

# “Against The Odds: The Audacity To Believe”

## A ‘Household’ Academic Writing and Arts Project

### Concept Note

**Summary:** The ‘household writing project’ combines both research and writing in five genres. It takes Jesus conclusive statement: “*You have heard... but I tell you*” in Matthew 5:17-48 as a direct challenge posed to tradition. If tradition does not change, it will die; if it changes, it may live. The ‘tradition’ of development, reinforced by the current methodologies, processes and goals of education in the Pacific household have materially enriched some while subjecting many to poverty and dependency, and contributing to the progressive depletion of the household’s bio-diversity. The Covid-19 pandemic has further revealed deep fissures in our household including poverty, inequality, violence, loss of bio-diversity and insecurity. It has also highlighted the depletion of our household resilience to manage these fissures. For this reason, there is an urgent need to rebuild our ‘home’ to what it was once was and more - to enable our peoples and communities to not just survive, but thrive. We reflect on the ‘home’ that once was and ask the critical question: how did it come to be the way it was? How did our forebears give birth to this household we call regionalism? And, on what principles and values was the process anchored? This project is not about reviving tradition. Rather it is about reaching inwards to the source – our cultural resilience as a resource repository of indigenous and religious knowledge, spirituality, wisdom and skills to renew our Pacific household. It’s purpose is to use the power of the ‘pen’ and various forms of art and methods of storying and narration to influence and change the ‘story of development’ of the household, and to strengthen the resilience and security of the region. The project will be coordinated by the Pacific Theological College (PTC) through the Institute for Mission and Research (IMR). The timeframe to complete this project is 1.9 years.

**Background:** In 2017, Pacific church leaders redefined ecumenism as ‘*Household of God*’ insofar as the Pacific is concerned.<sup>1</sup> But that ‘household’ is today disintegrating. Traditions that once held the Pacific household together founded on agreements committed to with simple handshakes and the legitimacy of one’s word has given way to what might be viewed as democratic brutality. Our understanding of the ‘household’ has, as a result, changed. Our regional politics is seen as divisive and bilateral, resulting in the decline of multilateralism. Our household economics is increasingly narcissistic and self-serving and, our spirituality is denigrating of our collectivity as a people. “Today our regional and local identity as members of God’s household in the Pacific is experiencing not only objective pressures stemming from increasing consumption, commercialisation and secularisation in our societies – which is part and parcel of the globalisation process – but also the consequences of non-attendance to the need to renew, reframe and script our regional and local stories of what development and its journey ought to be for us in the Pacific. The result has been the decline in self-belief concerning who we are as uniquely people of the Pacific, and hence a decline in development cooperation and relationships. We are faced with the demoralisation of our region and our respective societies, with a deficit of trust in our political systems, in our political and church leadership, and in our accountability and our people’s responsibility towards each other.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PCLM. 2017. Sowing A New Seed of Pacific Ecumenism. Nadi: October 2017. 4

<sup>2</sup> Tevita Havea. 2020. “The Story of our Pacific Household in the New Nomral”. From the Deep: Pasifiki Voices for a New Story. Suva: Pacific Theological College. 7.

**Strategies:** The idea then, is to foster a renewed sense of what we mean by the Pacific ‘household’. Given the above scenario assessment, it is crucial to draw from what we know (and perhaps forgotten about), and also from other means, tools and templates that could help us to ignite this sense of renewal.

- **The first strategy** is to use the education we received in research and analysis, and our experiences, to write about the core values of the ‘household’ as we perceive them to be. The idea is to **re-tell the story of the ‘household’, using the following 8Cs principles: Covenantal (household biblical re-storying), Cosmology (theology of the household); Community (spirituality of the household); Custodianship (ecological ethic of the household); Consensus (politics of the household); Contribution (economics of the household); Creativity (household education); and Cooperation (social ethics of the household)**. These are guiding principles that academics (both young and old) will be invited to contribute from their own perspectives and world views. The outcome would be a published volume of all contributions. This first volume (and the series of volumes after) will be titled **“Re-storying the Pacific Household”**. The follow-up volumes will focus on one of the household’s 8Cs above. For example, the second volume could be ‘contribution’ (economics of the household) or on ‘creativity’ (education in the household), and so on. For such knowledge to gain its own legitimacy and traction, a journal of Pacific ecology and resilience development could be instituted.

**Timeframe: May 2021 – April 2022, with the launch of the 1<sup>st</sup> volume in April 2022.**

- **The second strategy** is to employ four art forms: poetry; music; dance and visual arts. At least 30 artists will be invited to contribute to this strategy. This strategy is aimed at implementing the belief that our narratives and visions of resilience and security are sustained through education, albeit, education through the art forms. It is also aimed at providing the young people with a platform for other forms of expressions, other than academic writing, their visions and articulations of the household. The core of this strategy remains the ‘household’ and how these genres and methods of narration, could help to renew the ‘household’ as we see it.

**Timeline: May 2021 – April 2022, with a showcase of all the art forms at the launch of the 1<sup>st</sup> Volume of the “Re-storying the Pacific Household”.**

- **The third Strategy** is the provision of an online platform to profile the authors and artists work, and a platform to discuss the various development issues raised by the authors in their essays and art forms. **Timeline: August 2021 – May 2022.**

The outputs of these strategies – writing, arts and online discussions – will be at the centre of a weeklong festival/celebration of the ‘household’ at the end of 2022.

**Coordination:** The project will be coordinated by the Institute for Mission and Research, based at the Pacific Theological College, with friends in Papua New Guinea. The coordination includes the facilitation of the activities relating to the ‘household’ anthology writings, publications, mentoring online workshops on the art forms, workshops logistical support, and profiling the ‘Pacific household’ writing project widely in the region and beyond.

**Timeframe:** The whole project is expected to take 1.9 years to complete, between May 2021 and December 2022 where the celebration of the ‘household’ is scheduled.