

Tongan

Fakatapu – Clearing the path for Mo’ui Fakalata

*Holo pe ho’o mou me’a, ka mau hao atu he,
Kuo mau ta’imalie ‘i he ‘ofa ‘a e ‘Otua
Tu’unga ai ‘a ‘emau fakafeta’i ‘i he’etau ‘inasi ‘i he mo’ui pea tau femaata’aki ai he ‘aho
ni;
Fakatapu ki he kelekele ‘eiki ni
Fakatapu ki he Hou’eiki ‘oku me’aa, Te Ariki nui Kingi Tuheitia moe Tangata whenua ‘o
Aotearoa
Fakatulou atu ki he Taki ‘o e Potungaue
Fakafe’iloaki atu ki he sola mo e Vulangi
Pea talangata ‘iate kimautilu ‘o fai ki tu’a mama’o, kae ‘ataa ke fakahoko atu e
fakamatala ko eni ki he fakakaukau kuo fatu ‘e he kau ngaau Tonga ‘o e Potungaue
ni, ke tataki’aki ‘a ‘emau ngaue.*

Background

Tonga is part of the Polynesian group. It is an independent nation with a land area of around 750 square kilometres. Tonga is the only constitutional monarchy in the Pacific and with a class structure in its constitution. The Tongan 2016 Census showed a population of 100,745¹. Tonga is one of only two Pacific nations where there is no customary land, a feature that sets it apart from most other Pacific cultures where existence is rooted in the collective ownership and guardianship of land and natural resources. *Fakataputapu – clearing the path–* (above) is a demonstration of Tongan beliefs in acknowledging land, people of the land, God, and expressing the meaning of a particular engagement. Tongan is the national language.

Tongans in Aotearoa

| Tongans | 2001 | 2006 | 2013 |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 40,719 | 50,478 | 60,336 |

The majority (94.0% or 56,685) in Aotearoa live in the North Island while less (6.1% or 3,651) live in the South Island. Most (92.3%) live in urban areas. Concentrations are in the Auckland region (77.8% or 46,971), followed by Wellington (4.1% or 2,448), and Waikato (3.9% or 2,370) regions. The population living in the Auckland region mainly live around Mangere-Otahuhu (27.1%), Otara-Papatoetoe (14.2%), and Maungakiekie-Tamaki (13.4%) areas². Around 22,416 of Tongans in Aotearoa in 2013 were born overseas³.

¹ Tonga Department of Statistics. (2018). Tonga Statistics at a Glance - Latest Releases. Retrieved 18/10/2018 from <http://tonga.prism.spc.int/>

² Statistics New Zealand. (n.d). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Tongan. Population and geography*. Retrieved 10/3/2015 from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24711&tabname=Populationandgeography

³ Statistics New Zealand. (n.d). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Tongan. Key facts*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24711&parent_id=24706&tabname=#24711

Traditional Society Structure

Knowledge of this structure and some of the key relational expectations are important for practitioners to understand in order to engage appropriately and respectfully with Tongan children and *kainga*.

Kakai Tonga (Tongan people) are divided into three classes:

1. *Tu'i* (the King)
2. *Hou'eiki* (nobility) and *matapule*
3. *Kakai Tu'a* (commoners)

