be increased by the size of the donation, whether it be monetary, crafts, livestock and/or harvest.

The bigger the contribution has in recent times equalled *ngali tangata/ngali fefine e fua fatongia*. A compliment with high status and if achieved increases the status and feelings of wellbeing for the family/*kainga*. It also has the same effect on individuals in cases where the *kainga* system has broken down.

Another factor that has been identified through the fieldwork in relation to class mobilisation includes notions of *fakavahavaha'a*<sup>44</sup>, *fesiosiofaki*<sup>45</sup>, or competition through and by material gain in order to achieve class upward movement.

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<sup>41</sup> pride

<sup>42</sup> fulfilling one's obligation at the level expected of a person of high calibre

<sup>43</sup> fulfilling one's obligation at the highest possible level expected

<sup>44</sup> rivalry

<sup>45</sup> keeping up with the jones

These notions add to the discussions around '*kuo mahu'inga 'ae ongoongo moe langilangi, kuo mahu'inga ange ia ha toe me'a*' (Mahina, 2004). Mahina discusses the importance of notions and practices around concepts like 'Keeping up with the Jones'

This is not a new concept to many people who participate in gambling and it is definitely not unique to Tongans. However, understanding the communality of Tongan lifestyles and close inter-relationships of people it is fair to claim that for Tongans 'everything is defined by the environment and the people around us' (Mahina, 2004). Everything and everyone is interconnected in some way or other and private and public life is holistic, including people and the environment, 'spacial definitions of time and space'. (ibid)

Understanding that everything in Tongan society and the *kainga* system is stratified and that mobilisation is difficult to achieve and that status is pre-determined by birth and genealogy. Materialistic gain/competition, increased donations, 'bigger means better' and the process of keeping up with the Jones contributes to *laukau, ngali tangata- ngali fefine, kuo lava lelei e fatongia*, this then equates to wellbeing and health for many Tongans as obligations have been fulfilled well and family status and social ranking has improved.

The reality for the majority of Tongans in Auckland is the picture painted in chapter three, low socio-economic status, recent migrants, young population, for the majority English is a second language, living in extended family situations, affiliated to some form of organised religion and high numbers of the Tongans residing in the higher deprivation areas of Auckland. Within the Auckland social context the majority of Tongans have very little alternatives and options for developing financial independence.

Gambling again in this situation presents itself as a logical and realistic option for improving ones status and upward class movement. Socio-cultural meanings of status and the ability to fulfil ones obligations is a significant consideration when trying to understand Tongan gambling. The majority of Tongans will say that if they hit a big win the *tapuaki/blessings, monuia/luck*, winnings will be distributed and shared among family, friends, church both in New Zealand and in Tonga.

Therefore highlighted in such claims is the importance of the *kainga* system. We have discussed the effects of the breakdown but it seems that if placed in a supportive and financially secure position Tongan people ultimately resort back to the distribution and supporting members of their *kainga* network. The *kainga* welfare system comes back into play if resources are readily available and accessible.

In summary, *laukau*, *ngali tangata /ngali fefine*, *fakavahavaha'a*, *fesiosiofaki* are themes that interplay to result in some form of socio-cultural mobilisation. Gambling symbolises 'easy money' in an environment where money is scarce and hard to obtain, 'big money' in a situation where available resources are minimal. Gambling also promises the fulfilment of obligations to the level of *ngali tangata/ngali fefine* hence improving rank and status and being able to compete and be better than the rest while at the same time being able to assist and provide for the *kainga*, church and acquaintances to achieve *laukau*, Tongan pride.

#### 4. The Normalisation of Gambling and Shift of Socio-Cultural Sanctions: Women

Although the questionnaire was not designed to gather information regarding specific parts of the Tongan community, participants and other commentators consistently identified areas of concern that needed more focus and further investigation.

These areas were around women gambling, influence on youth/particularly young girls/women and effects on the elderly populations. Observations pointed to women using gambling for socialising, relaxation and entertainment. At first inspection these reasons were straightforward and was due to the lack of alternative places for entertainment or recreation for these women. The team agreed that although these were important factors, more discussion and further investigation uncovered a number of influences that were concealed under the stated reason of entertainment, relaxation and socialising.

One of the outcomes of legalised gambling, increased accessibility and availability, specific market driven strategies together with the effects of low socio-economic status have contributed to the normalisation of gambling within the Tongan community. The team suggest that the normalisation of gambling contributes to the shift or rejection of some socio-cultural sanctions.

Some participants talked about how casino's, pubs, bars and gambling venues were now acceptable places for Tongan women to frequent.

***'The introduction of pokie machines has opened the door for a great number of Tongan women to become regular patrons....many of these women, especially the church going women, kau akonaki<sup>46</sup> may have never been in a bar, pub or casino before the introduction of the pokies.'* (Community Leader Interview, 2003)**

The contribution of legislation and the access and availability of EGM's have not only normalised gambling behaviours and practices it is also contributing to the normalisation of establishments such as pubs or bars for Tongan women. The once 'taboo' place for women is now acceptable and a commonplace for Tongan women to visit. However, it has been noted that many of these women do not participate in any alcohol or tobacco consumption and/or socialising. They are there purely for the gambling. The shift in social sanctions in this particular instance is that Tongan women, especially the older generation are now commonly and frequently seen at casinos, bars, pubs and mini-casinos.