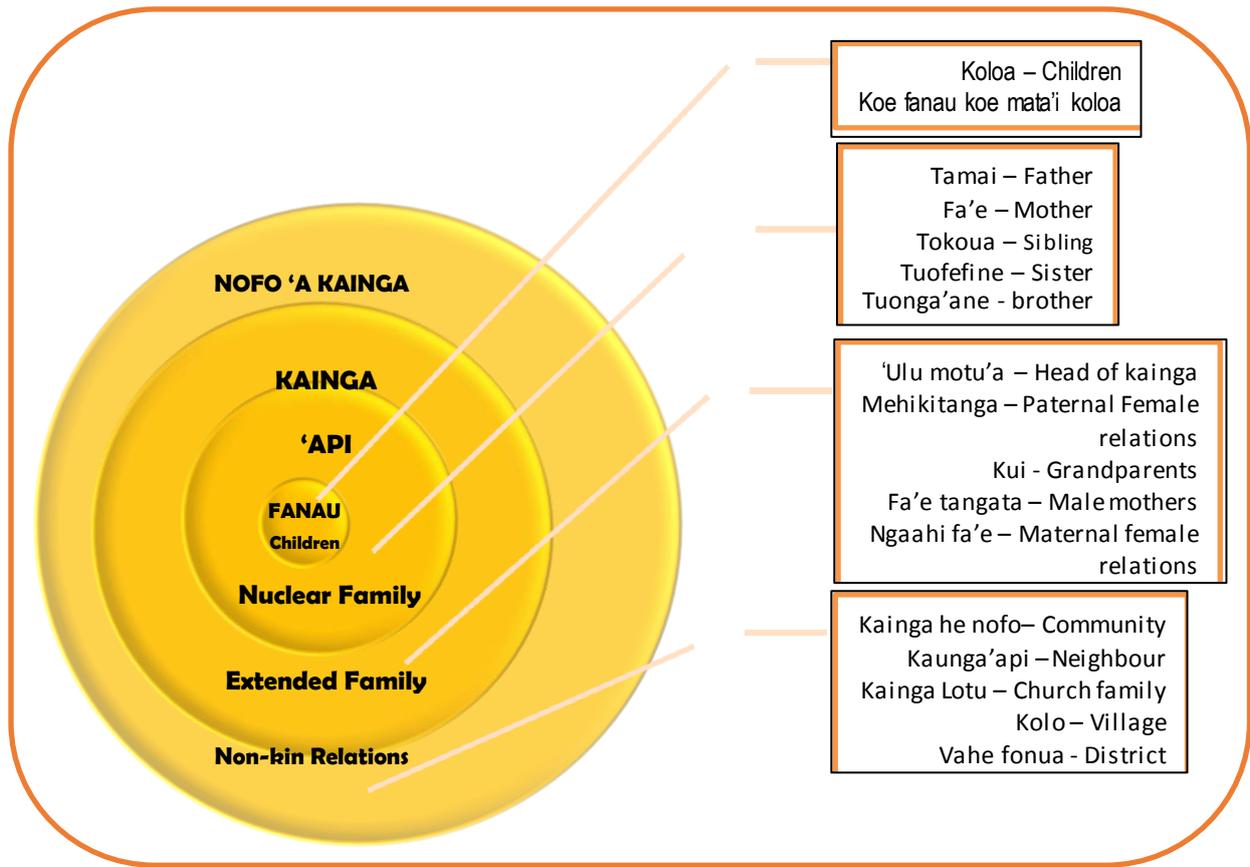
Tongans are born into their place in Tongan society. It is expected that every Tongan is taught their place and their *fatongia* (responsibility) to self, family, church, King and country. Privileges, duties and responsibilities are associated with class. People address each other in language that is appropriate to their rank, for example: greetings for royalty '*Mālo e Lakoifie*', for nobility – '*Mālo e Laumalie*' and for commoners '*Mālo e lelei*'.

Tonga has a system of 31 noble titles plus three *matapule* who are stewards of the King's lands. All land in Tonga belongs to the King according to the Tongan Constitution.

Lotu - Christianity

Tongans adopted Christianity as the national religion in the early to mid-1800s when Tonga's King George I converted to Christianity and declared Tonga to be protected only by God. The Tongan coat of arms has the words '*Otua mo Tonga Ko hoku tofi'a* – 'God and Tonga are my inheritance'. Christianity has since become deeply imbedded in Tongan culture. Churches are an important part of *kainga he nofo* (community) and form *kainga lotu* (Church family); they provide support and are a focus of *kainga* (family) association.

Nofo 'a kainga – Tongan Family Structure



The traditional *kainga* is collective in nature. The relationship between the members of the *kainga* is reciprocal and interdependent, with each member fulfilling an expected role and responsibilities to another.

Traditional roles within the *kainga*:

- **Tamai** (father) is usually the head of the 'api (house, home). If the father is no longer in the 'api the role is then taken by the **fa'e** (mother).
- **'Ulumotu'a** – is the head of the paternal *kainga*. The 'ulumotu'a is a male and this is a role inherited by the oldest of the paternal line. It is regarded as *fale hufanga* (house of refuge). Traditional family decision making is based on a collective consensus, but where there is disagreement, the 'ulumotu'a makes the final decision. When the 'ulumotu'a is absent, decision making and providing guidance is deferred to the elders (who are women or men).
- Paternal *kainga* often hold higher standing than maternal *kainga* in decision making, depending on the situation, family concerned and context.
- Sisters are socially superior to brothers within families. For example, **mehikitanga** (paternal aunts) or **fahu** (eldest paternal aunt in a family line that extends beyond the nuclear unit) are matriarchal figure heads. Women in these positions traditionally have naming rights over their brother's children.
- Elders are respected by the young.