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<sup>46</sup> Women of the church, lay preachers

Other participants and commentators have also suggested that a further shift in social sanctions can be seen when group outings are taking place at the casino. Tongan women are gambling with friends, relatives, as part of their church groups and/or community groups. Along with the shift of social sanctions in relation to gambling venues is that women gambling in groups add to the normalisation of the gambling activity. There were comments from some of the interviews saying that 'if the other women in the church are doing it then it's ok for me to do it' or comments that women have said about church leaders 'I saw [name/s] at the casino, he's our minister and his wife, if they're there then it must be ok'. Other examples included the sightings of other prominent Tongans at the casino, that if they were there then that meant their gambling was endorsed.

Women's gambling highlighted a number of concerns that participants and commentators have identified. One of the most identified concerns was the impact and velocity of gambling effects on children, family and household women were gambling. It was suggested by some participants that the mother was the 'stronghold of most Tongan families, keeping everything together.' If she and her partner were gambling then the effects on the children, family, household was magnified. Many stories told by the community leaders/workers and social and health professionals supported this case.

Another area that was not repeatedly identified but stressed by the few that discussed it was the sense of freedom a woman may get from her gambling. Particularly social and health professionals pointed to the fact that women in abusive relationships may use gambling as an escape from her personal problems or situation. The sense of freedom may be in that she is removed from the home, interacting with a machine she may think she controls and added to that are her hopes and dreams.

Another factor mentioned by one participant was that she could obtain some financial freedom. If she is in a position where she does not have her own money and her partner controls the finances, a win means she has access to her own money, sense of freedom to spend it to her discretion something she may never be given or have felt in her relationship.

Other areas where an increase in shifting of social sanctions were in relation to the youth, in particular young women. Concerns were identified that young women were dropping off their mothers and their friends or other relatives to the main casino in town and then left unsupervised for lengths of time in town and sometimes at night. They may have been told to go home but in some cases the young women stay in town, 'hang around' and or gamble themselves while waiting for their mothers and the older groups.

Although youth gambling was not regularly identified by participants and commentators it was a concern in this area where young women were not being supervised and placed in situations outside the home in town, at night and possibly gambling themselves.

Tongan protocols around young unmarried girls/women is very strict and comply with a number of Tongan socio-cultural sanctions. Discussions around this area has seen a significant shift in these sanctions where these young girls/women now have a 'new found' freedom from the otherwise strict family home. These have been the named underlying effects of gambling for Tongan women and has been significantly highlighted by both participants and commentators.

## Fakapotopoto<sup>47</sup>

Most of the concepts so far have discussed the underlying reason why Tongan people gamble and gambling effects. This particular concept is one that has been highlighted as one of the driving reasons why some Tongan people choose not to gamble.

It is important to discuss as although we have identified a myriad of reason why Tongan people gamble and its effects *Fakapotopoto* was frequently noted as a reason for not gambling.

*Fakapotopoto* means being wise, knowledgeable, and skilful. It is about being sensible with resources, proficient in distribution, practical, smart, thinking ahead and consistent. These are attributes that many participants and commentators have remarked as an underlying reason why Tongan people do not gamble, or are able to control gambling habits.

People who do not gamble or who have shown some kind of success whether it be in business, education, fulfilment of obligations, good leadership qualities and attainment of wealth is considered *Fakapotopoto*.

The contrast is that people who are *Fakapotopoto* do not gamble. People who gamble are therefore not *fakapotopoto* and contrast these qualities as one of the participants stated in her interview that those who are not *fakapotopoto* 'reap what they sow, sadness and financial hardships':

*'Oku taitaitaha foki ke ma'u hotau kainga 'ae fo'i laumalie ko e ko e fakapotopoto, kou tui fakapapau ko 'ete ma'u pe e fakapotopoto ko 'etau toki lava ia 'of palani mo fakahokohoko fakalalei 'ae mo'ui...ko e kalasi koe 'oku fakavalevale, 'oku nau utu pe 'e me'a 'oku nau to, ko e mamahi moe fe'amokakai mo'oni e mo'ui.'*

*“ Many members of our community hardly understand the principle of fakapotopoto. I believe that once you embrace fakapotopoto , you will be able to plan and manage your life properly. Those who are fakavalevale- being unwise, ignorant and unskilled – reap what they sow, sadness and socio-economic hardships*

In reference to this concept Mahina stated during our advisory group discussion that Tongan people have not been able to 'merge [their] economic situation with their social ideals' he further supports his comments when he says that like many peoples we have 'unlimited wants but limited resources' .

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<sup>47</sup> wise, knowledgeable and skillful

Some of the discussions around *Fakapotopoto* looked at the cultural value Tongan people placed on relationships. Tongans understand and value 'people' centred relationships, *tauhi va*<sup>48</sup>. They understand *tauhi va* to be an essential part of Tongan culture, *kainga* systems, social realities and practices. *Fakapotopoto* in this case is concerned with the development of these relationships, systems and networks. Fulfilling obligations well and contributing to the overall wellbeing of the *kainga*, church, village or community.

Placed within the Auckland/New Zealand context *Fakapotopoto* shifts to include more budgeting, planning and forward thinking approaches to meet basic needs and obligations. Therefore, the discussion changed to Tongan people not knowing the value of money or not valuing money, viewing money to be a means to an end. Money being used as a vehicle for *tauhi va*, developing, maintaining and nurturing relationships, *kainga*, acquaintances or friendships.

Consideration of paying bills, individual or nuclear family needs/wants and meeting other personal financial obligations would often be 'put-off' in order to fulfil a spontaneous family obligation or church donation, village fundraising or other obligations outside the family that contributed to *tauhi va*.

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<sup>48</sup> building, maintaining and nurturing positive, harmonious relationships