Fanau - Children

Tongans view children as treasures and gifts from God – *Koe fanau koe mata'i koloa*. The birth of the first born child is the link that connects the maternal and paternal family from just *kainga he nofo* (associations of non kin) to *kainga* (family). The *kainga* has the responsibility to teach, care and guide the children about *talangofua* (obedience), *akonaki* (expected behaviour), and consequences.

Birth Order, Gender, Class

First born sons and daughters hold particular status and are raised to be aware of responsibility and expectations from an early age; these include looking out for younger siblings and over time, the *kainga*. Subsequent children are also taught their roles, responsibilities within and duties to the *kainga*.

The child's gender is also significant to legal rights and entitlements. Males have legal privilege over females in land inheritance and succession to the throne in Tonga⁴.

Fakahingoa 'ae fanau – Naming of children

The honour of naming the children is usually given to the paternal aunt, *mehikitanga*. This tradition creates an attachment between children and their *kainga*.

Fakame - Children's Day

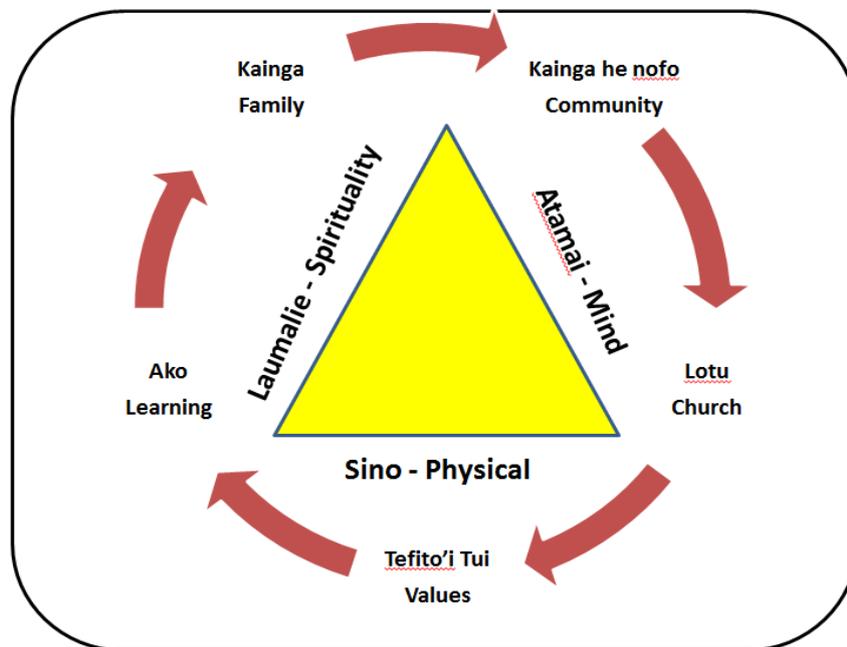
Children are celebrated annually in May. Church services are led by the youth while parents, *mehikitanga* and grandparents prepare for the occasion with *kainga* gathering and sharing food. In January every year, children and adults attend church in their school uniform or graduation regalia to mark the importance of education.

⁴ Act of Constitution of Tonga, 1998 Revised Edition. Sections 111 and 32. Retrieved from [http://publicofficialsfinancialdisclosure.worldbank.org/sites/fdl/files/assets/law-library-files/Tonga_Constitution_\(as%20amended\)_en.pdf](http://publicofficialsfinancialdisclosure.worldbank.org/sites/fdl/files/assets/law-library-files/Tonga_Constitution_(as%20amended)_en.pdf)

Mo'ui Fakalata – Tongan Cultural Framework Practice

Philosophy

Mo'ui denotes life and wellbeing; it refers to a multi-relational living that is healthy and well. *Mo'ui* refers to the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of families and communities. Additionally, it refers to the wellbeing of peoples and communities as important components of the ecology (*fonua*). *Fakalata* means enjoyment of life from a Tongan perspective, a life that enables people to be themselves and where it's pleasant, happy, safe and content. Joined, the concepts of *Mo'ui* and *Fakalata* symbolise one's specific and collective relationships and responsibilities. This conceptual framework underpins effective practice with *fanau* Tonga, their *kainga* and *kainga he nofo*, applying a holistic approach to life and peaceful co-existence.



This framework encompasses three essential and inseparable aspects of wellbeing: *'atamai* (mind), *loto* (spirit) and *sino* (physical). Together these aspects radiate harmony within each member of the *kainga* and by extension the whole *kainga*. This harmony is referred to as *'napangapanga malie'* – that all dimensions are well and balanced. The absence or compromise of any one of these disrupts harmony and can result in a home without peace, safety, joy or laughter.

Kainga is fundamental in *Mo'ui Fakalata* because it reflects the collective, reciprocal and supportive role each individual member contributes to achieving *Mo'ui fakalata*.

The spirit of *Mo'ui Fakalata* is aspirational. It focuses on the potential and strengths of people and *nofo 'a kainga*. At its core is a belief in the innate power of the human spirit to overcome obstacles and difficulties. It recognises that each *kainga* has the spirit and strength to make decisions for their *fanau*. The framework supports practitioners to understand and build with *fanau Tonga* and their *kainga* situations to achieve positive outcomes.

Purpose

Mo'ui Fakalata provides cultural knowledge and information to inform planning, engagement and decision making with Tongan families, communities and colleagues. In light of the fact that most decisions made within Oranga Tamariki about Tongan children are made by non-Tongans, this framework targets both Tongan and non-Tongan users.

The framework developers strongly recommend using this knowledge to develop best practice with Tongan children and *kainga* (families), and where possible, using the Tongan language. The language and culture significantly influence the way many Tongan children and families conceptualise and analyse their experiences, and the way they communicate with others of Tongan and non-Tongan background. Whether Tongan or non-Tongan, the practitioner must seek cultural consultation, this recognises that not all *kainga* are the same.

The development of *Mo'ui Fakalata* was assisted by works of Tongan researchers, Puao-Te-Ata-Tu, the strategic vision and goals of Oranga Tamariki, and input from Tongan Oranga Tamariki practitioners and staff.

Mo'ui Fakalata recognises the strengths and potential of people based on the innate power of the human spirit and ones bond with the divine. It is a sense of congeniality (*fakaholonofa*).

Tefito'i tui - Key Values:

- *Feveitokai'aki* – reciprocal respect
- *Faka'apa'apa* – respect
- *'Ofa* – love, care, compassion
- *Fetokoni'aki* – reciprocity
- *Fatongia* – duty and responsibility. *Fatongia* is rooted in *'ofa fonua* (fervent patriotism), *mateaki* (commitment and loyalty), *tauhi fonua* (cultural obligations), *melino* (peace) and *faataha* (unity)
- *Tauhi vaha'a* – maintaining relationships

The essence of the Tongan heart and spirit are comprised of these elements:

- *Loto 'ofa* - loving spirit, compassion
- *Loto ma'a* - honest spirit
- *Loto lelei* - good spirit
- *Loto melino* - peaceful spirit
- *Loto fiefia* - joyful spirit
- *Lototo'a* - courageous spirit
- *Loto hangamalie* - free spirit
- *Loto mafana* - warm spirit

The framework focuses on three key elements of social work engagement:

1. **Fakafehokotaki** – engagement
2. **Vaka'i pea fakama'opo'opo** – assessment
3. **Fakalotofale'ia** – decision making

Engagement – *Fakafehokotaki*

The use of *faka Tonga* (Tongan language) and simple terms (see table at the end of the section) would greatly help engagement with parents, elders and community leaders. It is important however to ascertain what language best suits the child or young person concerned. A significant proportion of Tongan children and young people speak Tongan because it is a language that is still used frequently in homes and churches. The possibility of this decreases however with New Zealand - born generations and ethnically mixed families (refer to Va'aifetu Part 1).

It is important to ascertain what language best suits the child or young person concerned, and ensure that they are meaningfully engaged in discussions that are not held in their preferred language. Children and young people not fluent in Tongan may still understand the words and cultural concepts used during engagement. Hearing their native language may help alleviate a child's or young person's anxiety and build rapport.

Engagement should be inclusive of *'api, kainga, kainga he nofo* (home, extended family and community). When this occurs, decisions are more likely to reflect and promote individual and *kainga* responsibility for outcomes for *fanau* (children).

- *Fakafehokotaki* emphasises the importance of cooperation and relationships, established through *a'u tonu* (face to face contact). Using Tongan greetings or inclusive words to *fehokotaki* with the *kainga*.
- *Matakainga* (behaving with mutual respect). Through the *fakafehokotaki* stage the social worker's mannerism, acknowledging *kainga* by sharing some information about their background, story to connect with *kainga*. Where roles are identified and understood and engagement occurs in a context of mutual respect.
- *Anga Fakatokilalo* (acting with humility) accentuates the social worker's *loto* and good intentions for the *kainga*. Once a relationship is created or acknowledged then the social worker's distinct role and purpose can begin to be discussed one step at a time.

Assessment – *Vakai'i pea fakama'opo'opo*

- *Vakai'i pea fakama'opo'opo* reflects the individual's and collective strength of the *kainga*. A *kainga* that understands and realises its capabilities through its members is one that can ensure the safety and wellbeing of its children.
- The Tongan child's world is often intertwined with that of the *kainga*, the collective to whom she/he belongs and is the main support. It is important therefore to understand the situation of the surrounding *kainga* as well as that of the child. The information obtained will aid the interpretation of information, situation, decision making with the family, and enable the collaborative development and implementation of realistic, achievable, child focussed plans.

Decision Making – *Fakalotofale'ia*

- *Fakalotofale'ia* is the process of *kainga* decision making that encompasses the strengths and spirit of the *kainga* to achieve the best interests of *fanau* (children) and safety of *kainga he nofo* (wider community).
- *Fakalotofale'ia* is evoked in times of crisis, because of its restorative and preventative elements. For example, the care of *fanau* Tonga – Tongan children, can sometimes be stressful; accordingly, the members of the *kainga* hold a *fakalotofale'ia* to discuss

how this could be addressed. The kainga members express their commitment to fulfil the *fatongia* – obligation towards *fanau*, based on values such as *'ofa* – love/compassion.

- *Fakalotofale'ia* is characterised by the following values among many others: *'Ofa* (love or compassion), *fetokoni'aki* (interdependence), *makafetoli'aki* (reciprocity), *uouongataha* (collective), *faka'apa'apa* (respect), and *fe'ofa'ofani* (harmony/'share and care'/looking out for each other). The practice of *fakalotofale'ia* promotes the internalising of key values (*tefito'i tui*) among the members' relationships within the *kainga*⁵.
- *Fakalata'ia* is the outcome of the *fakalotofale'ia* that will lead to a plan.

Useful Words and Phrases - Tonga

| Common Greetings and Phrases | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Mālo e lelei | Greetings, hello |
| Mou me'a mai | Welcome come in (<i>to more than one person</i>) |
| Mou me'a ā | Goodbye (<i>to more than one person</i>) |
| Fēfē hake? | How are you? |
| 'Oku ou sai pe mālo, fefe ā koe? | I'm fine thanks, and you? |
| Fakamolemole, kataki | Please |
| Mālo (or) fakafeta'i | Thank you |
| Tulou | Excuse me |
| 'Alu ā | Goodbye (<i>to a person who is leaving</i>) |
| Nofo ā | Goodbye (<i>Response to 'Alu a from the person leaving</i>) |
| Fakamolemole | Apologise, sorry |
| Muli | A non-Tongan |
| Family Terms | |
| 'ofefine | daughter |
| foha | son |
| pēpē | baby |
| mokopuna | grandchild |
| tamasii | child, boy |
| ta'ahine | girl |
| tamaiki | children |
| fanau | children |
| fa'e | mother/maternal aunt |
| tamai | father/paternal uncle/father's brothers & male cousins |
| fa'e tangata | maternal uncle/maternal male cousins |
| kainga | family |
| mehikitanga | paternal aunt |
| tokoua | sibling/cousins |
| 'ulumotu'a | head of the paternal <i>kainga</i> (<i>male</i>) |

⁵ Tuitahi Tahaafe, S.L. (2003). *Introducing disability concepts with integrity into Tongan cultural context*. Masters thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.